

# ALTERNATION

Journal of the Centre for the Study of Southern African  
Literature and Languages Vol 6, No 2, 1999  
ISSN 1023-1757



- \* *Alternation* is an international journal which publishes interdisciplinary contributions in the fields of Southern African Literature and Languages.
- \* Prior to publication, each publication in *Alternation* is refereed by at least two independent peer referees.
- \* *Alternation* is indexed in The Index to South African Periodicals (ISAP) and reviewed in The African Book Publishing Record (ABPR).
- \* *Alternation* is published every semester. *Alternation* was accredited in 1996.

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ISSN 1023-1757

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# *Alternation*

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

**1999**

**CSSALL  
Durban**

# Introduction

**Johannes A. Smit**

Against the background of a brief reappraisal of the politics - literary production interface in the twentieth century, Adebayo Williams argues for a recuperation of the personal dimension to cultural production. Seeing it as both an epistemological and historical necessity in Third World literatures, he shows that 'the particular artist becomes the bearer of the national burden, a vehicle for inarticulate societal aspirations or disaffections' if not the bearer of a new ideology. He then seeks to reposition Thomas Mofolo within the cultural politics of a pan-colonial society, attempts to re-examine his literary strategy in terms of societal constraints and reappraises the legacy of this 'misunderstood patriot and indisputable moral genius'

Emeka Nwabueze's article examines some of the peculiarities inherent in African American and black South African literature. It posits valid general relationships between the literatures arising from general similarities in 'environment', without assuming the existence of uniformity over the entire area of discussion. Pertinent references are made to particular texts either to exemplify a point, or to place it in comparison with other artistic works under discussion.

Isidore Diala focuses on André Brink's frequent depiction of the characteristic Afrikaner reduction of the Bible to a white mythology that complemented the materiality of apartheid. Pointing to the way in which the Bible was read 'in the self-regarding gaze of Afrikaner consciousness, severely hampered and narrowed by its morbid obsession with its tribulations and even threats of extinction in a heathen land', he argues that the Bible was distorted to justify racist ideology. In the same ways that historiography and cartography can be used for purposes of myth-making, this approach was used in the apartheid machinery to empower the Afrikaner Establishment by providing it with an authorised version of reality.

Pointing to the glaring omissions in colonial and post-colonial studies, Lekan Oyegoke says that they indicate an uneasiness about 'strident radical voices'. He sees this phenomenon as a strategy of 'quietening things down through a selective exclusion of radical perspectives'. The subject of his article, then, is the ideological implication of some of these omissions from works devoted to postcoloniality.

In his critical assessment of Kofi Awoonor's *This Earth, My Brother*, Kwame Ayivor focuses attention on the environmental determinism which shapes and informs its hero and characters. Further, he investigates how the 'corrosive fictional wasteland—Awoonor's bleak landscape—affects the protagonist's existential quest for selfhood and racial identity. How Amamu, the prodigal hero, 'became a stranger to his tribe, to his religion, to his traditions, and to himself' is the central concern.

Pointing to the autobiographical tone of his writing and the recurrence of self-portraits in his pictorial art, Marilet Sienaert shows how the issue of identity and self-representation has always been foregrounded and problematised in the work of Breyten Breytenbach. The main argument in the article is that, linked to place, there is a strong relationship between Africa and the sense of self constituted in his work. As such, the research examines and questions the way critics place his oeuvre within a purely European tradition of writing and painting.

In his 'Breyten Breytenbach's *Memory of Snow and of Dust*—A Postmodern Story of Identiti(es)', Erhard Reckwitz discusses a variety of elements which inform the view that his oeuvre derives from the same autobiography. Even so, he argues that *Memory of Snow and of Dust* must not be reduced to yet another poetic or narrative reworking of his obsessive preoccupation with exile and imprisonment respectively. As a mediator steeped in the knowledge of two cultures, Breytenbach's achievement is that he brought about a mutually enriching dialogue between South Africa and Europe by expressing the schizophrenia of postmodern South Africa in European deconstructivist terms—or vice versa.

In the light of the unprecedented theoretical developments in postcolonial studies, Cleopas Thosago points to the fact that, apart from two articles, not much of such reflection has been brought to bear on African language literature. His article focuses on the possibilities and challenges of realising 'the multilingual national concept of South African literature'. He probes the dialectic between multilingualism and globalisation and the extent to which it impacts on African-language literatures in South Africa. His observations and yet tentative conclusions, could perhaps be helpful in the attempt to re-position as well as re-orient African-language literatures in the ongoing local and global discussions and debates on postcoloniality, he argues.

Andrew Foley points to the hiatus in scholarship concerning not only a precise account of the actual nature of the Christian perspective which underpins Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country*, but also how his liberalism informs his religious thinking and gives shape to a Christian perspective which is actively and intimately concerned with matters

of social and political justice. His article attempts to fill this gap in scholarship by examining in some detail the nature and significance of Paton's synthesis of liberalism and Christianity.

Gisela Feurle gives an overview of an interdisciplinary course focused on Shaka, she developed with a colleague from the history department. The course had a curricular, didactic as well as an 'intercultural learning' dynamics built into it. Some of the central elements of the course were the contradictory representations of Shaka, the reasons why and the ways in which traditions and ethnic identities emerge, and the possible importance Shaka has for nationbuilding or ethnic identity in South Africa. In general, the course also focused on the interpretation of literary texts and historical sources, the studying of theoretical concepts, the study of the current political situation in South Africa using newspapers and films, and required reflection upon own points of view and perspectives.

Erhard Reckwitz addresses the problematic related to the supremacy of the political over the aesthetic in South African but also Third World literatures. He does so by providing an overview of the debate within South African scholarship but also how it relates to views on literature from elsewhere. The main point is that this binary leads to a too easy and fallacious mimetic distinction. If mimetic literature constitutes a first phase and magic realism - especially as it also derives from 'the ordinary' - a second, then a third stage would be literature's entering a more 'mature' symbolic.

In her article, S. Pather calls for equal treatment of the sexes not only as presented in the sections dealing with gender in the South African Constitution, but also in actual practice in society. Her main focus is on legal discourse which is still determined by a gender discriminatory tradition. As such, her analysis and argument accesses a discussion of the judgement of O'Regan J in *Brink v Kitshoff* NO 1996 (4) SA 197 (cc).

Gina Buijs examines the notion of power as a crucial variable in the disappearance of caste among the descendants of indentured labourers from India in Natal and the ways in which the process of migration to Natal from India enabled migrants to construct a different ethnic identity to that of their ancestors on the subcontinent. This is done against the background of the fact that, in India, it is generally agreed that most social values and relations are connected to a pure-and-impure pattern of hierarchy which constitutes the basis of the caste system.

In her linguistic study of South African Telugu surnames, Varijakshi Prabhakaran focuses on the gap in the study of the linguistic aspects of onomastics in South Africa. She gives a history of Telugu surnames in South Africa, puts forward a

methodology for data collection and then analyses the data collected. The linguistic analysis shows variations and changes that occurred due to the Telugu language's contact with 'in-group' and 'out-group' languages, viz. Tamil and English.

Against the background of an earlier argument concerning the conditions literary studies has to meet in order to participate in 'disciplinarity', Rory Ryan argues that despite its weak legitimation for disciplinarity, literary studies performs significant functions on cultural meaning and value. However, in order to answer the question, 'What operations are performed?', wider and logically prior questions within the human symbolic - which in turn requires a move into the attendant discipline of symbolic anthropology - have to be asked. Following his argument is an attempt to apply these anthropological observations to the literary phenomenon and its secondary productions.

Pointing to the complexity of bilingualism, Lawrie Barnes analyses the phenomenon in the South African context from a variety of perspectives. Various aspects of bilingualism such as the definition and typologisation of bilingualism, the measurement and acquisition of bilingualism, the effects of bilingualism on the individual and the configuration of bilingualism in society are examined. Some implications of research on bilingualism for education and language planning in South Africa are advanced.

Rembrandt Klopper has written and brought together five articles within the theoretical framework of an emerging comprehensive discipline known as Cognitive Rhetoric. The specialist contributions by Mark Turner and Gilles Fauconnier's, Elsa Klopper, and his own, focus on particular aspects of Cognitive Rhetoric without really giving a systematic overview of this approach. For this reason, the first article in the series, provides a concise overview of Cognitive Rhetoric as backdrop against which readers can read the other contributions. Here he shows that an individual's subjective perceptions of the universe differ significantly from how science objectively reveals the universe to be, and that Cognitive Rhetoric provides a coherent framework for understanding how humans subjectively perceive the universe to be.

In his review of Owomoyela's *The African Difference*, Mabogo P. More untangles some of the most important questions and issues relevant to all those concerned with the relationship between African intellectuals and the culture from which they come.

# Towards the Biologics of Cultural Production: The Literary Politics of Thomas Mofolo

Adebayo Williams

## Politics and Literary Production: A Paradigmatic Reappraisal

As the twentieth century draws to a close, literary theory appears to be in the grip of a profound crisis of identity. Arguably one of the outstanding achievements of human thought in the century, contemporary literary theory owes its existence to breakthroughs or what has been rather portentiously described as epistemological ruptures in disciplines as seemingly diverse as Structural Linguistics, Psychoanalysis, Philosophy, Historiography, Economics, Psychology, Anthropology and Political Science<sup>1</sup>. The coupling of advances in these various fields led to startling insights into literature and the arts, particularly the crucial interrelationship between cultural production and its enabling environment<sup>2</sup>. But historical developments, particularly the end of the cold war and the collapse of actually existing socialist states, the contradictions of emergent post-colonial states, the ascendancy of monetarist ideology in economic affairs, and the creation of a multi-national class of migrant intelligentsia as a result of deepening global inequality, have rendered the operating procedures of contemporary literary theory extremely problematic.

There is a sense, then, in which this development mirrors the dialectic of history. The triumph of theory, the attempts to objectivise literature and subject its parameters to rigorous quasi-scientific evaluation, were all an ideological reaction to an older mode of criticism and literary scholarship. It was hardly surprising, given the ideologically charged Oxbridge milieu of the seventies, that a youthful Terry Eagleton (1978:29-40) dismissed such criticism—and its academic relics—as being typified by the gentleman of letters who ‘wears his hat and opinion lightly’. In the epoch of agonistic contention, criticism is not about self-effacement and effete

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<sup>1</sup> The concept of epistemological rupture, ‘coupure épistémologique’, owes its recent popularisation to the French Marxist philosopher, Louis Althusser who in turn owes his inspiration to his former teacher, the mathematician, Bachelard. For an elaboration see Althusser (1970).

<sup>2</sup> For an early theorisation of this interconnection see Macherey (1977).

gentlemanliness but of sturdy views stubbornly held and vigorously declaimed. Yet this shifting perception was also part of the working out of certain historical contradictions both in the discipline and the society at large. As the intensification of capitalist relations of production led to increasing specialisation and differentiation of vocation, criticism moved from the saloon to the campus, the professional superseded the amateur; the *belles lettres* transformed into the modern literary critic.

It is an intriguing irony, therefore, that in the drive to objectivise the evaluative criteria of literature, the author himself became the most profound casualty. Coinciding with oracular declamations about the death of the novel, the consequent phenomenon of the anti-novel and the epochal events or '*les evenements*' of 1968 in France, the death of the author was proclaimed from the highest altar of *avant garde* literary theorising. Led by Structuralist theorists such as Roland Barthes and the early Derrida, the depersonalisation of the author or the 'de-authorisation' of literature followed closely the developments in two diverse disciplines. First, the Lacanian revisionism of Freudian psychoanalytical categories which decentred the subject and canonised the fragmented self. For Lacan (1977:27), human society would be better off without what he called the 'narcissistic tyranny' in which the 'promotion of the ego today culminates'. Second, the Althusserian assault on Hegelian dialectic and Marxian humanism which proclaimed 'the effectivity of an absent cause' and the heretic notion that 'history is a process without a subject' (Althusser 1970). It is indeed a long and winding road from these theoretical subversions to postcolonial doctrine and the denial of the categories of race, class, nation and origins by its leading exemplar<sup>3</sup>. The fate of the author, however, appears to have been firmly sealed in the heady momentum.

The ironic complicity of these innovations with the phenomenon of globalisation in its forcible occupation of pre-capitalist and non-capitalist spaces, its creation of 'a borderless world' and abolition of the old subject-object dialectic has been noted by several perceptive scholars<sup>4</sup>. What began as a radical epistemological revolt eventually naturalised as a doctrine of the status quo. Yet in the supersonic boom of theory, amidst the heavy artillery of contending theoretical fads, the concrete existential plight of the writer, the tormenting and tortured personal drama of creativity tended to be dismissed as one more example of an unwarranted fixation on the subject. Whatever the excesses of the old antiquarian scholarship and its voyeuristic preoccupation with mundanities and minutiae about the life of the artist, the grim anti-humanism of the paradigm that supplanted it appears to have bent the stick too far in the other direction.

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<sup>3</sup> For a recent penetrating critique that focuses on the theoretical lacunae in Bhabha's epistemology, see Easthope (1998).

<sup>4</sup> For example, see Miyoshi (1992).

It is clear then that a recuperation of the personal dimension to cultural production is an epistemological as well as historical necessity. In the particular case of contemporary research into Third World literatures, there is an ideological as well as political imperative for this. In the so called post-colonial societies which had barely emerged from the throes of imperialist subjugation before being thrown into the crucible of globalisation, a revaluation of their immediate cultural resources is important if they are not to travel the road of ruin with other post-industrial societies without first achieving their self-awareness. Indeed, the exploration of the tension between the private world of the artist and the public domain often throws their cultural and political realities into sharper relief. This is so because the work of art even at its most private and solipsistic is often seen as a resolution at the level of imagination of a concrete societal problem. However depoliticised a work of art may seem, however apolitical the writer himself may appear, neither can wish away the realities of political society. As Macherey famously demonstrated, a work of art often reveals the conditions of its possibility irrespective of the wishes of the author.

The stratagems and subterfuges that a writer employs to contain or outflank the pervasive encroachments of political society vary from epoch to epoch, and from society to society. In a particular conjuncture, certain political developments may block off existing possibilities for the writer while triggering off other possibilities. In some societies there may be certain safety mechanisms which give the writer an illusion of freedom, while in other societies the mechanics of an authoritarian state frees him of such illusions. At certain historical moments, owing to some unique circumstances, there is a convergence of public and private destiny in which a particular artist becomes the bearer of the national burden, a vehicle for inarticulate societal aspirations or disaffections. Under such circumstances, the artist becomes public property, an epic hero, the bearer of a new ideology who carries within his breasts the authentic national genius<sup>5</sup>.

It is, however, also the case that a writer's engagement with the political reality of his society may vary from text to text, depending on the state of the society and the logic of the writer's insertion in such. This usually introduces a genetic instability to the writer's *oeuvre*. This instability in turn becomes an emblematic mirror for the writer's own contradictory personality. In the same writer mutually antagonistic tendencies may co-exist, often turning the artist into a seething confluence of conflicts: royalist and republican, revolutionary and reactionary, fascist and freedom fighter, heretic and fanatic. Nowhere are the writer's contradictions more evident and more overdetermined than in societies that have undergone revolutionary rupture or radical restructuring. In these chaotic communities in which the old order had disappeared and the labour traumas of a new are self-evident, all

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<sup>5</sup> For the classic formulation of this phenomenon see Lukács (1968).

manner of strange species crawl out of the twilight zone of uncertain existence. None of these creatures of anomie can be more bizarre or more fascinating than the figure of the committed artist. Disdained and disdainful, contemptuous of the powers that be but at the same time a figure of contempt and pity himself, overtly supportive of the new establishment while covertly subverting its credo, his heart belonging to the old order while his head is seeking uneasy accommodation with the new, the artist in a society in a state in transition is a perplexing figure.

No society could possibly have been in a greater flux than South Africa at the beginning of the twentieth century. Having succumbed to the internal pacification of Chaka, the great Zulu warrior, it was to see the remnants of Chaka's army decisively routed by the British forces. As if these epics of bloodletting were not traumatic enough, the twentieth century opened with the Anglo-Boer war which first drew global attention to the savagery of modern warfare. Thus, some of the autochthonous communities in South Africa had three layers of colonisation superimposed on them with Zulu, British and Afrikaner political cultures in hegemonic contention. Thomas Mofolo, the pre-eminent indigenous South African artist at the turn of the century and arguably the father of the African novel, struggled valiantly with the complexities of this turbulent society, and they in turn left a permanent imprint on the man and his work. In the light of the theoretical motifs pursued in the forgoing, the rest of this article has three main objectives. First, it seeks to reposition Mofolo within the context of cultural politics in what can only be described as a pan-colonial society<sup>6</sup>. Second, it attempts to re-examine his literary strategy in terms of societal constraints. Finally, in carrying out the first two objectives, it tries to reappraise the legacy of a misunderstood patriot and indisputable moral genius.

## Social Contradictions and the Man of Letters

Contrary to the old myth, *Chaka* is not Mofolo's only novel. It was in fact his fourth and last. The chronology of publication and most probably of actual writing is as follows: *Traveller to the East* (1905-1906); *Pitseng* (1909); and *Chaka* (1925). Another manuscript, the unpublished *The Fallen Angel*, was reputed to have been written around 1907. Technically speaking, then, and contrary to received notion,

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<sup>6</sup> A pan-colonial society is a society which exhibits features of precolonial, colonial and post-colonial conditions all at once. The closest society to this is the continent-country of Australia. But while Australia was formally colonised and decolonised, at least politically, South Africa was never. For analogous reflections see Ahmad (1995) and Goss (1996).

*Chaka* is not the first African novel. Yet it is undeniably Mofolo's greatest achievement. Indeed, viewed against the background in which it was produced, it is certainly the first outstanding work of fiction in Africa.

The stress and strain of Mofolo's society are reflected in the eloquent silences and absences which determined the conception of *Chaka* and the polyphonic voices which dominated its execution<sup>7</sup>. Despite the phenomenon of a domiciled European community in South Africa long before the first serious wave of missionaries in other parts of the continent, members of the indigenous communities were actively discouraged from infiltrating the cultural ambience of the white community. With this situation, the 'education' of the few lucky ones never proceeded beyond the elementary. There was also the mandatory stuffing with biblical injunctions with which they were supposed to go and convert their 'savage' kins. This sociological ceiling could lead to severe cultural dislocations, and to the degree that Mofolo was its product it should be expected that the strategy and tactics of his art should revolve around its inauspicious matrix<sup>8</sup>.

Thus for an 'educated' aspiring native artist like Mofolo, the only contact with western literature is limited to the bible and a few proselytising tracts of which John Bunyan's *Pilgrims' Progress* is arguably the most celebrated. This denial of western intellectual nourishment prevented Mofolo's imagination from developing outsize foreign wings and drove it back to essentially improvise on its oral resources. Ironically enough, this could have been a blessing in disguise since in ordinary circumstances he could not expect to gain enough fluency and proficiency in the master's language, he invariably reverted to his native tongue. Yet as far as the concrete execution of literary designs are concerned, the problems have just begun. A harshly oppressive climate naturally tolerates no criticism from any quarters, and certainly not from a barely reconstructed 'savage'. Thus closes the door of contemporaneous realism, for in the conjuncture before globalisation and a transnational world space, the likes of Mofolo could not benefit from the tactics of 'silence, exile and cunning' which would give his successors the mobility and creative evasion needed to confront the intolerable hostility of apartheid.

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<sup>7</sup> According to Mikhail Bakhtin, the great Russian Formalist theorist, the concept of polyphony involves 'a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousness'. See Bakhtin (1984:84). Because he was working in severe isolation and sustained institutional vacuum, Bakhtin's theories have given rise to great scholarly controversies. For a recent reassessment, see Frick (1998:57-80).

<sup>8</sup> Some scholars have contended that apartheid was no less repressive than other modes of colonial subjugation on the continent but was part and parcel of the 'generic form of colonial state in Africa'. See Mamdani (1996).

Yet matters are hardly so clear cut, or easily given. For many aspiring South African artists at the end of the nineteenth century, the glancing contact with western civilisation must have left them genuinely shaken in their faith in the efficacy or even desirability of certain aspects of the indigenous tradition. This led to a certain political awkwardness or ambivalence of feeling. Thus the writer, the arch priest of political subversion, is himself internally subverted by a creeping cultural disorientation. Mofolo's personal situation could not have been helped by the fact that he went to work for Morija Press, the very organisation responsible for the dissemination of religious propaganda, and with which his only hope of publishing lay. It is in the light of these social and existential particularities that the peculiar sensibility of Mofolo's oeuvre must be viewed.

*Traveller to the East*, Mofolo's first fictional outing, is a purely imaginative working out of the hero quest motif. Fekesi, Mofolo's Bunyanesque hero, in his quest for a new order of salvation has to alienate himself from the 'black darkness' of his society and hence from its natural order. Symbolically enough, he is rescued by three Europeans and brought back to health. Yet this rescue operation only manages to postpone a grim and forlorn end. This must be seen as Mofolo's appraisal of the agonising dilemma of the 'redeemed' blackman. By the time Mofolo finished *Pitseng*, his third novel but the second to be published, these contradictions must have led to a profound spiritual and moral crisis. Early commentators, including Jahn (1968:101), tended to dismiss this work as pure missionary stuff. Dathorne (1974:126) appears more sympathetically perceptive. According to him:

All his life Mofolo had to choose between the amiable offerings of christian camaraderie and the set diet of an uncompromising art. The difficulties of the situation were made even more emphatic, especially since he was an employee of Morija. Only by taking this into consideration can one accept the second novel (i.e. *Pitseng*) at all; it was an attempt to pacify his teachers, employers, and publishers.

With the publication of *Pitseng*, Mofolo reached an artistic and ideological *cul de sac*. This was to force upon him a radical review of literary strategy. It might not be purely coincidental that he left Morija Press around this time. It is arguable that Mofolo might have been mulling over the Chaka theme for sometime and could in fact have written a draft; yet no one could deny that physical distancing from unbearable events often crystallises the problem in its stark enormity. For the artist, it is both a conscious and unconscious process and probably one of the irretrievable secrets of creative endeavour. Since the artist himself could hardly be trusted in such matters, it would be pointless debating which one had ascendancy concerning

Mofolo<sup>9</sup>. What is indisputable, however, is the fact that *Chaka* represents a radical departure from the point of view of Mofolo's earlier works. While the others were pure imaginative evocations, with *Chaka* Mofolo switches to imaginative biography.

By writing a fictionalised biography of Chaka, Mofolo could claim to be history's secretary and nothing more—a sort of Balzacian scribe of the society. Indeed this is precisely what Mofolo seemed to have claimed. Newbolt's preface has it that Mofolo was known to have been vigorously researching for the book and 'has made more than one journey into Natal to ascertain mores'<sup>10</sup>. Whether this was a clever feint to evade the hostile surveillance of Morija or a case of imaginative self-delusion remains to be seen. But the situation reminds one of the equally paradoxical parallel in Daniel Defoe, another founding father of the novel, who equally had to devise devious strategies of containment. While making important contributions to the development of fiction, Defoe was also professing his contempt for art and urging that his works be read as pure facts and not fiction. If this is also the case with Mofolo, then Gildon's (1979:149) savage swipe at Defoe: 'unless you would have us think that the Manner of your telling a lie will make it a Truth', is equally applies to him.

It is not purely coincidental, then, that it is on page 182, precisely sixteen pages on—when the reader's allegiance is firmly secure—that the wily narrator of *Chaka* finally lowers his mask:

Chaka's whole life was filled with important happenings, with marvels and mysteries that the ordinary person cannot understand. We have chosen out

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<sup>9</sup> There is no controversy as to the time of Mofolo's leaving Morija Press. Sir Newbolt in his preface to the Oxford Press edition of *Chaka* follows Mangoela's account that it was 'soon after the publication of his second book'. However, Daniel P. Kunene in the Heinemann translation states what we know that 'the 'Chaka' manuscript was in existence by the time he left because it is mentioned in the *Lwre dor de la Mission du Lessouto*, a commemorative volume published by the PEMS to cover the first seventy-five years of mission work in Lesotho, that is 1833 to 1908'. Indeed, Mofolo's radical switch of strategy and departure must have been hastened by the rejection of the manuscript of the still unpublished *The Fallen Angel* by the missionaries. The first draft of *Chaka* must have been rejected out of hand and Mofolo, in no mood for compromises, must have shelved his literary career entirely. Continues Kunene: 'There is further evidence that the first time Mofolo gave any further attention to the 'Chaka' manuscript since 1909 or 1910 was in the early 1920s .... This revision of the manuscript was finished some time before July 1922, the time when Mofolo told Zurcher that he (Mofolo) 'had just finished writing the book 'Chaka''. See Mofolo (1981:xii-xlii).

<sup>10</sup> See Mofolo (1931:xi). All further page references are to this edition.

one side of his life only which suited best our purpose, for it has not been our intention to tell everything (Mofolo 1931:182).

This is the author-narrator confessing that an ambiguity of design has been foisted on the reader; yet such is the seductive charm of Mofolo's prose and the chilling nature of the Pandora's box of intrigues, mayhem and bloodlust it has opened that not many readers at this point would have bothered about the plea of caution. Napoleon Bonaparte with whom Chaka has been infrequently compared once openly mused about a great novel his charmed life with its glamour and breathtaking daring would have made. Like Chaka's, such stories only beg to be told, and they need no artist of extraordinary merit to come alive. Yet this is what Mofolo appears to have been. Mofolo had a further advantage: he was a Sotho recreating a Zulu legend and he could therefore relate to the Chaka mystique with irreverence and aplomb. He could then fill the inevitable gaps, silences and absences in the Chaka story with the ideological colourings of his fertile imagination.

It is precisely the nature of such fictional ballast that has got Mofolo into trouble with South African nationalists and later day commentators. Obumselu, for example, charged him with perfidy and tribalism<sup>11</sup>. Yet it does seem that to argue thus is to miss the artistic nature of Mofolo's work and to ignore the highly complex and contradictory pressures operating within and outside the novel. But then it is also inevitable that Chaka himself as a historical personage should remain a subject of explosive controversy in death as well as in life. Chaka is arguably one of the greatest personalities ever thrown up by history. There can be no doubt that he represents the summit of black achievement before the military incursion of colonialists. He was a colossus in everything: in brains, in physique, in ambition, in aspiration and appetite. Anything he touched, be it local fighting or hunting, war, the intrigues of statescraft or philandering is magically transformed by the sheer force of genius. So forbidding was his legend as a warrior, so daunting was the memory of his generalship that even the normally unsuperstitious British after defeating the rump of his army under Cetewayo several decades after his death, went as far as to burn the inkata (juju) of the Zulu chieftains so that the 'evil genius' might rest forever. As Ayi Kwei Armah (1975:251) observes:

There is therefore something uncannily satisfying, even perfect, in the logic which brought a mind like this to focus on the birth, growth, rise to power, decline, then death of the great Zulu emperor, Chaka.

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<sup>11</sup> See Obumselu (1976:34). According to Obumselu: 'Mofolo's imperfect sympathy and extra-tribal perspective prevented him from writing the great black epic of which the Zulu conqueror was such an apt subject'.

In such circumstances, it is also perfectly logical that the missionaries, Mofolo's great ideological adversaries, saw through the hoax and refuse to touch Mofolo's manuscript with a long pole. It was not just a question of the ostensible reason they gave that *Chaka* 'could do nothing but harm to its readers because of its defence of pagan superstitions'<sup>12</sup>.

*Chaka* the book, was a threat because Chaka the man represents an implied critique of one of the great tropes colonialism: the myth of the under-achieving black savage who deserves to be dragged to civilisation screaming and yelling. Mofolo's work, then, is a subtle, hence profoundly subversive, attempt at the resuscitation of the heroic heritage of a people at the very nadir of their history. Yet it is significant that the missionaries failed to see the transformations Mofolo's own contradictory insertion in the colonial space had brought to bear on the story. For them that was hardly the matter, it was the very legacy, that was unacceptable.

In the light of this, to see the moral preachments in the novel as being inserted to please the missionaries is not only to damage the dialectical unity of the work but to impugn Mofolo's personal integrity, and to ignore the heroic circumstances of his subsequent life. Indeed, such is the organic tension in the work that its ideological underpinning resists and submits to pagan heroism, traditional humanism and christian moralism all at the same time. There is more than a hint of mesmerisation in the heady realism Mofolo often succumbs to in the portrait of Chaka's heroic splendour; yet Mofolo is unequivocal in his condemnation of the tragic excesses that this leads to. It can be advanced that Mofolo's lurid and lush painting of Chaka's career is designed to give weight and balance to his occasionally severe indictment. Yet the cumulative picture of Chaka that emerges is of a man more sinned against than sinning, a man whose genius appears to exempt him from the realm of mundane morality.

It would appear that this is precisely the basis of Mofolo's struggle with the great Zulu warrior. Secretly, he admires Chaka's political and military genius; yet he recoils in horror at the great destruction, the tremendous human cost attendant upon this. Indeed, the question goes beyond the tenets of Mofolo's new faith to the worldview of the magisterial traditional moralist cohabiting in him, for Chaka was a revolutionary despot whose passage led to a drastic overhauling and reorganisation of the society. Thus the change-loving, progressive artist in Mofolo could identify with Chaka's reforms, but the other half of him, the tradition-minded savant now allied to the conservative Christian moralist could not but inveigh against the destruction of the old ethos and the wanton disregard of human life.

The case of cowardice in the Zulu society is particularly instructive of Mofolo's moral dilemma and great ambivalence toward Chaka. Given his own

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<sup>12</sup> This is attributed to Rene Ellenberger; see Gérard (1971:129).

personal circumstances and the quiet daring and defiance with which he confronted his adversaries, this is a failing that Mofolo would have been contemptuous of. After Chaka sought a radical but terrifyingly effective 'final' solution to this weakness, the narrator observes:

On this day the men that were killed could be counted by tens of thousands. Thus was cowardice brought to an end among the Zulus and from that time the Zulu warriors when they went to war understood clearly the meaning of the saying: 'a man child is an ox for vultures .... From that time one Zulu was equal to ten of the enemy and could put them to flight (see Mofolo 1931:158f).

But despite this hint of approval, the old traditionalist and born-again Christian reassert themselves and the passage ends on a note of elegiac regrets:

This is only the beginning of the many slaughtering of Chaka. Those who saw what happened on that day were delirious all night and wasted away, for it was the first time that men had seen such things.

The issue of sexual relations in the society is also illustrative of Mofolo's impasse. Obviously, Mofolo the traditionalist has more than an axe to grind with Chaka's family since he claims that Chaka himself was an illegitimate son, a product of an act of desecration of tradition by Senzangakona. In a passage brimming with disgust, the narrator observes:

In this chapter we have seen that the fruit of sin is wondrously bitter .... The great crime which started everything was the sin of Nandi and Senzangakona .... But if Senzangakona had not committed this shameful act in his youth, Chaka would have lived in his home in Nobamba, the beloved darling of his father (Mofolo 1931:159).

It is obvious that the author-narrator's palpable revulsion has led to an intellectual slippage. For indeed, Chaka could not have been born in the first instance without the illicit act. And, of course, not only does it escape the narrator that Nandi was raped, he is also apparently untroubled by the fact that there must be something remiss about a society that exacts such a disproportionate penalty for so human an infringement. Yet, when Chaka, later in life, decides—in a turn of barbarous brilliance—to stand the logic on its head and become a mass-violator of women thereby cunningly legitimising his own illegitimacy, the narrator was up in arms and bears quoting at some length:

But Chaka had no wife, and indeed never married. However, he chose out for himself the most beautiful of the young girls of the tribe, those that were tall and of fine, light brown colour, that had beautiful figures and a pleasing appearance, and he used to take them to those huts and call them 'his sisters', that is to say people with whom he could not unite. But it was into the huts of those same girls that he went to visit them, and despoiled the maiden-hood of those unhappy girls, and plucked the flower of their youth, so that when the time came when their bloom had passed he might hand them on to his councillors, if indeed they were still alive<sup>13</sup>.

Finally, the issue of name for the new tribe provides an equal illumination as far as Mofolo's tortured relationship with Chaka is concerned. There is indeed something to a nation's name since it symbolises status and aspirations. In this respect, Chaka also proves himself to be an early genius of national mythopoesis. His choice of name for the new nation was not only an exhortation to greatness, it was also an utopian ideal demanding permanent vigilance and ceaseless self-surpassing:

Amazulu. Because I am great, I am even as this cloud that has thundered, that is irresistible. I, too look upon the tribes and they tremble (Mofolo 1931:132).

Expectedly, the narrator is not amused. Not only was Chaka demystifying the traditional seat of terror and mystery, he was also, so to say, thumping disdainfully at the seat of the new deity:

And they all laughed again in astonishment, and we, too, must wonder at the arrogance and ambition of this kafir who could compare his greatness to that of the Gods (Mofolo 1931:125).

In the light of the foregoing, the question, then, is not whether there is a double or even multiple vision in *Chaka* but whether this ambiguity of vision and of execution is not part of its secret, its complexity and beauty. Indeed, by enticing and

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<sup>13</sup> See Mofolo (1931:40). Indeed, as in many other instances, Mofolo's historical accuracy is gravely suspect. According to Kunene (1981xvi): 'While the above (i.e the seduction and rape of Nandi) makes for an excellent plot which is full of potential dynamite, the historical Senzangakhona did not have the problem of lacking an heir, and did not engage in the actions narrated by Mofolo'. In view of such controversies about its veracity, the best approach to Mofolo's work might be to critique it on its own terms.

resisting moralist, humanist, nationalist, tribalist and racist interpretations at the same time, Mofolo's masterpiece ensures its own permanent survival as a work of art. Having evaluated and analysed Mofolo's political and ideological predilections, it is imperative to isolate some of the artistic devices which, given the hostile circumstances and the meagre resources available to the African novelist at the time, Mofolo deploys to execute his haunting parable of power and its dementia.

### Politics of Sources and Resources

As every aspiring fiction writer knows, the major battle for a novel is often won and lost in the opening pages. At the beginning of his novel *The Man Without Qualities*, Robert Musil announces 'that no serious attempt will be made to ... enter into competition with reality'<sup>14</sup>. Nothing could be more completely antithetical to the overriding concern of the author of *Chaka*. In fact Mofolo appears overanxious to deploy 'reality' to his course lest he be caught offguard. Yet when allowances have been made for individual genius, even the literary resources available to the novelist are often determined and constrained by the sociocultural dialectic of the larger society. Musil by his repudiation was in fact taking up arms against the ugly reality of his society, romantically seeking to negate what had itself become a negation. Mofolo, on the other hand, was seeking to understand the new reality of his society through an artistic dissection of its old realities. Musil, given an ancient tradition to fall back upon and the vast armada of artistic and intellectual weapons available to him, could well succeed in his uphill task. On the contrary, *Chaka* was conceived on the apparent ruins of the author's tradition, and in comparison with the learning and intellectual gifts of a Robert Musil Mofolo could well have been a hewer of wood.

Yet despite the fact that the society presents the artist with finite combinations, despite the fact that its sociocultural dialectic dictates the terms, it is precisely in the tricky negotiating with the resources made available by the society that lesser artists fumble and falter. Of the many ways in which Mofolo could begin his tale of *Chaka*, it is intriguing that he chooses the approach of the apparently neutral observer. Thus opens *Chaka*:

The country of South Africa is a large peninsula lying between two oceans, one to the east and one to the west of it. Its inhabitants belong to the many and various tribes speaking different languages, yet they all fall easily into three main divisions .... Our story is concerned with the eastern tribes, the kaffirs, and before we begin it we must describe the state of these tribes in the early days, so that the reader may be able to follow the narrative in the succeeding chapters (Mofolo 1931:1).

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<sup>14</sup> As quoted in Frank Kermode (1967:127).

By beginning with this kind of dry, academic historian detachment, Mofolo invests his story not only with an aura of objectivity and authority but the mantra of overwhelming factuality. This clinical stamp is further reinforced by the staggering mass of sociological details Mofolo places at the reader's disposal. This indeed is arguably the humble beginning of that technique of sociological familiarisation for which an Achebe would later become justly celebrated. By placing the geographical landscape, the customs and norms of the people before the reader with such impressive clarity, Mofolo secures his unspoken oath of allegiance. The stage is thus set for his manipulation.

It can be argued that it is the oral bias of conceptual means of the story that forces on Mofolo the linearity and chronological rigidity of *Chaka*; yet the minutely discriminated procedure is entirely his inspiration. Again, if it is evident that it is the oral mines that furnish Mofolo with many of the gems of psychological insights, the honing and brilliant, epigrammatic summations bear the private stamp of an often cynical, often deeply religious and often morosely sober philosophy of the human condition. The untoward nature of the events leading to the birth of Chaka and the crisis attendant upon this are all assiduously chronicled. The formative stages of a predatory psychology are delineated with a masterly flourish. Indeed, Chaka presents a gold mine for Freudian investigators. The influence of childhood on an adult's character is usually decisive, and by detailing the most terrifying aspects of the injustice meted out to Chaka, Mofolo provides him with a strong alibi against which even he (Mofolo) himself would later struggle in vain. Mofolo makes use of certain characters as strategic placements which reflect their technical functions and as psychological tropes which are reflected in their air of mystery and ambiguity. Thus to be unjustly attacked by one's siblings may be terrible enough, but to hear one's own father order the assault is an experience from which even the most fortified of psyches is unlikely to make a speedy recovery. It is precisely at this point of spiritual and moral crisis, when Chaka was at the very nadir of his fortunes, that Mofolo infiltrates Isanusi, Chaka's hatchet man and evil genius, into the canvas. The description of the infamous medicine-man reveals a classic case-history of split personality:

When sleep first left Chaka and his eyes lighted on the man he saw a mocking look on his face: his mouth was drawn in a grimace, and in the depths of his eyes he could see unbounded malice and cruelty. He seemed to see a man far more evil than any sorcerer, more cruel by far than any murderer—the very father of malice, wickedness, and treachery. Chaka's body shuddered and his eyes quivered. When he looked again he found the man's face full of compassion and very sorrowful. And when he looked into the depths of his eyes he saw there perfect kindness, a sympathetic heart,

and the surest love. The expression on his face which he had seen before had vanished entirely (Mofolo 1931:43f).

It is not only Chaka's atrocities that are attenuated by the ominous presence of this evil personage, but the atrocities of the ordinary witchdoctor in this very character who, apparently not inhuman, is nevertheless trapped by greater evil powers that be. It would thus seem that Isanusi himself is deserving of amnesty and the case for this reprieve as a result of diminished responsibility is reinforced by Mofolo's (1931:53) deliberate and ingenuous conflation of personal name and public designation:

But Isanusi is not thy name: it tells me only what thou art (diviner), but I ask thy name: It's true, but 'Isanusi' is my name, even as my acts are the acts of an Isanusi.

The paradoxical anonymity, while effacing the man, also heightens his demonic essence and reinforces his terror. But such is Mofolo's ingenuity that it is after this psychological 'rebirth' during which Isanusi lends his authority and spiritual legitimacy to *Chaka's* conclusion about the predatory nature of human society that the latter was made to encounter Dingiswayo. Dingiswayo in his exemplary humaneness, kindness, generosity of spirit, patience and gentlemanliness has to be brought in both as a temporary foil and permanent contrast to Chaka's megalomaniac destructiveness. Yet such is the grand irony, the elusive multi-dimensional nature of the novel that it precisely these virtues that would ultimately destroy Dingiswayo. But, of course, not until Chaka himself has been implicated by vicarious responsibility through the deliberate stalling and cold-bloodedness of the evil duo of Ndlebe and Malunga:

We hindered thy messengers from going and it was we who spread the report that Dingiswayo had been killed, although he was still living.... Thou must not forget that we are here because of thee. We came to win for thee the chieftaincy, and our desire is that thou mayest find it soon that we may receive our cattle, our reward, and return home. If thy messengers had gone to Zwide, perchance Dingiswayo would not have been killed, and then thou wouldst not yet have been chief (Mofolo 1931:118f).

In the cloak and dagger world of political intrigues and infighting this one elevates perfidy into a state art. Thus Dingiswayo's death is directly linked to the savage trajectory of Chaka's ascendancy. It is here that the precise nature of the duo becomes problematic. The critical orthodoxy is to regard them as inhabitants of

Chaka's own mind, as projections of his tortured personality, or as 'facets' of his evil genius<sup>15</sup>. Yet the obverse is equally plausible, and it is in fact more in tune with the overall scheme of Mofolo's designs. Indeed they serve both as symbolic totems and as fully fleshed characters at the same time. In one breath, we are tempted to see them as symbolic manifestations of the warrior and dissembler of genius that Chaka undeniably was, yet in another we are apt to remind ourselves that they are characters in their own right, not only consistently drawn but also serving as strategic links and *deus ex machina* when the narrative stumbles into a tricky patch. Thus it was the 'idiot' Ndlebe who saves Chaka when his life was in great danger in battle:

Ndlebe was blazing with anger, he was no more the idiot he had appeared before, and his body was greater: he was like a wounded lion in agony, ready to avenge the blood that it has poured out .... Ndlebe hacked at their head incessantly with his axe and where they stood crowded together (Mofolo 1931:77).

And later after the battle:

Ndlebe was lying on the ground like a tired dog that has run far: there was no trace of the daring he had shown in the battle, he seemed once more as stupid as ever (Mofolo 1931:78).

For good measure, it is this 'stupid' man that acted as Chaka's liaison and confessor in the latter's hesitant and insecure wooing of Noliwe. Yet such is the riot of possibilities engendered by this constant mixing and exchanging of attributes that the two characters resist consistent symbolic designation and encourage a dialectic reintegration at the same time. It is only in the light of this that one can view the psychic intensity and haunting premonition of Dingiswayo's instantaneous recoiling from Malunga:

.... One is an idiot without doubt, and is not fit to even carry thy blanket. The second I do not like, for his eyes are deceitful, full of guile and treachery. Take him hence, I fear him, he is indeed evil (Mofolo 1931:73).

As we have seen if Dingiswayo is wrong at all in his assessment, it is in its underestimation of Ndlebe. Yet the chief is clairvoyant enough to have perceived in Malunga a re permutation of Chaka himself: the brave warrior and no-holds-barred plotter. Indeed, Chaka himself is not unaware of the immensity of Dingiswayo's intuitive powers. As he observes to Malunga:

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<sup>15</sup> For example, see Ikonne (1976:54-65).

Dingiswayo is a prudent man, and his eyes can see what is hidden from the eyes of other men; they do not look upon the outside only, but pierce right into the heart of a man. He saw clearly that I too was prudent, and he fears that perchance I may turn his people against him and take from him the chieftainship (Mofolo 1931:93).

Mofolo's classic swims in this swirling pool of possibilities to the relentless end. When Chaka is assassinated by his siblings, his body, left in the plains, was not only untouched by wild animals but was, symbolically enough, 'green like seaweed'. It is as if while secretly wishing the turbulent sovereign away, Mofolo is suddenly confronted by the *fait accompli* of his immortality. The king is dead, long live the king! It is an ambiguous denouement perfectly commensurate with Mofolo's political contradictions. The reader who has been compelled to trudge through the rocky terrain of convolutions, tongue in cheek assertions, daring somersaults and sheer distortions of history can only take solace in the fact that in the final analysis not even a great artist is exempt from the seductive and manipulative powers of his own art. What the manipulations confirm, however, is the immensity of Mofolo's native genius, his position as the true pioneer of the African novel and his place as an exemplary South African patriot.

## **Towards the Biologics of Cultural Production**

This essay attempts to reintegrate a new paradigm of antiquarian criticism into the discipline of Cultural Production<sup>16</sup>. As we have demonstrated, antiquarian criticism, at the beginning of the century, went into voluntary liquidation as a result of its fixation on the life of the author as well as its unsystematic and dilettante nature. T.S. Eliot's celebrated assertion that the artist that creates should be separated from the man that suffers seemed to have sounded the death knell of this amateurish voyeurism. It also heralded the parameters of practical criticism as later codified by I.A. Richards, the Cambridge critic, and new criticism with their objectivising rigour and aspiration to scientific exactitude in the business of criticism. These in turn spawned several schools of criticism which are often distinguished by their technical brilliance as well as their gross political absurdities.

Yet as several commentators would later observe, the romantic anticapitalism which drove Eliot and Richards to their canonical assault on old criticism is itself ultimately complicit with the capitalist status quo (Fekete 1977). As it were, the rise of new criticism and its professionalisation could itself be linked to certain developments in the rapidly industrialising metropole: increasing

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<sup>16</sup> For an early staking of territory, see Williams (1991:5-20).

specialisation concomitant with new found prosperity. As the industries boomed and huge cities grew on their wings, there was a dramatic expansion of educational facilities and further liberalisation of culture. There was an explosion of literary talent which in turn demanded a new type of intellectual critic with specialised or directing knowledge for its nourishment and nurturing. To the degree that practical criticism was the brainchild of an outstanding intellectual trained in psychology and aesthetics, it is an amusing misnomer.

The suppression of the life of the author in the work of art led to some interesting developments. The individualism of the author was gradually replaced by the individualism of the critic. Life itself was drained out of the work of art and in the more extreme mutations of the new type of criticism an aimless technical virtuosity or formalist chicanery became the order of the day. The critic became a poet *manque* or a novelist minus opportunity and talent. In the critic's struggle with the work of art - or probably with the artist—it was inevitable that a serious attempt would be made on the life of the author. Hence the purported death of the author. Between 1929 when Richards published his groundbreaking work and the phenomenon of structuralism and poststructuralism, the author has suffered irreversible damage, and criticism itself had been overtaken by what Jameson (1972:209) has described as 'an unhappy consciousness at the stylistic level'.

There were developments in the larger society which facilitated the rise of this depersonalisation of literature. The crisis of capitalist relations of production and distribution, the two global wars and their horrific butchery, the rise of Soviet communism and the attempt to create a 'new' man and by extension a new type of art and artist in a procrustean milieu, the brief ascendancy of fascism and its ethnocidal malice hauntingly foreshadowed in the work of Franz Kafka, and the eventual commodification of art within the logic of cultural capital<sup>17</sup>. All these have led to new relations of cultural production. With the globalisation of capital and the empiricist fetishization of 'readings' within the totality of cultural production, the author has lost much of his 'authority'. The advent of a coterie of professional 'readers' often based in the hallowed sanctuaries of learning has led to an anarchic individualism in which the act of reading is elevated over and above the act of writing itself. This relativist rot, or 'my reading is better than yours triumphalism', with its fragmented and fragmenting insights obscures the fundamentals of literary production and is in paradoxical complicity with the ravages of globalisation.

Thus the phenomenon of globalisation which is the unstructured response of late capitalism to its crisis has in fact led to a further erosion of the status of the author. With its 'borderless' world, its forcible occupation of pre-capitalist and non-capitalist space, its abolition of the old subject-object dialectic, its relentless

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<sup>17</sup> The classic theorisation of this phenomenon remains Jameson (1984:53-92).

homogenisation of old class distinctions, globalisation has turned the author into a perishable commodity. So it is then that the doctrine of postcolonialism which began as a stout recuperation of the Gramscian notion of the subaltern has ended 'hybridising'—and in effect denying—the very notion of race, class, nation and origin<sup>18</sup>. In effect, the author has become 'globalised', robbed of his distinct identity and like unfortunate humanity itself in the hands of postcolonial doctrine, has ceased to be 'a fixed, phenomenological entity' (Bhabha 1991:x). The 'death' of the author has become synonymous with the death of a differentiated world in the epoch of 'the end of history'<sup>19</sup>. It is the contention of this essay that it is impossible to grasp the totality or the underlying dynamics of this phenomenon without an interrogation of its subtext, its artefacts, its personalities and its ideological producers. In the light of the foregoing, it is imperative for Cultural Production to bend the epistemological stick in the other direction by reinserting the author—and humanity—into the centrepiece of its theoretical labours.

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<sup>18</sup> For a recent influential critique of the categories of postcolonial theory, see Dirlik (1994).

<sup>19</sup> For a recent critical discourse on the 'end of history' intellectual industry, see Derrida (1994). For a critical endorsement of this, see Ahmad (1994).

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# **Desperation and Anger: The Effect of Environment in Black South African and African-American Literature<sup>1</sup>**

**Emeka Nwabueze**

An interesting relationship exists between the South African literature and its African-American counterpart. The preposterous nature of the societies, the illogicality of their moral imperatives and the consequences of these for fictional depiction are major issue in both South African and African American literature. The fictional form in the two societies is both thematically and stylistically interfered with and in deed circumscribed by the dictates of the sociopolitical environment. The blacks in South Africa suffer in the hands of a white minority, the blacks in America suffer in the hands of a white majority. In South Africa, segregation assumes a human face and appears as a legitimate weapon of oppression in the name of 'apartheid', in America, segregation started with slavery and when slavery was abolished, the relationship between the two races had the image of a partnership between a horse and its rider. In South Africa, the apartheid regime introduced the Bantu Education Act in order to stamp apartheid on the education of the blacks, in America a law enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives sitting in the General Assembly tried to stifle the intellectual capacity of the blacks. In both societies, the black was considered three-fifths of a man, and sometimes treated less than that. To kill him was not considered murder, to rape his wife or daughter was not seen as a crime, and to confiscate his property was no robbery. It is, therefore, not surprising that the black writers in South Africa and America were forced by the demands of the environment to surrender to the social and political situations in their countries and see these situations represented in works of art. Literature from these societies cannot

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was presented at the National conference of the National Association of African-American Studies held at Adam's Mark Hotel, Houston, Texas, U.S.A. on February 9-14 1999.

be viewed in isolation of the heterodox sociopolitical matrix, since literature is recognised universally as a social phenomenon. The implication of this is that in the two societies, History, Politics, Philosophy, Ideology, Reportage, Reminiscence, and Biography (and autobiography) commingle in one manner or another to form the woof of literature.

This paper will attempt to examine some of the peculiarities inherent in African American and black South African literature. These two areas have produced a great deal of literature, and there is no pretence that the paper will attempt to cover them. What it sets out to do, therefore, is to posit valid general relationships between the literatures, without assuming the existence of uniformity over the entire area of discussion. Rather, pertinent references will be made to particular texts either to exemplify a point, or to place it in comparison with other artistic works under discussion.

The two words that keep both the African-American apart from their white counterparts are *segregation* and *apartheid*. They may seem different words but they mean the same thing and attempted to achieve the same purpose. They both maintain that keeping races apart would assure the purity of races. But ironically the proponents of both traced their authority from the Holy Writ. In South Africa, apartheid was supported by the Dutch Reformed Church which preached that staying apart was an act of God, that Afrikaners were the chosen people of God, while the Blacks were merely a subservient species. In 1950, two acts were passed—The Population Registration Act, and The Group Act—and both were designed to give impetus to this obnoxious racial classification.

In the United States where segregation was practised, some of the proponents of this act maintain that racial segregation is an act of God which was bound to ensure purity of the races. Even when the fight was directed against desegregation of public schools and other public facilities in the American South, segregation was given impetus by the assertion that purity of races would be destroyed by racial integration. Hence when the U.S. Supreme Court announced its decision in the case of *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, Representative John Bell Williams referred to the day as Black Monday. And Thomas Brady proceeded to write a book by that title. As F. James Davis (1991:17) states in his monumental work, *Who is Black?*:

He [Brady] wrote fiercely that he and the South would fight and die for the principles of racial purity and white womanhood rather than follow the Supreme Court's decision. He maintained that God opposes racial mixing and that Southern whites had a God-given right to keep their 'blood' white and pure.

It is, therefore, not surprising that the literature that eventually emerged from the two communities wore the garb of commitment. The emergent artist did not see literary writing merely as a means of entertainment, or a system of communicating personal feelings to the reader. He did not believe in arts for arts sake. He saw writing as a compulsion, as a means of advancing certain ideas for the liberation of society, or the de-colonisation of the Black mind. He saw literary writing as an art that informs, recreates, educates and affirms. To him literature should be judged on its relevance, on its humanistic orientation, on its service to the people, on its commitment to social change. George Thomson (1946:65) emphasises this idea of commitment in his book, *Marxism and Poetry*:

The poet speaks not for himself only but for his fellowmen. His cry is their cry, which only he can utter. That is what gives it its depth. But if he is to speak for them, he must suffer with them, rejoice with them, work with them, fight with them.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1982:iv) further stresses the importance of commitment and its meaning to the African writer:

Literature cannot escape from the class power structures that shape our everyday life. Here a writer has no choice. Whether or not he is aware of it, his works reflect one or more aspects of the intense economic, political, cultural and ideological struggles in a society. What he can choose is one or the other side in the battlefield: the side of the people, or the side of those social forces and classes that try to keep the people down. What he or she cannot do is to remain neutral.

Though some critics erroneously describe the literature that emerged as propaganda literature, this is tantamount to the confusion of propaganda with the concept of commitment. Propaganda involves the spreading of information, even rumours, in support of an idea or a cause. Veracity is not necessarily pertinent to the task of the propagandist. To these writers, the reality of survival and existence, and the determination to survive in a society fraught with inhumanity and devoid of freedom of expression creates a compulsion to commitment. Like Femi Ojo-Ade (1996:121) has pointed out,

Commitment emanates from a positive but pained state of mind—suffering, sacrifice, selflessness, determination to defy misery and triumph over travails—given life through action. The Self coalesces with the Other into a macrocosmic Self that is society.

In a society where repression, oppression, racism and victimisation are legal tools with which to destroy and incapacitate the innocent victim, commitment arises from the decision of the oppressed to raise dust against the oppressor through the medium of art. Literature, to the committed artist, becomes a tool for the expression of total reality, a valid means of expressing the voice of the oppressed majority. They provide information that serve as a mirror through which the ugliness of the society can be seen. Commitment to the problems of the environment does not mean sacrificing manner for matter or emphasising fact at the expense of craft.

In order to harness the social problems in their environments and comment on them both African-American and black South African writer started with autobiographical writings. It is necessary to point out, at this juncture, that this epithet will be used in its denotative sense in this study to refer to writing having the characteristics of autobiography conceptually, formally, and stylistically. As Kole Omotoso (1970:5) has pointed out, autobiographical writing occurs when,

the story and the story teller merge so well that we get first person narratives where the story and the teller are directly involved.

To the African-American writer, the road to creativity was not a rosy one. The writers lacked both freedom of movement and freedom of voice. To them freedom of voice was more fundamental. They had to contend with a law that does not only prohibit them from beaming, but a law that equally indicts anyone who attempts to give them a voice. As Michael G. Cooke (1984:82) has rightly pointed out,

Either directly or in projection through a central character, black writer after black writer, generation upon generation, from Frederick Douglas to Alice Walker, evinces the problem of voice. And it is appropriate to regard the most outspoken black writers of the protest movement as bearers of the burden in another guise. Theirs is not so much a free voice as the forced voice of reaction and resentment.

In America, the writers had to educate themselves under very strenuous circumstances. George Moses Horton (1779-1884) is a typical example. He was 'rented' out by his master to serve the Principal of Chapel Hill University in North Carolina for fifty cents per day. He used this opportunity to learn how to read and write, later becoming a notable poet. It should be remembered that there was a law enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives, sitting in the General Assembly which prohibited teaching slaves to read or write. The penalty was a fine not exceeding one hundred dollars and imprisonment not exceeding six months for a free white person. The same law prescribed additional fifty lashes of the cane if the

person is a 'free person of color'. Despite all these restraints, Horton educated himself in the arts and was so proficient in this genre that the undergraduates of the University paid him twenty-five cents per poem to compose love verses for them. Hence, some of his poems that survive are fraught with a plethora of witty expressions and sentimental images, as exemplified in the following stanza from a poem, 'Eliza', which celebrates a lost love:

Eliza, still thou art my song,  
Although by ... I may forsake thee;  
Fare thee well, for I was wrong  
To woo thee while another take thee ....

Though probably meant for a love gone sour, there is a strong note of nostalgia in the poem, giving impetus to the fact that the poet has latently recreated his position in the piece. The voice of lamentation is clear. So also are the images of heartlessness and a note of resignation to fate. In another guise, the poem may be an inverted lamentation of a slave master who has lost his slave through emancipation, and his sudden realisation of his guilt.

Expression of their voices through autobiographical writing gave the writers the opportunity of recollecting past events to feed the armpit of the present. Even when the novels are not pure autobiography in the right sense of the word, the authors clearly portrayed themselves in the narrative. A few examples will suffice. When William Brown's *Clotel* was published in 1853, the author clearly projects himself into the protagonist. This bond between the writer and the protagonist is manifested in the depiction of characters. In his prophetic novel that foreshadows some of the issues that later sprang up in the American society, Sutton E. Grigg's *Imperium in Imperio* (1899) also chronicles the degradation blacks in the American society. But significantly, his novel differs from *Clotel* in the sense that it attacks the society from a political vantage point.

Autobiography, therefore, is a representation of life that is formally fluid and committed strictly to no definite form. Structurally, there are certain themes that recur in African American and black South African literature. They are crime and punishment, violence and racial-love tragedies, poverty and squalor, police brutality, and the social effects of segregation. Many of the novels, because they are constructed out of the same autobiographical impulses, follow similar structural patterns of childhood reminiscences, adulthood alienation leading to desperation, anger and self-exile as the climactic point in the narrative. Evidently, the autobiographical literature is the work of the imagination, but it is closely rooted in the author's personal experiences, which are made to acquire universality due to collective ethos.

Autobiographical writing is more prominent in South Africa than in other areas of the continent. From Ezekiel Mphahlele through Peter Abrahams to Albert Luthuli, the archetypal pattern created in Black South African autobiographical writing is to describe the problems of the blacks, but from a personal vantage point. What is being described is the same, the characters and incidents described are seemingly different but fundamentally and thematically similar. Because the laws of exclusion are directed at color not personality, the authors try to show that the author may be different, but the situations being described are familiar. Albert Luthuli, in his book, *Let My People Go*, recaptures the main reason for this archetypal characterisation:

A non-committed African is the same black as a committed Native .... There was no choice, during riots the police shot their rifles and sten guns at anything which was black (140).

Hence, the life of a black man in South Africa is that of desperation that leads to anger. When he is forced to submit to the authorities, he does so with desperation and anger. He does so only to escape the frustration of the moment. As Peter Abrahams states in *Tell Freedom*,

A man can submit today in order to resist tomorrow. My submission had been such. And because I had not been free to show my real feeling, to voice my true thoughts, my submission had bred bitterness and anger. And there were nearly ten million others who had submitted with equal anger and bitterness (369f).

This desperation and anger leads the African-American into what W.E.B. Du Bois (1989:204) describes as double consciousness which, he maintains, operates at two levels:

At one level, there is the double-consciousness that comes from the difficulty of being both a Negro and an American, of having two identities forced on oneself by virtue of one's exclusion from the mainstream of American society. One is expected to conform to American values but is prevented from enjoying the fruits of doing so. At the other level is the double-consciousness that comes from the lack of communication between white and black Americans, leading to two separate spheres of existence for black people ....

The oppression, harassment and their concomitant alienating effects are bound to af-

fect both the writer and his character and create in him a sense of solitude and desperation to be a part of the environment. And it is necessary to define, at this juncture, what constitutes environment. Environment does not simply mean the geographical habitat of a person, or the physical setting of his creative work. It includes the social, political, and economic conditions as well as the mental conditions of the inhabitants. All the external factors that condition man in his society constitute his environment. To the African American and black South African writer, the environment excludes the individual from formal participation in the affairs of the community. He feels a sense of alienation and expresses a desire to tear himself from the clutches of oppression and segregation and live the life of a normal human being. Richard Wright (1966:226) recaptures this frustration and anger in *Native Son* through the voice of Bigger Thomas who serves as historical witness:

It was when he read the newspapers or magazines, or went to the movies, or walked along the streets with crowds, that he felt what he wanted: to merge himself with others and be a part of this world, to lose himself in it so he could find himself, to be allowed a chance to live like others, even though he was black.

This feeling of solitude is also apparent in Alex La Guma's *A Walk in the Night*, a story that recreates the misery of *black* and *coloured* South Africans who are unable to participate in governmental affairs. La Guma's Willie Boy, resembles Wright's Bigger Thomas, especially in his feeling of desperation and anger with the environment. He represents the oppressed black South Africans who are constantly harassed by the Police and forced, sometimes, to admit to crimes they did not commit. When he is arrested by the apartheid police, Raalt, Willie Boy retorts: 'What did I do? I never did nothing' (La Guma 1967:79). Actually, Willie Boy knows that he had not committed any offence, except that he born coloured and must be used and abused at will by the oppressive system.

It is necessary to point out one major difference in the segregation practised in the two environments. In the American environment the main distinctions are white and black. There was no need of engaging in unnecessary distinctions regarding the extent of blackness, or other trivial manifestations. In the South African environment, fine distinctions were considered a part of the system, and the extent of one's persecution depends on one's classification. As Nelson Mandela (1995:140) points out:

The arbitrary and meaningless tests to decide black from Colored or Colored from white often resulted in tragic cases where members of the same family were classified differently, all depending on whether one child

had a lighter or darker complexion. Where one was allowed to live and work could rest on such absurd distinctions as the curl of one's hair or the size of one's lips.

Because he is coloured, Willie Boy and other helpless characters in the novel are persecuted, blamed, abused and disregarded by foreigners who have taken over their society. He is rendered powerless by the system and pursued by the law. He regards the law, represented by the oppressive Boer police, as a fearsome monster, and spends all his time avoiding it, to no avail. He masks his alienation in drink so much that he has little time left to reflect fruitfully upon reasonable issues of life.

The same image of powerlessness and alienation is apparent in Mari Evans's poem, 'Vive Noir!' (1968). Like La Guma's Willie Boy, the persona in Evans's poem longs for that period when there will be inversion of roles in the environment, when the black will not only overcome his persecution and oppression but posses the power to make rules:

I'm  
Gonna wear the robes and  
Sit on the benches  
Make the rules and make  
The arrests say  
Who can and who  
Can't ...

Gonna make it a  
Crime  
To be anything BUT black (Cook & Henderson 1984:123).

There is a note of desperation and anger in these lines. Apart from giving us glimpses into what constitutes the major problem for black people in the poet's environment, there is a wish of a shift from the forte of power, a wish that is more of a fantasy than reality, but which shows the feelings of the oppressed people in their efforts to extract, not merely vengeance, but an inversion of roles. The poem also shows a demythification of the concept of crime. The poet merely says that the meaning of crime has been significantly reduced by the oppressor for his own benefits.

This wish of inversion of roles is seen in La Guma's characters—Michael Adonis and Willie Boy. They are coloured men, trying to live a successful life in a hostile environment without resorting to crime. But the force of the environment weighs heavily on them. Michael loses his job for merely going to the bathroom, and Willie Boy fails to get a job despite his efforts. They have no other alternative than to

succumb to the force of the environment.

La Guma creates characters that come down to us as human beings, as can be discerned from the situation in which he places them. These characters have human hearts, feelings of love and compassion and, sometimes, fantastic dreams of a rosy future, but they are compelled to live their lives in desperation, bitterness, anger, and random acts of crime. Hence, his characters cannot be seen merely as criminals and lawbreakers, but a collective representation of the victims of the environment. They may be forced to commit crimes but his condition is deemed blameable for the crime so committed. In desperation and anger, he drowns himself in drinks, drugs, women, and anything that is capable of quelling the pain of an unhopeful, unchangeable existence.

The same note of desperation and stifled hope is apparent in Don Lee's (1968) poem, 'In the Interest of Black Salvation'.

When I was 17  
I didn't have time to dream  
Dreams didn't exist-  
Prayers did, as dreams  
I am now 17 and 8  
I still don't dream  
Father forgive us for we know what we do.

The persona, like Michael Adonis and Willie Boy, is devoid of dreams because, like he says, dreams did not exist either in the past or in the present. Even prayer has eluded the persona and he/she now performs acts which he knows are wrong, but which he does because he has no alternative.

Furthermore, the concept of dream is a prominent feature in African American literary writing. It is a note of procrastination and hope in the midst of desperation and anger. It is a personification of the future, if not for the protagonist but for posterity. Langston Hughes recaptures this image of 'Dream deferred' in his immortal poem, where he philosophically reasons that a deferred dream moves from desperation and anger to eventual explosion. It is this concept of dream that forms the subject of Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*. Furthermore, this concept of dream is the meeting point of Richard Wright's *Native Son* and Lorraine Hansberry's play. Both plays are set in the same black neighbourhood, populated with people desperate for the realisation of their dreams, angry that the environment seems to make their hope of realisation impossible. In the final analysis, the dream deferred leads to eventual and expected explosion. Though the explosion of Bigger Thomas is more fatal than that of Walter Younger, they both depict the desperation, anger and frustration of the black man in a hostile and oppressive environment.

As the face of society changes, so changes the face of literature too. Literature is an aspect of society and reflects the characteristics of the age when it was written. As Malcolm Bradbury (1971:xiii) has rightly pointed out, literature,

is an institution of society, an inheritance of artistic practices and values, a point of formal interaction where writers and audiences meet, a means of social communication and involvement.

Consequently, while South Africa is yet to produce literature celebrating the conquest of apartheid and the establishment of a new order, African American literature has, for long, wallowed in this celebration. In her book, *Black Women Writers at Work*, Claudia Tate (1985:xxiv) makes the following observation:

While many black writers, male and female, fit into the general tradition in Afro-American literature of celebrating black survival by overcoming racial obstacles, other writers give their attention to those who fall in battle, insisting that their fight, though unsuccessful, is valiant and therefore merits artistic attention.

Examples of characters that exemplify the image of fallen heroes abound in contemporary African-American literature and are too innumerable to recount. Such characters are Pecola in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*; De Witt Williams in Gwendolyn Brooks's *A Street in Bronzeville*, Beau Willie in Ntozake Shange's *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/ When the Rainbow is Enuf*, and a host of others.

In conclusion, we have established that any artistic realisation is the coming together of the power of man and the power of the environment. Though art has the capacity to transcend the environment it inhabits, it can never be independent of it. But one question that needs to be addressed is the effect of literature on the environment that created it. Has literature contributed, in any way, to social change in South African and African American environments? Maya Angelou (1985:4), in her conversation with Claudia Tate, tends to suggest an answer to this question, when she comments on the role of literature in shaping human thought and action:

Learning the craft, understanding what language can do, gaining control of the language, enables one to make people weep, make them laugh, even make them go to war.

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# **Biblical Mythologies: Apartheid and Anti-Apartheid Readings**

**Isidore Diala**

Abdul R. JanMohamed has argued that the transformation of racial difference into moral and even metaphysical difference is at the heart of the economy of the central trope of imperialist practice, the manichean allegory. He traces the phenomenological origins of this metonymic transformation ultimately to the 'neutral' perception of physical difference and amply demonstrates the insidious domination of every facet of imperialist mentality of the allegorical extensions of this transformation (JanMohamed 1985:61). With reference to South Africa, Gallagher (1991) has methodically indicated how the writing of Ralph Standish (1612) which represents the Black as a subhuman and mythical Other, is representative of a long tradition of colonial writing spanning the work of John Jordain (1608), Hondious (1652), Kolb (1719), Mentzel (1785), Barrow (1801) and Philip (1828), all aimed at the justification of European colonisation.

In a recent enquiry into the White perceptual system focused mainly on the White's reflexive perception of the black migrant worker, Michael Wade (1993:21) reveals its culmination in a 'distressing arrest in the development of White perception' and explains this as the result of the impossibility of the White South African to see the Black as an autonomous Other. Wade's historical provenance is mainly the years spanning the industrialisation of South Africa, after the discovery of diamonds in the north-western Cape in 1860. But his findings are typical: the roots of the Whites' self-perception of the Black are fully in economics. In the documents of the white imagination, the novel, poetry, drama, the newspaper, and other forms in which Whites engage themselves effectively in a dialogue (speaking only less effectively to Others),

the giant image of the migrant worker looms inscrutable, impenetrable; shafts of perception, energised by the urgency of the Whites' deepest insecurities and fears, bounce off the matt black of his skin. Little can be learned about the migrant worker himself from these accounts; but much may be garnered towards an understanding of the group that has dominated

the private sector of the South African economy since the discovery of diamonds more than a century and a quarter ago (Wade 1993:1).

This essay proposes to consider André Brink's frequent depiction of characteristic Afrikaner reduction of the Bible to a white mythology that complements the materiality of apartheid. Read in the self-regarding gaze of Afrikaner consciousness severely hampered and narrowed by its morbid obsession with its tribulations and even threats of extinction in a heathen land, the Bible is distorted to a justification of a racist ideology. Like historiography and cartography, theology too becomes a specie of myth-making, annexed into the formidable machinery specifically created to empower the Afrikaner Establishment by the presentation of an authorised version of reality.

Brink (1983:18f) has noted that in its anxiety and desperation to create for itself a self-validating image, apartheid had to annex realms of human value other than the overtly political:

For apartheid to be sanctioned as the definitive characteristic of the Afrikaner Establishment, it had to reach far beyond the domain of politics: It was not simply a political policy 'adopted' as a response to the racial situation in the country but had to be accepted as an extension of an entire value system, embracing all the territories of social experience, economics, philosophy, morality and above all religion. The Church itself had to provide the ultimate justification for the ideology (Brink 1983:18f).

If the 'Christianisation' of apartheid and the appropriation of religion was to the Afrikaner Establishment the ultimate temptation, the reason is quite obvious: the projection of Afrikaner imperialism onto the revealed Word of God as divine ordinance, in Afrikaner consciousness, gave apartheid the final legitimacy.

In *Looking on Darkness* Brink's Coloured actor protagonist, Joseph Malan, recalls Hermian, the White master's young daughter, reading

with great conviction, the story of Noah and his son 'and cursed be Canaan a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren'. Then she shut the Bible .... She said: 'You see, that's where it comes from. We Whites are the children of Shem and Japheth and you are the children of Ham and his son Canaan. That's why it is like that' (Brink 1984c:77).

In the White girl's oracular citation of the Bible to account for a social fact are concealed the facts of the possibilities of interpretation and their political motivations; the privileging as canonical the version of reality authorised by the

dominant group; and even the invocation of signs as revealed wonders. Brink's insight in fact is the hardening of colonial myths into metaphysical facts and the imperceptible obliteration of the origins of colonial myths even in the coloniser's consciousness. If imperialism is usually associated with inhuman violence and appropriation, a basic reason is that the coloniser soon forgets that myths of the Other's sub-humanity are his own creations taken as truths.

In *Rumours of Rain*, Aunt Lenrie's statement, 'God brought us to a hard land where we must labour in the sweat of our brow. And then he gave us kaffirs to help us with our work' (Brink 1984d:89) draws, of course, on the same 'Biblical myth' of apartheid. It is however, in *A Chain of Voices* that Brink explores fully the coloniser's horrified response at the prospect of the revelation of the falsity of this myth. The novel dwells on the inevitable impoverishment and erosion of the humanity of both master and slave, making the master inhuman in turning his full gaze to the ultimate temptation of power: the lure of the grandeur of the godhead, and dehumanising the slave to the level of a beast and wretched suppliant. Piet's Kurtz-like contemplation of all the earth as his possession is both symptomatic and illustrative of the former process: 'In those days whatever, I saw was mine. Farm, grazing lands, mountain, hunting fields. We were masters here, my sons and I' (Brink 1984a:33). The news of slave revolts in Koeberg and Swartland strikes him as the violation of a fundamental divine injunction 'for it was an awful thing that had happened, a blasphemy against God himself who had decreed that the sons of Canaan should forever be the servants of Shem and Japheth' (Brink 1984a:34). His response to his own slaves is predictably terror. In the recollection of torture and in the weals and scars of the master's sjambok, Piet seeks the bars that will hold his slaves forever in the prison of servitude.

It is in the character of Barend, Piet's elder son, however, that Brink gathers up his insight that the firm belief in the divine sanction of apartheid or slavery and of the inequality of men imperceptibly merges with the dream of God. His will to power expressed in his unrestrained aspiration to 'Baaship' is analogous to the will to God. Although Barend survives the Slave rebellion, he is defeated in his deepest aspiration. That slaves dared attempt a rebellion at all is a metamorphosis that completely transforms the earth and fundamentally alters human consciousness, and his metaphors for comprehending the experience therefore appropriately evoke cataclysms. He feels the ruins of an entire life crumbling around him and likens the experience to madness and death:

[I]t was indeed a form of madness; and a form of death. The death of everything I'd always taken for granted; everything that had made me what I was; everything that had kept me alive and secure (Brink 1984a:462).

Woven into the fabric of the white man's myth is the eternity of the black man's servitude, since it is of God. The Black's allegedly divinely ordained sub-humanity and the White's divine majesty are a fate which condemns the former's anger to more passivity, thus excluding even the possibility of rebellion. In the white man's myth, slavery is an unalterable destiny. Brink's anti-apartheid myth of a common humanity, however, finds validity and anchorage in his systematic refutation of the basic claims of apartheid. In reality, slavery, like apartheid, is a mutable evil human institution. But when we forget the origins of our myths, and forget even that they are our own creations, they harden into prison walls and take us in. The traumatic rebirth of consciousness that follows the revelation of the falsity of such a myth understandably evokes apocalyptic transformations:

... the fact of their shooting: a slave firing at his master. That frontier crossed, there was no end to what might yet lie ahead.

This was what I'd feared. Not just that they might kill me or massacre my family: but that a single shot would shatter an entire way of life, a whole world. God's own established order, God Himself, was now threatened. Everything was at stake; everything could be destroyed: nothing was inviolate to their flames. And it was in the nature of fire not only to burn but to change utterly in the process: wood into ashes (Brink 1984a:462).

Writing on the Afrikaners' appropriation of Biblical myths to create a doctrinal nationalistic mythology of Afrikanerdom as the second Israel, Gallagher (1991:30) has noted:

Taking the traditional Christian idea of history as a progression of events controlled and directed by God to establish his eternal kingdom, Afrikaners, in a distorted development of the calvinistic notion of election, have come to believe that they are a chosen people, specially selected by God to establish his kingdom in the modern world.

For the Afrikaner then, South Africa was a savage Canaan in the Dark continent given to him by God's ordinance to domesticate and possess; and its indigenous peoples were of course the new hostile and heathen tribes of Canaan, and their resistances the Devil's doomed efforts to frustrate the divine purpose. His tribulations further exacerbated by the humiliations and persecutions experienced at the hands of imperial Britain, the Afrikaner gazed ever inward in the laager in expectation of the messiah. The triumph of Afrikaner nationalism in 1948 in Dr. D.F. Malan's National Party's election victory was certainly perceived as God's compassion on his beleaguered people. Apartheid, aimed at the distillation of racial exclusiveness, self-

preservation, racial egocentrism, was presumably the dream Christian ideology to preserve the divine boon.

For Brink, however, the Afrikaner legend of a messiah did not come to a triumphant fulfilment in either Malan's election victory and his advocacy of exclusive legitimacy for Afrikaners, or in Dr Verwoerd's Transkei Constitution Act aimed at the perfection of apartheid's basic idea of the complete separation of the races by the creation of 'independent' 'black areas', 'white areas', 'coloured areas' etc. In the institutionalisation of apartheid, in fact, the Afrikaner's self-absorption and self-pity in the contemplation of his tribulations and his morbid dread of the Other seem to have set him almost irrevocably on the path to self-extinction. Aimed at the flagrant disregard for the liberties of the Other and his dehumanisation, apartheid, like Nazism, could only lead to a holocaust. Brink interprets the 1976 Soweto riots as a mere foreshadowing of this, and in *Rumours of Rain* and *A Dry White Season* both of which have the riots as the backdrop, he weaves an alternative legend. of the Afrikaner messiah, in which the saviour far from being an ideologue or agent of apartheid is instead an adversary of that ideology.

Brink's interest in the redemptive vocation was manifest as early as 1974 in *Looking on Darkness*. His conception of the persecutions of Joseph's family over two centuries reverberates with constant allusions to the fate of Christian martyrs. Prompted by an awareness of these correspondences, Joseph talks of:

my own gradual reconstruction of our story, so that, by now, every episode in it seems to have become a station on an endless *via dolorosa*—as if it had been destined that in each new generation all the sin and suffering of an entire society should find its sacrificial victim in our tribe. It is certainly no reason for pride! In fact, it is in the very ordinariness and unexceptionalness of our chronicle that I find the agony which propagates itself from century to century, assuming new avatars according to the demands of each new age (Brink 1984c:355).

Joseph's own persecution and eventual execution are imagined as a pattern in the fulfilment of that destiny, and the entire novel indicates Brink's sustained attempt at the appropriation of the virtues of the ascetic tradition to the political theme. Where St. John of the Cross is often cited to illuminate Joseph's experience, both he and St. Simon Stylites are often summoned as models in Joseph Malan's experience of self-mortification as a gesture towards the attainment of God. Christ himself is in fact often the model in terms of which Brink imagines Joseph's experiences. The stages of Joseph's tribulations are likened to the stations of the Cross; his ordeal is a cup that must be drunk to the last drop; at Joseph's trial, the white audience repeatedly screams: 'Hang him'; and Joseph thinks of the hostile crowd, 'take me, tear me to

pieces, eat my body, drink my blood' (Brink 1984c:14). He moreover says nothing in self-defence at his trial. When scourged by the Security Police, Joseph thinks of his plight: 'I hang crucified in their arms' (Brink 1984c:270).

In steadfastly imagining and, presenting in terms of Christian ideals of martyrdom Joseph who is detained, tried and condemned on a murder charge, Brink interrogates both Afrikaner moral values and system of justice. But Brink too had been exploring the applicability of asceticism to his political theme. The purification of the soul through privation and suffering is not a likely slogan for an activist fighting against apartheid. He therefore first awakens Joseph from self indulgence, inaction and withdrawal, leads him to cultural activism, and attempts fully only in detention to work out salvation in Christian ascetic terms for his atheist protagonist. Yet, in transforming torturers into purgatorial fire, Brink dehistoricises and desocialises the experience, projecting it instead on a metaphysical level. The irony is that his appeal against the banning of *Kennis van die Aand* (later translated as *Looking on Darkness*) would suggest that the specific South African situation determined essentially his mode of the exploration of the experiences of his protagonist. Brink draws attention to the indeterminacy that characterises the episode that apparently depicts the South African police as torturers:

The entire chapter is narrated as a sort of lyrical present, not as a chronicle of what happened, with a narration of atrocities in a manner which is linked to the mystical writings of St. John and others: was he (Joseph) tortured, or is he busy, as usual in his life, 'playacting', 'creating theatre' for himself like Richard II in his cell? The ambiguity of the narration, the fact that no one—particularly Joseph—can say 'for sure' whether he is telling the truth or lying constitutes the essence of this chapter (Brink 1985:94).

Brink's attempt at the deception of the censor apart, his consolation of the tortured by the evocation of a beatific vision which one attains through mortification can be of any relevance to the freedom fighter only when appreciated as an allegory.

The 1976 Soweto riots led Brink to a clearer discovery of his mission as an artist—a preoccupation with the possibility of the Afrikaner's redemption. With this too, he found clearer applicability of the virtues of asceticism in the realm of politics. Brink's more mature view of apartheid is that the oppressor not the oppressed was in greater need of spiritual purgation, of the cleansing of guilt consciousness, and of even liberation and redemption. Aware that the greater sacrifices demanded of Blacks and Coloureds enriched their humanity, Brink condemned apartheid basically because he was convinced that it impoverished the humanity of the Afrikaner and moreover was an illogical culmination of centuries of Afrikaner history, characterised by rebellion against tyranny, and affirmation of human dignity and freedom.

In *Mapmakers* Brink (1983:19) considers apartheid a denial of what is best in the Afrikaner himself and a revelation only of

that side of him which is characterised by fear, by suspicion, by uncertainty, hence by arrogance, meanness, narrow-mindedness, pigheadedness. What it denies is the Afrikaner's reverence for life, his romanticism, his sense of the mystical, his deep attachment to the earth, his generosity, his compassion.

The redemption of the Afrikaner is for Brink (1983:20) therefore an integral aspect of the dissident writer's mission:

his struggle is not just against what is evil in the Afrikaner, but for what he perceives to be his potential for good. In other words, it is not just a struggle for the liberation of the Afrikaner from the ideology in which he has come to negate his better self. The dissident struggles in the name of what the Afrikaner could and should have become in the light of his own history, had he not allowed adversity (both real and imaginary) to narrow down his horizon to the small hard facts of mere physical survival.

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Brink's new insight was that Afrikaners had to abandon the Old Testament idea of themselves as God's chosen people and embrace the New Testament ideal of a suffering Christ, renouncing and emptying his God-head, choosing mortality and modesty, and electing in absolute freedom and love for crucifixion to offer mankind salvation. His messianic legend henceforth will tell stories of Afrikaner martyrs and paschal lambs: Bernard Franken (*Rumours of Rain*), Ben du Toit (*A Dry White Season*), Thomas Landman and Nina Jordeags (*An Act of Terror*). Renouncing kindred, political rights, and taking upon themselves the grim burden of testifying to Afrikaner high-mindedness and nobility in defiance of persecution and even death, they re-enact in Brink's fiction the role played in the struggle of South African liberation by prominent Afrikaners like Jan Hendrick Hofmeyr, Beyers Naude, Bram Fischer, and Others.

Brian Macaskill (1990:175) has drawn attention to the potential of textual interruption as an opposition to dominant oppressive hegemony, accounting for its internal operation in terms of its insertion of an oppositional wedge into the dominant discourse of the text, and its external operation by its intervention against the political hegemony with which the text engages. In *Rumours of Rain*, as Macaskill (1990:171) argues, the interruptive figures of Bernard Franken and Louis function structurally to intervene against Mynhardt, the odious exemplar of the hegemonic:

Franken's testimony from the dock and Louis's ideological rites of passage,

italicised in crucial positions throughout the text, provide an alternative to Mynhardt's conservative rationalisations.

And to give his interruptive 'true' vision of Afrikanerdom validity, Brink appeals to the authority of history: an almost journalistic account of the Angolan encounter, and especially the modelling of Bernard Franken on the historical Abram Fischer, an Afrikaner advocate and central figure in the South African Communist Party, twice serving as defence counsel for Nelson Mandela, and himself sentenced to life imprisonment in 1966 under the Suppression of Communism Act (Macaskill 1990:171f).

Macaskill, however, discerns serious ideological implications in Brink's mode of the transformation of Fischer into a mythic figure. Brink, he argues, codifies Bram Fischer as a Christ figure, locates him within an 'essentially human, metaphysical revolt', and aligns this Afrikaans dissident with the 'rebellious' company of Buddha, Christ, Mohammed and Paul Kruger (Macaskill 1990:172). In *Rumours*, Brink mythologises Fischer as Bernard Franken and draws from his trial statement to evoke a specific mythos of Afrikanerdom's positive aspects. This elaborate myth generated around the romantic vision of the 'true' Afrikaner as a dissident in the face of power and oppression is further reinforced by Louis, the other vehicle of interruption in the novel (Macaskill 1990:173). Macaskill contends that the interruptive function of Bernard's and Louis's testimony is twofold: to highlight Martin's treachery to family and friends, and equally his betrayal of the 'true' spirit of Afrikanerdom by not opposing the oppressive hegemony. *Rumours*, in propagating interruption as a vision of 'true' Afrikanerdom attacking the 'false' hegemony, offers only a re-definition rather than a refusal of the 'false' hegemonic terms: it can therefore offer only an alternate version devoid of an authentic counter hegemonic valence. Macaskill in fact concludes that:

*Rumours* provides ample testimony of ideological complicity between interruptive opposition and the hegemony it opposes ... interruptions ... remythologise an alarmingly romantic vision of the 'true' Afrikaner as fundamentally a dissident against the forces of external, and, gradually since 1948, internal oppression. That is to say, the relationship between principal and interruptive texts in this novel finally replaces what it sought to demythologise—the myth of innate supremacy—with another, equally suspect version of that same myth: the projection of a fundamental and 'true' sense of Afrikaner dissent ... intertextual framework serves to reduce historical complexity to an ideologically flattering myth, an eminently consumable story (Macaskill 1990:176).

Citing Raynond Williams, Michael Wade, Stephen Clingman and Gordimer, Macaskill acknowledges the abiding dangers of the implication of counter-hegemonic writing in the discursive structure it opposes, given its inhibition by hegemonic pressures and limits. He does not however identify this as Brink's dilemma. Macaskill reads *Rumours of Rain* as Brink's translation of Gordimer's *The Conversationist* in which, however, Brink's imitation of the interruptive technique employed in Gordimer's anterior text rather than being innocent is done along polemical and dangerously revisionist lines. *Rumours* deliberately participates in Afrikaner racism.

Revealing as Macaskill's argument definitely is, ... its basic limitation is its privileging of textual interruption as the monolithic technique par excellence of rupturing and dismantling the hegemonic. Macaskill therefore cannot take into cognisance the fact that even in *Rumours*, Brink does not appropriate dissidence as a distinctive virtue of Afrikanerdom. Brink's interest in rebellion is as a transcultural incessant positive human response to tyranny. In Brink, all nationalities affirm their humanity by a participation in this ideal: Bernard is in fact drawn to rebellion partly by his realisation at the 'Conspiracy Trial' where he acts as counsel to the accused, that the Afrikaner's exclusion of himself from the league of dissidents is in reality his self-exclusion from the humanfold. However, the ideals and experiences of the black Charlie Mofokeng, Beatrice Fiorini with her multi-ethnic background and the many other Blacks with whom Bernard Franken works, and who constitute one 'rebellious' fraternity fall beyond the scope of Macaskill's technique.

In Brink's stylistically pre-modernist realistic novel, the interruption of the dominant hegemony just as the corresponding legend of Afrikaner redemption, is negotiated mainly through the traditional embodiment of the positive ideals of the novel in the hero, Bernard Franken. Citing Gordimer, Macaskill notes the codification of Fischer as an Anti-Christ by the propagandists of Afrikaner nationalism. Brink reverses the logic fully: mythologises Fischer in Bernard as a Christ-figure, and codifies the apartheid superman, Mynhardt as the veritable Anti-Christ, and the foil against which Bernard's distinction is measured,

Martin's recollection of Dr. Malan's brief stopover at Kimberley on his triumphal journey to Pretoria indicates his knowledge of the Afrikaner legend of the messiah. At the arrival of Malan, the Afrikaner crowd, jubilant and ecstatic in spite of the long journey to Kimberley and the long wait, and in spite of the fact that Malan is hardly audible when he speaks, contemplates him in the image of Christ:

All the men had taken off their hats, pressing them against their chests, and the women stood up from the food-baskets on which they'd been sitting. In my young mind there was only one comparable image: the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. And looking at some of those old patriarchs with their great

beards and faces stained with tears and tobacco juice, one could well imagine them saying: Lord, now lettest thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation (Brink 1984d:53f).

Martin's father confidently foretells to his children on their way home the dawn of Afrikaner hegemony.

Martin is conceived as a contemporary Malan. His hypersensitive awareness of rivalry leads him not only to the adoption of ruthless survival strategies but also to the exaltation of the laager mentality. He asks his son, Louis:

How long do you think it took our people to find their feet in the cities? It's a full-time job to maintain our position. All around us are English and Jews just waiting to push us aside again. They've never forgiven us yet for beating them at their own game (Brink 1984d: 308).

The substance of Brink's meditation on the Soweto massacre, however, is that the morbid self-adulation often presented as the instinct of self-preservation is at bottom the root of genocides. Martin's interpretation of his life-mission as the preservation of Afrikaner hegemony therefore has as its ironic obverse the real possibility of the extinction of Afrikanerdom.

The jungle and hunting provide Martin with revealing metaphors in his conception of his vocation. But Martin is not only morally mired in a state of nature where only the fittest survive. In the context of *Rumours of Rain* where the presiding interpretative scheme of human experiences is religious and the central legend alluded to that of the messiah, the significance of Martin's beastliness can be grasped fully only in its apocalyptic dimension. The allusion is precise when Martin, after betraying Bernard Pilate-like, washes his hand. He is in reality the antagonist to Afrikaner redemption, the Anti-Christ. Brink traces the Soweto massacre to its ultimate source in Martin's symptomatic egoism which is the root of Afrikaner tribalism. But Martin also betrays and blights his own family kindred. At the end of the novel, when the symbolic apocalyptic downpour begins, Martin's response, predictably, is to ask for more:

Ceaselessly, irresistibly it came down from the dark skies. In a blunted stupor I resigned myself to the thought that it would never stop again. I didn't care anymore. Let it increase and grow worse and worse, a flood to soak the earth and uproot trees and split roots; causing the red earth to run down the hills, streaming, streaming endlessly, red water as if the earth itself was crying, as if the earth was crying blood (Brink 1984d:446).

Martin's deepest longing, however, is to survive the impending holocaust which he is the main agent of: 'But self-destruction is foreign to my nature, What matters is to survive, survive. To survive even the apocalypse' (Brink 1984d:374). But he suffers from a heart disease. Martin is mortally ill.

Brink's sketch of the life and career of Bram Fischer in his essay, 'Mahatma Ghandi Today', makes it obvious what he finds particularly striking and admirable about Fischer: his deep passion to salvage the Afrikaner from the holocaust he seemed poised to bring upon himself and to testify to the Afrikaner's humanity. This is prime in his evaluation of Fischer's significance in Afrikaner history:

His free life was devoted to a broadening of the image of the Afrikaner; and if Afrikaans is eventually to survive as a language, much of it will be due to the fact that men like Bram Fischer have been prepared to prove risking their all for it, that it is more than the language of one oppressive minority and of one frightening ideology—that it is indeed what many exiles call it today: *Menstaal*, 'the language of human beings' (Brink 1983:60).

Bernard's reminiscence at his trial of his experience of helping to transport people boycotting the bus services after an unreasonable hike in the fares identifies the demonstration of the Afrikaner's humanity also as the burning passion of his life:

my most important recollection of that experience is that of all the people I picked up, people who'd set out to walk ten or fifteen miles to work, starting at four or five o'clock in the morning—not one would believe me when I told them I was an Afrikaner. In their minds 'Afrikaner' and 'apartheid' had become synonymous. It made me realise, more than ever before, the obligation placed upon me by being an Afrikaner myself: an obligation towards all those suffering as a result of laws made by my fellow Afrikaners (Brink 1984d:138f).

Brink's interpretation of Fischer's and Bernard's presiding strategy of Afrikaner redemption illustrates the quality of Christian self-sacrifice even in its culmination as martyrdom.

Fischer renounces his prospects and privileges as the son of a prime minister of the Orange Free State and mediator between the Transvaal and Britain before the Anglo-Boer War (and as a particularly brilliant lawyer himself) to defend political activists. Bernard, likewise, resigns his sheltered job as a university lecturer in order to work as an advocate devoted essentially to the accused in political cases 'for the most trifling of fee' (Brink 1984d:113). Both, when all legitimate avenues for protest are criminalised, and given the state's increasing recourse to violence, are compelled

finally to pick up arms. Both too get the opportunity to escape to England but renounce exile, returning to certain imprisonment or death. Where Fischer jumped bail, Bernard escapes from prison to consolidate the armed struggle.

André Brink in fact interprets Bernard's distinctive selflessness as an aspect of his nature: 'It was much a peculiarity of Bernard's to get involved with others as someone else might have big ears or bandy legs or moles' (Brink 1984d:95). Where Martin interprets Afrikaner history to justify apartheid as Afrikaner salvation, Bernard condemns it as a negation of the Afrikaner's leading role in the struggle for human freedom in South Africa. Where Martin celebrates the prerogatives of the Afrikaner in the apartheid dispensation as a divine boon, Bernard renounces them as tainting and as a curse:

As a White, as an Afrikaner linked through the colour of my skin and through my language, to that group which is in Power in this country, my choice is different. I am free to reap the fruit of my White superiority while it lasts. Or I may choose to do nothing at all. But a third course is open to me. And as a thinking and feeling man my only freedom today lies in renouncing, for the freedom of others, everything I might otherwise lay claims to, not through any merit on my part, but through the condition of my birth—which is the epitome of bondage. No man is so completely oppressed by the oppressor as himself (Brink 1984d:134).

In comparing Bernard's spontaneous and unself-conscious creativity and generosity to the elements, Brink links it with the creativity of nature itself:

in spite of his incisive intellect and all his sophistication, Bernard primarily struck one like, well, a sort of elemental force, something as natural and basic as wind or water (35).

Brink points to the energy that remakes society as one that is self-forgetful, self-sacrificing, ever-flowing, like nature's fullness.

JanMohamed has implied that the white writer's transcendence of the barriers of fetishised racial difference is extremely difficult since the interrogation of one's own cultural values invariably entails the examination and decentering of the self constituted by those values in the presence of the Other. He discerns, however, in the White writer's creative exploration of the oral/ mythic culture of the African which is decidedly different from his own chirographic culture the willingness to be influenced by the dominated Other and therefore a step beyond the racial barrier (JanMohamed 1985:83). André Brink excludes a presumptuous appropriation of the Black voice: 'I'd never be so presumptuous as to say that I know what it's like to be

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black in South Africa' (Brink 1993:7). But he self-consciously narrows the frontiers that separate the Black Other by increasing shared experiences. He speaks of the many black people that came to him for help on

hearing of the banning of *Looking on Darkness*: So I became increasingly involved in their everyday lives. In human terms it was a unique experience, and it opened up a new world for me. Some of the people who came to see me became very close friends. Through them I began to get a clearer idea of the black experience (Brink 1993:7);

and of his contact in the 1970s with the ANC:

I've spent all my life crossing frontiers, and this was a very difficult one to cross. Yet when I did cross it, I met remarkable people, warm and rich in experience, people who have taught me most of the things I know (Brink 1993:7).

His identification with a black slave in *A Chain of Voices*, Brink explains, was prompted by the so many close and violent, experiences that he had shared with Black people, and his acceptance as a writer of the challenge to imagine what it felt like to be in the place of Blacks in South Africa.

Brink's great theme is the Afrikaner's impoverishment of his humanity by his implementation of the ideology of apartheid, and the possibility of his redemption. He contends that the Afrikaner stands to gain more in mutual recognition between the races in South Africa. For, in the Afrikaner's recognition of the full humanity of his Black neighbour and in his creative response to Black ways and traditions, Brink discerns a path to the restoration of humanity to the Afrikaner himself. For Brink's Afrikaner protagonist in *A Dry White Season*, Ben du Toit, the moment of consciousness is the moment of the recognition of Afrikaner 'human' values, in his ignorance exalted as the virtues divine, as clearly anti-human and moreover a justification of evil:

Everything one used to take for granted, with so much certainty that one never even bothered to enquire about it, now turns out to be illusion. Your certainties are proven lies ....

'Humanity'. Normally one uses it as a synonym for compassion; charity; decency; integrity. 'He is such a human person'. Must one now go in search of an entirely different set of synonyms: cruelty; exploitation; unscrupulousness; or whatever? (Brink 1984b:161).

This questioning of tribal discourse and allegiance followed to its end culminates in the dilation of consciousness and the compassionate recognition of the humanity of all people. The narrow, arbitrary self-perpetuating myth of tribe rooted in self-interest and characterised by self-absorption gives way to the exhilarating reality of the humanity of all human beings anchored in fellow-feeling and love.

The point is that in Brink's fiction, Black culture is depicted as the embodiment of humane virtues. Maligned, humiliated, famished, scourged and shackled, the Black carries yet, like an undying flame, the vital spark of humanity. This virtue embodied by Brink's positive characters, he calls by its Xhosa name of *Ubuntu* in *An Act of Terror*. The novelist is at a loss whether to lament its non-existence or its loss in Afrikaans and English vocabularies: 'Ubuntu: sharing, generosity, hospitality, humanity. All of that, and more. Oh much more' (Brink 1991:179).

Writing on *Rumours of Rain*, Ben Obumselu has drawn attention to the correspondence between the messianic legend in the novel and in Andre Schatz-Bart's 1959 novel, *Le Dernier des justes*. He also comments that Bernard in his sacrifice illustrates a Christian ideal. But considering Brink a myth-maker who sees the typical experience of humanity in terms of complexes of poetic imagery, Obumselu argues that the ideal which Brink offers in *Rumours of Rain* as a counter-hegemonic valence is actually a Xhosa ideal. The Xhosa wanderer who frightens Martin when he is lost in the forest of the eastern cape, Obumselu, notes, is 'Brink's symbol of the free individual who follows a lonely vision wherever it leads' (Obumselu 1990:58). Ancient, shrivelled, homeless, he seeks after a vague glimpse of the vision of perfect beauty, the *Momlambo*. But his quest, though of Eros, is a metaphor of every ideal towards which humanity feels a compulsive, hypnotic pull. Commenting on what he tells Martin—'If a man desires the *Momlambo*, if you want to sleep with her under one kaross and untie her *inciyo*, then you must kill your own father in your heart' (Brink 1984d:257)—Obumselu (1990:58) writes:

The Xhosa ideal that is here expounded is the positive value in terms of which all the characters in the novel are conceived. It is the ideal value embodied in Bernhard Franken, and Beatrice Foirini, the value which makes Martin Mynhardt's son symbolically kill the father and leave home. But it must not be thought that in this beautiful novel, violence is presented as the unique badge of virtue. All men are lovers and follow the Muse. Martin himself does not merely kill the father; he massacres all his kindred as he follows the gleam of wealth and power. The test is whether violence is self-giving or merely an exploitative reflex.

Brink's interest in this Xhosa ideal very probably lies in its affirmation of Christ's own injunction to singleness of purpose and total renunciation of the world, an injunction Brink makes constant even if often only in oblique allusions to: 'If any man comes to me without hating his father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, yes and his own life too, he cannot be my disciple' (Luke 14:26-27). African wisdom coincides with what Brink finds positive in the Christian revelation.

Purely at the level of theory, the myth of the Afrikaner as the saviour is conceivably more ideologically dangerous than the myth of the African as the descendant of Canaan. In incessant Black rebellion, Brink recurrently ruptures the naive myth of the eternity of Black servitude, showing apartheid as a mutable Afrikaner hegemony not divine ordinance.

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# Postcoloniality and African Writing: A Millennial Postscript

Lekan Oyegoke

## Preamble

Postcoloniality, the fledgling theory of colonial and post-colonial discourse, stands the risk of going prematurely moribund at the turn of the century and millennium. Its self-destruct mechanism takes the form of a paradox: there is a suggestion that all there is to be said on the subject of postcoloniality appears to have been said, while at the same time the theory seems scarcely to have scratched the discursive surface of things even now at the close of an eventful and memorable twentieth century and second millennium. The theory appears to be both new and old in a teasing, contradictory way.

It may well be that it is only the signifier 'postcoloniality' that is new or fledgling and the amorphous object of its discursive interest stretches 'like a patient etherised upon a table', to borrow a line from T.S. Eliot's famous dramatic monologue, 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'. Postcoloniality's body of elusive signifieds has its historical toe pointing in the direction of 1885 and beyond, in the temporal mists, while its groggy head lolls uncertainly in the descending computerised haze of the looming year alias 'Y2K'. Presiding over postcoloniality's morbidity are two categories of partisans: the modern and postmodernist intelligentsia and the not-so-modern political elite weaned on sometimes medieval, sometimes colonial sociopolitical values.

The twilight years of the present century and millennium have hatched a number of books and several essays that examine postcoloniality. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman's reader entitled *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory* is an important collection of essays by respectable thinkers and theorists of Third World cultural and literary studies. The selection of contributors enables a tracing of the genesis of postcoloniality back to the humanism of the Negrismo movement of the Americas and the Caribbean and of which Negritude was a part, in the ideas of Léopold Sédar Senghor, Aimé Césaire, and, subsequently, the Freudian cultural psychotherapy of Frantz Fanon and the Marxist socialist political radicalism of

Amilcar Cabral. While Homi Bhabha appends his discursive signature to certain aspects of Fanon's poetical and cultural thesis, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's incisive analysis privileges an often neglected aspect of Third World studies: the genderised patriarchal politics of colonial and post-colonial discourse. Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiong'o take opposing sides on the problem of language in African writing, while Edward W. Said and Aijaz Ahmad oppose each other over the famous orientalist divide.

However, underlying the sheer eloquence and presence of the impressive array of perspectives in this book is an equally articulate absence of certain notable voices that should be pertinent to a study of colonial discourse and post-colonial theory. Homi Bhabha laments the neglect of the ideas of Franz Fanon in recent Literary scholarship; but apart from Fanon other glaring omissions make one pause for a reassessment of scholarly bearings. Excluded from the collection of essays and extracts of theses are the ideas and observations on the political history of African cultures by the brilliant Caribbean historian Walter Rodney. Missing are the controversial but stimulating views on African literature by the Nigerian troika of Chinweizu, Onwuekwia Jemie, and Ihechukwu Madubuike. Also unrepresented are the analytical insights of Senegalese Cheikh Anta Diop, and the Afrocentric aesthetic of African-American Molefi Kete Asante.

It seems that this stage of postcoloniality is rather uneasy about strident radical voices. There is therefore what appears to be a strategy of quietening things down through a selective exclusion of radical perspectives. The ideological implication of some of these omissions from works devoted entirely to postcoloniality and the study thereof is the subject of the present millennial postscript to colonial and post-colonial discourse.

## Postcoloniality

Several scholars have observed that postcoloniality is a remarkably heterogeneous intellectual enterprise. This point receives interesting treatment by Stephen Slemon writing under the title 'The Scramble for Post-colonialism' in an important reader entitled *De-scribing Empire* published the same year as *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory*, both of which appeared five years after the seminal *The Empire Writes Back* by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin.

Slemon seems correct in suggesting that postcoloniality is a growing academic industry of mainly Western institutions of learning, marked by a disorderly scramble for and pragmatic appropriation of the discourse of empire. This is all in line with some of the reservations about postcoloniality expressed by such scholars as Salman Rushdie, Aijaz Ahmad, Ngugi wa Thiong'o.

Post-colonial discourse appears to have taken off in multiple directions at once and its discursive thrust is mired in a mush of philosophical abstractions and aesthetic overgeneralisations which seek to validate the hegemonic hold of imperial metropolitan centres of power over the colonised, expropriated margins of empire. Apart from the telling sub-text of textual exclusions and absences in some of the influential publications on the subject of colonial and post-colonial discourse, the wary literary traveller in the thorny thicket of postcoloniality cannot but be taken aback by its proclivity sometimes towards what may be described as sophistry in aid of selective and partisan ideological positions in c- and literary matters. There is, for example, the tendency by post-colonial theory to dismiss as 'essentialist' or 'nativistic' certain unresolved pragmatic issues at the heart of the African cultural experience.

Postcoloniality seems to be an attempt to tidy up a part of the chaos and confusion that have characterised Literary studies this century. But, ironically, even this theory has been caught in some of the contradictions it set out to remove. This is perhaps an inevitable development, as postcoloniality itself has appropriated for its own ideological purpose some of the givens in the older theories that have proved to be false and fallacious.

Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (1994:2) are correct in their reading of history when they describe a stage of postcoloniality:

The colonial phase, particularly the rapid acquisition of territories by European nations in the late nineteenth century (most famously in the 'Scramble for Africa'), represents the need for access to new (preferably captive) markets and sources of raw materials, as well as the desire to deny these to competitor nations.

However, what they don't say, and which none of their contributors sufficiently privileges, but which Walter Rodney describes eloquently in *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* is that Africa would have evolved differently politically, economically, and culturally, were it not for Western European hegemonic interference. Postcoloniality will dismiss as essentialist any suggestion that Rodney's thesis perhaps holds the key to an effective resolution of the perpetual political conflict and cultural and economic chaos in which post-colonial Africa is engulfed. That Africa's path to peace and prosperity perhaps lies in a care' considered unravelling of European-packaged colonial and post-colonial Africa as well as a carefully thought out repackaging of Africa in line with some of the post-colonial possibilities that would have been.

The reality is that post-colonial territorial boundaries still mark off 'markets' for Europe and are unworkable as nation states: the borders have been too arbitrarily

and artificially arrived at to constitute a basis for peace and progress, unchanged. The forced and superficial national character of post-colonial African countries is the right kind of nursery bed for growing empty-headed political puppets and megalomaniacs and power-drunk military dictators whose sole assignment seems to be the preservation of colonially drawn political boundaries in post-independence Africa.

Post-colonial theory should be more interested in the cultural reasons for the unworkability of the post-colonial African nation state, but it does not appear to be. This should be unsurprising because, like other theories concerned with the African cultural and literary experience, postcoloniality has adopted a culturally homogeneous definition of African writing. It is the writing in the former language of colonialism which in this case is English. If this is the basic assumption of post-colonial theory with respect to African writing, its failure to appreciate the cultural implication of the political scenario described by Rodney becomes understandable.

Many proponents of post-colonial theory tend to be dismissive of discursive strategies propounded in aid of an aesthetics of African cultural expression that privileges indigenous language cultural experience in Africa. Hence the general disregard by the theory of the Afrocentric postulations of the likes of Cheikh Anta Diop, nuclear physicist, historian and Africanist, who has argued for a greater show of confidence in African languages and thought systems by African scientists, educationists, and the political elite. Diop's pragmatic afrocentricism using Wolof is a precursor of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's cultural radicalism and renewed interest in his first language, Gikuyu. And then Diop's and Ngugi's afrocentricism is an advance on the partial reformist afrocentric aesthetic argued by the likes of Chinweizu, Onwujekwa Jemie, Ihechukwu Madubuike as well as Molefi Kete Asante. Whereas the afrocentricism of Chinweizu et al and Asante scours the African traditions for an indigenous validation of cultural and artistic expression in the colonial language of containment (English), Diop's and Ngugi's afrocentric aesthetic argues for an adoption of both the African cultural experience and its original language of expression, for example, Gikuyu, Wolof or Valaf, Xhosa, Yoruba, Zulu, etc.

Postcoloniality is dismissive of Diop's and Ngugi's brand of cultural radicalism for two main reasons, it would appear. Firstly, and as has already been mentioned, post-colonial theory in its present ideological thrust is a partisan academic enterprise whose aporia lies in its desire to further Third World cultural, literary interests while at the same time operating within a historical framework of Western philosophical strategies of cultural, political, and economic containment of the peripheral colonial other by the imperial metropolitan self. Secondly, the vast cultural empire comprising anglophone, francophone, and lusophone Africa is too tempting a booty for postcoloniality to acknowledge that the same factors which prop up an extant post-colonial cultural empire are the ones responsible for Africa's inherent political and economic instability.

Some of the ideological positions taken by postcoloniality seem to fly in the face of reality, as has been indicated. The point may be illustrated further by using an example drawn from contemporary Europe. The eddying currents of the repeated and present balkanisation of central Europe are not much dissimilar to the centrifugal forces seeking to rend post-colonial Africa down the very middle. Europe is at present re-emerging as a powerful regional bloc, but historically the break-up of Europe has been antecedent to a reunification. A similar pattern of development must apply to Africa even more so than to Europe, given the genesis of the conflict of interests in Africa in the Berlin 1885 arrangement by a divided Europe.

The point therefore is not really whether the post-colonial political structures of Africa should unravel before Africa can move forward, but rather it is a question of when this would happen. A peaceful dismantling appears to be a *sine qua non* to peace, to stability, and to progress in the continent. Furthermore, a collapse of the present post-colonial cultural empire will, or perhaps, should translate into a privileging of monolithic structures defined by specific indigenous African languages. But where there will be culturally heterogeneous political entities, these should be the results of a negotiated agreement by all the indigenous language groups concerned. Regional economic and cultural blocs can only be negotiated subsequently. Regional blocs will be ineffectual if they are made up of unstable member states, as seems to be the case in twentieth-century Africa.

Postcoloniality can harbour within its totalising heterogeneous character quite an unsafe blinding dose of hypocrisy. It seems all right for other people to have a language that informs/ describes/ defines their identity, but it is not right if an African asks to be similarly defined by the language into which they are born in Africa. It is tribalism and a sacrilege: the only good African is the one lost in a nondescript globalised post-colonial world 'described' by a European language.

Furthermore, postcoloniality, proceeding dialectically from a premise of binary opposition, has conceptually separated the metropolitan centre of empire from a margin made up of the former colonies of B~ but it fails to carry through its deconstructing of cultural imperialism. The margin is understood as including the likes of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Anglophone Africa, and Asia—in the case of Britain. The homogenising principle is not only the colonial experience but also the presence of English. However, unlike Australia, Canada and New Zealand, Africa has, in addition to the globalising English, its own specific indigenous languages. But it would appear that certain post-colonial theorists actually believe that these languages are either non-existent or unimportant. Yet, it seems obvious that although the separation of the language of colonial and post-colonial discourse into 'English' (for centre) and 'english' (for periphery) is theoretically engaging, the conclusion for Africa must be somewhat different.

Postcoloniality foregrounds 'english' in preference to 'English' in literary

discourse. This argument is tenable in cultural contexts in which 'english' is the sole or main language. In Africa, as has already been noted, 'english' is scarcely a sole language; the ideological ascendancy of this language is in opposition to many a downgraded indigenous African language. The logical progression of the post-colonial dialectics that splits up colonial language into 'English' and 'english' should therefore involve a privileging of the indigenous African language in opposition to a new hegemonic centre in 'english'. This, in my opinion, constitutes a part of postcoloniality's unfinished business; and pursuing this line of reasoning should not be reduced to a dismissable 'essentialism', 'nativism', or 'tribalism'. There is a pejorative hint of the fallacy of *argumentum ad hominem* on the part of post-colonial theory when it deploys such dismissive epithets with respect to certain aspects of the aesthetics of African cultural experience.

There is no doubt that postcoloniality has made the study of the cultural products of former empire rather energetic and exciting in recent times. But the insights it has yielded notwithstanding, it still leaves many of the unresolved issues of African writing unanswered in a definitive way. This should perhaps be unsurprising in view of some of the flaws of the theory, as noted above, and its recycling of some of the discredited assumptions and pedagogical strategies of older theories of literature respecting the African cultural experience.

Postcoloniality has been unable to define African literature in a way that makes clear that it is a product not only of hybridity and multiculturalism, as Homi Bhabha contends, but also inherent contradictions that make it African-literature and not-African-literature. African-literature is anglophone African writing, while not-African-literature is comparable to European-literature, a loose term, not for a specific literature, but for a collection of specific literatures informed by specific languages. African-literature is conceptually the African writing in 'english' ('french', 'portuguese') while not-African-literature is the sidelined indigenous language literature, waiting to be liberated from official policies that perpetuate its relegation and underdevelopment.

There is also the question of audience. Having embraced a monolithic conception of African writing, postcoloniality adopts a homogenised, culturally uniform audience for the African literary experience. The theory imagines the audience to be all of Africa or sub-Saharan Africa, the reality being that it is only the intellectual class using 'english'. The audience for African writing is split between the Africans using 'english' and those using an indigenous language, and the audience is further splintered by the factors of orality and literacy.

In the midst of this universal chaos and confusion, Marking cultural life and literary studies, the majority of the political elite have remained wonderfully consistent in their seeming indifference and complete nonchalance. Founded in 1963, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) defined for itself right at the outset, a

myopic lame-duck approach to the cultural underpinnings of the perpetual political and economic instability of its member states. The OAU decided in its charter not to have anything to do with the post-colonial territorial boundaries which, as was earlier mentioned, began as European 'market' possessions. However, given the climate of euphoria and optimism of the times, the OAU's ignorance could be excused. But since the 1960s Africa's political history has been marked by a plague of irredentist and secessionist conflicts and other ethnically fuelled civil wars and wars of aggression. Predictably, apart from Tanzania and South Africa, there is scarcely a post-colonial African country that has deemed it necessary to formulate a national language policy, let alone pursue one. The ruling elite seem unshakeable in their resolve to hold together the colonial borders through a coercion of the general citizenry. How long this measure will hold out in the twenty-first century and third millennium, only God knows.

### **Postscript**

The 1986 Nobel prize for literature winner, Wole Soyinka, has recently criticised the OAU for ignoring its problem of inherited colonial boundaries. Soyinka's call to the OAU to revisit this momentous issue has caused scarcely a stir in the continental body. Post-colonial theory might find the OAU's non-response rather reassuring: the colonial and post-colonial status quo lingers on.

In closing this postscript, Kwame Anthony Appiah's (1991:356) comment seems pertinent:

What happens will happen not because we pronounce on the matter in theory, but will happen out of the changing everyday practices of African cultural life.

It is a truism that change is what history is made of, and the political history of Africa will be no exception as both postcoloniality and the OAU are borne into the twenty-first century and opening phase of the third millennium by the unfolding force of reality. A part of the unsettling reality, research has shown, is that increasingly post-colonial anglophone Africans are gaining linguistic competence in neither English nor the indigenous language, in a way that compounds the problem of a vanishing reading culture—barely out of its infancy in many parts—while the ultimate loser is literature.

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# The Prodigal Hero Returns to his Aboriginal Home: A Reading of Kofi Awoonor's *This Earth, My Brother*

Kwame Ayivor

This critique takes a critical look at the environmental determinism which shapes and informs Kofi Awoonor's hero and other characters in *This Earth, My Brother*. Another major preoccupation of this critical analysis is to investigate how the corrosive fictional wasteland—Awoonor's bleak landscape—affects the protagonist's existential quest for selfhood and racial identity. How Amamu, the prodigal hero, 'became a stranger to his tribe, to his religion, to his traditions, and to himself' (Yetiv 1976:86) is, therefore, my central concern. *This Earth, My Brother*, which is structured around the traditional African ontology and aesthetics, in particular, the Ewe cosmology, has a riveting resonance. The fictional world of *This Earth, My Brother* is so realistic that any reader with intimate knowledge of the Ewe world-view will realise that all Awoonor has done is to cloak in fictional fantasy the real living world of the Ewes. To achieve his creative purpose, the novelist has clothed in fictional garb of illusion countless fragments of Ewe religious, cultural and mystical rituals and ethnohistory.

When Awoonor's method of dealing with and fictionalising inherited material is compared to that of Ayi Kwei Armah (1979), Armah's *The Healers* shows how art becomes reality cloaked in the illusion of fiction—a situation in which the real cultural living world of the Akans is masked in art. The reader who is uninformed of the Akan heritage (even being Akan) might perceive fantasy while there is none, because the cultural reality and history of the Akans are ingeniously enshrouded in a marvellously seductive fiction. Kofi Awoonor's *This Earth, My Brother* employs the same device—concealing facets of Ewe existential realism and ontology within the garb of fictional illusion. Some of the flamboyant and ravaged destitute who inhere the fictional world of this novel happen to be real men who either lived or are still living in Keta (Ghana), where I once lived. The author does not even bother to conceal the identities of Abotsi, and Betieza, whose real life situations are manipulated by the novel (68-74). But Armah enigmatises and veils his

sources in fictionality by refurbishing his inherited material and forms and by renaming the original sources through a creative process of abstraction. To translate his artistic and didactic aims into fictional realism, Awoonor manipulates the rural-urban dichotomy in which the untamed Ewe rural world is juxtaposed with the urban slum jungle of Nima, the notorious Accra shantytown. Awoonor's purpose in contrasting the rural Deme with the urban ghetto of Nima is to set the rural world, the home of traditional African culture and history, as the antithesis of the blasted urban setting, the realm of white culture and civilisation. Deme, the rural setting in *This Earth, My Brother*, is symbolised as 'a huge foul dunghill', where dead chickens and dead goats are salvaged for food by the colonial war-scarred ex-serviceman, (the madman) Abotsi. The second important environmental landmark is 'the Deme road', which epitomises the chaos and the decay of colonial Ghana.

The lorry road is a narrow track of red earth beaten together by many feet, and the few trucks that careered along it on market-days on their way to the coast. It was mainly built, if it was built at all, of mud, and gravel collected by women from the gravel pits beneath the Aka River. When it rained, it was closed to traffic. There was a road overseer, a fat drunken man who could be seen after the second day of rain in his army supply raincoat, carrying a large load of keys which he jingled with a great of feeling of importance (7).

The Deme road represents the fictional universe of Amamu, Awoonor's protagonist. The village of Deme, Amamu's aboriginal home, is an environment deprived of the basic necessities of life and where women are eternally exploited. That such a road is supervised by a fat corrupt drunken man, Attipoe, clearly reveals the moral bankruptcy of the society and more importantly the ruling elite class of Deme and the entire Ghanaian social order—from microcosm to macrocosm. Awoonor's preoccupation with abject poverty and squalor shows that the two scourges are the predominating fictional landmarks of Deme rural wasteland and the Nima urban slum. The dilapidated conditions of the houses and the regular diet of Deme villagers are clear indices of the poverty and the starvation which threaten to obliterate the inhabitants of this bleak fictional terrain. Awoonor maintains that most of the houses are leaking and the occupants are too poor to have them repaired. Thus when it rains and this happens very often, the owners of the leaking houses try to catch the dripping water with pans and pots:

If your house leaked, you gather together pans and pots in which the drip, drip, drip of the rain beat at first singular tattoos, and then changed to the drop, drop, drop of collecting water (8).

Poetic prose narrative not only evokes the stylistic patterning of Awoonor's novel but also conveys the futility of occupants of leaking houses trying to prevent the inevitable flooding of the houses on rainy days. This general index of grim poverty is heightened by a number specific individual deprivations which permeates this work.

Kodzo, the town crier is a classic example of grim individual destitution, which plagues the people of Deme. Drunk and tormented by an empty rumbling belly, the famous town crier is forced to spend the night near a stinking chickens-house in Attipoe's compound because his wife has deserted him and nobody cares for or offers the poor man any food. The town crier's 'damp mud and thatched hut in Ablome' (10) gives us a clear picture of the physical shape and rustic conditions of the houses of Deme. His extreme loneliness and personal wretchedness epitomise the general suffering and hopelessness in this harsh world. Kodzo's daily woes and troubles—'no water in the ducks' plate, no firewood in the fireplace' (10), existential worries compounded by perpetual rumblings caused by eternal hunger and chronic troublesome hernia—crystallise the enormity of his deprivation and destitution. Chronic physical deprivations and grim poverty which dog Tailor and Abotsi, two of the many outcast destitutes, who inhere Awoonor's fictional world, have added another dimension to the cosmic malaise which threatened to obliterate this denuded landscape. Awoonor thickens the murky portrait of his rural wilderness with harrowing details of human suffering and naked starvation:

'I am dying. Is there anyone with a pencil and paper?'  
Someone had a pencil.

'Write down the names I am going to call. They owe me money. Use it to buy a coffin for me'.

A few elders had gathered looking at him. They were sure he was dying. There was nothing they could do.

'Before I close my mouth, Gamadeku, go and tell your wife to cook me *akple*<sup>1</sup> and light soup. I can't die on empty stomach'.

The food was brought. He ate and burst into a big sweat. He didn't die (72).

Tailor is forced to resort to the above subterfuge—the survival strategy of faking his own dying moment—in order to get something to appease the life-threatening hunger. Though we are certainly going to laugh at the hilarious humour created by this humiliating situation, we are more likely to miss the implied deeper meaning of this passage. The hidden insight is that Tailor could easily have died from

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<sup>1</sup> *Akple* is a stiff pap prepared from a mixture of fermented mealie meal and cassava dough. It is normally eaten in Ewe land with soups like: palm nut soup, okra soup, peanut butter soup and spinach (palaver) stew.

hunger, completely ignored by a society which is blind to the agonised suffering of the dispossessed outcasts who salvage the dead and rotten animals from the foul Deme dunghill for food. It must be reiterated that Abotsi dies in a similar fashion, completely ignored by the hospital which feels that the life of a madman is not worth calling a doctor for.

Children are, perhaps, the worst victims of hunger and starvation in Africa. Awoonor paints a horrific picture of how school children have to go to with only roasted mealies/ corn, *gari*<sup>2</sup> and cubes of sugar and have to beg for drinking water, which is, often, denied them by heartless women who hawk their items of food to school children. The most revealing incident which unmasks how innovative and dangerous a starving child can be is the event in which Amamu's brother risks the avenging anger of the Ewe gods in order to quench the hunger tearing inside his bowels. Amamu's brother's hunger is so overwhelming that he overcomes his fears for the gods and eats the delicacies offered to the deities—an act which is one of terrifying taboos among the Ewes. Awoonor brings his portrayal of inescapable hunger and starvation in Deme to a climactic height in his description of a macabre incident in which a brother kills his own brother over a miserable rat caught in a trap:

They were brothers .... The elder came first to inspect the traps. He saw his junior's had the good catch. His trap caught the worthless little mouse which cannot provide a meal. Then it occurred to him. Suppose, suppose he took the mouse and placed it in his brother's trap ... But his bother had climbed a tall tree and saw his brother exchanging the animals. Then he ran the run of deers and came. And clubbed his brother on the head to death. (51)

Awoonor completes his grotesque and horrific murder episode with more gory details. The reader is told that a hunter discovers his dog 'feasting on the rotten entrails of a man whose nostrils, mouth and eyes were choked with [green] houseflies'. The murder having been discovered, the younger brother is arrested and made to carry the decomposed remains of his brother for thirty miles for a post-mortem examination, and is finally hanged 'for killing his brother for a mouse'. The thematic and the creative purpose of the gruesome details of Awoonor's macabre and cocktail narrative might, perhaps, not only be to concretise the intensity of the destitution and starvation in Deme, but also to convey the state of moral decay and disintegration of final love in an environment where hunger and starvation have assumed cosmic proportions. The incident also reveals the ruthlessness and

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<sup>2</sup> *Gari*, which is like tapioca, is prepared by roasting dried and well-sieved cassava dough. *Egba*, which is frequently mentioned in Nigerian fiction, is cooked by pouring boiling water over *gari*.

insensibility of colonialism and the novelist's constant parodying of Christian mythology. Here, Awoonor is, no doubt, parodying the biblical murder of Cain by his brother, Abel. Perhaps the most moving testimony of what hunger could do to man is the event in which a Hausa man who is about to be buried protests loudly of being alive and only hungry!

The stereotyped image of traditional Africa as exemplified by the stinking Deme dunghill is effectively captured by the author in this novel. The pervasive squalor which envelops Awoonor's fictional world of Deme does not only represent the physically squalid Africa, but the monstrous moral decay, which Awoonor suggests, has accumulated through the process of history. The key sentence in the Empire Day speech given by the Deme spokesman before the colonial representative, the District Commissioner, is 'our people go to latrine in the bush'. Lack of conveniences in traditional Africa seems to be a consistent complaint in African fiction. When Awoonor writes: 'Bring a rag this child has passed excrement or when Amamu tells us that the caning his father has given him has made him defecate badly right inside the compound, our attention is just being drawn to the type of squalor which dominates Awoonor's landscape: SHIT. The moral rot and wretchedness of Awoonor's fictive landscape are symbolised by the constant repetition of shit and dunghill. The narrator relates a story

about the driver of the night soil van, who went on a one-man strike because he wanted a raise. Drove and parked the truck right in front of the Sanitary Inspector's office. Refused to move. He got his raise (37).

The use of night soil as a weapon in forcing the white colonial officer into complying with the night soil driver's demand for a wage increase shows not only the cheeky and the defiant outcasts who inhabit Awoonor's rural world but also underpins the view that excrement is a powerful ritual weapon in traditional Africa. The Deme rural world is steeped in so much filth that it is normal for a crawling child to eat animal droppings from the compound.

Another landmark which dominates the Deme rural environment is violence and brutality towards children. We are told that Awoonor's communal world is a corrosive wasteland where police violence, teachers' cruelty towards school children, and sexual immorality are rife. The violent repression of the Sasieme Riot in which traditional leaders are arrested, beaten and locked up, their wives seized and raped, the town looted and jewelleries stolen, stray animals rounded up and ancestral stools seized just because the elders insist on performing the religious rites of cleansing the stools of their ancestors and deities graphically conveys the inherent violence and destructiveness of colonialism. It is sad to observe that children are, very often, the unwitting victims of violence perpetrated by callous and impotent adults.

After a bad school inspection report, whose root cause has nothing to do with the children, the entire teaching staff work out their anger and frustration on the defenceless children. 'That day', Awoonor reports, 'Deme Roman Catholic School went into mourning' (36). The desire to displace the anger aroused by the white school inspector is such that 'old offences were dug up' and 'teachers caned whole classes on the slightest provocation and pretext' (36). The brutality and the severity of the caning is vividly conveyed in Awoonor's own words:

It was a weary day of loud noises, of lashes, of screams, tears and no joy. A few of the little ones pissed in their clothes, and they had to rags to wipe the urine from the floor. As they searched for rags, they rubbed their buttocks with their left hand and strove to wipe tears away with their right hand. It was a weary day (36)

And if we compare Awoonor's portrayal of teachers' cruelty towards school children with Es'kia Mphahlele's (1959) in *Down Second Avenue*, it will be clear that although the aim of both novelists is to crystallise the harsh and the cruel experiences Africa's school children have to endure in order to master the alphabets—the first step towards westernisation—the pupil-teacher conflict always generates undercurrents of sardonic humour. Mphahlele's (1959:52) *Down Second Avenue* evokes this physical abuse of school children as follows:

You should've seen Kuzwi the day Pongose was on the bench under his cane! That was the day Pongose's trousers seat flew up. A whole patch. And the day Danie wet his pants, another added.

In an environment dominated by violence and powerlessness, the victims of the powerful white cast will, of psychological necessity, need weaker victims for working out or displacing their own frustration and impotent anger. If we juxtapose Awoonor's caning of school children episode with that of Mphahlele's it will be seen that both authors have captured the severe brutality of the thrashing and the underlying sardonic humour. The root cause of the cruelty of the colonial African teachers has been put down to the inherent violent structure of colonialism, particularly the hostile colonised-coloniser encounters.

The unusually large presence of mad characters in *This Earth, My Brother* needs to be scrutinised. There must be a thematic or creative purpose for making seven of the characters who inhabit Awoonor's fictional world insane or eccentric. Perhaps the author is suggesting that the Deme rural society has corrosive and nerve-wrecking conditions that unhinge man's rootedness with his milieu, leading to his mental breakdown and insanity. The most important madman who plays no small role

in the novel is Abotsi, who lives on dead chickens and goats salvaged from the famous Deme rubbish-dump. Immediately after Abotsi in the insane ranking is Dzesan, the madman who runs amuck and opens fire on a market full of people. Dzesan has one distinguishing feature: he constantly complains of being cheated of his discharge money by the colonial government—an accusation made by all the ex-servicemen. This reveals the authenticity of the allegation, suggesting the dishonesty of the British colonial government and its eternal exploitation of the colonised.. The third crazy man Awoonor presents in his work is Sule. This insane ex-serviceman has one preoccupation: to train his five-year son into a soldier. Thus he drills his son, who is always dressed in full military uniform, from dawn to noon. The above three crazy men are all ex-servicemen, who fought the in the World War II (1939-1945) for the British colonisers, who abandon them in their in the villages they have run away from in order to enlist in the British colonial army. Since their enlistment is disapproved by their parents and the community and no financial provision is made to resettle them back in the villages they had deserted, they are regarded as traitors and treated as outcasts. This hostile reception compounds the mental states of mind, pushing them to insanity.

The other characters afflicted by madness are the Kabre man who is reputed to be an expert in battle of stones with children. Also crazy is Masa, the short, strong woman who is a friend to the mad Kabre man, who belongs to the most stigmatised ethnic group in West Africa. Although the cause of the derangement of the outcast Kabre man and Masa has never been directly stated in the text, there is no doubt that the corrosive and debilitating conditions of Deme rural wasteland have played a role in their mental breakdown. The last but not one character plagued by insanity, is ironically a priest. Rev. Dumenyo's mind is shattered by what he considers to be the tormenting double standard of Christianity. Rev. Dumenyo has a mental breakdown because he deserts the Ewe traditional gods and becomes a preacher, who falls in love with a member of his congregation—a romance forbidden by his church. The forbidden love affair unhinges his sensitive religious mind. The deranged Rev. Dumenyo challenges the doctrine which preaches religious love, but forbids human love and passion—the type of human romantic emotions which Christianity stigmatises as evil. The derangement of Amamu, Awoonor's elitist lawyer protagonist, crowns the theme of madness in *This Earth, My Brother*.

The mad and the eccentric are not the only people who inhabit Awoonor's rural landscape. There are the poverty-stricken village folks, who constantly struggle to ward off the eternal hunger which plagues them. It is crucial to note that even educated Africans, like the headmaster and the teachers of Deme Roman Catholic School and the Benezas, who dominate the funeral wakes of the poor outcasts who are refused burial by the Christian churches, are not better off than destitutes like Abotsi, Tailor and others.

Awoonor's urban environment of the city of Accra, like his rural locale of Deme, is symbolised by huge dunghills and a foul smelling open gutter, which rule supreme over the entire urban wasteland by spilling rot and trash over and polluting the whole city of Accra. This view is conveyed as follows:

No river runs through Nima. Only a huge open gutter that stinks to heaven. The city itself grew with vengeance. Nima grew alongside it like an ever growing and an eternal dunghill (151f).

Awoonor paints a revolting picture of the Nima ghetto—an appalling squalid environment unfit for human habitation. The long pot-holed street which runs through Nima, we are told, is a dirt track sprayed with coal-tar. That a cafe which stands prominently in this urban jungle is called 'the Harlem Cafe' shows that the novelist is employing the ghetto's universal image, by alluding to the famous ghetto of Harlem in United States of America.

The nauseating and harrowing details of Awoonor's urban landscape, whose physical and moral demise is endlessly repeated, are, in many respects, similar to Mphahlele's revolting portrayal of the disgustingly ever full latrine bucket in his grandmother's house in Marabastad slum. The back of the latrine, we are told, is equally infested with thousands of maggots which wriggle lustily in the stinking, thick, black, rotten seepage which flows from the shit bucket. Awoonor's portrayal of the bucket latrines runs as follows:

Another set is the two septic latrines, a fitting memorial to Nima, the city within a city Nkrumah has said he would make it. These latrines are ever full. Near the septic latrines are huge dunghills which in the language of the Accra City Council are called refuse dumps. No one ever removes refuse in Nima (152).

The permanent landmarks of Nima are 'a long pot-holed street running through the ghetto', the ever full septic latrines, and 'huge eternal dunghills'. Like Mphahlele's urban jungle, Marabastad, the dispossessed inhabitants of the Nima slum live in tin shacks and mud huts. The nauseating conditions of Awoonor's urban ghetto of Nima make one wonder whether any human being could ever transcend its corrosive forces. To set the Nima slum people as the antithesis of Ghana's bourgeoisie and to stress the great divide in the Ghanaian society, Awoonor juxtaposes the beautiful posh estate houses occupied by members of the Ghanaian elite class with the dilapidated slum houses of the Nima shantytown. The novelist writes:

The houses stand, if they stand, precarious, hurled together by a drunken

builder. Mud, zinc, deal board, swish. All bent westward towards the valley and the gutter in the vulgar pose of a woman stripping and bending to take a piss. On the eastern side of Nima, fenced away in respectable seclusion, are the new estate houses of Kanda. Here, the politicians, members of Parliament, directors of public corporations, party functionaries (in those days, now civil servants moved in) and a community of well-to-do prostitutes—who ostensibly work for the national airline or the hotels—live (153).

Nima does not only dominate the plush area of Accra, inhabited by the cream of the society, but the centre of higher learning is also situated in its 'green and pleasant fields' (153). Why Awoonor further compares the 'red-top buildings that house the great university' (University of Ghana, Legon, with the slum rickety houses of Nima sewer dwellers is difficult to decode:

On the northern part of Nima, beyond the last dunghill, lie violet mountains far away ... On their sides, perched in intellectual arrogance, are the red-top buildings that house the great university. They lie there as if God put them there in His infinite art and wisdom. So that He will then better be able to supervise the building of His new Jerusalem in Nima's green and pleasant fields (153).

Perhaps Awoonor intends to castigate academics of the Ghanaian ivory tower, who are noted for their intellectual arrogance. The thrust of the passage suggests that the revolting slum wasteland of Nima is intended to exercise a supreme proprietorship and ownership over both the city of Accra, particularly the posh residential area of the rich and famous, and the proud University of Ghana, where arrogant intellectuals pursue their academic vocation. That Nima, one of the most grotesque slum landscape ever painted in fiction, dominates the entire urban environment of the city of Accra, looming larger than life itself, is the greatest affirmation of Awoonor's thematic and artistic purpose of making Nima gradually engulf the main city of Accra. The final outcome of this domination is the inevitable transformation of the city of Accra into a city of slum in which there is no difference between Nima and palatial residential areas. All will become one big sprawling mushroom of slums. What Awoonor has also conveyed by these juxtapositions is that the physical purification, the appalling squalor, the moral decay and the abject human destitution, which are permanent characteristics of Nima, obtrusively pervade the rest of Accra, transforming Accra into a sub-ghetto of the 'City of Nima'. That the sub-human sewer dwellers of Nima—the washerwomen, the garden boys, the steward boys, the cooks, 'the drivers who work in respectable houses', 'the hard working

community of women who sell on credit terms to workers koko, beans and *gari*, *kenke* and fish'—mostly work for the elite or hawk their wares in the street pavements in the city centre reinforces the argument the Nima ghetto has taken over the city of Accra. Commenting further on another important segment of the Nima shantytown and showing how low Amamu's society has sunk morally, Awoonor has this to say:

There are prostitutes, the night women of Nima, they work in the night clubs that skirt Nima like sorrow children on a dunghill, offering respite to its inhabitants, promising them joyous retreats from their earthly worries. Husky-voiced, these women are largely from the rural towns. Illiterate and quarrelsome, they add to the nobility of their profession a capacity to be tough when the occasion demands (154).

The above citation does reveal what is in store for rural women who desert the communal village protective environment for the glamorous life of the city. Few of the rural hopefuls turn to crime and prostitution and manage to 'amass a tidy wealth' and return to their villages, but the majority 'linger on, bored, bitter and disease-ridden, only to wobble to their home towns ill with consumption to die' (154). The rural failures who are ashamed to go home, according to the writer,

die in their soiled bed clothes in airless card and deal board shacks, to be hauled off and buried by the City Council Sanitation and Health Department in the pagan section of Awudome Cemetery (154).

Alive the socials destitutes are ostracised and abandoned; dead, their mortal remains are denied Christian burial in Christian cemeteries. Their contemptuous rejection and dehumanisation by the ruling caste and the society in general continues even after death. The fundamental feature which exercises a powerful control over *This Earth, My Brother* is the environmental determinism which seeks to destroy or reduce the inhabitants of Amamu's world to the level of animals. Man's day to day preoccupation is, therefore, how to survive or transcend the forces which threaten to obliterate him. It must be reiterated here that there is no difference between the wasted life led by Abotsi and Tailor in the Deme rural environment and the empty urban life endured by the rootless and fragmented inhabitants of the Nima urban slum.

Like the rural locale of Deme, where Abotsi, Tailor and Kodzo, the town crier, are perpetually tormented by cruel hunger, the physical destitution which gnaws the bodies and the souls of men and women in the blasted urban setting is more devastating. At least the villager can trap mice, rats, squirrels and birds, or defiantly eat the food offered to the gods, like Amamu's brother or be occasionally rescued

from death by starvation by few kind-hearted villagers. The abject poverty of the inhabitants of Nima is projected by the children's conditions: 'pot-bellied children, perfect studies in malnutrition' (152). The poor quality of human condition which affirms the debilitating effects of the denuded environment on the inhabitants, is ceaselessly repeated. By the water pumps, we are told that 'bare-chested women wheezing with consumption quarrelled over who came first in the long winding queue' (152). It is crucial to compare the revolting slum conditions of Nima with those of the main city of Accra, which is expected to be neat and tidy. If filth, moral decay, hunger, misery and wretchedness are the most prevalent landmarks of the Nima ghetto, then the city of Accra itself is merely an extension of Nima.

Awoonor manipulates excremental metaphor in conveying his vision of colonial Africa, which Ayi Kwei Armah exploits with devastating and eclectic effect in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. One important stylistic feature of Awoonor's text is the overwhelming preoccupation with the macabre, the pejorative and the excremental and the dystopian vision. It is, therefore, not surprising that Awoonor again exploits the image of shit to convey the squalidness of the environment of the main city of Accra:

The yellow lights of the streets paved with human excrement from flying trucks pronounce and witness it. Underneath them painted prostitutes are hawking their pussies to Lebanese merchants, a cedi a piece with the prospect of *dzara*, *ntosuo*<sup>3</sup>, and if you know where they sell penicillin you can buy and buy (84).

Prostitution and excrement are landmarks for spiritual decay and filth, and their preponderance in the city environment is a clear evidence which supports the thesis that Awoonor's rural and urban landscapes are plagued by the same socio-economic and moral diseases. The excremental image exploited in the novel is synonymous with the dunghill image of Deme and Nima. The sentence fragment, 'if you know where they sell penicillin you can buy and buy', is a warning which suggests that prostitution spreads venereal diseases. As if the squalidness and the moral disintegration of the urban setting is not enough, the novelist further loads it with images and symbols of spiritual putrefaction and physical wretchedness. The

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<sup>3</sup> In buying and selling foodstuffs in markets in West Africa, especially in Ghana, the buyer is given few of the items of food free of charge (*gratis*) after the buying. The Hausa word *dzara* and the Akan word *ntosuo* are used to express this commercial custom of taking a few food items free of charge. What Awoonor, however, is suggesting is that, like the customer in the market situation, the man who buys sexual pleasure in a brothel is also entitled to one or two free rounds of sex.

growth of prostitution in *This Earth, My Brother* has reached such an alarming proportion that it has become necessary for hotel managements to inspect 'a line of prostitutes' before the arrival of clients. Awoonor's disillusionment with the character of social forces in the society and his bitter revulsion against the emerging elite and middle class is captured by his choice of words:

Gay girls in tight silk clothes worn knee length chaperoned by garlicked Lebanese chattering animatedly in Arabic and Pidgin from huge American cars purchased with loans from the national banks and independent Africa. Some long-limbed like shy gazelles of the savannah, their lips coated in blood.

A man was caught behind the public latrine at the lorry park cohabiting with a ten-year old girl selling ground nuts. Statutory rape. When questioned he said it was a slip of the penis (113).

The sentence fragment 'painted prostitutes are hawking their pussies to Lebanese merchants, a cedi a piece' underpins one of Awoonor's stylistic modes: the manipulation of the profane. Like the African American LeRoi Jones (formerly known as Amiri Baraka), who uses obscene narrative style in dealing with physical and spiritual rot in the society, Awoonor exploits verbal rot in order to cleanse the physical and the moral murk in which colonisers and their heirs, the African nationalist leaders, have covered Africa. To achieve this didactic purpose, Awoonor tries to purify the physical and the spiritual rot with verbal rot, a stylistic patterning structured around the profane—a creative ploy akin to the ritualistic carrier motif in which moral and spiritual filth is carried ritualistically at the end of the year by a chosen victim (Horton 259).

Awoonor's urban locale is not only morally rotten, but also physically diseased. We know of the proud Colonel Letsu, whose foot is gnarled and deformed by guinea worm disease he contracted when he was a child and the wheezy tubercular woman. The most shocking portraits of diseased characters, however, are 'the fingerless leper woman clutching a baby into her bosom' and 'a man in the last throes of syphilis ... screaming in a public latrine: 'It's coming' (116). The question which easily comes to mind is whether any human being can survive the environment so far delineated?

The city environment, like the untamed rural world, has its own toll of hunger which definitely is a common feature in the Black African fictional milieu. Though the adult Amamu has never been plagued by hunger, the boy Amamu knows the pangs of hunger and starvation. He cannot forget the starvation which compels Abotsi to scavenge for dead animals from the rubbish dump or Tailor's faking of his own death in order to trick women into giving him some food nor can he erase from

his memory how his own brother is driven by hunger to eat food offered to the ancestral gods. The overwhelming wretchedness of Amamu's world dehumanises and debases man. Man has become a helpless victim of a locale in which human existence is meaningless and absurd.

What does Amamu say about the ruling caste of his society? They are, according to Amamu, a bunch of empty-headed intellectuals, whose sole preoccupation is their pensions and gratuities. In his usual powerful and spellbinding style, Awoonor paints the portraiture of the impotent caste. The first in status and importance is Alex, the Principal Secretary of Ministry of Agriculture—a self-confident forty-five old man, whose own intellectual emptiness is revealed by his impatience with college-trained, whom he regards as 'hair-brained snobs. His shallow-mindedness is further confirmed by the fact that he pushed his way to the top' through sheer doggedness. The novelist's second portrait deals with Bob, a failed scientist, turned banker, who has capacity for tomfoolery and jokes about female genitals. Amamu's next victim is a faceless dentist whose speciality is sleeping with his patients. There is also a portrait of the yaws-gnarled Deme kid, now a snobbish empty-headed colonel, who speaks neither English nor Ewe (21-23). The last group of elitist nitwits painted by Awoonor is made of 'the agriculturists planning the nation's agronomical salvation from moth-eaten desks filthy with old tattered files' and old executive and senior officers 'with failing eyes and a nagging and discomfiting anxiety about how much their pensions and gratuities were going to amount to when they retired from service' (92).

The writer maintains that Amamu's fictional cosmos is a land devoid of all life's nurturing elements and ruled by a bunch of insensitive and empty-headed intellectuals. Commenting on Ghana's attainment of independence, Awoonor talks about the Ghanaian nationalist leader bringing the people 'from the dust of degradation' and then casting them back 'into degradation' (p. 28)—a paradox which is difficult to unravel. Later in the novel Awoonor provides a hint to resolving the paradox when he declares that we must 'return to the magic hour of our birth for which we mourn'. The 'magic birth' Awoonor refers to requires mourning instead of the usual celebration and rejoicing because it turns into a nightmare. In a single sentence, Awoonor unpacks the paradox: 'Nkrumah, Awoonor declares later, from all accounts, just continues the work of British colonialists' (92). What is being suggested here is the disenchantment which has come with independence—expectations of freedom which generated huge euphoria and is expected to create a paradise on earth. Like the American Dream or the Emancipation of Slaves in America, the African independence has turned into a nightmare. That Ghana's independence is not really an emancipation from colonialism but rather a different form of enslavement is repeatedly suggested by Awoonor's manipulation of ironic mode:

Where are you from? Ghana. Isn't that the Gold Coast? Yes, before independence, before emancipation. (55)

The implied deeper meaning of this quote is whether Ghana is independent. The changing of the colonial name, the Gold Coast, to Ghana and designing a national flag do not offer true freedom. These political manoeuvres offer only what cynics call 'flag independence'. In another heavily loaded caustic irony Awoonor castigates an NT, the symbol of the body politic, who pleads 'with tears that the use of contraceptives be spelled out and entrenched in the constitution'. The narrator tells us that this immoral plea wins the gratitude of the chiefs—the custodians of traditional African morality and cultural purity—who regard his plea as the highest form of patriotism. We are told that the immoral MP becomes a national hero when the chiefs send 'a telegram congratulating the Assembly for its sagacity, good sense and patriotism' (117). What Awoonor suggests here is that not only the MPs are thrilled about having clandestine sexual relationships outside their marital boundaries but also the chiefs. The National Assembly, the chiefs and indeed the ruling caste are being satirised here for their immoral attitudes and the chiefs indicted for either their metaphysical blindness or moral ineptitude. Whatever meaning we attach to Awoonor's ironic stance, the MPs and the chiefs, who rule the nation, are acting contrary to what is expected from them.

To highlight one of his thematic concerns—the absurdity and the futility of the struggles of the Blackman on planet earth—Awoonor employs a network of paradoxes and ironical reversals, which need careful textual examination. The empty promise by the head of state to make 'Nima a City within a City' produces the reverse. Instead of improving the ghetto created during World War II when an American military base was established at Cantoment residential area and providing it with better social amenities which will make it fit for human habitation, Nima is so neglected that it acquires the reputation of being the shabbiest and the filthiest shantytown in Ghana. This ironic inversion is further compounded by the paradox of Nima eclipsing the city of Accra and relegating it into a slum suburb of the Nima ghetto. Awoonor's virulent satire is also directed against the incongruity of the use of socialism as a label for a nation in which capitalism reigns supreme and in which the gap between the rich and poor widens instead of narrowing. Worse still, although the sons and the daughters of the soil are now in power, the economy continues to be controlled by Lebanese businessmen. The author conveys this view as follows:

The Lebanese merchants are bargaining away native lands, even a government that proclaims socialism—a confusion of ideas, beliefs and magic—cannot provide the answer. So children turn into beggars in the market place, as the eminent men play golf on the Achimota course (162).

Awoonor talks of children turning into 'beggars in the market place'. He should have added 'and adults wind up in mad houses'. That foreigners are land speculators in a society which shouts militant and bogus rhetoric from rooftops and whose fundamental constitutional and ideological law is public ownership of land, is indeed incongruous.

The Blackman's odyssey is dogged by huge contradictions and paradoxes. The ambiguity lies in the fact that as a prodigal hero, who has severed his primary ties from his aboriginal home in order to assimilate European ethos, Amamu must go back to the traditional communalism he had previously rejected as a child in order to achieve a restoration and redemption. To regain his lost native wisdom, he has to be reconnected to the Deme dunghill he has turned his back to when he began his quest for western education—the quest for the golden fleece which takes him to the UK. In order to re-create a new counter-image for himself and his race, he must embrace the rejected stigmatised African heritage with all its degrading shortcomings. For Amamu to be able to find self-illumination and redefine his selfhood and race, he has to lose or dissipate his African rooted past during a process of westernisation which will finally lead to self-consciousness, desecration of his gods, cosmic anomie, a severe state of marginalisation, and physical and metaphysical agony. Another classic example of ironic inversion which needs to be mentioned is the incident in which Kodzo, the Deme town crier, who has received for many years treatment for his chronic and troublesome hernia without success, discovers that the traditional medicine-man, who has been treating him, suffers from severe chronic hernia himself. Kodzo's reaction is how can the physician heal him if he cannot heal himself.

The ironic mode in this novel is also evoked by irony of characters. The central irony of character is revealed by the protagonist. Amamu is acclaimed to be a learned and brilliant lawyer, but his peers dismiss him as a madman. The incongruity arises from the fact that in a society derailed by immorality, poverty and corruption and ruled by blind shallow-minded intellectuals, the sensitive and the visionaries are called insane by the naive and the visionless. As a British trained and successful lawyer, Amamu is a member of the ruling class, but he is so upright and alienated from his class that he is a virtual alien in his own country. The fact that Amamu's bourgeois wife cannot give him what he needs most, peace and love, and that he has found what his wife is incapable of providing him in a whore, Adisa, is loaded with both irony and paradox. The most heightened form of contradiction invoked by Amamu's character is that he has found no harmony in his westernised environment—an ambition and odyssey which have taken him from local schools right to overseas. Amamu has to go back, shoeless and stripped of all the strappings of westernisation, to the degrading Deme dunghill, his aboriginal home, inhabited by village destitutes and mad people, and dominated by pagan deities and drumming. It is equally ironic that the prodigal protagonist can only achieve the self-illumination

necessary for rediscovery of self and race if he has passed through the agony of westernisation which induces extreme alienation.

The beliefs in the efficacy of departed ancestors—the fundamental component of Africa's cultural heritage—form the very core of Awoonor's novel. In order to transform his creative vision into fictional realism, Awoonor excavates and transmogrifies myriad fragments of Ewe icons, rituals, myths, legends, religion and cultural history into a tantalising, seductive, complex novel. Cannily concealed beneath this narrative structure is an impenetrable magico-iconographic forest of Ewe symbols—a fictive crucible which veils the magical secret grove of Ewe mysticism. In the Ewe cosmology the well-being of man, both materially and spiritually, is believed to be controlled by the deities and ancestors, who demand frequent sacrifices of food. Now that we have fully scrutinised the environment which shapes and informs the characters who inhabit Awoonor's fictive world, let us take a look at Amamu's character.

Why a talented, London-trained lawyer flooded with clients and married to a beautiful, bourgeois been-to—a man with an impeccable social position—runs mad is my last central preoccupation. Unlike the poverty-stricken madmen of the untamed rural world of Deme, Amamu's education and profession can help him climb the ladder of success to the very top if he so desires. The enviable social status open to Amamu if joins the visionless majority of Ghanaians and plays the immoral role of the dishonest and corrupt intellectuals like his colleagues is evoked by the reaction of the traffic cop when he discovers the true identity of Amamu. The traffic policeman's fear and unconditional apology when he realises that the man is about to charge for traffic offence is an 'untouchable'—a lawyer—supports the interpretation that Amamu can enjoy all the privileges of the ruling class if he submits to the rules of the game of corruption practised by his colleagues.

Amamu's personal character is, perhaps, the fundamental cause of his refusal to accept the type of life the elite class of intellectuals entreat him to lead. He is not only very learned, but also aloof, proud, and extremely sensitive. Not very unlike Albert Camus' Meursault in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Amamu is brutally distant and seems to have Meursault's passion for the absolute truth. A society which places a high premium on lying, pretence, corruption and self-interest is bound to silence any minority voice which threatens its existence. What is difficult to unravel is the fact that, although Amamu is pitched against the corrupt society of Ghana and is committed to defending and saving the outcasts and the dispossessed, he continues to enjoy the privileges the immoral elite class has created for its own protection. That Amamu enjoys these benefits is revealed in how he uses his social position as a lawyer to terrorise the poor traffic policeman, who is about to charge him for a traffic offence.

Amamu tries various ways of escapism from the harsh realities of his cosmic

ennui and alienation. Amamu's deliberate attempt to remain in drunken stupor seems to suggest that he is trying to flee from the depressing realities of life. The protagonist's frequent mental journeys to the sweet dreamy world of his childhood, which is symbolised by the magical woman of the sea (*mammy-watah*) and the fields of butterflies and the ancient almond tree near the sea could be seen an indication of escapism from realities. The deeper insight of this strange behaviour, however, is that Amamu is struggling to get reconnected to the racial umbilical cord he has severed when he went on a quest for the golden fleece—an odyssey which leads to his process of westernisation and dissipation of his African cultural heritage.

Awoonor's protagonists' dilemma is a complex one. The ruling caste he is supposed to belong to is composed of parasites who are bent on sucking dry the blood of the poor. As a lawyer, he is considered a god in his society and he knows that things have to change. He, however, also knows the body politic is plagued by corruption—a rotten state of affairs epitomised by the slogan 'chop make chop some' (22). Although a transformation can only be achieved through the destruction of the social parasites, it is impossible for a lone voice to effect the demolition of a powerful elite class supported by a silent voice of the majority. Amamu's initial attempts to transform his diseased society are confined to talking to his peers in the National Club:

He would go on and on. Suddenly he would realise that no-one said anything, no-one interrupted. So he would become silent, withdrawal was his immediate refuge. Then he would gaze to sea, his mind wandering away. After a while, his friends would pick up their conversation which had been interrupted .... Suddenly he would call Richard and ask for his bill. And without a word to his comrades, he would descend the creaky stairway and drive away into the evening. They would say he was mad. But very learned (25f).

It is clear from this citation that even before Amamu actually goes around the bend, his colleagues perceive him as a madman. This is not all. Amamu's alienated character trait has become his second nature. It is evident that Amamu discovers the only way by which he can evolve harmoniously with his peers is by adopting the attitude prescribed by the society: 'Chop some make I chop some'. The society insists on its members adhering to the rules of the game: making others steal from national coffers what you do not want to steal; confining criticism of the government and the society in general to verbal rhetorics and meaningless protest designed to achieve no concrete results.

Like the characters in Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, Amamu realises that his peers are only interested in spending their time and energy on meaningless



worthless beings fit to be thrown to the dogs or exorcised like evil spirits that they are. Amamu has warm relationship with the Deme's social misfits. The child Amamu's final decision not to hit the insane Rev. Dumenygo with the stone he has picked up for this purpose as his peers have expected and his silent rejection of the 'wise' adults' advice not to establish any relationship those whom the society has branded 'insane' can only be explained as an uncanny ability to recognise the absolute truth.

In Awoonor's fictional world-view, the only people equipped with mother wit are the children. This view is confirmed by Amamu's and his peers' decision to accompany Abotsi on his last journey to the pagan graveyard despite expressed orders from parents that no children should come to the burial ground. Amamu recalls vividly and painfully the extreme suffering the Deme social misfits are subjected to and the tremendous obstacles they have to overcome in order to survive physically. While Tailor has to feign death order to compel the women to give him something to ward off his nagging hunger, his friend Abotsi has to fight with vultures which rule the rubbish dumps that contain the dead animals. The most unforgettable incident concerning hunger is Amamu's brother's coming home, dripping with palm oil after eating the food offered to the Ewe gods. Amamu's world is not without brutalities meted out to the weak and the dispossessed.

The protagonist cannot help contrasting his own servant, Yaro's moral anguish, when his brother is beaten to death by the police of independent Ghana with the Sasieme durbar incident and its brutal repression by the colonial authorities of the Gold Coast. Amamu, the learned lawyer, associates himself with the suffering of the Deme outcasts, whom he cannot eradicate from his mind. Amamu cannot ignore the physical and moral decay of Nima: the prostitution, the inescapable suffering and the eternal dunghills of shit. Neither can he escape the artificiality of his wife and the emptiness of his own life—her artificial teeth and hair which symbolise the mockery and the hollowness of their very relationship. Amamu cannot transcend his destiny. Going back to Europe is not an option and neither can he go home because 'Home is my desolation, home is my anguish, home is my drink of hyssop and tears. Where is home?' (29). Amamu also makes a discovery which shatters all hopes for the future, leaving a personal ritual sacrifice as the only alternative. The ruling class of Black neo-colonialists, Amamu has discovered, are Blacks with white souls who faithfully continue the work left by their white masters. Amamu realises that the 'nation's agronomical salvation' is planned 'from moth-eaten desks filthy with tattered files' in 'forgotten edifices' by 'old men' with 'falling eyes' and a nagging and discomfoting anxiety about their retirement pensions and gratuities. Even the rat-infested National Club building patronised by Amamu and his peers is also a colonial inheritance, and the barman, Richard, is employed to work in the club because somebody remembers his colonial connection.

What is Awoonor trying to do by linking the colonial ruling caste with the contemporary ruling elite? Obviously, the novelist maintains that the moral decay, the disintegration, which besieges Amamu's world is a historical continuum dating from the past. The central evidence in support of this view is revealed by the following quotation.

Nkrumah, from all accounts, just continued the work of the British colonialists. Government by force of arms—*vis et armis*—government by chicanery, tricks, new tricks will be worked out with devastating logic for a one-party state ... (92).

The above citation suggests that the nationalist leaders who won freedom for Africa have either consciously or unconsciously sold their people back into slavery—an insidious servitude in which the slave-masters are all Blacks, who use the same old colonial subterfuges disguised with new names and faces. The Black leaders are forced to walk backwards into the colonial past for their political stratagems because 'seeing forward was denied them' (93). This view is further reinforced by Awoonor's symbolic use of the Christianborg Castle, the colonial administrative headquarters, which the nationalist government of Nkrumah and the military regime that toppled him use as the official residence for the Head of State. Awoonor suggests the nationalist government of Nkrumah is, like the colonial government, dominated by greed and self-interest and is not committed to the welfare of the masses. This interpretation is confirmed by the fact that the Black Star Square, the symbol of nationhood and national heritage, is in total darkness while in the Castle, where the President lives, 'light was blazing ... as if it were on fire' (27). Awoonor suggests that Nkrumah's political antics are like those of the colonisers. Nkrumah who considers himself a national hero and a redeemer declares: 'Follow my laws my children, follow my laws for I am the one who brought you from the dust of degradation' (28)—a self-deification which rings hollow. What the national legendary hero has, according to Awoonor, done is to derail his people and send them plunging deeper into darkness.

Amamu is confronted with a huge dilemma. What can he do? His society is bent upon doing nothing about its impending doom. There is no future for a society dominated by the visionless majority who can only move backward. Amamu cannot go and live with his prostitute girlfriend, Adisa, because their love can only provide a temporary relief to the 'wounded' and 'fragmentary humanity that has suffered and continues to suffer the affront of a total immorality, the immorality that rejected and excluded all other possibilities' (Awoonor 168). Finally, Amamu has decided to confront death and sacrifice his life by committing suicide so that others can be saved. This is definitely a regressive step—an action which leads to loss of selfhood

and death. Awoonor suggests in his essay, 'Tradition and Continuity in African Literature', that Amamu's final journey back to his aboriginal home of Deme and death is not futile because 'He is, in fact, the Ogun essence through whom the restoration will be achieved' (Awoonor 1976:170). In his article entitled 'Kofi Awoonor as Critic' Obi Maduakor formulates one of Awoonor's four propositions articulated in his essay cited above. According to Maduakor's (1994:10) formulation,

African art aspires ultimately towards the condition of wholeness. It aims at evoking energies that make for restoration, renewal and integration; it does not provoke disintegration either within the individual or communal psyche.

The prodigal hero's arrival at Deme, the disappearance of his nagging headache and its replacement by serenity and happiness support the view that his final death is a triumph and not a tragedy. Awoonor suggests that Amamu 'should die so that the rest shall be saved' and sees his death as ritual sacrifice which will, perhaps, give a meaning to his meaningless existence. It is, however, difficult to brush aside the feeling that Amamu has sacrificed his life in vain. Although the termination of Amamu's odyssey in madness has puzzled many a critic:

Awoonor insists that the contradictions within the hero's psyche are resolved at that moment of his final embrace with the woman the sea (*mammy-watah*) (Maduakor 1994:10).

Perhaps we must add that the return of the prodigal hero to his aboriginal home, bare-footed and without the trappings of western civilisation, amounts to the restoration and redemption of his dissipated marginalised selfhood and racial wholeness.

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# Africa and Identity in the Art and Writing of Breyten Breytenbach

Marilet Sienaert

From the strongly autobiographical tone of his writing to the striking recurrence of self-portraits in his pictorial art, the issue of identity and self-representation has always been foregrounded and problematised in the work of Breyten Breytenbach<sup>1</sup>. The extent to which the question of identity is—or is not—linked to place, is of primary importance in the context of this paper, not only because I wish to examine the link between Africa and the sense of self constituted in his work, but also because I question the way critics place his oeuvre within a purely European tradition of writing and painting. Hence the rather ambitious title of this paper, meant to evoke the 'bigger picture' which underpins my introductory exploration of the interplay between identity and Africa in his work.

In order to briefly contextualise this issue of identity and place I have to remind the reader of specific events in Breytenbach's eventful life. He left South Africa in the early sixties and settled in Paris with his Vietnamese wife, a decision which inevitably, during the apartheid years, constituted a form of exile and undoubtedly shaped the nature of his work. Although he now—since the democratic elections of 1994—regularly returns to the country of his birth, the fact remains that for several decades his art and writing were informed by the various European trends of the day. The rich infusion of both French Surrealism and Symbolism<sup>2</sup> comes to

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<sup>1</sup> Breytenbach's writing is almost exclusively autobiographical, from *Die ysterkoei moet sweet* (1964), *Om te vlieg* (1974), *Met ander woorde* (1973), *Seisoen in die Paradys* (1974) and *True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist* (1983) right up to the more recent *Return to Paradise* (1993), *Dog heart* (1998) and *Woordwerk* (1999), to name just a few. Selfrepresentation has similarly been problematized in his pictorial work, as implied in exhibition titles such as 'Selfportraits and other ancestors' (1991); 'Painting the eye' (1993) and 'Portraits, Prints and Paper' (1998).

<sup>2</sup> Critics have long proclaimed the influence of Surrealism and Symbolism in Breytenbach's work, for example Brink (1971) as regards the writing, and Leenhardt (1987) as regards the pictorial work.

mind, (e.g. *Die Ysterkoei moet sweet* 1964, and *Om te vlieg* 1971), as do the explicit intertextualities of *A Season in Paradise* (1974), *Return to Paradise* (1993) and *Rimbaud's Une saison en enfer*. His pictorial art too—thematically as well as stylistically—leans heavily on the work, amongst others, of Magritte, Henri Rousseau, De Chirico and Bacon.

In spite of this obvious European influence one remained acutely aware—throughout the years—of the umbilical cord which tied Breytenbach to Africa. The subject matter of his work and the consistently rich Afrikaans he continued to practice in spite of years in exile make this abundantly obvious. For him, Africa and the act of remembering are indelibly intertwined, the one feeding on the other and together providing the matter of his creative imagination. Life in a foreign land may have turned his seldom-heard mother-tongue into a memory, but its very absence seems to have nourished his imagination in sometimes unexpected ways, as when claims, for example, to 'always draw in Afrikaans, my mother-tongue ...' (Breytenbach, 1991:54).

However, this attachment to the land of his birth took a turn when, on a clandestine visit to South Africa in 1974, he was arrested for so called subversive political activities against the Apartheid Régime and imprisoned for seven years. Ironically, this led to almost cult status for the enfant terrible of Afrikaans literature, he became both a martyr for, and emblem of the alternative voice of his people. His creative work was stimulated by the hardships of prison life and his resistance against the system, and some of his most outstanding poetry was written in this period. After serving his prison sentence he remained vehemently opposed to the political system sustained by the National Party and seemed unable to overcome his anger and despair at the loss of a personal homeland. Significantly, he now also preferred not to write in his mother tongue. Accepting French citizenship on his return to Paris, he started working on several manuscripts simultaneously, all of them in English: *End Papers* (1983a), *Mouir* (1983b) which was written in a mixture of Afrikaans and English, *The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist* (1984), and the translation of a selection of prison poems, entitled *Judas Eye* (1988).

On one level the decision to write in English was a practical one and has remained valid to this day: The works do not require translation and immediately become accessible to a wider reading public. On another level though, as is evident from the bitterness and tremendous sense of loss expressed in his art and writing at the time, the decision was emotional and reflective of the way language (in this case the mother tongue) and place intermingle in the constitution of a self. When one compares the psychological fragmentation<sup>3</sup> expressed in some of the prison poems

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<sup>3</sup> A fragmented sense of self can be traced throughout this collection of poems, not only in the evocation of a profound sense of depersonalisation experienced as a result

(cf ('Yk') 1983c) to the lyrical clarity expressed by the 'I' of his most recent writing (Papierblom 1998a), it is obvious that more than the mere passing of time must have entered the equation. A new, and in many ways nurturing, connectedness with North and West Africa was established (elucidated further on in this paper) and served as catalyst to heal his acute sense of alienation. It is the nature of this connectedness with Africa—as well as the interaction between this connectedness and the European-colonial tradition from which he springs—that significantly informed the sense of identity now constituted through his art and writing. It is against this background that I should like to highlight the nature of this 'I' and its significance in a global context, as it constitutes a subject position which not only poses a challenge to Breytenbach's fellow South Africans, but also has ethical—and political—implications for changes taking place in the world today.

The first definite indication in the post-prison period of this shift from Europe to a renewed and healing groundedness in Africa appears in *The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist* (1984) commenced shortly after his return to France. Although here the narrator writes from Sicily and thus strictly speaking still from Europe, he is acutely aware of the way in which the colour and quality of the light around him reflects that of the African soil; a conscious assimilation that helps him to recall and confront the full horror of his prison experience. The presence of Africa—north of his homeland—escalates in his subsequent work, as in the haunting *Memory of snow and of dust* (1989), which unfolds mostly in Ethiopia before shifting to South Africa. *Return to Paradise* is similarly placed in North and West Africa, mostly in Senegal, and even his poetry becomes imbued with themes and images from that part of the world<sup>4</sup>. His paintings too, suddenly become startlingly bright with the warm, clear colours of Africa, there is no sign any more of the foggy greys and murky green tints that characterise his earlier work from Europe<sup>5</sup>. More than a superficial presence on the level of themes or images however, these linkages with the African soil have indeed had a profound effect on Breytenbach's understanding of the creative act of writing and painting, and in particular on the sense of self constituted through this process.

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of solitary confinement, but also in the ruptured—yet powerfully 'signifying'—structure and syntax of most of the poems. Compare in particular 'Isis' (p.155), 'ii' (p.156), 'Nekra' (pp. 43- 44) and 'Mahala' (p. 8).

<sup>4</sup> See *nege landskappe van ons tye bemaak aan 'n beminde* (1993), and in particular the three 'island' poems on pp. 5-6,98-99 and 172-174, as well as entire sections in *Soos die So* (1990b) for example pp.160 -166.

<sup>5</sup> Representative of this shift is the contrast between the dull tones of the early 'Ma vie et moi' (1975), (reproduced in 1993b:43) and the vivid hues of 'Famille sainte' (1991).

Take for example his affinity with the African concept of ancestors and its role in ancient and contemporary forms of worship. The title *Selfportraits and other Ancestors* for an exhibition of his work in Stockholm is a case in point, as is the subject of one of his best known paintings, the sinisterly beautiful *Moonlight Arab*, which was inspired by an annual festival in Ethiopia to honour the ancestors, when bodies are exhumed, garlanded and fêted for a day and a night, to be buried again with the rising sun<sup>6</sup>. Such explicit reference in his work to this ancient tradition is not fortuitous: In the same way in which tribal peoples relate to their world through the prism of kinship, Breytenbach refers to the act of writing or painting as 'a dancing of the bones' (1991:62), thus recalling how art practice in Africa traditionally serves to confirm one's links with the ancestors. Creative practice thus has a specific function: Through one's art, a return to the forefathers creates a sense of belonging and becomes an opportunity, as it were, to renew relationship with oneself and the world.

In a similar vein, the mask as archetypal African image has also become synonymous with Breytenbach's work<sup>7</sup>. For him the concept of identity is closely linked to the concept of masking: Not only does it embody identity as something which cannot be fully revealed or understood, it also suggests a constantly transforming 'I'—a perpetual shedding of identities which evoke the mysteriousness of being. This is indeed the traditional African point of view: As in the case of, for example, the initiation masks from Mali with which Breytenbach is familiar, 'the more secret the association (of the initiate), and the "deeper" its knowledge, the more ambiguous, abstract and metaphoric their visual language' (Nooter 1993:59). The unfamiliar effect of a ceremonial mask glimpsed in semi-darkness therefore effectively conveys such fathomless depth of being. The mirror too, as primary motif in both the art and writing of Breytenbach<sup>8</sup>, points not only to a similarly constituted ever-changing 'I' but specifically evokes the meaning of the small mirror sometimes

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<sup>6</sup> One of the prison poems evokes a similar practice from Madagascar, the *Famadihana* ancestral feast (Eklips 1983d:45-46).

<sup>7</sup> This is evident from the many pictorial depictions of masked figures (see for example 1990a:16;36;40;44;48 and 1993b:14;17;19;50;54), but also from the frequent evocation of multiple, interchangeable identities in his writing. See for example 1993a:163-168, where the poet refers to himself as *Bibberbek*, *Bewebors*, *Bittergek*, *Buitendag*, *Bruidjebark*, *Bietjieberes*, *Bredebroek* and *Babbeldors* in the space of one poem.

<sup>8</sup> Pictorial examples abound (1990a:125 and 1993b:17) and come as no surprise in the light of the '*Don Espejuelo*' (Mr. Mirror) alter ego encountered repeatedly in his writing, and which foregrounds his obsession with the impenetrable nature of being.

fixed to the stomach of a tribal fetish<sup>9</sup>: Although 'I' am temporarily visible in the reflected image, the essence of my full identity remains impenetrable as the glass itself.

This concept of a shifting identity is further problematised: On a first reading of his more recent work, for example *Return to Paradise* (1993), 'Foreword' (1996a) and 'Travelling towards an Identity' (1996b), one is struck by the notion of homelessness foregrounded in the recurring figure of the exile, the drifter, the bastard and so on. In fact, the notion of identity itself seems to be adrift, as for example in the sometimes confusing array of names the author uses to refer to himself: Mr. Bird, Mr. Mirror, Lazarus, Jan Afrika, Bangai Bird, Breyten Breytenpag, Bibberbek, Bewebors and so forth. As stylistic device this insistence on a constantly changing 'I' naturally undermines the idea of a single, unified voice (see Van der Merwe 1980 and Viljoen 1993). In his pictorial work the many images of masks, mirrors, creatures associated with change such as moths, butterflies and chameleons similarly evoke transforming and (inter)changeable identities, thereby constituting a veritable gallery of selves—in metamorphosis (see Breytenbach 1990:16,36,40,44,48).

Breytenbach's longstanding interest in, and commitment to Buddhist philosophy<sup>10</sup> no doubt partly explains this persistently shifting 'I' as well as his claim that 'every portrait—landscape or other depiction—is a selfportrait' (1991:76). He argues that, although the artwork reflects what the artist sees, it also incarnates what the artist is, in other words what he or she has consciously absorbed (see Breytenbach 1991: 76f). Such (Buddhist) transcendence of the self as a separate entity in order to identify with the depicted landscape is even explicitly expressed in some early paintings, where a horse or a shoe entitled Self-portrait clearly implies 'I am (also) the other'<sup>11</sup>. Although a reading in terms of Buddhist selflessness goes a long way in clarifying statements of this kind, the blurring of conventional subject-object

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<sup>9</sup> Wooden sculptured figures where the fetish material on the abdomen is covered with a small piece of (imported) mirror is a common occurrence in African art (Willett 1993:167).

<sup>10</sup> Evident from his very first collection of poetry (*Die ysterkoei moet sweet* 1964) and repeatedly acknowledged as feeding ground of his oeuvre, Buddhist philosophy represents a way of being that permeates Breytenbach's understanding of the creative process (cf. Sienaert 1993:25-45).

<sup>11</sup> Such Buddhist dissolution of self and integration with the perceived object springs from the premise of relativity and the principle of 'dependent arising' formulated by the historic Buddha. All things are in a state of 'constant arising and ceasing' as nothing has a true material nature through which it can exist independently (cf. Abe 1985:92-93). 'You' and 'I' are relative to each other as poles of one and the same process, therefore 'you' are inherently present in 'I' just as 'I' am present in 'you'.

boundaries and the associated notion of a shifting 'I' also postulates identity, in true postmodernist fashion, as a construct within the discursive practice of writing or painting.

In view of Breytenbach's overriding connectedness with Africa however, the blurring of boundaries between subject and object also strongly recalls the fact that—whenever African art is considered in a tribal context—there is no division between the object and its beholder (cf. Forster, 1993:30). This implies that in Africa, art—be it an object, music or dance—is not seen as being separate from the person who experiences it. Breytenbach (1991: 76-79) similarly insists that the act of painting or writing becomes both the approximation (or reflection) of reality and the energy which brings it into being; it represents a single process through which the subject-object dichotomy of artist (or observer) and image dissolves. This particular vision of reality requires the active participation of an observer and can metaphorically be seen as a kind of confrontation; an interaction between object and viewer which challenges conventional perception and leads to its transformation or renewal.

The notion of art as constitutive of the subject rather than constituted by the subject (Lechte on Julia Kristeva, 1990:24) offers a Eurocentric theoretical counterpart to this tribal assumption of art practice. Of significance however, is that in the case of both types of understanding, be it African or European, the subject position thus brought into being is predicated on the ability to confront and transform, a definition of identity which—for Breytenbach—is rooted in 'the Africa into which you are born and where you adapt, a world posited on metamorphosis, because we are interchangeable with the land and vegetation and animals and spirits' (1992: *Thinking Fire* 179).

This groundedness in Africa also finds persistent expression in a relatively new but more and more predominant branch of Breytenbach's work, namely the philosophical essays<sup>12</sup>, many of which are written for and in the context of the Gorée Institute's activities. This Institute was set up in the early eighties when a group of influential Afrikaners met with a delegation from the then banned African National Congress in the city of Dakar. Breytenbach was instrumental in negotiating the establishment of a Pan African Institute on nearby Gorée, the small island and last foothold of slaves exported to the new world. It is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Gorée Institute operates as a think-tank for democracy, culture and development in Africa, and has since its inception been pivotal in forging links

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<sup>12</sup> In addition to *End Papers* (1983a), *Hart-Lam* (1991), *The Memory of Birds in Times of Revolution* (1996) and essays written for the catalogues of his art exhibitions there has been a proliferation of recent essays and philosophical papers, some of which were written for public lectures and are yet to be published.

between West and South Africa, (cf. *The Time of the Writer* festivals and the Natal Technikon's graphic art programme), and also between Zanzibar and the Centre Rimbaud in Djibouti.

Breytenbach's commitment to the mission of the Institute, as well as his participation in numerous workshops there, have led to a number of essays—some yet to be published—which further reveal how this particularly African sense of self informs his thinking: African nomads, and here he cites as examples (1998b:13) the Tuareg—and also the Afrikaner—know that to survive you have to 'initiate change and unleash potential'. Clearly implicit in this wisdom is that one's survival and therefore one's very being depends on the ability to adapt and change. For the nomad then, identity—by definition—becomes synonymous to transformation; to 'be' is to 'transform'. The flexible spirit this implies is reflected in Breytenbach's own nomadic lifestyle and the physical and intellectual interaction he maintains between various points in Africa and between Africa and Europe. Metaphorically, it appears in the drifter or exile figure in his work, but also in the many images of metamorphosis and inter-changeability. A precarious subject position fraught with ambiguity, this identity-in-transit is meant to be read positively. As there is nothing new under the proverbial sun, creativity, after all, is based on the ability to change one's perspective. It implies lateral thinking and a fresh take on familiar objects or notions which have grown stale over time. By interpreting one's world through writing and painting one transforms it; it is an act similar to that of the creative thinker whose ability to offer a fresh perspective stimulates political change. In the words of Breytenbach, 'it is through moving that you make' (1996a:5).

Paradoxically however, this ideal identity cannot be defined as—by its very nature—it can not be fixed. There is a dialectical relationship between specificity and the common pool, so that there is no single (Tuareg or Afrikaner) identity, not even for the nomad. The ethical—and political—implications then are obvious: We are required to 'move'; to enter the metaphoric space Breytenbach refers to as the 'middle world' (1996a:5), where anything becomes possible because imagination, indelibly linked to memory<sup>13</sup>, can here function at its full potential. In the present climate of the so called African Renaissance and amidst renewed claims of Africanism, Breytenbach uses the image of the African nomad to caution that the very act of defining an identity (self or other), is more than cultural affirmation. Naming accrues power and it becomes a political act, by naming you identify with, or distance yourself from the other. Because identity is normally predicated on an act of recognition which presupposes exclusion and demarcation, he pleads for the ideal of a 'bastard' identity:

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<sup>13</sup> See Breytenbach (1993a:71-90) where the explicit equation of memory and imagination underpins a whole section of poems in the collection.

The bastard, I think, has a heightened sense of identity, perhaps of the furtiveness thereof: the past is more complex and entangled, the future less certain, identity consists of the wells and the pastures and the stars along the lines of travelling (1998c:14).

Thence the chameleon, an archetypal African image of change and an important presence in Breytenbach's art as well as his writing<sup>14</sup>. Not only does it evoke the nomad as go-between, as hybrid identity which facilitates interaction between seeming opposites, it also evokes an identity which—for Breytenbach—would encapsulate what it means to be African:

[A]ccommodating and realising the enriching qualities of diversity; situating Africa in and towards the rest of the world— not just the North, but the South as well; evolving, historically and theoretically, a body of African thinking, and valorising that which already exists; assessing the mix apparently so peculiar to the continent of culture (creativity), reflection (philosophical and religious) and public action or intervention (1998c:5).

Beyond this pan-African celebration of our affinities with others elsewhere in Africa, Breytenbach also speaks to his second home which is Europe. We cannot limit ourselves by being bound to national or geographical frontiers. When Africa is enriched and not dispersed by its inherent diversity, it mirrors the identity Breytenbach aspires to through the creative act of writing or painting. As suggested by the image of the nomad or chameleon, the diversity of Africa evokes our potential to change—and by implication—to grow, it highlights the way in which the 'I' can constantly transform itself and creatively engage the 'other'. Like the polyphony of voices in a poem or painting which offer no reassuring sense of closure but a wealth of possible readings, it is a subject position which recalls the right of the individual to seek out different possibilities and to transform. Whilst acknowledging our inability to define the ultimate (social or aesthetic) utopia, it is a form of identity which promotes the 'middle way' (Breytenbach, 1996a:5), namely awareness of the world—and ourselves—as revolutionary centres of renewal and change.

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<sup>14</sup> See Breytenbach (1990a:53) for an example of this image in his pictorial work. In his writing, the striking series of poems which feature 'Kamiljoen' (a phonetic play on Chameleon) comes to mind Breytenbach (1993b:61-69).

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# Breyten Breytenbach's *Memory of Snow and of Dust*— A Postmodern Story of Identiti(es)

Erhard Reckwitz

I  
Marcel Proust once remarked that most authors, throughout their creative careers, continue writing or rewriting one and the same basic book.

This is particularly true of the South African poet, painter and novelist Breyten Breytenbach who in 1990 was awarded the CNA prize—perhaps the most prestigious literary prize in South Africa and as such late recognition for an author living in exile for more than twenty years. His prize-winning novel (if it can be called that at all) *Memory of Snow and of Dust*<sup>1</sup> reveals itself even at first sight as being another poetic or narrative reworking of his obsessive preoccupation with exile and imprisonment respectively, both of which he had to undergo, plus the attending problems of identity the exiled or imprisoned subject is necessarily exposed to.

In a *Weekly Mail* review, Fanie Olivier (1989:1) says:

*Memory of Snow and of Dust* is essentially a work of human existence. The novel reintroduces the themes and literary motives from Breytenbach's other works, examines them, considers and rejects them, and, paradoxically, reaffirms their relevance. In this search for being, calling on one's memory is essential. In the novel memory itself becomes part of the narration, in the same sense that living and dying is part of writing one's life.

Breytenbach quite openly confesses to the essential sameness of his *oeuvre*, to its—in order to put it more fashionably—internal intertextuality. In a poem of his serving as a kind of motto or prefix to *Memory of Snow and of Dust* he writes somewhat programmatically:

The biography  
I am repeatedly in the process of  
writing is always the same one,

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<sup>1</sup> All quotations are from the 1989 Faber and Faber edition.

and it may be described  
as a variously sliced-up or torn-apart  
book of myself as the essential  
apocryphal memory (p. 3).

The book he has thus produced consists of two parts: The first one deals with the goings-on and actions of Mano, a South African coloured (to use the invidious terminology of race) and an actor by training, and Meheret, his Ethiopian girlfriend, a writer and journalist, both living in exile in Paris. Mano, who is a member of a so-called 'movement', gets sent to South Africa on an undercover-mission and, inevitably, is caught by the Secret Police. When it becomes clear that he is to stand trial on a trumped-up murder charge which will result in an almost automatic death-sentence, Meheret starts writing down the events of her time with Mano. This she does partly in an attempt to conjure up images of her lost lover, partly as a kind of tribute to the unborn child whose stirrings she is beginning to feel in her womb and for whom she wants to secure a past by preserving memories of his lost father.

The second part is chiefly made up of Mano's reminiscences and impressions, both 'real' and phantasmagoric, while he is awaiting 'the high jump' in the death row of Pollsmoor Prison.

This brief reconstruction of the plot-outline of the novel is sufficient to convey the impression of the extent to which it is nothing but a thinly disguised fictional reworking of what happened to Breytenbach himself and of what formed the basis for his more overtly autobiographical writings, such as *Mouiroir*, *The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist*, *End Papers* or *Judas Eye*. What the plot-outline has not managed to get across is the fact that the 'story', to use that inadequate term for want of a better one, is not so simple as it might appear from summing it up.

## II

Of course Breytenbach is far too sceptical, as has been evinced by his other writings, about the ability of the human memory to supply a precise and reliable remembrance of things past. After having lived in Paris for such a long time, thus consciously or unconsciously absorbing the influence of the French *maîtres-penseurs* of our times, he no longer subscribes to the European *cogito*-tradition culminating in Husserl's concept of '*Erinnerung als Selbsterkenntnis*'<sup>2</sup>. Following this tradition human beings always remember and present their lives, as Umberto Eco (1965:162) has shown, as a

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Manfred Sommer (1990:205): 'Selbstfindung ist diese "Erinnerung" aber im doppelten Sinne: ein Finden *in* sich und ein Finden *seiner* selbst' (This kind of memory is an act of finding oneself in a dual sense: a finding *in* oneself and a finding of one's *own* self [a.t.]).

conventional, unified story from which all accidental and distracting elements have been removed, or as Wolfgang Iser (1976:203) has put it: 'only in our memories do we have the freedom to give shape or meaning to the diverse and discordant complexities of life such as we experience them' (a.t.)<sup>3</sup>.

Accordingly, *Memory of Snow and of Dust* cites this tradition by constantly referring to the novelistic qualities of autobiography: 'Each life is a novel' (p. 82), it says somewhere, and Mano, before embarking on his memoirs, reassures the reader: "Life is a story". So a story you will get', and he goes on to say: 'my report is a story. Which, by definition, must have a beginning, an opening up and enduring to an ending' (p. 216).

If, therefore, 'memory is a faculty of the imagination' (p. 215), as Mano observes, 'if people invent themselves' (p. 25), human beings must have an almost in-built tendency to delete from their past lives everything that does not conform to what later in their lives they have come to conceive of as the essence of themselves.

### III

Breytenbach obviously invokes this tradition in order to play it off against more recent insights into the problematic nature of memorising one's life: Since Freud we have come to realise that memory has its own ways of systematically suppressing certain events or facts, thus revealing a subconscious intentionality at work transcending by far everything the conscious mind may be cognisant of<sup>4</sup>. Derrida on the other hand has taken apart the Husserlian concept of human beings gaining access to their true selves through reflecting themselves in the mirror of their own memories. Such a '*présence à soi*' presupposes a complete convergence of the two selves, the present one reflecting upon itself and the former one being reflected. This, however, would only be possible if the self had access to an immediate pre-reflexive knowledge of itself which in turn would enable it to recognise itself in its former image. Since such knowledge is not available—hence the need for reflection—there are no criteria by which to judge the correctness of an act of retroactive identification. Accordingly, the memorising self is subject to a constant redoubling of itself without ever being capable of bridging the gap between its various stages of existence<sup>5</sup>: '*La présence n'est jamais présente*', as Derrida (1972:336) puts it.

Correspondingly, Breytenbach has one of his characters say: 'absence, that

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<sup>3</sup> 'nur in der Erinnerung herrscht das notwendige Mass an Freiheit, die es gestattet, die ungeordnete Vielfalt des erfahrenen Lebens in die Sinngestalt eines stimmigen Zusammenhangs zu bringen'.

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of this point cf. Jürgen Habermas (1968:266ff).

<sup>5</sup> For an excellent presentation of this intricate problem cf. Manfred Frank (1984:196ff).

was the very presence!' (p. 82) Based on this epistemological premise the reader, of course, does not get the conventional life story promised him by Mano, i.e. a well-made story in the Aristotelian sense with a beginning, a middle and an end that progresses along a fixed number of firmly implanted syntagmatic sign-posts.

On the contrary it is claimed elsewhere: 'One mustn't make it too easy for the reader!' (p. 80), and since the quest for the self is bound to end up in an endless dissemination of that self 'the search for clarity extends the areas of uncertainty and diffuseness' (p. 5), as Meheret states rather paradoxically at the very beginning of her memoirs, which, incidentally, is a clear reference to Heisenberg's 'uncertainty principle' that the observer inevitably changes or obfuscates the observed.

'We don't need to be coherent' (p. 286), Mano claims in one of his mad ramblings in prison, and this is precisely the way the present novel is structured. To begin with it does not have any of the textual markers delimiting its beginning or end, the framing effect we have come to expect from more conventional stories. Rather disconcertingly the novel begins with the wilful imposition of a beginning: 'This is where your story starts' (p. 5), and it takes about a dozen pages or so before any of the deictics or pronouns employed are contextually saturated so that the reader may know who is thus addressed. Equally, the text disclaims its own ending and, by implication, its own significance, when Mano concludes his attempt at recollecting his past with the words: 'Please forgive me for forgetting' (p. 308). As a man without a memory he has truly become Anom Niemand, the name he assumed upon re-entering South Africa, and a story about an anonymous nobody is, by definition, no story at all.

But even what little remains of the ending of the story is undercut by its narrative presentation in that two conflicting versions are given: One where Mano gets miraculously released from prison (p. 296), and one where he awaits execution (p. 297). The novel, in its attempt to capture the diffuseness of human life and memory, rather blatantly flaunts its own flouting of anything even vaguely resembling syntagmatic coherence:

I'm not to know if a clear line will ultimately describe itself .... But there will be repetitions: it is the simplest way I know of to make patterns, and patterns bring about rhythm by which (an image of) life is ensnared (p. 215)

—thus Mano states his Kierkegaardian or Freudian obsession with '*Wiederholung*'.

Hence the novel presents itself as a motley arrangement of isolated narrative sequences, some set in Europe, others in Africa, some rendered more or less realistically, others adhering to a form of discourse Borges has termed 'irrealism'. Poems alternate with descriptive passages where aesthetic or political matters are discussed, and the gruesome reality of South African police practice is presented in a

'medieval morality play' (pp. 88ff) showing in very drastic terms the torturing to death of a black female academic.

#### IV

What all those pieces of discourse, which are syntagmatically incoherent as far as their sequential arrangement is concerned, have in common, however vaguely, is some kind of paradigmatic theme, namely their preoccupation with exile and the ensuing sense of disorientation, with imprisonment, death, the 'hot' violence of Africa (metonymically represented by black *dust*), the 'cool' indifference of Europe (metonymically represented by white *snow*) and, because of all this, the inconclusive search for an essentially schizophrenic identity that is as elusive and fleeting a substance as snow and dust:

everything is resolved and encompassed by the immobile mobility of scaling your own life—the mountain will be snow and the movement will be dust  
(p. 286)

—this is the final realization of *Mano*. As Frederic Jameson (1991:25) sees it, such a schizophrenic condition is typically associated with the experience of 'isolated, disconnected material signifiers that fail to link up into a coherent sequence'. There is absolutely no linking of one's past to one's future, and there is no continuity at all between different mental states. This also seems to apply to South Africa at large which is quite literally a grotesque 'no man's land', a graphic term often used by Breytenbach to denote his country's essential inimicality to a fulfilled sense of human identity.

Accordingly this sort of experience is best conveyed and 'iconized'—in the sense of 'form enacting meaning' (Leech & Short 1981:242)—by a novelistic discourse that is open rather than closed, that relies on a circular or spatial rather than temporal arrangement of sequences, and that is chiefly made up of the metaphorical permutations of an interconnected series of problems remaining more or less static throughout the text<sup>6</sup> rather than presenting the linear and dynamic resolution of any of those problems in the course of a well-made narrative plot.

The novel that had been, as genre, 'hybrid' or 'polysystemic' from its inception because its narrative base always had to carry a good amount of other discursive material, whether of descriptive or persuasive nature, is pushed with the advent of the (post) modern experimental novel to the very limits of its possibilities in that, as George Steiner (1979:342) argues, 'the classic divisions between poetry, drama, prose fiction and philosophic argument are deliberately broken down'. The

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Máno's*/Breytenbach's insistence on 'patterns'.

literary work, conventionally taken to be a closed, finished, reliably representational object thus becomes a *text*, an infinite signifying process in which meanings are constantly in the process of being generated only to be subverted time and again (cf. Barthes 1984:69-77).

Where identity, for the reasons shown above, is never stable, 'the laws of metamorphosis' (p. 250) is the only generalisation that can be arrived at: the chameleon, the mythical *animal semper mutabile*, is the apt symbol for that ever changing quality of human identity that Breytenbach uses throughout the text, and the text itself with its 'disorderly' and at the same time repetitive structure echoes the constant mutability of '*une identité dynamique*' by continually vacillating, in truly metaphorical fashion, between 'sameness' and 'otherness' (cf. Ricoeur 1985:355). The deferral of meaning involved in this incessant sliding of signification along a chain of signifiers is bound forever to thwart (and thus reorientate) our readerly desire and expectations as to the 'true' nature of what is being said, or as Breytenbach has one of his characters say: 'The matrix ... cannot remain unchanging once and for all' (p. 250).

This deconstructivist insight into the decentred nature of structures and the resulting fluidity of meaning ('Nothing is eternal except transformation. Nothing is static except movement .... Everything is relative', Breytenbach 1986:251, state's elsewhere) also informs the writer's concept of language, as is evidenced by the recurring use of the mirror as a symbol for reconstructing images of our own selves via a remembrance of things past<sup>7</sup>: 'We are the mirrors created by the system. The monkeys also' (p. 163), he says. The system referred to is, of course, language<sup>8</sup>, hence our memory mirroring the past is something not belonging to ourselves. Instead of authenticating ourselves we get alienated from reality by constantly having recourse to a symbolic order that is not of our own making and that belongs to the whole language community rather than being our own exclusive possession. A mirror that is more of a filter than a truthful reflector of the past is thus a highly unreliable affair, it is, to use Derrida's graphic image, a mirror without a reflexive coating at the back that transforms or distorts everything reflected by it (cf. Derrida 1972:359).

Therefore to understand oneself through the medium of language is inevitably to misunderstand oneself, which predicament is very succinctly expressed in Lacan's (1966:832) pun on '*me connaître—méconnaître*'. Reality without the mirror does not exist, and our attempts at reaching out for it resemble those of monkeys groping behind a mirror: 'You play the game, are played by it' (p. 25), one of the characters in *Memory* sums up this decentering of the subject as the maker of

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Reckwitz (1996:165-204) for a more detailed discussion of this point.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Jürgen Habermas' (1975:120) dictum: 'was auch immer existiert, wird reflektiert im Spiegel der Sprache'.

himself. Linguistic representation, to use another French pun, invariably entails a *de*-presentation of the object represented (cf. Derrida 1967:344). Thus the act of speaking or writing is located half-way between speaking and being spoken or writing and being written, respectively (cf. Barthes 1984:21-32; Coetzee 1986:11-13).

## V

An open, polysystemic, anti-teleological, deconstructivist novel like the one discussed here cannot help being dialogical rather than monological, to use Michail Bakhtin's terms (1979:251ff), and *Memory* fulfils this condition by being a veritable echo-chamber of voices interfering with one another.

A classic realist text may be defined as one where there is a hierarchy among the discourses which compose the text and this hierarchy is defined in terms of an empirical notion of truth

—thus Colin MacCabe (1989:134-146) defines the monological and repressive tendencies of the conventional linear story. Where, however, notions of reality are in the constant process of being exploded because the subject constructing its own past is forever deflected from its course by either a subconscious *alter ego* or the unattainability of a true sense of selfhood or the uncontrollable arbitrariness of language there is bound to occur a constant challenging of any kind of discourse assuming dominance in the name of an empirical rendering of what is supposed 'to be there'.

This challenge to a semiotics of representation is most impressively brought about, quite apart from the discursive multifariousness mentioned above, by constant 'frame breaks' (Waugh 1984:18ff), 'short circuits' (Lodge 1979:239ff) or 'metalepses' (Genette 1973:243ff), to use the terms currently most in use in order to describe the phenomenon of diegetic levels normally kept separate getting conflated. Thus the novel reveals itself as a Chinese box-like affair where the voices of the real, implied and explicit authors plus those of the various characters are intercalated to create stories within stories within stories forming an almost endless regress of narrative voices whose recursive embeddings it is difficult to keep track of.

A few instances may suffice to show the essential duplicity<sup>9</sup> or multiplicity of meanings resulting from this technique. Mano, the character plus explicit author of his own memoirs comes from a small town in the Boland region of the Cape, just like Breytenbach, the real plus implicit author of *Memory*, and just like Breyten he lives

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Julia Kristeva's (1969:82-112) definition of 'le double'.

in his Parisian exile with a woman regarded as non-white (according to South African racial terminology), and again like Breyten he returns to South Africa on an undercover mission to get arrested on a trumped-up charge. The two levels get further entwined, beyond the perhaps not so unusual similarities between an author and one of his central characters, in that Mano, the actor, is to play the part of Breyten, the author (who frequently intrudes into both the narration and the story under the alias of Barnum), in a film on Breytenbach. One of Mano's reasons for returning to South Africa is, so to speak, to retrace Breytenbach's steps with a view to studying the antecedents of the film's hero. It is one of the many ironic duplicities of the story that he is forced to do so quite literally and to the bitter end—a fate Breytenbach, incidentally, was spared.

In one of his intrusions into the story itself Breytenbach alias Barnum makes clear his role as creator of his fictional world. Thus he informs Mano: '... I have all the attributes of God, but none of his responsibilities. I can create people out of paper and ink ...', and he goes on to say: 'The magic of the writer is that he can slip into the skin of his making' (pp. 62f).

In the same discussion he enlightens Mano as to what his actions in the further course of the story are to be:

I shall send you, Mano, back on a supposedly political mission to South Africa, commissioned by some all-powerful organization. Down there, I'm afraid, I shall have you caught, betrayed perhaps inadvertently by a close comrade. You will be put in prison (p. 63).

The conflation of both levels is perfect when Barnum ponders Mano's fate: 'My past may be his future' (p. 87).

Elsewhere he talks with Meheret on the art of writing, especially the writing of the memoirs of her life with Mano. It frequently introduces two choric figures, Ka'afir and Polichinelle, who freely comment on the story's dynamics. These two later reappear again as characters, just like Barnum who, in his capacity as Chief Judge Breytenbach, presides over the court that sentences Mano to death. Towards the end Mano remonstrates with Barnum over his fate: 'Why did you do this to me? Why me? Why did you want me to walk the rope to get to this stage?' (p. 292). It is certainly not for nothing that the text elsewhere (p. 262) contains a reference to Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, another work of fiction where characters become readers or authors of the fiction they are in, and vice versa.

A different metafictional device employed is the coincidence of Meheret's story, as it is unfolded, and her on-going preparations for, or hesitations about, writing the selfsame story, both of which processes run parallel with the gestation of the child she has conceived from Mano. Hence her book bears the title of *Utéropia*—

it is nourished by the 'placenta of words' (p. 87) and it is therefore, in a metaphorical sense, also a child of hers, which is as clear an instance of a 'self-begetting novel'<sup>10</sup> as one could wish to come across: 'Nine months full. You are not a book. And yet you are nearly written' (p. 209)—with these words Meheret concludes her story, and the double meaning of her remark resides in the fact that it is doubtful whether she is thus addressing her child or her book. *Memory*, in being the story of coming into its own existence, really resembles a snake swallowing its own tail.

'None can tell teller from the told'—this quotation from John Barth's *Lost in the Funhouse* most suitably conveys to what an extent narrative voices and levels are scrambled together in such a way as to raise doubts about whether there is any tale at all to be told. By the same token the novel reveals itself as something totally artificial, something made that does not invite the reader to mistake it for reality, quite the contrary: The intrusive author rather unashamedly postures as the 'puppet master' (p. 265) or circus director (hence the name of Barnum) of his narrative universe and its creatures, both of which he constructs only to dismantle them over and over again. All of this amounts to the conscious display of a non-representational imagination completely unbounded by 'the way things are', thereby making us realize 'the fictional aspect of our own existence' (Barth 1977:80) as it is presented to us by our own slightly more conventional life stories in which we also participate as characters and authors alike. Identity, or what remains of it, is obviously only possible, as Norman Holland sees it, in terms of a plural or relational 'divided me' (Holland 1983:303) maintaining a constant dialogue with itself about what is going on in its life and reinterpreting itself anew whenever the necessity arises.

## VI

What then, to ask the final question, is the meaning of a postmodern text like the present one in the South African context? Fanie Olivier (1989:8) provides one possible answer:

if the reader was hoping to find slogans and improbable easy answers, and another session of Boer-bashing, *Memory of Snow and of Dust* will come as a big disappointment.

Obviously an introverted, self-exploring novel like *Memory* does not fulfil, at least not at first sight, the demands made on poetry at the 1987 *Culture in Another South Africa* conference in Amsterdam which urged 'the continuing development of poetry as a mobilizing force in our people's struggle against apartheid, exploitation, oppression and repression'<sup>11</sup>. Breytenbach (1990:192f) himself has repeatedly

<sup>10</sup> Cf. S. Kellman (1976:1245) for a definition of this term.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Malvern van Wyk Smith (1990:126-131) for a brief discussion of this point.

warned against white South African writers wholeheartedly embracing the latest intellectual fads imported from Europe—in this case deconstructivism and postmodernism. There seems to be a contradiction here: On the one hand he quite obviously employs—as has been shown—most of the ideas and concepts propounded by the French postmodernist thinkers, and on the other hand he deplores the ensuing lack of contact with socio-political reality.

At this point it seems appropriate to call to mind Paul Ricoeur's insight that no novel, be it ever so removed from reality, can ever remain a totally self-contained aesthetic construct. On the contrary, every novel somehow refers to reality because it is a processing of that reality. As such it is a deviation from the world as we know it, but it also invites us to look back at the world in the light of the fictional universe as a kind of metaphor of reality, and hopefully a fresh and unexpected one (cf. Ricoeur 1975:173ff), or in Robert Scholes' (1974:27f) words: 'the literary work ... refers to the "real" world by interposing an "imaginary" world between its audience and reality'.

This is particularly true of a postmodern, metafictional novel like the present one. Even though it does not engage with reality as such because it is mainly concerned with discussing and exposing its own literary or linguistic conventions, it refers to reality, even though at one remove, or as Patricia Waugh (1984:11) puts it:

Metafiction converts what it sees as the negative values of outworn literary conventions into the basis of potentially constructive social criticism. It suggests, in fact, that there may be as much to be learnt from setting the mirror of art up to its own linguistic or representational structures as from directly setting it up to a hypothetical 'human nature' that somehow exists outside historical systems of articulation.

Since, as has been shown, reality is never accessible as such because of the conventions of cognition imposed by the powerful social institution of language, it is an eminently social function of literature to show up, problematize and undermine the semantic and syntactic procedures involved in processing material reality. What is at stake here is not *mimesis* but *semiosis*, not a passive rendering but an active production and hence transformation of the world. This is precisely what Breytenbach (1990:193) has in mind when he states:

I tried writing subversively. What I could and did try and do was on the one hand to undermine the petrified positions, the cultural stratagems and institutions, the retarded conceptions of the dominant Afrikaans culture, and on the other hand to sharpen the knowledge of the implications of the South African régime.

Reality is quite obviously not the 'real' real. In *Memory* he repeatedly castigates European society as being besotted by a mass-communication that ends up in total disinformation:

We have entered the age of instant amnesia. No more information, only staged propaganda and commentary from postmodernist city rats (p. 86).

This Baudrillardian analysis of a grotesquely alienated reality applies even more to the South Africa of the late eighties, where the entire political and legal system plus the police and prison authorities are engaged in playing the 'reality game' (Breytenbach 1984:199) of a just and democratic society where due process of law is the rule everyone abides by and where individuals with intact identities can lead fulfilled lives, while this is blatantly not so.

Against this fictitious reality that is typically embodied in the discourse of the classic realist novel, deconstructive art sets itself up as anti-fiction (cf. Marquard 1973:35-54), as an instrument of unmasking it as the ideological sham it is, or as Breytenbach (1986:151f) puts it:

Language is a blindness. Form is a limitation, a construction of our basic condition of laziness. It is tradition made concrete .... The tongue looks for the familiar, for the taste of wood. Normally we don't see; we recognize. Seeing should be rupture. The eye, to survive intact, must break.

If 'ideology is precisely the confusion of linguistic with natural reality', as Paul de Man (1988:365-371) formulates it, then the writer must break with language and established literary forms. Even though he cannot entirely get away from the constraints imposed by language he can at least twist the iron bars of its prison in order to gain a certain degree of freedom to turn what is normally a sociolect into his own ideolectic version of the world, thus asserting his individuality against all the intertexts he is compelled to live with by imaginatively creating his own 'textual and intra-textual and infra-textual contexts' (Breytenbach 1986:185) where new configurations triumph over outworn meanings.

Ampie Coetzee (1990:44) has summed up Breyten Breytenbach's anti-ideological meta-approach to both literature and reality as follows:

*hy [Breytenbach] het nie veel oor politieke sake [geskryf] nie; meestal bespiegelend oor die wyse van produksie van 'n teks, en oor die vraag of skryf enige funksie het binne 'n onderdrukkende stelsel.*

This eminently postmodernist as well as deconstructivist perspective is the specific contribution to Breytenbach, who designates himself as 'an off-white

Afrikaans-speaking South African living temporarily abroad' (1990:195), with his famous 'n *Blik van buite* (*A View from Outside*) (Breytenbach 1980:151ff.) is capable of making to South African literature. If human identity is predominantly dialogical in that one's own conception of oneself is only possible against the background of another's consciousness of oneself (Jauss 1984:681), then Breyten Breytenbach's achievement as a mediator steeped in the knowledge of two cultures lies in having brought about that mutually enriching dialogue between South Africa and Europe by expressing the schizophrenia of postmodern South Africa in European deconstructivist terms—or perhaps vice versa, if we presume that the old distinction between centre and periphery no longer holds (cf. Hutcheon 1988:57ff).

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# Postcolonial Discourse and African Language Literary Studies in South Africa

Cleopas Thosago

## 1. Introduction

The impetus for this article is the painful realisation that, other than Barber's and Swanepoel's recent articles, there seems to exist no substantial body of critical texts which cover cogently the pertinent relationship between the recently flourishing postcolonial discourse and the existing corpus of African language literatures. The advent and consequent development of postcoloniality as a theoretical, methodological and political term, especially after the unmentioned passing of grand apartheid and the subsequent (inter)nationally celebrated interment, have generated and enlivened numerous, acrimonious debates on the appropriateness and applicability of the label to South African literary studies.

This article therefore arrives belatedly in the wake of, and therefore draws extensively from, Karin Barber's interventionist article in the critical arena where, she argues, some trajectory of postcolonial criticism threatens to efface African-language literature from 'African' literary studies. Also not insignificant, and even more contextually, is C.F. Swanepoel's (1998) recent article which attempts to deconstruct the centre-margin dichotomy that obtains in (post)apartheid literary studies. The central objective of Swanepoel's article is thus to expose and unmask, through a critique of the centre-margin dichotomy that pertains between literatures, the ironical dis-continuities inherent in South African literary practice with the aim to pave a traversable way for an Afrocentric postcolonial discourse.

In the light of these unprecedented theoretical developments in postcolonial studies, this article seeks to explore the possibilities and challenges of realising what Swanepoel (1998:21) calls 'the multilingual national concept of South African literature'. This aim will be achieved by probing the dialectic between multilingualism and globalization and the extent to which it impacts on African-language literatures in South Africa. The observations made and the tentative conclusions reached could perhaps be helpful in the attempt to re-position/re-orient African-language literatures in the ongoing local and global discussions and debates on postcoloniality.

## **2. South African Literary Studies: Post-Apartheid or Postcolonial?**

The demise of the Nationalist Party's nefarious grand-narrative of apartheid in South Africa, and the concomitant birth of a nascent democracy spearheaded by the African National Congress-led Government of National Unity, not only almost coincided historically with the lively advent of debates on the concept postcoloniality. But most importantly, it heralds the beginning of renewed interest in South African literary studies whose main terms of reference are couched in the language of nationalism and 'nation building', concepts which betray the deep-seated yearning to (re)construct a truly representative South African national identity. Carrim (1995) captures the mammoth task that faces the emerging dispensation as follows:

The challenge before our new democracy is to provide the space for people to express their multiple identities in a way that fosters the evolution of a South African national identity.

It is within the reconstructive ambit of this transitional political climate and the ubiquitous 'post' literary discourses that this article seeks to dis-locate literary studies in South Africa by examining the contentious relationship of African-language literatures to the concepts 'postcolonialism' and 'post-apartheid'; for many, these coterminous concepts are mistakenly conceived as synonymous especially in the light of the recently emerging debates and discussions on literature in the 'new' South Africa.

The concept postcolonialism is problematic to define and describe mainly because of the geographical diversity of the places of origin of its semanteme, colonialism, and the wide-ranging areas of application that postcoloniality covers. Despite these terminological difficulties, in the brief scope of this article, colonialism should be understood as a discourse which describes the prevailing conditions in South Africa as a British colony and, by extension, as informed by the epistemological inclinations resulting from the colonial condition. While recognising the confusion and abstruseness surrounding the term, I am tempted to provide the following as a working definition of the expansive terrain of postcolonial studies without, of course, laying any pretentious claims to erudition. In my view, postcolonialism refers loosely to a burgeoning critical discourse which deploys various, often conflicting methods and theories derived from a diversified ensemble of discursive practices to study the congeries of interactions and intersections—political, economic, artistic, military, literary, etc.—between (once) powerful European empires and nations affected in one way or another by colonial subjugation and domination, during the reign and after the decline of the phenomenal, but differently experienced moment of colonialism.

The term post-apartheid is the least difficult to comprehend in that, first and foremost, it refers to a specific historical period which comes after the sudden demise of apartheid and, secondly, it is particularly useful to Black South Africans as a viable political term. Annamaria Carusi (1991:96) argues the matter pointedly:

For the black majority, whose literature however has a minority status in terms of the South African and international canon, to speak of post-colonialism is pre-emptive; in terms of political desirability, it is anyhow more useful and more practical to speak of 'post-apartheid': the colonizer cannot be got rid of, precisely because he does not see himself as such.

The familiar term, post-apartheid, which evokes a false sense of collectivity bordering on the verges of utopia is outrightly rejected in this article for the reason that it seems to mask the palpable tensions and disjunctions that prevail at the moment in South African literary studies. Furthermore, and because of its historical specificity, the term is not readily amenable to use as a stylistic marker or textual feature as is the case with postcolonialism.

Literary critical practice in South Africa should resist the essentialist identities that were constructed by the apartheid driven orthodoxies which, more often than not, always relegated African literary studies to the margins of literary studies. Within the ambit of the much contested space of contemporary literary studies, African literature finds itself distorted or appropriated to dogmatically serve as a carrier of the European cultural baggage.

The designation, 'South African Literary Studies', begs several questions. First, it presupposes that there exists unproblematically a single and unified literature in South Africa with 'one, all inclusive literary history' (Van Vuuren 1994:269). This impression is erroneous because although its literatures coexist independently within the diverse and differently experienced South African situation, they also developed in isolation from and in ignorance of each other. This view has led the self-declared 'albino terrorist', Breyten Breytenbach, (1986:79) to make the following radical observation:

First of all it must be said that a *South African literature* in fact doesn't exist—or if it does then it is simply defined by the South African situation. What we writers share is the specific South African *situation*, but we experience its influence in different ways depending on whether we belong to the exploiters or the victims.

Due to the undeserved overemphasis on the coloniser/colonised binarism, there exists a gaping lack of a unified South African literature reflective of a common linguistic,

racial, religious, cultural, or even historical heritage; hence it becomes imperative that there be a re-examination of literary studies in the country, in order to usher in what one might call a 'national literary studies'.

Secondly, the term seems to suggest that the field falls squarely within the parameters of a clearly defined and consensually constructed critical practice within which all the literatures can be easily subsumed in an all-inclusive monolith framework—an integrative South African Literature. A brief consideration of the numerous thematic, theoretical, descriptive and critical surveys which inhabit the South African literary landscape starkly reveals that any attempt at an integrative literary history usually flounders, mainly because its forward thrust is hindered by an overzealous reliance on the existence of cultural homogeneity and linguistic purity. The charge levelled against the surveys is that besides their failure to apportion equal space for the treatment of the various literatures, they tend to override linguistic differences, historical specificities and cultural idiosyncrasies which distinguish literatures from each other.

It is not surprising then that the formulation of an integrative history is almost a futile exercise if serious consideration is given to the fact that South African literature has so many uneven contours which arise mainly from its multilingualism and the inevitable influence of international literary trends that it is 'bound to be relative and exclusive' (Viljoen & Hentschel 1997:6). This aside sentiment notwithstanding, the envisaged literary history should boldly attempt to adequately address and deal effectively with both local issues and global trends that have become commonplace in international literary debates.

In its vast theorisations on African Literature, postcolonial discourse falls prey to critical complicity because it tends to focus specifically on African Literature written in the variety of 'englishes' while relegating its rightful, primary object of study, African literatures in the indigenous languages, to the marginal wastelands of literary studies. The most common reason proffered for the omission, elision to be exact, of these indigenous literatures is that their marked linguistic difference renders them inaccessible for scrutiny by the perverted colonialist gaze of Western scholars, unless they are presented conveniently for perusal by the masters in the proliferating but usually 'unreadable' translations. For Deepika Bahri, their paradoxical existence as absent presences in the literary sphere signals a potential threat to the revisionary mission of postcolonial theory. He writes:

the relegation of non-Western textual productions to a realm not so much peripheral as invisible ... is an astute strategy if one is going about the business of attempting a coherent theory, but the very presence of these productions poses the most potent threat to any theory from which they are absent (Bahri 1995:66).

Postcolonial discourse should therefore avoid being trapped in this pitfall by striving for a wider inclusiveness of all literatures, especially the so called 'minor' literatures, in order to safeguard its viability as an analytic tool which respects difference in diversity. Notwithstanding its theoretical expediency, postcolonial discourse is therefore not without its glaring discontents for, in its well-intentioned mission to give voice to the muted subalterns, it ends up replicating those power structures which it seeks to critique, oppressive structures which were first strategically installed by colonialism and later perpetuated by segregatory practices such as colonisation and apartheid.

This systematic silencing of the indigenous languages is perhaps a result of the marginal status that is condescendingly accorded the African languages and literatures in the academic ivory-towers by some Black heirs of European academic value systems who are ironically 'only partially competent in the mother tongue' (Kunene 1996:16). It is therefore imperative that African scholars and academics steeped in Eurocentricity should critically interrogate their complicity with colonial thought in the academy, paying particular attention to their unwitting contribution to the growth of the European literatures at the expense of their indigenous African literatures. Understandably, Aruna Srivastava (1995:13f) challenges the postcolonial academic to become actively involved in the impartial promotion of indigenous cultural texts:

The postcolonial academic, it seems to me, must work out her reasons for silence, for certain kinds of grading strategies and types of assignments, for certain modes of transmitting knowledge, for her defensiveness and ignorance on certain occasions, for her position for advocating for students and colleagues alike, her position on what constitutes academic freedom, 'proper' scholarship and the like.

The postcolonial academic must selflessly strive for the dis-alienation of indigenous languages and s/he must ensure that the autochthonous develop a positive attitude towards their indigenous languages and literatures instead of pandering to the negative linguistic stereotypes created by the coloniser with the villainous aim of stifling their expeditious growth.

It is advisable that any party interested in the reformulation of the rubric African literatures so that it can genuinely accommodate and subsume under its under its broad wings both White and indigenous literatures should, however, guard against propagating nationalist ideas based solely on the untenable grounds of racism and ethnicity. A holistic literary history, it seems, can only be realised through the collaboration of experts from the disparate literatures:

a fully informed and competent account of South African Literature can only arise as the outcome of carefully allocated and organized teamwork. It is highly significant that no committee of the various departments concerned has even been set up in any South African university for that purpose (Gérard 1979:4).

As Albert Gérard has it, it is imperative that collaborative projects such as that pioneered by the Centre for the Study of Southern African Literature and Languages at the University of Durban-Westville be initiated all over the country to address this thorny issue. However, such massive projects require elaborate but flexible methodologies and interpretive tools, allowing researchers the latitude to use various theories ranging from the rigid formalist approaches to the fragmented gamut of recent postmodernist reading strategies. While the encyclopaedic method seems best suited for the purpose at hand, its main shortcoming is that it fails dismally to accommodate competing theoretical approaches, seeking instead, to deploy in an almost canonical fashion, 'accepted' and 'recognised' approaches to texts.

### **3. African Language Literatures: Challenges and Possible Solutions**

In 1972, the eminent Kenyan writer and critic, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, published a seminal essay appositely entitled 'On the Abolition of the English Department' which, as the title explicitly suggests, calls for the abolition of English departments and the subsequent establishment of African languages and literatures as autonomous disciplines at university level. Its central contention is that for African literatures and languages to gain a credible purchase in tertiary institutions, English departments should be rigorously reconfigured and at the centre of the displaced curricula, should feature prominently the indigenous literatures. Only later, when there is a considerable measure of certainty that the African languages and literatures have taken root and are blossoming without difficulty, can attention be shifted to the study of European literatures albeit from an Africanist perspective. While he might seem to be uncritically advocating for a radical move towards Afrocentrism and the return to a protean precolonial traditionalism, Ngugi's rejectionist argument is genuine and can only be clearly understood in the context of those post-independent countries where indigenous languages were almost completely exterminated through the hegemonic imposition of colonial languages and imperialist cultures to the detriment of the former.

Contrariwise, in our present volatile context, where inconsiderable linguistic differences could trigger, unprovoked, ethnic rivalry resulting in senseless bloodshed as is commonplace in embattled Kwa Zulu-Natal, it would indeed be a healthy

alliance to see all the eleven languages thriving parallel to each other or even convergently in the bid to nurture the cherished spirit of multilingualism. While I fully agree that it is necessary to place more emphasis on all the languages, indigenous languages, which for the most part were grossly neglected insofar as government subsidies are concerned, definitely need more financial support as well as integration and efficacious usage as indispensable communicative tools within the business sector and government so as to equal the unrivalled status accorded English and Afrikaans in these important spheres.

There is in this regard a pressing need to write back the history of African language literatures into the mainstream 'canon' since literary historiography in apartheid South Africa concerned itself exclusively with English and Afrikaans literatures 'to the exclusion of oral traditions and the other indigenous languages' (Van Vuuren 1994:267). In his writings, Steve Biko, the martyred luminary of the Black Consciousness movement who stood firmly to his dying day a staunch adversary of apartheid, sought to provide a guiding light in this respect by eloquently articulating the centrality of an alternative history as the first step in the tedious road to mental decolonisation:

Among the many reasons often suggested for the ostensible developmental stasis characterising African language literatures, Neville Alexander distinguishes the lack of a stable reading culture as the most serious obstacle to the healthy evolution of African language literatures. He neatly sums up this dilemma thus:

There can be no doubt that the lack of a reading culture in the African languages in South Africa is the single most important sociocultural factor that explains the continued low status of these languages (Alexander 1996: i i).

It follows then, that one of our major challenges is to encourage the growth of a culture of reading, with African language literatures occupying centre stage because such indigenous prioritisation would, ultimately, 'dis-establish the dominance of traditional EngLit' (Coullie & Gibbon 1996:16) from our university curricula, thus bringing to fruition Ngugi's dream.

The growth of African language literatures is also hindered by the fact that in what has mainly come to be regarded as a multilingual society, White South Africans speak either English or Afrikaans or both and, to cite Alexander once more, 'fewer than 1 percent of them know any of the African languages' (Alexander 1996:11). Breaking out of the waning 'colonial bilingualism (English/Afrikaans)' (Alexander 1996:11) demands sheer determination from Whites, lest it is realised painfully 'as the power relations shift invariably in favour of blacks' (Alexander 1996:11). The struggle to de-polarise the linguistic hierarchy between Black and

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White South Africans will indeed facilitate the process of destabilising the centre-margin identities maintained by these groups.

But then, what is the relevant prerequisite in the process of constructing a national literary history in South Africa? Traditionally, the construction of a national literary history presupposes the existence of a 'single dominant language' (Wade 1996:238) articulating the foundational sovereignty of the nation. In South Africa such a desirable goal is frustrated by the existing multilingualism and, most importantly, the constitutional sanction of the hegemonic dominance of one language over others. In the present context, Johan van Wyk (1996:34) succinctly dismisses language as the proper site for forging a national literary history:

In South Africa ... With different language groups merged into one national identity, literary history cannot be conceived on the basis of language.

Instead of serving as a crucial site for (re)constructing a national literary history, the language issue—especially the displacement of English and Afrikaans as 'official' languages with the self-imposed status of representing 'national' languages—emerges contradictorily as a crucial scene of resistance where political contestation over the linguistic status of the eleven languages is spectacularly staged.

Seen from this rather jaundiced perspective, it stands to reason that before settling for amalgamation within global nationalism, African languages should first develop themselves and mature as autonomous ethnic literatures before aspiring for a national status in order to avoid the risk of dissolution in the process of transition. On reaching the projected maturity in terms of scientific and terminological development, these ethnic literatures should then avail themselves for syncretisation and hybridisation by the other neighbouring ethnic literatures without being unnecessarily hostile to what we could term 'ethnic imperialism', thus constructing around themselves a complex South African identity.

Such an intertextualised identity could be realised by firstly ensuring that our children are for the most part taught in the African languages at school and, perhaps, also during the formative years of tertiary education. Secondly, they should, as a matter of fact, also learn another indigenous language and literature over and above English and/or Afrikaans. The critical dialogue which will ensue from this linguistic marriage would create a 'national' globalism which is able to account for local cultural exchange. Diana Brydon (1991:196) describes this new formation as follows:

This new globalism simultaneously asserts local independence and global interdependencies. It seeks a way to cooperate without cooption, a way to define differences that do not depend on myths of cultural purity or

authenticity but that thrive on interaction that 'contaminates' without homogenising.

The salient point that I want to make here is that it would be expedient for our White counterparts to have working knowledge of indigenous languages in order for them to be able to appreciate the ethical nuances inherent in African language literatures in their source languages and not as second rate translations. In turn, the general tendency to use the rubric South African literature as though it meant English and Afrikaans literatures only would be substantially diminished, making ample room for African language literatures to feature equally with their European counterparts.

Conversely, it is absolutely necessary for Blacks to have sound knowledge of some of the various languages and literatures that are spoken and produced by the different African language groups other than their own in order for them to gain access independently to the rich literary heritage of this rainbow nation. Sound knowledge of the myriad linguistic and cultural backgrounds of these ethnic groups is indispensable for the (re)writing of a well-informed, unbiased and all-inclusive South African literary historiography, one in which all South Africans can unreservedly take pride.

South Africa finds itself in a unique position wherein it is not only characterised by a complex multilingualism which pertains inside the country only; as it were, the country has to vie continually for recognition in the international literary arena with competing neighbouring African states while simultaneously resisting continued dominance by the previous two 'official' languages. The obsessive impulse to remain sequestered within the narrow enclaves of national borders without venturing to make cross-border contacts and collaborations could have adverse consequences for South African literary practice. Tim Couzens (1990:3) recognises the gravity of the parochialism likely to ensue from the confinement when he pessimistically opines:

We are, in the near future, in danger of studying only South African literature. In so doing we will become as Saddam Hussein or PW Botha, people who seldom venture beyond their immediate horizons.

The timely recognition and successful negotiation of this double-bind would guarantee the literature a veritable South African identity which does not depend entirely on things 'purely' African or European to define, on our behalf, a distinctive national identity. The debilitating effects and inexorable impact of Western cultural imperialism, it appears, cannot be simply wished away as much as the profound influence of the rest of Africa cannot be ignored by South Africans. In this raging confluence, South Africa might wisely

wish to be allied to both worlds yet seek to maintain its independence from each, proffering the kind of international integration that does not require surrendering its own unique national character (Lindfors 1996:29).

Because 'post-colonial theorists embrace hybridity and heterogeneity as a characteristic of the post-colonial mode' (Brydon 1991:195), they should reject as false the notion of cultural authenticity which was enforced by the twin evils—colonialism and apartheid—through the separate ethnic development policies in the search 'for a new globalism that is neither the old universalism nor the Disney simulacrum' (1991:196). After all, as Arif Dirlik (1994:329) notes, globalism is the primary target of postcolonialism since the term's goal is

no less than to abolish all distinctions between the center and periphery as well as other 'binarisms' that are allegedly a legacy of colonial(ist) ways of thinking and to reveal societies globally in their complex heterogeneity and contingency.

Postmodernism, as the preceding section illustrates, is therefore a potent instrument for imploding the centre-margin polarity and any other objectificatory hierarchy likely to be perpetuated by enabling discourses such as postcoloniality in their moments of intense commitment when inattentiveness could cloud their celebrated penchant for self-criticism.

#### **4. Postmodernism: Unwelcome Saviour?**

Why pull yet another overburdened term into the academic fray to redeem African language literatures from being rendered obsolete by global literary trends? Indeed, Helen Tiffin (1998:170f) warns against the general tendency to use postcolonialism and postmodernism as though the two were synonymous and therefore interchangeable when she writes:

It is ironic that the label of 'postmodern' is increasingly being applied hegemonically, to cultures and texts outside Europe, assimilating post-colonial works whose political orientations and experimental formations have been designed to counteract such European appropriation.

To me, at least, the significance of the term postmodernism, despite its purported hegemonic and obfuscatory tendencies, lies precisely in its possession of the unassailable ability to re-situate African language literatures into the mainstream of global literary studies, while simultaneously enabling the literatures to retain their

distinctively local provenance. The discourse of postmodernity, Chantal Mouffe (1998:30) argues persuasively, fulfils one of the primary requirements of multicultural societies in that it is perpetually driven by 'the need to acknowledge the particular, the heterogeneous and the multiple ... [it is] ... a forum for creating unity without denying specificity'.

Due to its unconstrained self-reflexivity which places premium value on difference in diversity, postmodernism should be unconditionally welcomed into the fold of these raging critical debates because it is self-consciously aware of the limitations Europe has over its former colonies. By acknowledging the insignificance of hierarchies, especially those obtaining between Africa and Europe, postmodern discourse affirms the truism that all cultures are mutually interdependent and that when 'lesser' cultures come into contact with 'high' cultures they are nonetheless influenced in many unexpected ways.

What is even fascinating about postmodernity, as Carrim's statement also suggests, is that it rejects the notion of a protean and fixed identity, fostering instead, multiple identities which are constantly in transformation. In the words of Robert Young (1990:19), postmodernism 'can best be defined as European culture's awareness that it is no longer the unquestioned and dominant centre of the world', a theme espoused widely by postcolonial theorists and writers.

Evidently, as the foregoing discussion attempted to demonstrate, though circuitously, the endeavour to fashion an integrative South African national literary history is bound to fail precisely because individual writers and critics, institutions, approaches and methodologies cannot be adequately re-presented within the narrow confines of nationalism since they variously owe allegiance to other multiple relationships. Similarly, Horsman and Marshall claim that (1994:230):

Multiple allegiances are possible, even as the importance of the nation-state system as an organizing principle has yet to be institutionally challenged on any thing like a global scale. Individuals are increasingly encouraged to view themselves as members of groups—not national citizens exclusively, not members of social class, but as blacks, as Slovaks, as Muslims, as French-Canadians, as born-again Christians, as gays, as environmentalists, and so on.

Both postcolonial discourse and postmodern theory play a major role in encouraging global (inter)nationalism by deconstructing the fixed conceptions of nationalism based on vaguely defined borders and by resisting the possibility of arriving at a unified identity undefiled by fragmentary forces such as history, religion, or ethnic boundaries. In the final analysis, it is worth noting that the fact that postcoloniality evades definition because of its multiple references to a vast plethora of contending

theoretical and methodological practices renders it so amorphous that it could simply pass unnoticed for any of the numerous versions of postmodernism.

## 5. Conclusion

The eleven South African languages are so contiguous that they actually provide a necessary interface where literary studies can be instrumental in dissolving the self/other dichotomy which is currently operative in South African literary and cultural studies. Furthermore, by making themselves amenable to the influence of postcolonial discourse, African language literatures can create their own unique form of national globalism which challenges head-on the foundations of international globalisation.

Evidently endowed with the rare ability to capture vividly the mutations within both the local and global literary scene, African language literatures are best poised to straddle the diversified postmodern scene. This move, however, requires that the literatures innovate their themes, style, ideological disposition and move away from the strict requirements of educational publishers who usually stifle imaginative creativity with their stylistic prescriptions to writers, and most importantly, divorce themselves completely from the restricting orbit of Western literary 'standards' in the carnivalesque search for postcolonial critical standards.

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# Christianity and Liberalism in *Cry, the Beloved Country*

Andrew Foley

## Introduction

Virtually all critics who have commented on *Cry, the Beloved Country* since it was first published exactly fifty years ago, have recognised the central position which Alan Paton's Christianity occupies in the novel's overall thematic structure. And yet, despite this critical attention, little effort has been made to provide a precise account of the actual nature of the Christian perspective which underpins *Cry, the Beloved Country*. In the main, critics have tended to refer rather loosely to the 'Christian message' of the novel, without considering what particular interpretation of that message Paton brings to bear upon the text; or they have merely adverted to the 'biblical' flavour of the novel's language, without examining the significance of the original sources of the scriptural quotations and allusions. Similarly, although it has been generally acknowledged that Paton's outlook in *Cry, the Beloved Country* is liberal as well as Christian, there has been no attempt to explore the complex relationship between Christian faith and liberal politics in the novel. In particular, what has not been adequately documented is the extent to which Paton's liberalism informs his religious thinking and gives shape to a Christian perspective which is actively and intimately concerned with matters of social and political justice.

The purpose of this article is to address these issues by examining in some detail the nature and significance of Paton's synthesis of liberalism and Christianity in *Cry, the Beloved Country*. The article will begin by recording how interconnected Paton's religious and political convictions became in the years leading up to the composition of *Cry, the Beloved Country*. It will then consider the pervasive influence of liberal political ideas on the Christian outlook of the novel at the level of plot and characterisation. And it will then proceed to focus closely on a series of key biblical passages which help Paton to formulate his own politico-religious position and which function at a subtextual level to define and determine the novel's linguistic and, indeed, thematic constitution. In more general terms, it is hoped that this discussion of *Cry, the Beloved Country* may serve to clarify some of the important points of consonance between Christianity and liberalism, and to suggest that the liberal-Christian perspective

presented in the novel continues to represent a valid and coherent approach to problems of religious and political philosophy.

## **Background**

As he has recounted in his first autobiographical volume, *Towards the Mountain* (1980), Alan Paton was born into a devout Christadelphian family, but began at an early age to reject the strict, authoritarian attitudes of his father, and to differentiate between what he later termed 'the lesser and the greater moralities' (1980:32). He developed an ecumenical temperament, seeking to establish common ground with those who cherished similar ideals rather than emphasising sectarian differences in dogma, and he was drawn towards a Christian practice based on compassion and tolerance rather than fear and judgement. It seems clear that Paton was a decent, moral young man, concerned about his neighbour and eager to serve his community, but it was only in his thirties that his Christianity began to take on a specifically liberal character as he became increasingly attentive to hitherto unconsidered notions of 'racial justice' (see Paton 1958a:6).

It is too simplistic to reduce the development of Paton's Christianity in a liberal direction to a few incidents only, but it is useful to highlight some of these as crucial stages in that development. By so doing, it will be possible to illustrate how Paton seems to have naturally inclined towards an intimate connection between religion and politics, and especially towards a Christianity involved in matters of social upliftment and political reform. The first and most obvious of these stages was his acceptance—following a life-threatening bout of Enteric fever—of the post of Principal of Diepkloof Reformatory for African Boys. In his thirteen years at Diepkloof, as he notes in his autobiographical essay, 'Case History of a Pinky' (1971; in Paton 1975:328-239), he 'began to understand the kind of world in which Black people had to live and struggle and die' and, consequently, he began to overcome 'all racial hatred and prejudice'. Significantly, he has cast this turning point in his political outlook in religious terms, likening it to that of St Francis of Assisi when he came down from his horse to embrace the leper in the road on the Umbrian plain, and he feels that the saint's famous words could be applied with equal validity to himself (in Paton 1980:169):

The Lord himself led me amongst them, and I showed mercy to them, and when I left them, what had seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness of body and soul.

Secondly, as Paton has described in *Apartheid and the Archbishop* (1973) and elsewhere, the Anglican synod of 1941 decided to establish a Diocesan Commission under the chairmanship of the then Bishop of Johannesburg, Geoffrey Clayton, with the

task of attempting to define 'what it believed to be the mind of Christ for South Africa' (1973:116). Paton (1973:117) has commented that his involvement in the Commission was for him like coming from the darkness into the light as he began to understand at last that one could not be a Christian in South Africa and claim to love justice and truth without becoming actively concerned about the socio-political problems of the country. As he trenchantly remarks in *Towards the Mountain* (1980:248), 'the bishop's commission ... didn't change the heart of the nation but it changed me'.

The third seminal event to be noted is Paton's moving encounter at the funeral of Edith Rheinallt-Jones, recalled in his essay, 'A Deep Experience' (1961). Although Paton had been very impressed with Edith's work at the South African Institute of Race Relations and the Wayfarers, his real revelation came at her funeral in 1944 at St George's Presbyterian Church in Johannesburg: scores of people of every colour and creed 'had come to honour her memory—their hates and their fears, their prides and their prejudices, all for the moment forgotten' (1961:24). Paton's experience in that church completely convinced him that Edith's ideal of social justice and racial equality 'was the highest and best kind of thing to strive for in a country like South Africa' (1961:24).

By the mid 1940s, then, Paton had come to accept and expound a brand of Christianity which was neither otherworldly nor divorced from social reality, but directly concerned with the social, economic and political conditions of his country. More particularly, his promotion of individual rights and freedoms meant that his religious outlook was not merely political but specifically liberal in character.

This interweaving of Christian and liberal principles in Paton's thinking is evident in much of his writing from around this period. Most notably, perhaps, it is given concrete expression in his comparative summation of his three mentors, his friend and former Deputy Prime Minister, Jan Hofmeyr, Archbishop Geoffrey Clayton, and the renowned Wits University Professor of Philosophy, Alfred Hoernlé: (Paton 1980:243):

Hofmeyr and Clayton would have regarded themselves as servants, however poor, of the Holy Spirit. Hoernlé regarded himself as a servant of the liberal spirit. And in so doing each of them cherished the same ideals of truth, justice and compassion.

Elsewhere (1958b:278), Paton has further insisted on the crucial affinity between his Christian beliefs and his liberal political principles:

Because I am a Christian I am a passionate believer in human freedom, and therefore, in human rights.

He has also expanded (1958c:11) on what he viewed as the Christian underpinnings of much liberal thought, with specific reference to the South African Liberal Party of which he was a founding member:

Now although the Liberal Party is not a Christian organisation, its policies have a great deal in common with Christian ethics, and its philosophy has been influenced by Christian theology. I shall not apologise for writing something about these things. If one is a Christian, one believes that there is a spiritual order as well as a temporal, but one also believes that the values of the spiritual order—justice, love, mercy, truth—should be the supreme values of the temporal society, and that the good state will uphold and cherish them. Further one believes that the Church, while without temporal power, has the duty of championing these values in the temporal world.

None of this is meant to imply, of course, that liberalism and Christianity are interchangeable or identical, but simply that for Paton certain cardinal values are shared by both. Most pertinently, both are vitally concerned with the needs, aspirations and deprivations of men and women in society, and both promote a vision of social justice founded upon the intrinsic worth and dignity of the human individual.

It ought to have become plain from this discussion that it is not enough merely to refer to Paton's outlook as Christian. After all, Christianity is open to various interpretations on ideological grounds, as a moment's consideration of the ethos of the Dutch Reformed Churches in South Africa under apartheid will reveal. Instead, Paton's form of Christianity needs to be distinguished as specifically liberal in orientation, firstly, in its focus on human rights and socio-political amelioration, which differentiates it from other conservative modes of Christian thought. Secondly, its liberal character lies in its rejection of all forms of authoritarian politics that place the interests of the State above those of the individual, a feature which differentiates it not only from the Christianity of Afrikaner nationalism but also from Marxist-based interpretations of the gospel. In order to see how this form of liberal-Christian thought is presented in *Cry, the Beloved Country*, it is necessary to turn to a detailed discussion of the novel itself.

## **Christianity and Liberalism in *Cry, the Beloved Country*: Plot and Character**

Even at the level of basic story line and characterisation, it is apparent that *Cry, the Beloved Country* contains an important religious dimension. The central protagonist, Stephen Kumalo, is a parson, and much of his psychological suffering and anguish as he is faced with the destruction of his family and his tribe is framed in essentially religious terms. Indeed, part of his development in the novel involves his movement from rural

'innocence' (95) to doubt and near despair—'It seems that God has turned from me' (96)—and finally to a mature understanding and acceptance of the world. Forced through his misery to confront the fundamental question of 'the purpose of our lives' and 'the secret of the earthly pilgrimage' (57), he learns through other, affirmative experiences that 'kindness and love can pay for pain and suffering' (193) and that 'there can be comfort in a world of desolation' (56), as the novel's subtitle suggests.

Many of the plot details, to be sure, are designed to show how through religious faith people 'may be succoured and forgiven' (98) and achieve personal redemption. Nevertheless, important though this aspect of the novel undoubtedly is, it must not be allowed to obscure the equally important political dimension of the novel's religious perspective. For the novel is not merely concerned with the alleviation of suffering at a personal level, but also with the elimination of the social and economic causes of much of that suffering, as well as with the reform of the political system which has led to such socio-economic problems.

Edward Callan (1982:38) has pithily labelled Book Three (chapters 30-36) of *Cry, the Beloved Country* 'the book of restoration' as the focus shifts from an unsettling portrayal of social distress to a vision of restorative possibilities. For example, Stephen Kumalo, on his return to Ndotsheni, embarks on an active campaign of social upliftment for his people. In this, significantly, he has been inspired by experiencing firsthand the work of his fellow priests in Johannesburg, most prominently Msimangu, 'the best man of all my days' (194), but also the English priest, Father Vincent. It is useful to note that this character is based on Trevor Huddleston, the renowned Sophiatown priest whom Paton had met through his work at Diepkloof Reformatory and who had impressed Paton with his commitment to bringing about political change in South Africa (see Alexander 1994:200). It is Father Vincent who counsels Kumalo and brings him back from the brink of despair when his son turns out to be the murderer of a white man in Johannesburg. More pertinently, as part of this counselling, Vincent reminds Kumalo (as Huddleston might well have done) of the task of social 'rebuilding' and of seeking racial 'justice' (98). In addition to Father Vincent, another religious character is based on an actual person: Reverend Michael Scott, the activist priest with whom Paton had served on the Diocesan Commission, emerges as 'that extraordinary Father Beresford' (147; see Alexander 1994:200), whose political views are favourably counterpointed in the novel with white materialistic euphoria about the gold rush in Odendaalsrust. Beresford is portrayed as arguing persuasively in his 'extraordinary' pamphlet, *Cross at the Crossroads*, for the profits from the gold rush to be diverted to rural agricultural projects, social welfare and healthcare improvement, and the raising of miners' wages. Apart from the views of such admirable characters, Kumalo is also influenced, in a different way, by his brother, John. In spite of John's personal corruption, it is clear, as Msimangu concedes, that 'many of the things that he said are true' (37), most pertinently, his criticism of the Church's ineffectual protests against racial injustice (34).

In particular, Stephen Kumalo takes cognisance of at least the partial validity of his brother's dictum that 'what God has not done for South Africa, man must do' (25), and so he begins to take active responsibility for the regeneration of his community:

Kumalo began to pray regularly in his church for the restoration of Ndotsheni. But he knew that was not enough. Somewhere down here upon the earth men must come together, think something, do something (195).

Despite his failure to mobilise the leaders of the community—the chief and the headmaster—into effective action, his enterprise does bear some fruit, particularly in his association with James Jarvis: a telling example of two men, one black, one white, who do indeed come together, and think something, and do something.

James Jarvis is the owner of High Place, the fertile farm above Ndotsheni, and it is his son, Arthur, ironically, who is killed in Johannesburg by Kumalo's son. Like Kumalo, Jarvis's journey to Johannesburg involves him in a personal voyage of discovery as he comprehends through his son's writings the full extent of his country's problems. Jarvis is an ignorant rather than bad man, and, while not overtly racist, is certainly conservative in his political and religious views. As he reads the manuscripts his son has left behind, however, he undergoes 'a deep experience' comparable to Paton's at Edith Rheinallt-Jones's funeral, and begins to understand his son's principles. In particular, he comes to see, as Paton did on the Diocesan Commission, that in a country like South Africa, one cannot be a Christian and not be concerned about political justice, a point made forcefully in each of Arthur's pieces. In the first, fragmentary article, Arthur asserts the culpability of whites in the destruction of black social and economic life, and ends by claiming that

¼ whether we are fearful or no, we shall never, because we are a Christian people, be able to evade the moral issues (127).

The second piece is entitled 'The Truth About Native Crime' (see 119), and its theme echoes some of Paton's own views on black crime published in a series of articles in the journal, *The Forum*, shortly before the writing of *Cry, the Beloved Country* (see, for example, Paton 1945). Arthur's paper acerbically points out the inconsistencies and contradictions involved in a people claiming to be Christian and yet practising racial discrimination:

The truth is that our civilisation is riddled through and through with dilemma. We believe in the brotherhood of man, but we do not want it in South Africa ¼. And we are therefore compelled, in order to preserve our belief that we are Christian, to ascribe to Almighty God, Creator of Heaven and Earth, our own human intentions,

and to say that because He created white and black, He gives the Divine Approval to any human action that is designed to keep black men from advancement  $\frac{1}{4}$ . The truth is that our civilisation is not Christian; it is a tragic compound of great ideal and fearful practice, of high assurance and desperate anxiety, of loving charity and fearful clutching of possessions (134).

Finally, in a piece James Jarvis finds most painful, entitled 'Private Essay on the Evolution of a South African', his son records that he was brought up by 'honourable parents' who were 'upright and kind and law-abiding' and 'who taught [him his] prayers and took [him] regularly to church' but who taught him 'nothing at all' about South Africa (150). Acknowledging the truth of his son's words, James Jarvis resolves to take up and pursue, in his limited way, his son's liberal-Christian ideals. Importantly, Arthur's ideals are revealed not just at a theoretical level through his articles, but also through the example of his active efforts in the political arena, calling for 'more Native schools', protesting 'about the conditions at the non-European hospital', and insisting on 'settled labour' on the mines, as well as, in all likelihood, standing as a 'native M.P.' at the next election (121).

On his return to Ndotsheni, then, James Jarvis, like Stephen Kumalo, takes responsibility for beginning the process of restoring the land and the community. Having already donated a large sum of money to the African Boys' Club with which his son was associated in Johannesburg, he now sees to the immediate material needs of the children in Ndotsheni. Far from merely offering some paternalistic gestures, Jarvis also builds a dam and provides the services of an agricultural demonstrator to show the people more successful farming methods in order that they may achieve self-sufficiency. Moreover, in a move weighty with symbolic significance, Jarvis helps to repair the dilapidated local church, for the novel confirms in fictional mode Paton's firm belief, articulated in his *Forum* articles, that at bottom 'moral and spiritual decay can only be stopped by moral and spiritual means' (Paton 1945:7-8). Thus, working in concert with Kumalo, Jarvis demonstrates in exemplary fashion the capacity of ordinary men and women to take responsibility for their lives and to begin the process of rebuilding at least some part of the beloved country.

At the level of central plot and characterisation, then, the Christian perspective of *Cry, the Beloved Country* is deeply and vitally informed by the principles and values of liberalism<sup>1</sup>. Far from propounding an apolitical message of earthly endurance and heavenly reward, *Cry, the Beloved Country* offers a Christian approach directly focused on the social, economic and political issues of the day and actively concerned with bringing about a just and equitable society in South Africa.

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<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed account of Paton's presentation of the values and principles of liberal political philosophy in *Cry, the Beloved Country*, see Foley 1996.

The question of the relationship between religion and politics is explored not only at the level of plot and character, however, but also at the level of language, at what may be termed the level of text and subtext<sup>2</sup>.

### **Christianity and Liberalism in *Cry, the Beloved Country*: Text and Subtext**

In the body of critical work which has grown around *Cry, the Beloved Country*, perhaps the most frequently misrepresented aspect of the novel is that of its language, particularly those passages which have been termed 'biblical'. Even the most distinguished of Paton scholars, Edward Callan, has failed to provide an adequate explication of the significance of the religious quality of much of the language, merely suggesting that certain sections of the novel employ devices such as repetition and parallelism which are reminiscent of the Hebrew poetry of the bible, especially the Psalms (see Callan 1991:38-44). More recently, Kemp Williams has offered a stylistic analysis of the novel's language, but, beyond noting that some of the syntax of the novel recalls that of scripture, provides little insight into the rationale underlying the narrative style (Williams 1996:10-13). Indeed, the only critic to focus in any depth on the political implications of the religious texture of the language, Sheridan Baker, has done so only to produce a wildly improbable reading of the novel, such as associating James Jarvis with God and Arthur Jarvis with Jesus Christ (Baker 1957:56-61). Most notably, no effort has been made to explain the purpose of the numerous biblical references embedded in the text<sup>3</sup>.

In the light of this critical velleity, a close examination will be offered of the nature and meaning of Paton's use of a narrative language which frequently seems to be deliberately biblical in character. Such an examination will investigate the specifically political meaning underlying Paton's employment of biblical quotations, references and allusions, but will also consider the significance of the pervasive examples in the text of diction and imagery derived from scripture. In particular, it will be necessary to offer some exegesis of the key biblical passages which Paton has used to underpin his own politico-religious perspective, and which function at a subtextual level to determine the novel's thematic meaning.

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<sup>2</sup> While acknowledging the valuable exploration of intertextuality conducted by structuralist theorists such as Julia Kristeva, for example, this article will attempt to develop the present argument in terms of a specifically liberal understanding of the relationship between political and literary critical practice (see Foley 1992).

<sup>3</sup> The concern here is not so much with transparent details such as characters' names but rather with those biblical passages which have actually served to shape the direction of the novel's meaning.

Most evidently, as several commentators have noted, Paton has Msimangu use as the text for his sermon at Ezenzeleni several verses from the Book of Isaiah, namely Isaiah 42:6-7 and 42:16 (81) and Isaiah 40:28,30,31(82). At one level, the choice of these verses is apposite for a sermon designed to console and inspire the blind residents of the place, especially Isaiah 42:16:

And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not  
I will lead them in paths that they have not known  
I will make darkness light before them  
and crooked things straight  
These things I will do unto them  
and not forsake them (81).

In the immediate dramatic context of the novel, the verses serve also at a metaphorical level to offer succour to Stephen Kumalo himself, who has been 'blind' to God's mercy and who has indeed felt 'faint' and 'weary'. By the end of the sermon, Kumalo humbly announces that he has 'recovered' (83).

But if Msimangu and Kumalo relate to the verses only at these levels for the moment, it is apparent that Paton is aware of the weightier political import of Isaiah's message and allows this awareness to filter through into the overall perspective of the novel. This political awareness is made manifest later on in the novel when Paton, through Kumalo, grafts the end of Isaiah 42:16 quoted above onto the opening words of Isaiah 40 to produce a vision not so much of personal consolation but of divine assurance at the national level:

Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people; these things will I do unto you, and not forsake you (224).

This is a crucial point to which this article will return in due course. But to appreciate the full significance of the point it is necessary to understand the scriptural antecedents of Isaiah's message and how these earlier passages also inform Paton's religious and political thinking. An examination is therefore required of Exodus 3 and Isaiah 11.

In pursuing this line of argument, it must be pointed out that one would not have had to be a professional biblical scholar to discover the linkages between these various passages. In his quotations, Paton uses the King James Version of the bible (otherwise known as the Authorised Version) and it was standard for editions of the time to have a concordance running parallel with the text (see, for example, the Oxford edition of *The Holy Bible* of 1946<sup>4</sup>). In any event, Paton reveals himself in his Christian

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<sup>4</sup> All biblical quotations and references in this article will be taken from this edition.

non-fiction writing to be a diligent student of the bible who is sensitive to the subtleties and complexities of scriptural interpretation (see, for example, Paton 1958b; 1959).

Beginning with the book of Exodus, it may be seen that Paton derives certain core images from Exodus 3 to evoke the quasi-sacred character of the Natal hills described in the opening chapter of *Cry, the Beloved Country*. In this biblical passage, which relates the epiphany of God in the burning bush, Moses goes up 'the mountain of God' (3:1) where he is told: 'put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground' (3:5). In *Cry, the Beloved Country*, the reader is similarly admonished with regard to the land of 'the rich green hills' above Ixopo: 'Stand unshod upon it, for the ground is holy, being even as it came from the Creator' (1). Moreover, the 'desolate' lower regions and valleys in *Cry, the Beloved Country* would seem to correspond with the 'desert' (3:1) or 'wilderness' (3:18) surrounding the mountain in Exodus. Tony Morphet is therefore wrong to suggest that the passage in *Cry, the Beloved Country* is meant to evoke an Edenic, prelapsarian world (1983:9; see Genesis 2). Such an interpretation, in fact, misses a crucial aspect of Paton's actual biblical reference, for in Exodus the reason why God has called Moses is to deploy him to 'bring forth my people' (3:10) from the 'oppression' (3:9) of Egyptian enslavement; in other words, to effect political liberation. Paton's awareness of this significance is evident in the fact that he utilises several phrases from this passage as leading terms in his own book, particularly the idea of the 'cry' of a country in its desire for 'emancipation' from 'bondage' (see especially the title and final paragraph of the novel):

¼ the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage (2:23; see also 6:1-9).

The argument here is not that Paton expects his readers to recognise in the opening paragraphs of the novel a subtle biblical allusion to the idea of political emancipation. Rather, the point is that an understanding of the political import of the original source suggests that Paton shares with the Exodus author a particular conception of God. For the early Israelites, Yahweh was not distant and unapproachable but was instead actively concerned about the world and at times intervened directly in history to bring political freedom and justice to his people. Similarly, it would seem that Paton's theology revolves around a God not just of heaven but of history; not just of paradise but of politics.

This line of argument may be developed by further considering the concept of 'the holy mountain' as it emerges in scripture and in Paton's interpretation. As is common throughout the bible, later writers often hearken back to the diction, imagery and narrative of earlier texts to substantiate their present assertions. A pertinent example is that of Isaiah 11, where the prophet validates his political message by drawing on the

language and content of the Exodus story (see Isaiah 11:16). The essence of the prophet's vision is conveyed through the image of the mountain of God:

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea (11:9).

It is a familiar passage, and one of special importance to Paton who used it for the title and epigraph of his autobiography, *Towards the Mountain* (1980). It is also, however, a passage which has been frequently misinterpreted. Rather than speaking of a far distant future moment, even after death, when a condition of perfect peace is attained, Isaiah is prophesying the imminent arrival of the messiah, conceived of in the Judaic tradition as an earthly king of the Davidic line who will bring about the liberation and unification of the people of Israel (see Isaiah 9:2-7; 11:1-9; and Psalm 2:6). The specific political context of the prophecy arises from Isaiah's denunciation of the king of Judah, Ahaz, whom Isaiah regarded as having betrayed the people by surrendering their sovereignty in a coalition against the Assyrians rather than trusting in Yahweh's promises (see Bright 1980:290-291). The holy mountain, then, refers to the ushering in of an ideal political state governed by a king of peace and justice (see Isaiah 9:7; 11:2-5). Again, the lexical echoes of *Cry, the Beloved Country* are noticeable, for here the people will acknowledge that God 'comfortedst' (12:1) them as they 'cry' out (12:6) in celebration.

Part of the reason for the common misunderstanding of the passage derives from its appropriation over the years by Christian commentators to signify the Second Coming instead of the Judaic messiah, a fact of which Paton was very much aware (see Paton 1988:1). As such, several critics have mistakenly assumed that Paton's fondness for the passage means that his focus is essentially directed towards a world outside time and history (Morphet 1983:10; Williams 1996:14), or, as Thengani H. Ngwenya (1997:54) has recently contended, that his religious beliefs played 'the primary role' in his writing:

By anchoring his political philosophy in religious principles Paton positions himself above conflicting political ideologies and presents his vision of the future in essentially utopian and transcendental terms.

For Paton, however, while part of his faith is certainly based on the Christian eschatological hope, another equally important part remains firmly rooted in the political realities of this world. As he pointed out in a 1974 paper entitled 'The Nature and Ground of Christian Hope Today' (in Paton 1975:288):

The fact is that although we shall never reach the holy mountain, the whole journey of the Christian life is directed towards it. It is the vision of the

unattainable that determines what we shall attain. There is no holy mountain. It exists only in the vision of the prophets. Yet the vision of it can move men and women to unparalleled deeds, and to lives devoted to what is just and holy. Therefore our hope is concerned with the Future and the Now.

Later on in the same essay, he explicitly describes Isaiah's vision of the holy mountain as 'the vision of the triumph of righteousness in one's own country' (in Paton 1975:289). His interpretation of the concept of the holy mountain, therefore, is, if anything, anti-utopian (see also Paton 1980:122) and based on the belief that Christian justice and holiness are to be sought in the present world. It is an interpretation, moreover, fully consonant with the meliorist principles of liberalism, which affirm 'the corrigibility and improvability of all social institutions and political arrangements' (Gray 1986) rather than positing a rigid utopian ideal. Towards the end of the article, I return to Paton's use of the concept of the holy mountain. For the moment, however, the focus reverts Isaiah 40 and 42 with which this discussion began.

As biblical scholars have demonstrated (see Westermann 1969), chapters 40 to 55 of the book of Isaiah belong not to the original prophet but to an anonymous later writer, conventionally called Second Isaiah or Deutero-Isaiah (just as the even later writer of chapters 56-66 is called Trito-Isaiah). The political context of chapters 40-55 has shifted from the time of the Assyrian empire in the eighth century BC to the imminent conquest of the Babylonians by the Persian, Cyrus, in 539 BC (Bright 1980:360). Characteristically, though, Deutero-Isaiah draws on the language and concepts of both the Exodus narrative and Proto-Isaiah to authenticate his prophecy in which he foretells the coming liberation of the people from Babylonian captivity and their return to their own land (as was Cyrus' policy). The prophet interprets these events as God appointing Cyrus as his unwitting tool in restoring Zion (see Isaiah 44:24-45:7), and so God is to be exalted as the Lord of the universe, including, importantly, political history (see Isaiah 45:11-18; 48:12-16).

Once more, the opening chapters of Deutero-Isaiah have been the subject of much confusion as they have been taken over by the Christian tradition (together with Micah 3:10) as a herald of the coming of Christ (see Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:2-3; Luke 3:4-6; John 1:23). As noted earlier, however, Paton is clearly aware of the original significance of these chapters as conveying a message of God's active concern with history and particularly his confirmation of the imminent emancipation of his people. And thus Paton, though not quoting at length, allows the diction and imagery of these chapters to permeate his own narrative as a subtextual consolidation of his politically-oriented religious outlook. A brief consideration of the opening of Deutero-Isaiah (40:1-11) will illustrate the point:

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God ....

The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field:

The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass.

The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand forever.

O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!

Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.

He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather his lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

In this and later chapters there is a recurrent reference to 'comfort' being brought to the people (see also 49:13; 50:3; 51:3; 51:12; 51:19; 52:9); of 'cries' of sorrow being turned into 'cries' of national rejoicing by the prophetic 'cry' of liberation (see also 42:14; 43:14; 54:1); and of such comfort obtaining even in the midst of 'wilderness' and 'desert', or, more pertinently, 'desolation' (see 47:11; 49:8; 49:19-21; 51:19; 54:1-3). Furthermore, Deutero-Isaiah spreads the message, as Paton does in *Cry, the Beloved Country*, that the people should not be 'afraid', but should overcome their 'fear' (see 43:1; 44:2,8), and begin to 'rebuild' and 'restore' (42:22; 44:26; 49:6), for 'a new thing' (43:19) is about to be created. And the prophet makes extensive use of the imagery of 'valley' and 'mountain' (including the phrase 'high places': 42:18; 49:9), particularly 'the high mountain' (40:9) of Zion, reminiscent of the mountain of God in Exodus 3:1 and 'the holy mountain' of Isaiah 11:9.

The point to be made, therefore, is that Paton is not simply employing this vocabulary for the sake of lending his narrative style a biblical flavour. Instead, it is evident that in the composition of *Cry, the Beloved Country* Paton has had in mind a series of linked scriptural passages which deal with the theme of God's concern with political history. It is these passages which have influenced the development of Paton's conception of God, and which underlie his understanding of the relationship between religion and politics. Put in theological terms, God for Paton (and for other liberal-Christian thinkers) is coterminously transcendent and immanent. That is, as lord and

creator of the universe he is above and beyond this world while at the same time being present in the world and vitally concerned about the world. Hence, while *Cry, the Beloved Country* certainly confirms the Christian belief in posthumous salvation (witness, for example, the desperate efforts to get Absalom to avail himself of absolution), it is simultaneously focused on specifically social and political issues.

However, rather than present these ideas bluntly in the form of statement and assertion, Paton has utilised an altogether more subtle and original technique. He has taken these key biblical passages and, recognising their politico-religious significance, has allowed their very language to pervade his own writing: not only in the form of direct quotation and allusion, but in terms of diction, tone, syntax and imagery. And as this subtextual language has become part of the actual fabric of his own text, so have the concepts and vision within this language come to inform and even determine the thematic structure and meaning of his novel. Thus, far from functioning merely as quaint stylistic embellishment, the recurrent biblical phrases and images in *Cry, the Beloved Country* form an integral part of the novel's meaning, and help convey a sense of God as actively and immediately involved in human society and politics.

## Conclusion

This article has argued that in *Cry, the Beloved Country* Alan Paton offers a profound exploration of the relationship between religion and politics, not only at the level of plot and character, but also at the level of what may be termed text and subtext. The pursuit of this argument has, however, raised a number of related issues, some of which it is necessary in conclusion to address. In the first place, it must be emphasised that when Paton conceives of God intervening in political history, he does not see this—as some charismatic Christian groups have—in terms of a physical incarnation of God in the world, or in terms of the *parusia*, and certainly not in terms of the establishment of a theocratic state. In more moderate and more plausible manner, Paton conceptualises such intervention in terms of individual people being so inspired and motivated by the ideals of the liberal-Christian outlook that they seek to implement such ideals in their own societies. It was his conviction, as noted earlier, that the vision of Isaiah's holy mountain could compel men and women to the pursuit of political justice and sustain them in that pursuit: he contends after all that he himself had been moved 'to the depth of [his] being' by this vision<sup>5</sup> to strive for 'a more just, a more humane, a more Christian country' (in Paton 1975:289,291). And, indeed, much of the thematic thrust of *Cry, the Beloved Country* concerns individual characters like Msimangu and Stephen Kumalo,

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<sup>5</sup> In this regard, Paton also records the effect on him of John of Patmos's vision in the New Testament of the new heaven and the new earth (Revelation 21:1-22:5), a vision which he similarly interprets in political terms (in Paton 1975:287-289).

or like Arthur Jarvis and James Jarvis, being so moved by just such a vision that they take it upon themselves to help effect real and meaningful change in their society. God intervenes in history, therefore, through the agency of human beings who have been touched, as it were, by the kinds of ideals articulated, for example, in the Beatitudes of Christ: righteousness and justice, mercy and compassion, tolerance and peacemaking (Matthew 5:1-10). Put in more poetic terms, Paton's unwavering faith in the ability of God to influence political conduct is reflected in his final published words at the end of his last volume of autobiography, *Journey Continued* (1988:301):

God bless Africa  
Guard her children  
Guide her rulers  
and give her peace.

In the second place, it is important to note that Paton did not view the idea of God's intervention in history in terms of what later came to be called 'liberation theology'. The term denotes a radical intellectual movement with a Marxist rather than liberal orientation which tended to condone the use of political violence as a necessary means of liberation from oppression, using selectively interpreted biblical passages as justification. Paton's view is articulated in *Towards the Mountain* (1980:32):

Although attempts are made today—and particularly in Africa—to prove that Jesus believed in 'sanctified violence', and although he drove the money changers out of the temple, it seemed to me that the whole meaning of the gospel was that creative love had a greater power—and a truer and sweeter power—than force.

Paton's rejection of violence as an agent of political change has been condemned by certain critics who have regarded his advocacy of 'love' as naïve and irrelevant (Watson 1982; Rich 1985). It is important to realise, however, that the word, love, as it is used in a political context in *Cry, the Beloved Country*, means far more than some vague notion of interpersonal goodwill, and may more properly be glossed as the desire and effort to create a just and equitable social order in South Africa. This is certainly the sense in which Msimangu, for example, uses the word: negatively, he fears that when the whites finally 'turn to loving' they will find that the blacks 'are turned to hating' (38; 235); but more positively Msimangu offers a lucid explication of the political meaning of love as effective action for the achievement of racial equality and justice:

But there is only one thing that has power completely, and that is love.  
Because when a man loves he seeks no power, and therefore he has power. I

see only one hope for this country, and that is when white men and black men, desiring neither power nor money, but desiring only the good of their country, come together to work for it (37).

The impression must not be given, however, that Paton created *Cry, the Beloved Country* as a watertight theological treatise or that there are not some inconsistencies in the presentation of the novel's religious standpoint. Most notably, there is the problem of Msimangu's strange decision to retire into a religious community where he 'would forswear the world and all its possessions' (183), since this seems precisely to remove him from the sphere of practical action and influence which Paton has been highlighting in the novel. It would appear, moreover, to substantiate the views of Msimangu's unnamed critics in the novel who, following Marx's axiom that religion is the opium of the people, despise Msimangu for preaching 'of a world not made by hands, .... making the hungry patient, the suffering content, the dying at peace', and for sending the people 'marching to heaven instead of to Pretoria' (82-83). Although Paton evidently based this episode on the actual case of Father Leo Rakale, the first black Anglican to become a monk in South Africa (see Alexander 1994:200), there is no doubt that its inclusion weakens rather than strengthens Paton's portrayal of Msimangu as a Christian committed to social change.

Despite such inconsistencies in detail, the liberal-Christian perspective which the novel presents remains generally coherent, and the novel's ending succeeds in bringing the examination of this perspective to a meaningful and appropriate conclusion. On the eve of his son's execution, Stephen Kumalo goes up into the mountain above Carisbrooke to hold a vigil, and on the way he coincidentally meets James Jarvis. Despite the gathering darkness, the two men find words to thank each other for their kindness and to console each other for their loss, thus revealing how far the two men have come in their relationship and confirming the potential for true human interaction that they have established. But the setting for this final meeting also operates at a symbolic level to recall the holy mountain of Isaiah as an ideal of political reconciliation and peace:

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.

And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox (Isaiah 11:6f).

Paton is careful to avoid rendering the scene implausible, and so the white man remains mounted while the black man stands on foot and there is no physical contact for 'such a thing is not lightly done' (232). Nevertheless, through the subtextual biblical imagery,

Paton is able to suggest in the figures of these two old men the potential for the real and meaningful reconciliation of the races in South Africa and for the attainment of genuine racial justice.

The biblical subtext of the novel continues into the final pages as Kumalo contemplates in solitude the meaning of all he has experienced. By now, significantly, the notion of the interconnection of religion and politics, and of God's involvement in history, seems completely natural as the concept of 'salvation' (235) is applied at the national level, and the anthemic prayer of South Africa is mentioned for the fourth time:

And now for all the people of Africa, the beloved country. *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika*, God save Africa (235; see 53, 191, 229).

Even though Kumalo is sufficiently prescient to perceive that such salvation 'lay afar off' (235), the novel does end with some sense of hope. Kumalo's view of the sun rising in the east betokens not just the actual dawn, but also, through the serious pun, the assurance of both personal resurrection and, potentially at least, national redemption. The famous final sentence of the novel, appropriately echoing the language of the books of Exodus and Isaiah, adroitly encapsulates this complex blend of pragmatic restraint and expectant faith:

But when that dawn will come, of our emancipation, from the fear of bondage and the bondage of fear, why, that is a secret (236).

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# Shaka and the Changing of Perspectives— Teaching South African Literature and History at a German College<sup>1</sup>

Gisela Feurle

## 1 Introduction

In 1996 a colleague of the history department and I developed and taught an interdisciplinary course 'South Africa and Shaka—Literature and History' at the Oberstufenkolleg Bielefeld as an experiment in interdisciplinary team-teaching in our section 'cultures and histories'<sup>2</sup>. Various reasons motivated us to choose such an apparently 'far away' topic: the exciting political situation in South Africa, the question of nationbuilding and the role of tradition in this context. We had looked for

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<sup>1</sup> This is a slightly revised version of a paper presented at the Centre for the Study of Southern African Literature and Languages (CSSALL) at the University of Durban-Westville in August 1999.

<sup>2</sup> The Oberstufenkolleg at the University of Bielefeld is the only college of its kind in Germany. It was founded in the 1970s in the context of educational reform as an experimental college and research institution that links the three years of upper secondary school including Abitur (matric) with undergraduate university studies (2 or 4 semesters) in an integrated four-year course. Different from the traditional sequence of general knowledge at school and specialisation at university it combines specialisation in two majors and general studies based on interdisciplinary courses and project learning and has the aim to further self-directed learning. It is meant as an ongoing workshop for (action) research and development of curricula and the production of teaching material that should allow transfer to universities and schools in particular. The great diversity of the students with regard to their educational, social, cultural and national background and age is one of the fundamental characteristics which is linked to the aim of creating greater equality of opportunity (e.g. about 20% of the students have a culturally or nationally different background from German, most of them coming from migrant families). Another characteristic aspect of the Oberstufenkolleg is its democratic self-administration.

a topic that allowed and required both literary and historical studies and was a good case for the reflection of eurocentric perspectives. Having taught at a Zimbabwean school in the 1980s I remembered well how I had been impressed by the new Zimbabwean history books after independence and their Africanist approach e.g. to the figure of Shaka—Shaka the Great and not Shaka the Brutal—to the Mfecane and the question of historical change and I realised that there are new challenges now and a lively debate in South Africa in this respect. We were interested in the general and theoretical questions involved in the topic with regard to the question of construction or invention of tradition and its political function. And finally we had already come across Zulu praise poetry and the German translation of Thomas Mofolo's novel *Chaka Zulu* as interesting texts for such a course.

We decided for Shaka and posed the following questions in the leaflet announcing the course: There are many and contradictory representations of Shaka—why and what is 'true'? How and why do traditions and ethnic identities emerge? What is Shaka's importance for nationbuilding or ethnic identity in South Africa? We outlined that we wanted to look for answers by analysing literary texts and historical sources; by studying theoretical concepts; that we wanted to deal with the current political situation in South Africa using newspapers and films; and that we wished to also reflect upon our own points of view and perspectives.

Our approach involves various perspectives and their change:

- \* changing the perspective of the discipline in an interdisciplinary approach, i.e. in this case of historical and literary studies;
- \* changing the perspective of the 'self' and the 'other', the European and African, or German and South African perspectives and underlying experiences;
- \* changing the teachers' and students' perspectives on the topic.

The first and third refer to the curricular and didactic approach, the second is an essential element in an approach to intercultural learning.

Following these ways of changing perspectives, I shall first outline some theoretical and didactic aspects of our approach with reference to the concrete course. Then the course structure and programme, the teaching material and teaching methods will be presented, to conclude with a short reflection of our experiences.

## **2 Underlying Theoretical and Pedagogical Concepts**

### **2.1 General Studies and the Interdisciplinary Pedagogical Approach**

The area of general education comprising the interdisciplinary courses and projects is an important curricular element at the Oberstufenkolleg as it is conceived to be

complementary and in contrast to the area of specialised education. The central ideas are that learning in this field should be holistic, problem oriented and reflective and relate one's own experience or questions to the respective topic or problem. It should involve learning by going beyond the boundaries of one discipline, changing the perspective of the discipline and reflecting this process and the different approaches involved. The students in these courses are a mixed group also as for their majors and this should further their experience that complex problems can only be tackled by the co-operation of different disciplines and people. These courses also teach basic skills and abilities—like reading strategies, text interpretation, analysis of sources, studying skills, differentiation and critical thinking etc. They should prepare for studying at the university but also for life in society.

According to this concept of general studies we started off from the complex phenomenon, i.e. the fact that Shaka is being referred to and plays a certain role in present day politics in South Africa and the question what this means—in South Africa and for us. We did this by showing a film of a German TV-series 'African Kings' of 1996 with the characteristic title 'The Lion of the Zulu' that dealt with the revival of Zulu culture today, with Shaka, King Zwelithini, South African politics etc. It raised many questions on the basis of which we developed the need to look behind the clichés—e.g. of Zulu warriors—and to approach the topic from different angles and disciplines: politics, literature and culture, and history. We changed the perspective of the discipline, i.e. contrasted the different concepts, methods and insights of literary and historical studies when we dealt with literary text and historical sources and made students aware of differences, but also of similarities, and reflected what we did and learnt. For example we carried out literary interpretation and looked at the aesthetic qualities of Thomas Mofolo's novel 'Chaka Zulu' (e.g. characterisation, narrative strategies, imagery, language, form etc.) and of Zulu praise poems and on the other hand analysed sources like the diary of H.F. Fynn about his meeting with Shaka, dealt with Zulu praise poems as source of oral history, or looked at history books. Texts like Ritter's biography of Shaka illustrated that there is often no clear distinction between history and fiction.

On this basis we could show the relevance of theoretical concepts. The discourse on the construction of nations, the creation and formation of ethnicity and ethnic identity (Elwert 1989) and on the invention of tradition (Ranger 1983) was both background and explicit topic in our course, also in reference to the colonial and apartheid history of South Africa (Köbler 1991). We found it very exciting to include aspects of the ongoing research and the academic and political debate in South Africa which we try to follow as far as our possibilities allow (e.g. Hamilton 1995; 1998). However, as knowledge of English is limited for a number of our students, we cannot include too many and too difficult texts in English.

The learner orientation of the general studies concept meant that we started off the Shaka-course by stimulating the students to communicate and reflect their associations and questions with regard to South Africa—most of them had not heard of Shaka before<sup>3</sup>. We did this by letting them choose a postcard or photo as a stimulus. This was also a way for the group (of 24 students) of getting to know each other which is an important basis for this type of course. The approach also means that to a certain extent there should be possibility and space for students to include their interests and participate in making the programme of the course, thus changing from the teachers' to the students' perspective and planning. For example it was some students' wish to include more of present day South African politics and we followed that suggestion by including more press clippings, films and current affairs topics. One requirement for passing the course is an oral and written contribution regarding a topic arising from the content of the course. Here some students also put forward their particular ideas and interest, e.g. one politically interested student wanted to read the autobiography of Nelson Mandela and make a presentation for the group. We discussed it with her and identified an aspect that fit the course topic; she finally gave a biographical survey and focused on the role of tradition and Xhosa identity in Nelson Mandela's youth.

## 2.2 Intercultural Learning

The approach of intercultural learning is another element that determined our course. I think it should always apply when dealing with 'other' cultures or societies. This may be the case when reading South African literature as German readers, but also when dealing with the topic of the identity of German-Turkish youth in German society. It involves that not only aspects of the 'other' culture and society are dealt with, but also the respective aspects of one's own or familiar culture. Thus, it means a change of perspective and the challenge to treat the topic as it represents oneself and 'the other'. Furthermore, when dealing with another culture and society, the basis of one's reception is to be reflected, i.e. one's own historical, political, social, personal and gender position and linked to all this, one's language, values, judgements and ideas, that which is 'normal'. This cultural self-reflection in our context is a way of becoming aware of eurocentric perspectives, of dealing with the colonial gaze or neo-colonial attitudes, shaking prejudices and stereotypes or essentialised ideas of culture.

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<sup>3</sup> In South African context, I would begin by asking for everybody's associations regarding Shaka. In fact, I did this when presenting this paper at UDW and it revealed an interesting variety of views and perspectives which one has to take into account and can refer to during the course.

The approach meant that we dealt with the problem of European or German terms applied to African history, e.g. the terms 'Stamm'/'tribe', 'king' and 'state', their eurocentrism, and the colonial and racist connotations they may carry (Harding 1994). We reflected the colonial and racist images carried by the German word 'Häuptling' and decided for the English term 'chief'; we wondered if the term 'nkosi' for Shaka would not be better than 'king'; and looked for an alternative to the term 'Stamm' that carried both the idea of essentialism and the connotation of primitivity when applied to Africa.

It also meant reflecting upon stereotypes and one's own reactions and evaluations when watching the film about Zulu culture, Zulu warriors, the strong reference to tradition and Shaka, or when reading about violence in KwaZulu/Natal. At a later point—also on the basis of more knowledge about the historical and political context—we could relate such phenomena to the concept of invention of tradition and culture, to the political use of cultural symbols and traditions and show that these are general phenomena and 'modern' processes. We looked for an example from the German context to show similar (although also very different) processes and chose the figure of the Germanic warrior Arminius whose statue can be seen in the Teutoburg Forest near the city of Bielefeld where we live. In history we learn that Arminius beat the Romans under their commander Varus in the year 9 A.D.—i.e. according to Tacitus—and that this liberated the Germans from Roman colonialism. In the nineteenth century when there was a national movement for a unified German national state, the figure of Arminius became an important symbol of German nationalism and strength and after a long time (more than 40 years) of preparation and mobilisation, the huge Arminius statue was erected in 1875 in the presence of the Emperor Wilhelm I—after the German national state had been founded in 1871 (Böhning 1985). What is interesting is that the Arminius of the nineteenth century has his sword lifted and directed to the south west against the then 'hereditary enemy', Napoleon and the French. Arminius, as symbol of nineteenth century nationalism, has been depicted in art and in literature, e.g. in a nationalist drama of Kleist, in poetry and popular songs. Heinrich Heine wrote a very ironic and anti-nationalist poem in 1844. It is not surprising that during national socialism in Germany, the fascists used the Arminius symbol for their own nationalist, racist and warfare purposes. After 1945 it no longer had this point of reference or importance, except for neo-nazi groups who still take the statue as their place of assembly and for chauvinist reference. In general, these days—to tell the end or, better, the present state of the story—the Arminius statue fortunately is only a tourist attraction and recently Arminius got dressed in a huge football shirt in order to celebrate the promotion of the local football team called Arminia Bielefeld into the first league and to boost local tourism and a local brewery.

In our course we referred to Arminius, to the way he was constructed and made use of as a mythical construction and symbol for German nationalism in different times. We did not do this in detail, however. It will be worthwhile next time and perhaps as a digression, we shall make a trip to the statue, to intensify the experience how 'the other' (Shaka) can help to open or sharpen one's eye for one's own history and political processes. Despite all this, it is obvious that the case of Shaka as a political and cultural metaphor, the great variety of representations even during his lifetime and after, is certainly much more complex and of different relevance for the South African history and society than the Arminius case. Of course, such a change of perspective to our own history implying some comparison has to be careful and conscious of the trap of eurocentrism and it needs the basis of certain theoretical concepts—as mentioned above.

### 2.3 Pedagogical Approach

As a third point I want to underline elements of our pedagogical approach that are closely linked to the two concepts of general or interdisciplinary studies and intercultural learning. Central aspects like learner and problem orientation, inclusion of students' interests and perspectives, reflection of one's own cultural background, values and images, and reactions to the 'other' have already been mentioned. The concept of 'theme-centred interaction' developed by Ruth Cohn (1975) implies further changes of perspective and proved to be a very fruitful pedagogical basis for our purposes. It is based on the so-called 'triangle' of 'I', 'We' (the group) and 'It' (the subject matter resp. a certain question) that is surrounded by 'the globe'—the context of society etc. Contrary to traditional approaches that are centred on the subject matter only (as it is often the case at university) or more recent pedagogical approaches that are student oriented, it emphasises that all three dimensions are important and need to be balanced in the pedagogical situation. This means that one has to focus on the interaction of the individual and the subject matter, i.e. the topic, theme or text, and also on the interaction of the group as a group, and how the group articulates with the subject matter.

We did this by applying various methods, e.g. once when we needed some feedback regarding the course and wanted to stimulate reflection on everybody's participation and attitude, we had everybody position him- or herself in relation, i.e. in respective distance, to the course reader that was lying on the floor in the centre. This showed quite a variety of involvement and was revealing for the group. In addition we also had a 'round' in which everybody briefly commented on the question: 'How is my participation in this course? What are the reasons?' Or, before focusing on the reception and interpretation of literature (also in contrast to historical texts) we had the students discuss in small groups for a short while the question 'Do I

read literature/fiction? Why or why not?' and had a discussion in the plenary about reasons for reading literature, its effects etc. which prepared the ground for literary studies.

Altogether we tried to apply and experiment with a variety of methods that can organise and facilitate the learning process, students' activity, personal participation and creativity, reflection and discussion, e.g. by group work, role play, creative tasks. Team teaching is not necessary for all that, but of course, an advantage not only for ideas and variation, but also for observation, reflection and evaluation of processes and lessons.

### **3 The Course: Programme, Teaching Material and Methods**

Roughly five different phases resp. topics can be distinguished: the current political situation in South Africa, literary representations of Shaka, historical constructions of Shaka, Zulu praise poetry as literary text and historical source and finally theoretical concepts of invention of tradition and creation of identities<sup>4</sup>. Although we had fixed this course programme and prepared the course reader with central texts, we were flexible in the process of teaching and learning, added or left out certain aspects and material.

#### **3.1 Introduction and Current Political Situation in South Africa**

After introducing our course concept to the students and dealing with the students' associations as mentioned above, we showed and discussed the TV-film 'The Lion of the Zulu' as a first introduction to Shaka, his representations and his relevance for the past and present of South Africa, e.g. for Inkatha. We tried to build up the background by means of basic information on South Africa ('From apartheid to democracy') and various newspaper articles that gave an impression of the political situation in September 1996 (violence in KwaZulu/Natal, constitution). As it became obvious that most students had very little knowledge about South Africa further information and illustration regarding apartheid and current affairs were necessary in the course of the programme (e.g. the film 'Cry for Freedom', up-to-date newspaper clippings).

#### **3.2 Literary Representations of Shaka**

To convey a first impression of a traditional African literary text and create one different from the academic or school atmosphere, we listened to some music of Ladysmith Black Mambaza and created a kind of story telling situation: I read the first three chapters of Thomas Mofolo's novel *Chaka Zulu* (1988) to the group. When

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<sup>4</sup> See the end of the article for the outline.

reflecting what was unfamiliar or striking for them, students mentioned e.g. the exotic names, the language, the way of telling, which was a good starting point.

In the following lesson we dealt with the different pieces of information on the author and his work as given in entries of encyclopaedias and on blurbs. It struck us, for example, and led to discussions on eurocentric evaluations that three of the four short texts emphasised Mofolo's 'simple language'. The next step was a practical introduction to literary interpretation and its application to chapter four of the novel: narrative perspective and strategies, plot, characterisation, language, elements of oral tradition, cultural context, effects on the reader. The epilogue of the translator dealing with Mofolo's language, characteristic elements of African oral tradition and the difficulties of translation from Sesotho to German (in particular the imagery, proverbs, sentence structure, repetition, onomatopoeia) was very productive for intercultural reflection. In the following lessons small groups of students read and interpreted different chapters of the novel applying what they had learnt and presented their results to the plenary.

At the beginning of the literature section we had suggested topics for the students' individual contributions, so that the following topics were dealt with on the basis of student input: historical context and biography of Thomas Mofolo and the history of his novel *Chaka Zulu*, which is interesting, as the author had to alter it and that it took 18 years to get published by the missionary publishing house—there one wonders how different comments and opinions were censured or not. There is the German edition of *Chaka Zulu* of 1953, which was a translation of the shortened and 'smoothened' English version for European readers of 1949, and the new German edition of 1988 translated directly from Sesotho. Thus, one topic was the comparison of the passage on Shaka's murder of his love, Noliwe, in the shortened and distorted version of 1953 and in the 1988 edition<sup>5</sup>. Other topics were a comparison of the passage on Shaka's mother Nandi's death as told in Mofolo and Ritter's *Shaka* biography (in the former, Shaka kills and in the latter he does not kill his mother), the author Rider Haggard and Shaka's death in his romance *Nada the Lily*, the representation of Shaka and the beautiful black Noliwe in Leopold Senghor's dramatic poem *Tschaka* of 1956 written in the tradition of *négritude*<sup>6</sup>. We compared

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<sup>5</sup> The 1953 edition is not only considerably shorter; there is also a change of style, e.g. images are left out, like 'he swallowed the stone' (when Shaka decided to follow Isanusi's advice to kill Noliwe).

<sup>6</sup> I am grateful for the critical questions which were raised when I presented my paper at UDW—e.g. why we had not included anything from Masisi Kunene's, *Emperor Shaka the Great*. I agree that it is important to include this perspective and its literary representation, and, having got hold of the text in the meantime, we shall use it too in our next course.

different interpretations and evaluations of Mofolo's novel and this raised questions like: Does the novel represent or subvert the colonial/missionary discourse? Does it uphold Christian moral values or the importance of African culture? It was the ambiguity of Mofolo's novel in these respects that was particularly interesting and stimulating.

Interwoven with these contributions we continued reading and interpreting passages of the novel, discussed different approaches to literary studies and the question of reception. The variety of literary representations and constructions of Shaka ranging from Mofolo's ambiguous Shaka figure that develops from good to evil, from a young man who was wronged to a ruthless, immoral ruler, up to Senghor's Shaka as fighter against oppression and symbol of African liberation, led us to the importance of the historical, political and personal context of the author and the functions of literary construction.

### 3.3 Historical Constructions of Shaka

A text 'Rewriting of history in South Africa' (*Le Monde Diplomatique* October 1996) that discusses the problem of different perspectives on history and in textbooks in the new South Africa introduced our historical part.

We took care to use besides European or German authors (e.g. Fisch 1990) as many texts written by authors from Southern Africa as possible. Thus we introduced a southern African perspective on 'Mfecane and Shaka' by texts from the Zimbabwean history textbook 'African Heritage' (Sibanda et al. 1982). In groups, students read and translated some passages, e.g. historical change, Shaka the great military leader. We had luckily (and by chance) got hold of some South African teaching material 'Teaching the Mfecane' (History Methodology group at Witwatersrand University 1995). We included some of it in our reader, as it presents the concept and concrete material regarding the different constructions of Shaka in a stimulating way: E.g. it asks 'What did Shaka look like?' and answers it by different sources giving contradictory information, e.g. Shaka was not tall or rather tall, dark or light in complexion etc. With regard to the topic 'market forces and state formation' we successfully took up the suggestion to make a role play of barter trade involving three groups that had either cattle, ivory or weapons and thus different chances in trade. In a next step we dealt with 'causes of change in Nguni society and Mfecane', starting with the different theories presented in a recent Zimbabwean textbook (Barnes et al. 1993)—the theory of white influence, great-men-theory, influence of trade, population growth, which made us conclude that there is a complexity and interplay of causes. We taught about the current debate in South Africa initiated by Cobbing—the influence of slave trade vs. internally induced change—on the basis of short excerpts of three positions (Cobbing 1988; Eldridge 1992; Hamilton 1992) and various maps. This made the students see and experience

historical research as an ongoing process that is determined by different theories and ideologies and construction of historical figures.

A role play should consolidate and apply what had been learnt: we imagined an academic conference; some students acted as researchers who put forward their position on the Mfecane after having prepared for it in group, so that an argument and lively debate developed.

Next we looked more closely at the analysis and the problem of interpretation of primary and secondary historical sources referring to concrete examples that dealt with Shaka, as e.g. Ritter, Bryant, and in particular H.F. Fynn's diary of which we read an extract<sup>7</sup>. It was revealing to learn that the white traders' representation of Shaka changed and depended on their interest, e.g. when they wanted Britain to get involved in Natal they portrayed Shaka as an aggressive brutal ruler, whereas before he was said to be a wise diplomat.

As a kind of footnote I want to mention an interesting text in this respect<sup>8</sup>. In 1929 the German missionary Wilhelm von Fintel of the Hermannsburg mission in Empangweni wrote a booklet on Shaka with the title 'Tschaka der große Zulukoönig' for the Germans at home to make them continue their support of the missionary efforts. To briefly summarise his conclusion: The Zulu lived an idle life full of vice and without moral, then Shaka came and changed his people, establishing moral and discipline, as if he was called by God to act as a reformer to prepare his people for times to come when they would receive the evangelium. For this to happen, however, God had to destroy the Zulu kingdom so that Christ's throne could be erected. Fintel concludes that the missionaries' work to change Shaka's kingdom into Christ's kingdom is still going on. At first this seemed to me an absurd interpretation or a wild adaptation of the mission's ideology to the circumstances. On second thought, however, I wonder if it is not a theological parallel to Shepstone's modelling of the colonial government in Zululand—in a distorted way—on structures of Shaka's rule (see Hamilton 1998:72ff.) In any case, this can serve as illustrative material for a certain kind of historical construction and ideological perspective in our next Shaka-course.

All along in the history section, there were students contributions or inputs dealing with: history and politics of the ANC and Inkatha, Nelson Mandela's biography, South Africa at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Mfecane and the Great Trek, traditional Zulu culture, the question of land in the history of South

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<sup>7</sup> This is a good example illustrating the problems related to source material: the diary had been reconstructed and not only rewritten by Fynn himself, but has been used as a source and point of reference by many historians.

<sup>8</sup> I discovered this text at the Killie Campbell library in Durban a few days before presenting this paper.

Africa. We concluded the history part by reflecting and contrasting the different emphases and methods of literary and historical studies.

At this point of the course the students had to write an assignment of 90 minutes to apply what they had learnt about literary interpretation and historical analysis<sup>9</sup>.

### 3.4 Zulu Praise Poetry—Literary Text and Historical Source

Our aim was to show the quality of a text that requires the interaction of different disciplines for its interpretation, i.e. history, social anthropology and literary studies, and that only by relating the aesthetic, cultural, social and historical aspects to each other, fuller understanding can be achieved.

As most students knew little about interpreting poetry and its effects, we first taught or revised some basics (e.g. rhythm, metre, alliteration, anapher, imagery, parallelism etc.) using a German example, a poem of Heinrich Heine. Then we chose one passage of Shaka's praise poem (collected by James Stuart, translated by Cope 1968) and demonstrated to the students some aspects of a literary interpretation and a historical analysis and how they complement each other—as far as we could we used the English version and for some formal elements also the Zulu original. A practical exercise intensified the poetic and intercultural 'encounter': In small groups the students translated some more extracts from Shaka's and Senzangakhona's praise poems from English into German, struggling to understand the message, the praises and allusions or criticism, and to find poetic German equivalents for images, for the rhythm, the alliterations etc.<sup>10</sup>. They also realised that despite the annotations, a lot remained incomprehensible, vague and strange to us and that much historical, linguistic, and aesthetic knowledge is needed to understand more, but also that our intercultural understanding has its limits.

A contribution of two students dealt with oral tradition, the context and function of Zulu praise poems, *izibongo*, and looked at the praise poems in Mofolo's novel (in German translation). At the end, they asked everybody in the group

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<sup>9</sup> It had two parts: a literary interpretation of a passage from Thomas Mofolo's novel and an analysis of a passage on Shaka taken from the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Passing this assignment, an oral and written presentation of one topic in the course and regular attendance were the requirements for students to pass the course. (The Oberstufenkolleg has a pass/fail system of evaluation; marks are only given in the final examination and some preceding examination assignments.)

<sup>10</sup> E.g. the powerful repetition that conveys the numerous battles: 'Bird that eats others, As it was still eating others it destroyed some more, Still eating it destroyed others..'; criticism like 'the kicking of this beast puzzles me'.

(including us teachers) to show what we have learnt by writing a short praise poem on somebody or something. This creative task proved to be very productive, not only because of the fun we had and the interesting results presented to the plenary, but also because the active production and use of aesthetic elements intensified the understanding of the genre and its effect and the involvement with 'the other'.

### **3.5 Theoretical Concepts: Invention of Tradition and Creation of Ethnic and National Identity**

We dealt with theoretical concepts—only briefly, however—that explain the formation of ethnic and national groups and identities and that criticise essentialist positions. This helped to explain and understand the concrete material, i.e. the different constructions and representations of Shaka and their respective political and ideological functions in society. Leading back to questions regarding present day South Africa that were raised at the beginning of the course, we read and discussed a theory-based article (in German) that analysed the processes of inventing tradition with reference to the question of national identity of the 'Zulu' and 'Xhosa' (Köbler 1991) during colonial and apartheid times. Students found the text and the complex subject matter quite difficult to understand. As this was at the end of the course, we unfortunately had too little time left to deal with these theoretical, historical and political aspects more thoroughly and also the present situation in South Africa as for nation building and ethnic identity. This would require a follow-up course. I think and hope, however, that if there are—for both students and teachers—some puzzling and open questions triggered by the 'Shaka-topic' this will also have a productive result.

## **4 Conclusion**

'Shaka' is a difficult and complex topic for a course that is not a graduate or research seminar, but for most students an introduction to South Africa, South African literature and history. That is why we had a broad approach with a great variety of material and often could not treat subject materials in depth. Because the Shaka-topic is very 'far away' for the students and it is difficult to find a subjective or personal anchor, we used many different methods to activate the students and motivate them for their learning process. Especially the creative tasks, role plays and translation tasks proved to be successful.

Our central text for the start, Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka Zulu*, is also not easy, as it leads into a strange, unfamiliar and old world—somehow more difficult for the students than South African fiction of the present—, but most students liked reading it and quite a number of them got fascinated by the novel: by Shaka's development,

by Isanusi, by the language. Just because the Shaka-topic is 'far away', our experience showed that literature is a good way to lead into it, to create a subjective and emotional link and we concluded that in any case, the literary approach should come before the historical. Showing some of the film 'Shaka Zulu' by Bill Faure—which was not available to us then—would not only be interesting for the question of cultural constructions and intercultural reflection but also play a motivating and personally activating role in creating controversial discussions. For creating personal connection and motivation, it was also important that we repeatedly related the topic to eurocentric and colonial images as well as to current political relevance. The intercultural change of perspective—e.g. when reflecting stereotypes, eurocentric terms, German national symbols—also meant coming closer to the topic, revealing its complexities and furthering the process of understanding.

Students evaluated as positive that their ideas and suggestions were taken up and discussions and activities were stimulated, i.e. they appreciated the changes of perspective to the 'I' and to the group that I mentioned above. A good indicator is also that all students remained in the course up to the end.

Dealing with literature before the historical approach meant still another advantage: moving from literary constructions of Shaka to the historical Shakas made the students discover that there is construction in history, too. The change of perspective of the discipline was thus revealing for them and facilitated understanding. Using methods of both literary and historical studies when we dealt with the praise poems, provided the experience that, going beyond one discipline or specialisation, the process and quality of understanding is furthered and enhanced. For us teachers the interdisciplinary change of perspective was very stimulating and enriching. Team teaching also enabled us to have different perspectives in the lesson, because each time one of us was mainly responsible and acting, the other more observing and reflecting, which was a good basis for evaluating the teaching process. Team teaching also made us more daring in experimenting with teaching methods. But of course, it is also possible—and the normal case—to teach such a course on one's own.

Often the students had the active part which made the lesson lively and reduced our double dominance. However, a great number of oral contributions by students can also be a difficulty—if the contributions are poor. Therefore, especially with the younger students, a lot of help was required to prepare.

We were tempted to add more and more material and aspects to do justice to the complexity of the topic. This cannot be the solution, however. On the contrary, we have to be very careful not to overdo it—especially because we find more and more interesting material. Rather to confuse by abundance, one would need to select carefully and keep the balance—between all the concrete and interesting facets, the exemplary and the theoretical.

It is difficult to draw conclusions that look beyond the assignments, the course discussions and the feedback and know what the students actually learnt and understood and how far they got involved with South African topics. Sometimes we can see some effects, e.g. when students write exam papers on Zulu praise poetry or choose literary representations of Shaka as a topic for their final exam at the end of their four years at the Oberstufenkolleg<sup>11</sup>.

To conclude: The three different kinds of changing the perspective—interdisciplinary, intercultural and pedagogical—and a variety of teaching methods helped to open up the far away and complex Shaka-topic and to gain insight that could not have been gained otherwise. Perhaps some of this may also be of interest for teaching at the university and for training future teachers.

Oberstufenkolleg Bielefeld  
University of Bielefeld, Germany

## Course Outline

### **WS 1996 Course in General Education/Cultures and Histories**

Gisela Feurle/Uwe Horst

#### South Africa and Shaka Zulu—Literature and History

##### Course structure

#### **1. Introduction and current political situation in South Africa**

- personal reflection
- film 'The Lion of the Zulu'
- basic information on South Africa; slides
- newspaper articles: politics in South Africa

(continuous students' contributions/inputs integrated in the course topics)

#### **2. Literary representations of Shaka**

- Thomas Mofolo: *Chaka Zulu*
- literary interpretation
- E.A. Ritter, *Shaka*; Rider Haggard, *Nada the Lily*; Leopold Senghor, *Tschaka*;
- different interpretations of Mofolo
- literature and literary studies

(feedback to the course and reflection)

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<sup>11</sup> Four students of this course took part in our study trip to South Africa (to Kwa Zulu-Natal and in particular Pietermaritzburg) in 1998.

### 3. Historical Constructions of Shaka

- current affairs/political history and situation
- South Africa in the 19th century
- Shaka and the Mfecane (Zimbabwe)
- teaching the Mfecane (South Africa)
- 'Cobbing debate' on the Mfecane
- historical sources (example H.F. Fynn)
- Eurocentrism of terminology

(assignment—90 min.: analysis of a literary and a historical text)

### 4. Zulu Praise Poetry—Literary Text and Historical Source

- oral tradition and Zulu praise poetry
- Shaka praise poem: literary and historical interpretation

### 5. Theoretical Concepts: Invention of Tradition and Creation of National and Ethnic Identities

- theoretical concepts
- Arminius statue: symbol for German nationalism
- South Africa: example Zulu

(feedback and evaluation of course)

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# The Rediscovery of the Ordinary— Remarks about a Literary Debate in South Africa

Erhard Reckwitz

## I

As early as 1967 Lewis Nkosi, in his essay 'Fiction by Black South African Authors', remarked that in most literary texts produced by black authors 'the journalistic fact parade[s] outrageously as imaginative literature' (Nkosi 1981:222). What results from this, in his view, is that the 'social facts' are not, or only superficially, transcoded or transformed into the appropriately literary shape of 'artistically persuasive works of fiction' (Nkosi 1981:222). Considering the writers Nkosi is referring to in his essay—among others he mentions the names of authors as important as Alex La Guma, Richard Rive or Ezekiel Mphahlele—his statement is somewhat too acerbic. However, what vents itself here is a certain dissatisfaction with a specific kind of South African *écriture* that years later was taken to task by John M. Coetzee in quite a similar vein for its 'refusal to create a structure in which there is some centre of intelligence' (Coetzee n.d.). It must be granted that in his case the criticism seems to be levelled, with perhaps more justification than in the previous case, at some of the black authors of the Seventies, such as Sipho Sepamla and Wally Serote with their Soweto novels *A Ride on the Whirlwind* and *To Every Birth Its Blood*. From roughly the mid-Eighties onwards Njabulo Ndebele, in his dual capacity as creative writer as well as literary critic, has joined this debate with a number of articles and lectures that, in 1991, were collected under the title *Rediscovery of the Ordinary. Essays on South African Literature and Culture*. One of Ndebele's most incisive remarks reads as follows:

Literature appears not to have found a place in the development of contemporary African culture in South Africa. Instead [...] literature has located itself in the field of politics. And it has done so without discovering and defining the basis of its integrity as an art form. Its form, therefore, has not developed, since to be fictional or poetic was to be political (Ndebele 1991:85).

The result of this, according to Ndebele, is 'a literature of surface meanings' (Ndebele 1991:35) where the roles of oppressor and oppressed are assigned on the basis of the all-too-well known political circumstances, where the divide between justice and injustice, right or wrong is demarcated, purely along racial lines, between Black and White, and where the actors in a narrative are *a priori* defined in terms of their assumed political orientation. Thus they can be used as so many pawns in the novelistic game of chess, the inevitable result of which is predetermined from the outset. All of this, of course, happens with the avowed purpose of 'bearing witness to, and telling about, South Africa' (Attwell 1993:11).

The self-imposed limitations inherent in this expressive ('bearing witness') or referential ('telling about') realism vis-à-vis a reality that is, indeed, worthy of being critically exposed on all counts, have remained a constant feature of South African fiction, as David Attwell has rightly observed, whether in the white liberal tradition that began with Olive Schreiner and reached its apogee with the radical liberalism of Nadine Gordimer, or whether in the black tradition that extends from the elegiac protest of Sol Plaatje to the militant radicalism of the 'literature of liberation' in the Sixties and Seventies (cf. Attwell 1993:12). The very fact that South African literature in English has always tended to be the more or less direct representation of political concepts in the shape of literary characters plus their actions and milieus may be due to its being, after all, a 'minor literature' in the sense formulated by Felix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze. In their essay *Kafka. Pour une littérature mineure* these two authors, in drawing on the example of the German-speaking Jews in the Prague of the days of the Austro-Hungarian empire, have described what the 'deterritorialized' use of a 'great' language by a linguistic minority that is removed from the actual centre where the language has originated is capable of leading to. The parallels with South Africa are there to grasp:

In them [the minor literatures] everything is political. In the 'great' literatures, particular instances (the individual concerns of the members of a family or the problems in a marriage etc.) have the tendency to be linked with other individual matters, with the social milieu serving as a kind of general framework or backdrop .... This is completely different from what goes on in a 'minor' literature: There the narrowness of its space has the effect that each individual problem is directly related to politics. The individual event thus becomes all the more relevant and indispensable, becomes blown up out of all proportion, and it gets, as it were, put under the microscope, in order for it to be made to stand for a totally different story. (Deleuze & Guattari 1975:25; a.t.)

In other words: Normally the literariness of literature, its 'aesthetic surplus'—in the sense of Theodor Adorno—is supposed to reside in its particularising resistance to the trite universality of that which is conceptual. Form, again invoking Adorno's testimony, therefore is what establishes the autonomy of art *vis-à-vis* that which is merely given (Adorno 1970:10f). Aesthetic form thus is a differential term because of its contingent, i.e. unforeseeable, deviation from any conceptual or referential norm. The very opposite applies in a minor literature where the aesthetic particularity of literature is constantly made subservient to the generally accepted conceptuality of political alignment, which in turn becomes the measure of its worth.

It is small wonder that 'writing black' (Richard Rive) should, in the face of the mimetic constraints implicit in the avowed aim of 'bearing witness', should have been predominantly autobiographical, whether it be in the shape of coming to terms with the indignities and humiliation inflicted on individuals by apartheid, or the experience of exile, or the representation of political resistance in the 'literature of combat' (Watts 1989:17). This tendency applies to prose writing and poetry alike.

The damage inflicted on literature through this political instrumentalisation—'literature as a weapon in the struggle' is an ever-recurring metaphor—has been considerable, as Albie Sachs has noted in his article 'Preparing ourselves for freedom', which was initially written as an ANC in-house positional paper. There he states:

In the first place it [the political instrumentalisation] results in an impoverishment of our art. Instead of getting real criticism, we get solidarity criticism. Our artists are not pushed to improve the quality of their work. It is enough to be politically correct .... The range of themes is narrowed down so that all that is funny or genuinely tragic in the world is extruded. Ambiguity or contradiction are completely shut out, and the only conflict permitted is that between the old and the new, as if there were only bad in the past and good in the future (Sachs 1990:21).

What gets formulated here in negative terms, as that which is deplored as missing, is—put positively—the credo of all struggle literature, or as Michael Chapman, one of its advocates, has put it: 'the authority of experience, rather than its transformation into the art object, has become the real locus of power' (Chapman 1988/1989:14). Somewhat maliciously Gareth Cornwell has summarised the consequences to be drawn from this absolute supremacy of the political over the aesthetic as follows: 'bad writing on an important subject was more important than good writing on non-revolutionary subjects' (Cornwell 1990:28). Given such a horizon of expectation, any kind of literature that does not fulfil these referential requirements, such as J.M.

Coetzee's postmodern novel *Foe* with its plot that can only be related to the South African situation in a highly oblique or allegorical fashion, gets dismissed offhand, again citing Chapman, as 'a kind of masturbatory release ... from the Europeanising dreams of an intellectual coterie' (quoted after Cornwell 1990:29).

## II

In summing up the preceding debate, the scene presents itself as follows: Translated into the terminology of the Prague school of semiotics, all this means that in most South African literary texts, especially in those produced by black authors, the aesthetic function of language recedes into the background or is subordinated to the pragmatic as well as communicative functions of linguistic utterance. Or to put it in terms of insights provided by the new discipline of systems theory: This kind of literature lives by and from its 'external or outward referentiality' in that it is mimetically focused on the reality 'out there' which it is charged with faithfully rendering. By contrast its 'self-referentiality', which can be variously defined as the insistence on the 'specific obstinacy of the aesthetic' (Habermas) or its artistically contrived form or its linguistic opaqueness resulting from this or its innovatory use of the various secondary linguistic codes literature is made up of, all this gets played down almost completely. In the Barthesian sense most South African writers therefore tend to be '*écrivants*' who use language for some ulterior purpose such as conveying a political message, as opposed to '*écrivains*' for whom language is an end in itself (Barthes 1964:151-153).

Depending on the aesthetic as well as political premises brought into play, this state of affairs can be welcomed or deplored, as the case may be. Accordingly, self-referentiality can be seen as something to be desired, as in Albie Sachs' insistence on literature's integrity as an art form, or as something to be rejected, as in Chapman's charge of literature's 'masturbatory' tendencies of looking in on itself and playing its own game (with itself). Conversely, external reference can be positively regarded as the inalienable and indispensable 'truth of experience' on the one hand, or negatively as the obligation to be 'politically correct' that is the bane of artistic creation on the other.

Putting this South African context in a wider perspective, one soon realises that what is here being discussed as a totally new phenomenon is not so new, after all. On the contrary, the same process can be observed in other *Third World Literatures*—I am using this term without the universalising meaning bestowed upon it by Fredric Jameson: In *Culture and Imperialism* Edward Said has developed a sequential model of 'decolonizing cultural resistance' (Said 1993:259) that in quite a number of ways refers back to Frantz Fanon's 'symbolic reversal' attendant upon any cultural emancipation, but it is more precise in elucidating the early stages of this

process that he defines as follows: 'Local slave narratives, spiritual autobiographies, prison memoirs form a counterpoint to the Western Powers' monumental histories ...' (Said 1993:260). It would seem that Black South African literature still finds itself in such an early stage, and taking into account its preoccupation with 'bearing witness' it becomes evident that this is the first literary manifestation of a developing literary counter-discourse from which more is to follow in the subsequent stages.

There are other parallels with the wider context of *Third World Aesthetics*: All over the African continent literature as struggle literature or literature of protest forms an integral part of the political project of decolonization. Accordingly Chinweizu et al. formulate their 'nativist' political aesthetics as the task 'to systematically destroy all encrustations of colonial and slave mentality' (Chinweizu et al. 1) Chidi Amuta in his turn defines an 'aesthetics of resistance' as 'a reactive stance towards major historical experiences ... as slavery, colonialism, cultural emasculation, political corruption, apartheid, class antagonism and imperialism' (Amuta 1989:81). Put more succinctly, the whole purpose of this enterprise is the emancipation of the marginalised and suppressed history of the colonised from the sway of a dominant European master narrative. It has become an act of 'writing oneself back into history' (Gugelberger 582).

Again widening the perspective beyond the immediate concerns of postcolonial writing, it soon becomes evident that an emancipatory struggle literature is nothing but a variant of *littérature engagée*, or to use the classical formula of Jean-Paul Sartre: '*L'écrivain "engagé" sait que la parole est action: il sait que dévoiler c'est changer et qu'on ne peut dévoiler qu'en projetant de changer*' (Sartre 30). Accordingly Sartre postulates a use of language that, in a centrifugal movement, is directed outward to address the world of objects, as opposed to a centripetal closing in upon itself of language that, in his view, amounts to 'a sickness of the words': '*Appeler un chat un chat*' (Sartre 341)—this is the proper way of writing. There are certain affinities of this definition with a Marxist aesthetics according to which literature is conceived of as a social practice geared to expressing or implementing specific class interests. Another classical formulation of *engagement*, translated into English as 'commitment' or 'alignment', has been supplied by Raymond Williams: 'Alignment ... is no more than a recognition of specific men in specific (and in Marxist terms class) relations to specific situations and experiences' (Williams 1976:199). Seen in such a wider context, the present South African literary debate is nothing but a re-enactment of the Twenties debate between Brecht and Lukács as to which kind of literature is best suited to further the advance of legitimate social interests. In other words: We are dealing with the conflict between realism and symbolism, and it all boils down to the question as to which of both *écritures* is the one that can be negatively defined as being affirmative and ideological or which, conversely, carries the positive charge of being truly revolutionary.

The argument in favour of 'social realism' mainly derives its momentum from the opprobrium of literature having severed all its ties with socio-political experience, which process began and eventually culminated in the nineteenth century. This has been variously described by critics as different as Michel Foucault and Raymond Williams: For the former it takes the form of '*un retour du langage*', i.e. a self-sufficient, opaque linguistic artistry that is only there for its own sake and which, according to Foucault, is ideally embodied in the writings of Mallarmé; for the latter 'the superior reality of art' that is capable of transcending the trivia of social determinants is a result of Romanticism. Culture, or the sphere of the aesthetic, thus becomes divorced from the social sphere, in the process becoming an autonomous or even autotelic entity whose sole concern is with socially abstract human values or with language, or as Terry Eagleton has put it: 'art is thereby conveniently sequestered from all other social practices, to become an isolated enclave within which the dominant order can find an ideal refuge from its own values of competitiveness, exploitation and material possession' (Eagleton 1990:9).

A Marxist inspired social realism, by contrast, is diametrically opposed to such a bourgeois ideology of the utter self-sufficiency of art in insisting on the social relevance as well as referentiality of art: 'Because [Marxism is an] attempt to understand literature in relation to society, [it is] ... a form of social "realism" or materialism' (Brantlinger 1990:70). Seen as such, literature is concerned with exposing existing power structures, it is imbued with what Habermas has termed 'an emancipatory a priori' (Habermas 1972:28). This applies, as Patrick Brantlinger has argued, specifically to the Third World Writer who more often than not has recourse to a realist *écriture*: 'a critical social realism or mimetic representation can be critical of the very sources of cultural and political authority' (Brantlinger 1990:156). This is precisely what most black South African writers are concerned with, since to castigate and expose certain abuses takes absolute precedence over the imaginative transcendence of reality (cf. Nkosi 1981:77ff).

However, by way of complicating matters, the other side, i.e. those in favour of a self-reflexive, symbolist kind of writing, can equally as well charge realism with playing, however unwillingly, along with the existing order, thereby getting itself ensnared in an ideological aporia. In this view any kind of realist *écriture* effects nothing but an affirmative perpetuation of reality such as it exists, which is of course itself an ideological construct, even though the content and intention of the realist texts involved may openly proclaim their critical attitude: 'Realist texts ... may attack social injustices, but reinforce the structures of the real by treating them as inescapable, without alternative' (Brantlinger 166). In other words: The literary grammar of realism with its constituents of character, action and milieu, which is largely in line with the linear logic of conventional sentence syntax—moving from subject via predicate to object—is ultimately the encoding of bourgeois agency in its

relationship with the surrounding world, which according to the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche is a rather illusory or erroneous way of conceptualising a universe that is utterly contingent. It is therefore, however unconsciously, an 'ideology of form', as Fredric Jameson (1989:76) has put it, that is fundamentally anti-revolutionary.

But apart from the ideological content inherent in what we normally perceive as an innocently transparent way of rendering what goes on in the world, it is ever since the insights provided first by Saussure and much later the Deconstructivists that we can no longer assume language to be the mirror of an extralinguistic reality simply existing 'out there'. Due to the materiality of language and its internal workings as a symbolic system, what we perceive as reality is not an unmediated object of mimetic representation or the uncontaminated well-spring of individual experience. These basic assumptions underlying what has come to be called 'expressive realism' (Belsey 1980:11) has been rendered null and void by the insight into the materiality as well as self-reflexivity of language, which goes a long way towards disproving the validity of essentialising terms like 'truth' and 'experience' that most of the struggle writers constantly invoke. The literary reality thus represented as being utterly true is therefore only the tautological copy of that copy which, as Roland Barthes (1970:61) argues, our ideological and conventionalised perception of reality deludes us into taking for the real real in the first place. In spite of all his professed love for truthfulness the realist author thus succumbs to the danger of putting up an unwarranted 'resistance to new meanings and new ways of analyzing the world' (Belsey 1980:46), a project which can only be achieved as a result of new constellations of, and correlations between, signifiers and signifieds, i.e. new literary codes. Or as Adorno has put it: Literature has to free itself from 'the heteronomy of representation' by resorting to 'the unfettering of its aesthetic forces of production', which would be a way of anticipating the unfettering of such forces in material terms (Adorno 1970:56). There are resonances of this in Njabulo Ndebele's demand that South African literature 'should probe beyond the observable facts, to reveal new worlds where it was previously thought they did not exist, to reveal process and movement where they were hidden' (Ndebele 1991:72).

### III

Let us summarise at this stage: Depending on one's perspective either position can claim to be emancipatory or revolutionary, just as much one can blame either for being complicit with reactionary ideologies. This means that 'neither realism nor avant-garde is "intrinsically progressive"' (Hoyles 1982:47) because just as little as it is possible to determine the immanent measure of a text's 'literariness' can one

abstractly gauge the potential for political and social change any kind of literature might possess.

Both styles of writing are therefore equally ideological because they are culturally determined forms of representing reality, and both are equally political because, in truly dialectical fashion, even the most apolitical text that seems far removed from any concern with reality at all is the manifestation of a 'political unconscious' (Jameson 1981:1989) that prevents it from being politically explicit. In numerous of his brilliant formulations Adorno has insisted on both the aesthetic autonomy and the social involvement of art in general and literature in particular, of which the following seems most pertinent to the matter in hand: 'There is nothing in art, not even in its most sublimated form, that is not of this world; nothing of this, however, remains untransformed' (Adorno 1970:209). If we conclude from what has been said so far that there exist no intrinsic criteria for the social involvement of art and that, conversely, art is political precisely because of its seeming autonomy, then Tony Bennett's dictum applies: 'different literary political strategies might be appropriate in different historical contexts or in relation to different groups of readers' (Bennett 1982:226). Thus placing the literary text in its social context, it becomes relevant for the sociologist of literature to ask 'why and when ... an over-emphasis of form comes about, and when and for what reason it became literature's major concern how textual representations could best be made to mirror as realistically as possible the world, i.e. society' (Jaeggi 1972:78; a.t.).

In this way the apparent essentialism of opposing our two kinds of writing becomes historically relative: It was especially in the early stages of South African literature, which we have already referred to, that the realist *écriture* fulfilled an important part in setting up a counter-discourse to white hegemony. What was at stake in this case was to acquaint a white readership, who were often ignorant of the hardships Africans had to endure in their country, with the prevailing state of affairs. The appeal of this literature could be summarised as: 'Look at what you've done to us.' Somewhat later, when the addressees were largely black, the message was geared to bring about a process of conscientisation, according to the formula: 'Look at what they are constantly doing to us.' In order to get across both of these messages, which are somehow complementary, a realistic kind of writing was best equipped because, through representing aspects of reality that were familiar to writer and reader alike, an interface between text and context could be created that made it possible to view the context in the light of the message propagated by the text, and vice versa.

This greatly facilitated the communication about the context because, as Hans Robert Jauss has put it, 'especially recognisably familiar situations that he is constantly involved in' enable the reader aesthetically to distance himself from the constraints of everyday life and critically question their justification (Jauss 1982:33f). At the same time it is the linear logic of realist narration with its reliable time-space

co-ordinates that enhances the communication between text and reader. In modernist or postmodernist types of writing with their confusing discontinuities this kind of understanding would have to be established by the reader at great pains and against numerous resistances put up by the text.

Beyond this it has to be borne in mind that for a long time in English South African literature, whether it be by white or black authors, the realist narrative mode was the only one available because experimental Anglo-American forms of literature were a long time in taking root at the periphery. Equally it must be conceded that in an early 'imitative' phase of postcolonial emancipation, as Fanon has argued, the harkening back to an earlier indigenous tradition like oral literature usually does not yet occur because this belongs to a later stage of development. Patrick Brantlinger has aptly summarised the advantages of realism in a postcolonial situation as follows: 'The people need realism; the people are realistic; realistic forms of narrative are more apt to be popular than those based on abstruse, rarefied aesthetic theories' (Brantlinger 1990:169).

What also has to be taken into consideration is the fact that the much criticized 'artlessness' or 'lack of refinement' on the part of black writers was not just due to the unavailability of more 'refined' literary models or certain mimetic constraints. It rather seems that this *écriture* was a conscious transformation of European realism, especially in its variant of 'liberal realism' with its predominant interest in individuals fulfilling their own potential. Lewis Nkosi has once remarked that for Blacks in South Africa kafkaesque situations do not have to be invented because they are already part and parcel of their everyday experience. Accordingly the free unfolding of a person's human potential liberal realism makes so much of for them is only available in its negative form of anomy and the struggle to overcome this situation. But in addition to this experiential argument which is based on the assumption of there existing a thematic homology between text and context, one could adduce a valuable insight provided by some sociologists of literature (cf. Link 1980:378-385; Bourdieu 1992:249-292). According to them certain kinds of *écriture* are not developed or employed because of their natural affinities with the prevailing sentiment or spirit of a particular epoch or class. More often than not they are used just because, within a spectrum of available literary styles, the ones predominantly employed are contaminated by their associations with particular class interests. Following this line of reasoning the 'artless' literary realism as evolved by black writers, along with the binarism underlying their unequivocal plots and the abundance of details taken directly from the everyday milieu, consciously sets itself off against the established literary discourse of liberal realism with its 'artful' characterisations and the complex psychological and social causalities of its plots as used by white writers.

#### IV

However, having said this, it becomes obvious to what an extent any kind of political struggle literature requires some sort of opposition as its *raison d'être*, and that this kind of literature gets into trouble once it has lost its opponent, such as seems to have happened in the 'new' South Africa. At such a juncture one cannot help realising the extent to which—in the 'old' South Africa—the social subsystems of politics and literature were inextricably entwined, again to invoke the terminology of systems theory. Because of this, the literary system, which under normal circumstances is more or less exclusively concerned with following its own internal rules, is press-ganged into fulfilling an additional function within the socio-political sphere, its avowed aims being the 'instruction' or 'conscientization' targeted at a specific political group's supporters, or the 'diffamation' of the political opponent, and such like. What gets disregarded under these circumstances is the fact that the subsystem of politics and literature use totally different binary codes for their respective ways of generating meaning: The code employed by politics is 'power' (in the sense of having or not having it); the code relevant for literature is the difference between 'beautiful' vs. 'ugly' or 'interesting' vs. 'boring'. It is evident that these two codes give rise to vastly different sequential operations: In politics these are geared to maintaining the possession of power, in literature to safeguarding a continuous level of aesthetic beauty or interest.

For as long as the black majority in South Africa was oppressed and was not in possession of institutionalised political power, literature as a kind of Ersatz-medium was called upon to serve an important socio-political function, and it was produced and read because it was an indispensable way of voicing the Blacks' discontent with the state of affairs prevailing at the time. It was thus a form of political opposition. In the meantime, however, under the new dispensation in the political power game the political demands of the majority have to, and more importantly can be, processed via the proper constitutional channels set in place for that purpose. Under such circumstances it is no longer sufficient for literature to be politically correct and opposed to the system in order to assert its relevance. This new state of affairs in many ways resembles what happened in the ex-communist states in Eastern Europe, or to formulate it again in the terms of systems theory:

The differentiation between politics and literature leads to the reduction of functional redundancy or crossing of boundaries between the two subsystems. From now on the opposition is handled by the institutionalised opposition. Literature therefore has to go in search of its own proper function—it is no longer the political orientation that determines the 'value' of a text, but rather its aesthetic qualities as 'pure' literature. This does not necessarily mean that, on a secondary level, literature cannot serve a

political function, since literary texts, after all, are inscribed within the larger context of political communication (Plumpe 1993:22; a.t.).

Or, as the followers of the Prague school of semiotics put it, who always insisted on literature having, besides its aesthetic function, a communicative or practical one: The practical function must always be dominated or controlled by the aesthetic one in order for art to qualify as art.

## V

This begs the question what an 'autonomous' literature is to look like in the South African context or, in other words, in which direction the 'freed imagination' invoked by Njabulo Ndebele and Albie Sachs is to lead. Njabulo Ndebele has submitted a whole catalogue of supposedly 'new' but in reality quite old themes for literature to deal with, which has gained him André Brink's charge that his sole concern is with purely thematic instead of aesthetic issues (Brink 14):

Will I like my daughter's boyfriends or prospective husbands? how do I deal with my attraction to my friend's wife? what will my child become? Relatives can be a nuisance; someone I despise has a better car than mine; the principal is messing up the school, I am going to try to be the next principal. The list is endless (Ndebele 1991:53).

Through thus listing the assumed thematic preoccupation of a small black bourgeoisie he tends to universalise class-specific interests by reducing them to their common 'human' denominator, thus excluding the problems of a dispossessed and disadvantaged black proletariat. In any case, a 'new' South African literature cannot just rest content with rediscovering and wallowing in such 'delights of ordinary life'; to use a formula coined by Thomas Mann.

Where this journey of rediscovery might be capable of leading to becomes a bit clearer when we take a look at the authors whom Ndebele considers to be exemplary of a new kind of writing: Michael Siluma, Bheki Maseko and Joël Matlou. It is precisely the latter's collection of short stories bearing the title of *Life at Home and Other Stories* which goes to show that the discovery of new themes can and must be concomitant with a new narrative style. One single short passage may serve to illustrate this: 'I never slept on the road during the night because I knew that female animals would rape me continuously. I didn't want to father an animal child' (Matlou 1991:34). This short passage goes to confirm what Dorothy Driver has said about Matlou: 'he has written the "ordinary" in a way which extends, rather than conforms to, the critic's [Ndebele's] decree' (Driver 1992:117).

It thus becomes obvious that, whereas Ndebele seems to have developed his ideas along the lines of liberal realism, Matlou seems to have taken a direction that shows numerous parallels with the African tradition of oral narrative such as Amos Tutuola's *Palm-Wine Drinkard* or Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*. This trend seems to confirm Fanon's three-stage model whereby after an imitative phase of cultural development there inevitably ensues a phase of retrospectively reactivating almost forgotten indigenous art forms. However, in addition to this and looking ahead, such a development seems to be in line with the hybrid conditions obtaining in many other postcolonial societies, or to use Homi K. Bhabha's formula:

the margins of the nation displace the centre; the people of the periphery return to rewrite the history and fiction of the metropolis .... 'Magical realism' after the Latin American Boom becomes the literary language of the emergent post-colonial world (Bhabha 1990:7).

This statement is reminiscent of Albie Sachs' recommendation, issued at the famous Victoria Falls conference 'Writers meet the ANC', that Latin American magical realism might conceivably be the suitable literary model to be adopted by a 'new' South Africa with its numerous ethnic groups and its equally as numerous conflicting constructions of reality (cf. Coetzee & Polley 1990:197ff). This would run counter to the monological tendencies inherent in European realist writing where a unified perception of reality is allied to a simplistically linear concept of time and its corresponding sense of causality. By contrast, magical realism lives by the dialogical or plurivocal concert of competing or coexisting realities as well as the achronicities and acausalities resulting therefrom. Put differently, South African literature—whether by white or black authors—had so far been caught up in the Lacanian '*fascination spéculaire*' of the mirror-stage where the self only can obtain its identity via negatively defining itself against the other, in which process it became at the same time alienated from itself.

It is to be hoped that South African society as well as its literature can now enter into the more 'mature' symbolic stage where—beyond the narrow confines of binary oppositions—all the cultural groups are capable of living together under the protection of the requisite legal and societal mechanisms, or as Albie Sachs has put it rather idealistically: 'Black is beautiful, Brown is beautiful, White is beautiful' (Sachs 1990:27). Correspondingly, what Edward Said has demanded from all postcolonial societies is 'another way of telling' (Said 1990:259) whose characteristics are given as follows: 'innately ambiguous, hence negative and anti-narrativist', which narrative style alone is capable of doing justice to 'the exilic, the marginal, subjective, migratory energies of modern life' (Said 1994:259). Incidentally, such a decentred kind of writing is not only adequate for the *condition*

*postcoloniale* in particular but also for the *condition postmoderne* in general, which is proof of the fact that the different kinds of worlds—first, second and third—are beginning to become merged in one single hybrid world.

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# Equal Treatment: Addressing Sexual and Gender Discrimination

[Incorporating a discussion of the judgement of O'Regan J in *Brink v Kitshoff* NO 1996 (4) SA 197 (cc).]

**S. Pather**

## Introduction

One of the earliest themes underlying the historical transformation of the South African civil society has been its quest and indeed demand for equality. It has been argued that a fundamental principle underlying humanity is that one person should not be preferred over another, unless there exists sound reasoning based on identifiable criteria for such differentiation<sup>1</sup>. In addressing and redressing the discrimination of the past the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act<sup>2</sup> took its first yet bold steps towards justice when it expressed firm commitment to the principles of equality. This concept of equality is also reflected in The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act<sup>3</sup>, where chapter two section 9, subsections (3) and (4) reaffirms that persons may not be unfairly discriminated against directly or indirectly on one or more grounds including, inter alia, ; race, gender, sex, marital status etc.

Discrimination is not a term given to easy definition. Over the years it has plagued both lawyers and philosophers alike. According to the Oxford dictionary discrimination, in ordinary parlance, is a neutral term given two meanings: benign as in possessing the ability to be discerning and pejorative in the sense of being biased and unfair. The constitution was mindful to point out that what was being prohibited was discrimination that was unfairly prejudicial towards persons.

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<sup>1</sup> Sir Berlin 'Equality as an Ideal' in McKean (1985:2n6).

<sup>2</sup> 200 of 1993 (Herein after referred to as the 'Interim Constitution').

<sup>3</sup> 108 of 1996.

Although our history is one in which the most vicious pattern of discrimination has been racial, other systematic motifs of discrimination were and are inscribed on our social fabric. In drafting our [equality clause], the drafters recognised that systematic patterns of discrimination on the grounds other than race have caused, and ... continue to cause, considerable harm<sup>4</sup>.

In this regard, the struggle for racial equality has been midwife to a feminist movement<sup>5</sup>. For many years in South Africa the call for gender equality was made in the political sphere as opposed to the legal one. Therefore, any discussion on gender and sex in relation to equality must of necessity be situated against the backdrop of the dramatic constitutional-socio-political changes that have occurred in South Africa. It was largely due to the untiring efforts of feminist field workers that legal changes were effected towards achieving the equality of women. For example, when the Matrimonial Property Act<sup>6</sup> brought about the abolition of marital power it was heralded as 'the death of male domination and female subjugation, and the birth of a partnership of equals'<sup>7</sup>. This was one of many reforms towards merging actual equality with that of formal equality<sup>8</sup>. A far cry indeed from the common law approach of ranking married women as 'something better than his dog, a little dearer than his horse'<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Brink v Kitshoff NO 1996 (4) SA 197 (cc) 217 par [41] C-E.

<sup>5</sup> Evans (1980:24). In 1952 the following editorial appeared in the *New York Herald*: 'How did women first become subject to man as she is now all over the world? By her nature, her sex, just as the negro is and always will be, to the end of time, inferior to the white race, and therefore doomed to subjection ...' Hill Kay (1988:1).

<sup>6</sup> 88 of 1984.

<sup>7</sup> Sinclair J (1984:15).

<sup>8</sup> Formal Equality is aimed at achieving the 'eradication of express discrimination based on sex or gender' and including via legal structures, like constitutions, 'equal protection of the law for all and outlawing sex and gender discrimination.' Women have for long 'believed that the achievement of formal equality in the law would guarantee actual equality in society and in their homes. [F]ormal equality in the law...should be regarded as no more than a first stage in the quest for real equality. [W]ithin marriage real meaning for the notion that marriage is a partnership of equals will require much more than bland laws and commendable accompanying platitudes.' J Sinclair 'Family Rights' in Van Wyk, Dugard, De Villiers, Davis (eds) (1994:515).

<sup>9</sup> Hill Kay (1988:1).

When the remaining barriers to gender based equality were removed by the constitution, concern was expressed that the disadvantages suffered by women had yet to be eliminated in practice, and in this regard law reform will look to the courts for the pronouncement of equality as a reality for women. Equality does not exist in a vacuum: it needs practical articulation and manifestation - more especially within the context of gender based equality and the notion of constitutional guarantees of equality. In this regard such constitutional guarantees became a reality with the incorporation of the doctrine of the Rule of Law as articulated in Section 2 of the Constitution<sup>10</sup>. In the Diceyan sense, the Rule of Law guarantees procedural equality to all persons in the sense that irrespective of race, class, gender, rank etc., everyone is subject to the jurisdiction of the ordinary courts of the land. In terms of his principle of legality nobody will be deprived of their rights and freedoms through the arbitrary exercise of power. However 'as a legal technique to tame Leviathan'<sup>11</sup> the Rule of Law had little success since formal equality 'leaves untouched the causes and considerations of inequality and it ignores the problem that most women are in no position to act on their newly won competence, to act on their own'<sup>12</sup>. With the introduction of the new constitutional dispensation based on equality, the application of the doctrine to the constitution has undergone serious transformation. The entrenched bill of rights, has effected substantive reforms to the rights of people and women in particular. 'Material equality'<sup>13</sup> in this sense is seen not only as granting women easy access to the legal and judicial system but also to imbue them with the same legal capacity to 'acquire, enjoy and dispose of property'<sup>14</sup>, to inherit freely, to contract freely into and out of marriage' to compete on an equal footing, as men do, for the custody and guardianship of one's children.

Pivotal to this issue of gender equality is the role and function that the courts fulfil and in particular, the role that the constitutional court plays towards this realisation<sup>15</sup>. In *Baloro v University of Bophuthatswana*<sup>16</sup>, Justice Friedman was of

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<sup>10</sup> Section 2 reads as follows 'This constitution is the Supreme law of the Republic; law or conduct inconsistent with it is invalid, and obligations imposed by it must be fulfilled.' The Rule of Law came of age when Parliamentary Sovereignty gave way to Constitutional Supremacy - Section 44(4) stresses that 'when exercising its legislative authority, Parliament is bound by the Constitution and must act in accordance with, and within the limits of, the Constitution.'

<sup>11</sup> GE Devenish (1998:11).

<sup>12</sup> TW Bennett (1995:88).

<sup>13</sup> Bennett (1995:88).

<sup>14</sup> Bennett (1995:89).

<sup>15</sup> 'All courts of law must interpret and apply the laws of the land in accordance with both the letter and ethos of the constitution and the provisions of the Bill of Rights,

the view 'that the court should play a proactive role in changing society in accordance with the aims and spirit of the constitution. Furthermore, he also stated that a court is entitled to have regard to the 'circumstances and events leading up to the adoption of the constitution and the human, social and economic impact that any decision of the court will have'<sup>17</sup>. According to Devenish the 'task of constitutional adjudication was too fundamental'<sup>18</sup> in the realisation of a Human Rights culture not to be entrusted to the constitutional court.

In 1996 the Constitutional Court entered into a detailed discourse on the equality provision within the framework of our evolving human rights culture and focused on gender based equality within the context of the reasoning followed and authorities adopted in: *Brink v Kitshoff* NO<sup>19</sup>. It is interesting to note that the approach of the court was that given our particular history, where inequality was systematically entrenched, equality has now become the recurrent theme of the constitution. Further, the bill of rights, in particular the sections on equality was adopted

in the recognition that discrimination against people who are members of disfavoured groups [like women] can lead to patterns of ... disadvantage and harm. Such discrimination is unfair: it builds and entrenches equality among different groups in our society<sup>20</sup>.

The central issue in this case concerned the constitutionality of section 44 of the Insurance Act<sup>21</sup>: did this section discriminate against women? Section 44 provides as follows:

(1) If the estate of a man who has ceded or effected a life policy in terms of section 42 or section 43 has been sequestrated as insolvent, the policy or any money which has been paid or has become due thereunder or any other asset into which any such money was converted shall be deemed to belong to that

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encapsulated in chapter 2. All these courts are now involved in and must contribute to the development of a constitutional jurisprudence that reflects the values inherent in the Bill of Rights.' Devenish 1998:230).

<sup>16</sup> 1995 (4) SA 197 (B).

<sup>17</sup> Devenish (1998:231).

<sup>18</sup> Devenish (1998:223).

<sup>19</sup> *Brink v Kitshoff supra*

<sup>20</sup> 217 par[42] D-F

<sup>21</sup> 27 of 1943

estate: Provided that, if the transaction in question was entered into in good faith and was completed not less than two years before the sequestration -

- (a) by means or in pursuance of a duly registered antenuptial contract, the proceeding provisions of this subsection shall not apply in connection with the policy, money or other asset in question;
- (b) otherwise than by means or in pursuance of a duly registered antenuptial contract, only so much of the total value of all such policies, money and other assets as exceeds R30 000 shall be deemed to belong to the said estate.

(2) If the estate of a man who had ceded or effected a life policy as aforesaid, has not been sequestrated, the policy or any money which has been paid or has become due thereunder or any other asset into which any such money was converted shall, as against any creditor of that man, be deemed to be the property of the said man -

- (a) insofar as its value, together with the value of all other life policies ceded or effected as aforesaid and all monies which have been paid or have become due under any such policy and the value of all other assets into which any such money was converted, exceeds the sum of R30 000, if a period of two years or longer has elapsed since the date upon which the said man ceded or effected the policy ; or

- (b) entirely, if a period of less than two years has elapsed between the date upon which the policy was ceded or effected, as aforesaid, and the date upon which the creditor concerned causes the property in question to be attached in execution of a judgement or order of a court of law<sup>22</sup>.

The effect of section 44(1) & (2) is that, where a life insurance policy has been ceded to a woman, by her husband more than two years before the estate of her husband is sequestrated, she will receive a maximum sum of R30 000 from such policy. If however, the policy was preceded or taken out less than two years from the day of sequestration the wife will receive no benefit from the policy. Similarly, once two years lapses from the time the policy was ceded to the wife, or effected in her favour, the policy or any money she can receive thereunder, to the extent that it exceeded R30 000 would be deemed, to form part of the husband's estate. The proceeds may be attached by the husband's judgement creditors in execution of a judgement against him. However, if less than two years have lapsed since the date of the cession or taking out of the policy and the date of attachment by the husband's creditors, all the policy proceeds would be deemed to be part of the husband's estate.

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<sup>22</sup> 210 par[20] H-I; 210 par[20] A-D.

None of these disabilities affecting a wife applied in a situation where a wife ceded benefits to her husband. For the court the question for decision was framed by O'Regan J as follows:

The question referred to the court in this matter was whether section 44 of the Insurance Act<sup>23</sup> 27 Of 1934 ('the Act') is in conflict with the provision of Chapter 3 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 200 of 1993 ('the Constitution') insofar as it discriminates against married women by depriving them ... of the benefits of life insurance policies ceded to them or made in their favour by their husbands<sup>24</sup>.

It is interesting to note that O'Regan J emphasised the fact that: 'All parties conceded that section 44(1) and (2) constituted a breach of section 8 of the constitution'<sup>25</sup> Instructive too are these comments of O'Regan J:

- Section 44(1) and (2) of the Act treats married women and married men differently. This difference in treatment disadvantages married women and not married men. The discrimination in section 44 (1) and (2) is therefore based on two grounds: sex and marital status<sup>26</sup>

The discrimination could not be justified on the basis that it was fair.

- [T]he distinction drawn between married men and married women, which is the nub of the constitutional complaint in this case, can [not] be said to be reasonable or justifiable<sup>27</sup>

in an open and democratic society based on freedom and equality. The drafters of the constitution, mindful of the deep scars still visible in our society saw fit

to both proscribe such forms of discrimination and to permit positive steps to redress the effects of such discrimination. The need to prohibit such patterns of discrimination and to remedy their results are the primary purpose of section 8 ...<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> 27 of 1943

<sup>24</sup> 210 par[19] G-I

<sup>25</sup> 210 par[32] E-F

<sup>26</sup> 217 par[43] F-G

<sup>27</sup> 218 par[48] J; 219 par[48] A

<sup>28</sup> 217 par [42] E-G

As far as gender based equality is concerned, the court emphasised the notion of equality between men and women by referring to the preamble of the Interim Constitution which provides the following:

[T]here is a need to create a new order in which all South Africans will be entitled to a common South African citizenship in a sovereign and democratic constitutional state in which there is equality between men and women and people of all races ...<sup>29</sup>.

### **Gender Based Equality—The Need for Bold Interpretation**

(i) Invariably the starting point to any discussion inherent to gender based equality seems to hark back to Aristotle, in whose view, equality in morals means this: those things that are alike should be treated alike, while things that are unlike should be treated unlike in proportion to their unlikeness! Equality and justice are synonymous: to be just is to be equal, to be unjust is to be unequal<sup>30</sup>.

Strict scrutiny of this statement would appear to point in that direction of law being based on a particular model against which a comparison is being made. It is no secret that our legal system has as its basis a male model. On this basis then, if it is argued that the male standard is the standard against which we evaluate equality and since equality lives by comparison, then equality between the sexes needs to be recontextualized to allow real gender based differences to be addressed.

Indeed classical prose appears to reveal a singularly chattel-like status of women:

We have prostitutes for the sake of pleasure, concubines for daily care of body and wives for the purpose of begetting legitimate children and having a reliable guardian of contents of the house<sup>31</sup>.

A remark attributed to Socrates by Xenophon is perhaps closer to the true estimation of women in classical Greece; he is alleged to have said:

[I]t is evident that female nature is not in the least inferior to that of the male. It only lacks intellectual and physical strength<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> 214 par [33] F-H

<sup>30</sup> Aristotle Nichomachean Ethics in Van Wyk, Dugard, De Villiers, Davis (1994:197).

<sup>31</sup> [Dem.] 57. 122 Raphael Sealey (1990:3).

<sup>32</sup> [Xen. Symp. 2.9] Raphael Sealey (1990:4).

Aristotle's view of women as indecisive beings is particularly significant since it appears to speak to the reasoning behind why women in Athenian law were considered 'perpetual children'<sup>33</sup>. According to Aristotle, the difference in ages between the bride and the bridegroom is marked, men married between the age of 28 and 35 and women from 15 years<sup>34</sup>. In this way men could always maintain dominance over the women because of seniority, life experience and education.

In Athenian law, women did not marry. An oral contract was concluded by the man and the bridegroom. She was pledged into a marriage union by her father, brother or paternal grandfather for the purposes of producing legitimate offspring. On marriage, guardianship passed from one male (her guardian) to her husband who became the new guardian, as such, he had full control over her dowry, however, if he became insolvent his wife's dowry was distinguished from his property and attempts could be made to save her dowry. Such was the status of the wife, that on divorce, her husband could simply dissolve the union by sending her away from his house and returning her dowry. However, if the wife left her husband because of the perpetual guardianship under which she lived she had to register her leaving and then come under the guardianship of her new *kyvios* who represented her through the divorce process. Under Athenian Law the disabilities that women suffered were keenly left in the sphere of contract. The law explicitly forbade a woman to contract for the disposal of anything more than one *medimnos* of barley, which meant that outside of petty transactions she could not engage in trade dealing with immovable property or make a will<sup>35</sup>.

(ii) Through the ages, legal processes have come under the spotlight and women clamoured for change. Intrinsic to the process of reform is the self perception of women. Increased self respect, self-confidence and self-worth have assisted women to develop to their fullest potential and to claim constitutional protection as their human right.

A brief survey of the cross section of women's movements around the world indicates how women, governments and constitutions have dealt with the problem of gender based equality and within this framework to effect reform, both formal and substantive.

In 1975, Mozambique, via its constitution, declared all citizens equal. Article 17 stated that the emancipation of women is one of the state's essential tasks and equal rights in the sphere of political, economic, social and cultural spheres were proclaimed. Constitutional provisions of equality were to be the cornerstone of the

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<sup>33</sup> Raphael Sealey (1990:41).

<sup>34</sup> Aristotle argued that men should marry when 37 years of age and women at 18!

<sup>35</sup> Raphael Sealey (1990:37).

new Nation and traditional structures that opposed women were to be read in light of these constitutional directives. In an effort to eliminate traditional structures that exploited women and maintained them as a group of 'second class' citizens the government launched campaigns against traditional customs and practices that were considered discriminatory as far as gender based equality was concerned, these included Lobolo, polygamy, premature and forced marriages, initiation rites and female circumcision. However, despite the introduction of the constitutional guarantees of equality for women the male model was still being maintained as the norm against which women had to be measured - women had to be 'emancipated to be more like men'<sup>36</sup>.

The introduction of formal equality in a constitution brings little or no real change without support structures to assist women becoming empowered<sup>37</sup>. In 1990 the Constitution, mindful of the chasm between de facto and de jure reform in the legal position of women, saw fit to include support structures and initiatives as instruments towards stimulating and enhancing women's role in society<sup>38</sup>. This network of support has generated a global debate in which true liberation of women is being discussed.

(iii) The laws of a country are said to be a reflection of its society. In India, as it is with most countries of the world, women are considered as being inferior to men. A women's life revolves around her husband. In India, Religion has a strong bearing on morality which in turn plays a pivotal role in sexuality. According to Kate Millet relationships between the sexes are in fact relationships based on dominance and subordination<sup>39</sup>. Very early on in childhood men and women are socialised into their respective roles and because of poor educational opportunities for the girl child she is perpetually locked into subservience and partial slavery.

Hindu Women's position in society was pathetic. Neither the constitution nor the abolition by the British could stop the practice of *Sati* from becoming

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<sup>36</sup> *Women and the Law in Mozambique* Women and the Law in Southern Africa Research Project Working Paper 4 June 1992 Zimbabwe 67.

<sup>37</sup> What this approach does is devalue women in terms of their agricultural status and overlooks the fact that women are responsible for the majority of the country's agricultural production like family farm labour. The traditional household division based on sex and gender (like motherhood and home affairs) leaves little for the realisation of substantive equality.

<sup>38</sup> Alternate court systems like the local popular tribunal has had a significant effect in unlocking the legal system for women, especially with regard to custody issues, maintenance and wife abuse.

<sup>39</sup> Kate Millet in Lotika Sarkar and B Sivaramayya (eds) (1994:31).

entrenched<sup>40</sup>. As recently as 10 years ago the custom of *sati* was still being practised. The case of Roop Kanwar aroused a heated and passionate outcry when an 18 year old girl was forced to commit to the practise<sup>41</sup>. Given the widespread publicity that this case received women's groups campaigned tirelessly until the government passed the Sati Prevention Act in 1987 abolishing the practise throughout India.

Another equally horrifying practise that has surfaced of late is female foeticide. In a society where parents of the girl child have to produce a dowry, even in the face of poverty, it is easier before birth to have an amniocentesis performed or an ultra-sound scan performed to discover the sex of the child. Once it is discovered that the woman is bearing a girl child the women aborts the foetus. An outcry from women's movements has caused the Central Government to produce documentation to the effect that such practices will indeed be abolished.

Another 'scourge' on Indian womanhood is the dowry system<sup>42</sup>. A Hindu bride herself does not marry. She is given away in marriage by her parents to the husband<sup>43</sup>. So the more inferior the social class or the girl - the greater must be the compensation. Given the inferior status of the female person in India, and that her status can only be improved by marriage many girls and parents are easy prey to

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<sup>40</sup> *Sati* is a practise whereby the widow decides voluntarily or through harsh persuasive measures to be burnt with her husband's corpse. The custom of *sati* is also found in Greek writings. If the woman did not follow suit she was forced to remain a widow and as an impious woman, in disgrace, was not allowed to take any part in religious rites. In the *Malavikagnimitra* of Kalidasa this custom was regarded as 'normal and natural', Saroj Gulati in Lotika Sarkar and B Sivaramayya (eds) (1994:131-2 note 6 and 7).

<sup>41</sup> It is believed that she ran away from her husband's home and hid in some fields, where she was unfortunately located, dragged off and burnt against her will.

<sup>42</sup> The dowry system must be seen in historical context as well as in terms of present day reality. A dowry was to ensure that the girl (bride) was taken care of financially, in her marriage, by her husband because her father or guardian has provided accordingly. A need for such provision is because she is not in a position to do so herself, having not been equipped with the necessary economic and financial skills. Her duties extend to being a mother, a wife, a caretaker of the home and dutiful daughter-in-law, but not a financial supporter. Since the worth of a woman was measured by her dowry - the greater the dowry the better protected she was from the wrath of her husband and his family. Today the dowry is being used to bolster the husband's and his family's sagging economy. If it is not forthcoming in plentiful supply, the woman suffers horrifically at their hands.

<sup>43</sup> The Hindu marriage is a *Kanyadan* - *Kanya* meaning something no different from any other thing worth giving away and *Dan* meaning a gift.

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husband's and in-laws demands. Very often life is made so unbearable for these women that they either commit suicide or are brutally murdered, by burning, the husband's parents. In 1961 the Dowry Prohibition Act was passed. Since it failed to bring relief, to the many young women suffering torture under this system, it was amended in 1984. In terms of this act, any property or large amounts of money given in connection with marriage is forbidden and punishable as an offence. Any dowry received must be returned to the girl within three months if not, criminal offences attach. In 1986 the Act was further amended<sup>44</sup> to include dowry deaths (S.304B of the Indian Penal Code - lays down a presumption that if a married woman dies unnaturally within seven years of her marriage, and it is shown that she was being harassed for her dowry-her husband or his relatives are said to have caused such death. However, despite these legal, formal changes, very little is changed substantively. The inferior status of the girl child continues. As long as she is still regarded as a burden to her family, to be auctioned off, violations to her human rights, like female infanticide, foeticide and the dowry practice will continue.

The enactment of the Indian constitution breathed a welcome puff of life into the legal status of women. Not only did the preamble resolve to secure equality of opportunity and status for all but the document (besides the equality provision) also contains three Directive principles which are women specific. They deal with maternity leave, equality between men and women in remuneration packages and health care of workers<sup>45</sup>.

Given the patriarchal society that women grow up within, their lack of formal education and a lack of awareness of the content of the laws the plight of the majority of women, especially the younger women has not improved over the years. The views that are expressed by Sarkar and Sivaramayya are alive today as they were years ago. The law works at various levels and through various agencies:

much of the law is still not codified and in the name of religious freedom every antiquated anti-woman custom is preserved because we still do not have one civil code. These inequalities are to be found in the law relating to marriage, divorce, inheritance, succession, custody, guardianship and maintenance. In a basic sense these laws are designed to preserve the present family system based on male dominance and control of female sexuality<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>44</sup> Dowry Prohibition (Amendment) Act, 1986.

<sup>45</sup> Article 15(3) makes special provision for women and children which will not violate the principle of equality and non-discrimination. See further Lotika Sarkar and B Sivaramayya (eds) (1994:3).

<sup>46</sup> Nandita Haksar in Lotika Sarkar and B Sivaramayya (1994:35f).

Christine Littleton further emphasises that disadvantages faced by women arise not only as a result of their unique biological characteristics but also those resulting from social traits and characteristics including cultural and psychological influences<sup>47</sup>. It is submitted that if one unpacks these concepts of sex and gender - what emerges is a relationship based on biological traits as in sex, on the one hand, and cultural, social, psychological characteristics as in gender on the other hand. It is arguable that both these factors, from time immemorial, led to women occupying subservient roles in society.

(iv) As far as the economic subordination of women is concerned it is interesting to note the approach of the United States court in *Kahn v Shewin*<sup>48</sup>. In this case the court embraced what was referred to as its old doctrine of benign preferences. It upheld a Florida law that granted widows a tax exemption as a means of lessening the financial burden that arose from the loss of the spouse. In other words it perceives this as lessening the impact 'upon the sex for which the loss imposes a disproportionately heavy burden'<sup>49</sup>. It is arguable that this protection afforded to women constitutes what one could term benign purpose - besides being paternalistic this notion of benign purpose could not and did not withstand the feminist onslaught for equality between the sexes. Women are no longer as dependent on their husbands for support, economic, or otherwise. It has now been soundly established that providing remedies for women, especially married women, will only pass judicial as well as constitutional muster if they fall squarely within the remedial goals of equality. (In other words if provision is made for women, like provision must be made for men). Romantic paternalism is regarded as subordination and subjugation in its worst form - that of sexist attitudes and stereotyping<sup>50</sup>. Justice Bradley's view in *Bradwell v Illinois*<sup>51</sup>, of man being regarded as women's protector and defender is no longer tenable or defensible.

It is submitted that the position adopted by O' Reagan J supports feminist views on equality when the judge indicated that legal rules that discriminate against women, as do section 44(1) and (2) are in breach of the equality provisions of the

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<sup>47</sup> Littleton (1991:35-6). According to Ann Oakley (1994:31), 'sex is a word that refers to the biological differences between male and female: the visible difference in genitalia, the related difference in procreative function. *Gender*, however, is a matter of culture: refers to social classification into masculine and feminine'.

<sup>48</sup> 416 US 315 (1974).

<sup>49</sup> Tribe (1988:1577).

<sup>50</sup> Tribe (1988:1566).

<sup>51</sup> 83 US 130 141 (1872).

constitution. In advancing the feminist struggle closer to the reality of substantive equality, it is submitted that O' Reagan J was correct in her view that in South African society, discrimination on the grounds of sex although not as visible or as widely condemned as discrimination on the grounds of race, has nevertheless resulted in deep patterns of disadvantage. In other words, given the plurality of South African society, millions of women had to grapple with oppression and subordination because of being black. Therefore the gendered struggle within our society must be approached from different platforms. The application in *Brink v Kitshoff*, was what can be termed the 'first world' feminist battle but for scores of black women gender-based equality is fought on the plane of basic survival. Despite the universal women being a misnomer 'women of all origins in South Africa face and share a common background, that of being inferior to men'<sup>52</sup>. In between the white male legal standard the feminist white female standard and the African male customary law yardstick- the African female was almost without recourse. According to Bennett:

while the struggle for political equality of the sexes began at the turn of the century, it was a campaign conducted by white women, who drew their inspiration from Europe and America with little regard for Africans. A more representative, indigenous women's movement began only in 1954<sup>53</sup>. But no sooner had this movement started than the politics of liberation demanded that women's rights be subordinated to the higher aim of overthrowing apartheid<sup>54</sup>.

The constitution, while bringing relief in terms of formal equality is not a panacea to all ills. Women, all women, need to take ownership of the constitution, of the spirit and purport of the philosophy of constitutionalism and in particular of the rights conferring clauses in the bill of rights. To this end, gendered affirmative action would begin to recreate and remould the tradition of law and the paternalism entrenched in

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<sup>52</sup> A Petersen (1989:333), 'enquiring whether there can be anything like a woman's standpoint or perspective, refers to the "fractured identities" of black women, Asian women, Native American women, working class women, lesbian women. These differences among women may force the abandonment of the idea of "universal" woman. See further Van Wyk, Dugard De Villiers and Davis (eds) (1995:517).

<sup>53</sup> When the federation of South African Women, a forum for women's interests within the broadly based Congress Alliance, drew up the Women's Charter. The manifesto demanded equal rights with men (Albertyn 1994:43f). See further T.W. Bennett (1995:82n14).

<sup>54</sup> T.W. Bennett (1995:82).

the legal process<sup>55</sup>. It is submitted that it is this kind of discrimination which needs to be eradicated from our society. Indeed this constitutes a key principle of the constitution. The approach of the court, by refusing to reinforce irrelevant differences between men and women, is to be welcomed because it is only then that stereotyping can be eradicated and substantive equality achieved. Catherine Albertyn argues that '[c]onstitutionalism and rights provide the necessary framework and tools for the attainment of substantive political, social and economic equality by women'<sup>56</sup>. Given our history and the deep enduring scars that it left on our society, the courts by infusing the constitution with this concept of equality must, it is submitted, be prepared to act affirmatively by '[c]ombating the inequities that result when we all too casually allow biological differences to justify the imposition of legal disabilities on women'<sup>57</sup>.

It is further submitted that the discrimination against women as contained in section 44(1) and (2) is both blatant and overt. From the perspective of legal certainty there is merit in the view that one must always challenge the constitutionality of discriminatory provisions. However it is submitted that where the discrimination is blatant and overt especially where it concerns discrimination against women - thought should be given to simpler, cheaper and more flexible mechanisms to impugn such unconstitutional measures. The content of our laws must of necessity reflect an increased awareness and sensitivity towards gender classifications. In this regard, the Commission for Gender Equality is at the coal-face of the policy making process as far as gender based equality is concerned<sup>58</sup>.

### **3. Conclusion**

In the creation of a just society, the constitutional reshaping of equality highlights the vexed issue of gender-based equality. If rights are to be used effectively and cost effectively at that, the task of corrective action is not only that of the courts, as justice O' Regan pointed out '[t]here appears to be no reason either why Parliament could not enact a provision similar to section 44(1) and (2) which does not den against married women'<sup>59</sup>.

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<sup>55</sup> Section 9(2) of the South African Constitution specifically mentions that 'legislative and other measures designed to protect or advance persons, or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination may be taken'.

<sup>56</sup> Albertyn (1994:62).

<sup>57</sup> Tribe (1988:1577).

<sup>58</sup> Section 187 of the South African Constitution.

<sup>59</sup> 219 par[49] D-E.

This approach by the court suggests the introduction of legislation specifically enacted to promote socio-economic justice for women, but also, introduces the notion of a policy-making mindshift as far as gender-based equality is concerned. This mindshift seems to have far reaching consequences for women since draft legislation would appear to have already been prepared which contains provisions similar to section 44(1) and (2) but which do not discriminate against married women. It is further submitted that in pursuit of substantive equality, formal mechanisms, like legislative changes, must be implemented for true equality to be recognised by women. When the classification of gender is so interwoven with the social understanding of women that it finds expression in the very laws of our country, the credibility of our judiciary as well as our entire legal system will be determined by the manner in which they can transform those laws in keeping with constitutional change. Inherent to this process of Judicial activism is the realisation that law is designed to facilitate and improve the quality of life of people, in other words, Executive minded entrenchment of formal justice must of necessity be tempered with substantive justice. As Vicky Schultz asserts:

In ... early race discrimination cases, the courts acknowledge that human choices are never formed in a vacuum ... [These cases] illustrate what the courts can accomplish when they have the vision to acknowledge their own power and responsibility to dismantle oppressive ... arrangement<sup>60</sup>.

Accordingly, in dismantling the systematic subordination of women that has, over the years, built itself into the laws of our country, the role of the judiciary, must of necessity, be pro-active as well as transformatory.

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<sup>60</sup> Schultz (1992:300). See further Farganis (1994:63). Strict scrutiny of this statement would appear to point in the direction of law being based on a particular model against which a comparison is being made. It is no secret that our legal system is based on a male model. On this basis then, if it is argued that the male standard is the standard on which we evaluate equality and since equality lives by comparison, then women are being measured against the yardstick of men. In this sense, equality between the sexes needs to be contextualised to allow real gender-based differences to be addressed.

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# Migration and the Disappearance of Caste among Indian South Africans

Gina Buijs

The History of the Indian community in South Africa, as with other immigrant communities, is a relatively recent one. The first immigrants arrived on board the S.S. Truro in Durban, in November 1860. These women, men and children were recruited mainly from the South India, to work as indentured labourers in the sugar fields and in other enterprises in Natal; the local black population being apparently unwilling to do so. This paper is only concerned with the descendants of the largely South Indian indentured labour force, and not with so-called 'passenger' Indians who paid their own way, came mainly from North and West India, and were Muslim as well as Hindu.

The religion of the majority of the indentured was Hinduism, of a small minority Christianity. The Hinduism which the indentured brought with them, however, was circumscribed by their position as indentured servants in a new world, one which lacked the familiar patterns of authority and social relationships of the old. While it is difficult to generalise about Indian society because it is so varied and diverse, many Indologists and anthropologists writings on India (e.g. Dube 1955; Srinivas 1965, Karve 1965; Fuller 1988; Biardeau 1989), accept the view of Louis Dumont (1966:43) that underneath the many social forms and cultural expressions, most social relations and values in India are connected to a pattern of hierarchy which constitutes the basis of the caste system, (but see Appadurai 1986, for a contrary view).

Dumont credits the French sociologist Celestin Bougle, with describing the caste system as composed of hereditary groups which are both distinguished from one another and connected in three ways: firstly by gradation of status and hierarchy; secondly, by detailed rules aimed at ensuring their separation and thirdly, by the division of labour and the interdependence resulting from it. According to Dumont these principles are reducible to one fundamental one 'namely the opposition between pure and impure'. This opposition underlies hierarchy, separation and the division of labour. This preoccupation with pure and impure, is, says Dumont (1966:43), 'a constant in Hindu life'. Biardeau (1989:13) notes that

the opposition high:low, pure:impure, which is essential to this hierarchical vision of society, has to be conceived above all as a close complementary, even when it implies separations in space .... Each person knows the other and where he belongs: the patron and his clientele, the King and his subjects, the household priest and the families he serves, are bound together in a 'face to face' relationship.

This opposition is shown in macroscopic form in the contrast between two extreme categories: Brahmins and Untouchables. Brahmins, in principle priests, are superior in rank to all other castes; the untouchables, as impure servants are segregated outside the villages in their own dwellings. They are subject to numerous prohibitions, for instance they may not use the water from the same wells as other castes and they are not allowed access to caste Hindu temples. Although hygiene is invoked to justify ideas of impurity, the notion of caste is, according to Dumont, fundamentally a religious one, whose source lies in the temporary impurity contracted by clean caste members in relation to organic life. It is therefore specialisation in impure tasks which leads to this attribution of permanent impurity to some categories of people. However, Deliege (1992:169) notes that at least in South India, 'impurity cannot be separated from powerlessness and servitude'. Temporary and permanent impurity shares the same nature. Temporary impurity is often associated with life cycle rituals; especially those connected with birth and death. While birth only affects the mother and child, death affects the relations of the dead person collectively as it is both a social and a physical matter. Thus impurity corresponds to the organic aspect of man, and religion, by prescribing impurity, sets up an opposition between religious and social man, on the one hand, and nature on the other.

The history of the opposition between pure and impure in India is a long one, dating back at least to the laws of Manu (c. 300BCE) where the restrictions on Untouchables are clearly recorded, along with those relating to women, dogs and pigs. According to Dumont the development of caste historically must have been accompanied by the development of Brahmanic prescriptions relating to the impurities of organic life. The impurity of the untouchables is inseparable from the purity of the Brahmin. Thus untouchability cannot truly disappear until the purity of the Brahmin is radically devalued (Dumont 1966:53). The development of the opposition between pure and impure can be seen in the Hindu attitude towards the cow. Although the cow was revered at the time of the Vedas, these animals were also eaten from time to time as a sacrifice. Later the murder of a cow became equated with that of a Brahmin, and, since untouchables had the work of disposing of dead cows and their skins, this labour became one of them and features of Untouchability. The cow, half-animal, half-divine counterpart of Brahman, effectively divides the

highest from the lowest of men. Its sacred character thus has a social function. The maintenance of purity in this way entails the existence of specialists in impurity. Thus, especially in South India, the presence of Untouchables in village ceremonies is considered essential, as musicians and even as priests. Therefore Indian society may be conceived of as a totality made up of two unequal but complementary parts.

Connected to the concept of hierarchy is the basic fact that India is a group based and not an individual based society. Most of the actions and behaviour which an Indian undertakes is in relation to the various groups to which he belongs and most of this he is born into. Cohn (1971) suggests that these groups can be seen as the layers of an onion. At the centre of the onion is the family and this includes a man's parents, his siblings and his own wife and children. Such families are linked together genealogically to other families who also live close by. These families may hold land in common and have ritual obligations to one another. A number of such families form a lineage, that is, a group of males generally who recognise descent from a common ancestor.

Usually separate from, but occasionally coterminous with the lineage is the local caste group often referred to as *jati*, *jati* may be used to refer to a sub-caste, caste or caste category but most often to refer an endogamous large-scale descent group. Each man in the local caste group considers other men of his age to be his brothers, the women his sisters. Older men are thought of as a man's father and older women in the same way as a mother. A man uses kin terms to address these people. A local caste group may have a head who can act on behalf of its members in relations with other caste groups. It may own land or other property jointly, such as ritual objects. There may also be a local caste council which can exercise social control over the members (Beteille 1971). Hutton (1946:97) remarks that

from the point of view of the individual member of a caste the system provides him with a fixed milieu from which neither wealth nor poverty, success nor disaster, can remove him/ He is provided in this way with a permanent body of associations which control almost all his behaviour and contacts. His caste canalizes his choice in marriage, acts as his trade union, his friendly or benefit society. It takes the place for him of health insurance, and if need be provides for his funeral.

Foucault notes (1980:119) that what makes power hold good,

what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it does not only weigh on us as a force that says 'no' but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge and produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression.

He comments that power is employed and exercised through a netlike organisation and not only do individuals circulate between its threads, they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. They are not only its inert or consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its point of application.

It is probably significant of the true origins of the caste system that the ultimate controlling authority in the past was secular and that in the ancient Hindu scriptures was perceived to be the king. Thus cases of transgression of caste rules which could not be settled by the caste councils were referred to the state courts or to the ruler himself. The Rajput princes of the Kangra hills classified Brahmins, promoted from one caste to another, and readmitted expelled persons to caste, partially at least for monetary payments (Hutton 1946:81). Local rule, under the Moghuls and the British in India was in the hands of dominant castes and local caste councils. Dominance and rule were highly fragmented and prohibition on marriage across caste lines effectively insulated one dominant caste from another. The power of the dominant caste in a village or district was supported by the norm discouraging villagers from seeking justice from government officials, courts or police outside the village. Where a dominant caste has sufficient numbers it has usually been able to occupy a number of positions on the village council or panchayat. Pandian suggests that it is the corporateness of village life with everyone in the village subordinate to the adjudicative and penalising power of the village and caste which is a significant part of the authority structure which every villager comprehends. Inter and intra-caste mechanisms of social control depend on the villager accepting the authority of group action, which is represented in the panchayat or council of elders (Pandian 1983:196).

Foucault (1980:100) suggests that one needs to investigate historically and beginning at the lowest level how mechanisms of power have been able to function ...

the manner in which, at the effective level of the family, of the immediate environment, of the cells and most basic units of society, these phenomena of repression and exclusion possessed their instruments and logic, in response to a certain number of needs.

One of the most important of these mechanisms of power was the caste or village council, but it could only act for a limited area, small enough for the members of the council to assemble and for members of the caste within the area to have some knowledge of each other as a general rule.

Generally, the lower the caste in the social scale, the stronger its combination and the more efficient its organisation. Caste councils penalised people who broke rules of eating or fraternising with lower castes or who performed menial

work or changed their caste names. Transgressors who refused to recant or pay the fines were outcasted. This meant that members of the *jati* of the offender refused to have any social intercourse with him. Traditionally the punishments included withdrawing the right to receive water and *kachcha* or pure food from fellow caste members—the equivalents of the Roman *interdictio aquae et ignis*. Hutton (1946:90) comments that the ‘culprit is for practical purposes excommunicated’, and cites an example of some high caste subjects of a feudal prince in Orissa who refused to accept the decision of their ruler in a caste case and were themselves outcasted by him in consequence.

No priest, barber or washerman could render them any service, with the result that they had long beards matted with dirt, their hair hung in long strands and was filthy in the extreme, and their clothes were beyond description for uncleanness (Hutton 1946:83).

Excommunication may be a temporary penalty or for life.

Other forms of punishment are fines or the provision of feasts for the caste, or to Brahmins, or corporal punishment, or the performance of a pilgrimage, and many penalties were intended to humiliate the culprit, much as the stocks were used in mediaeval Europe. Caste control in India was least among the higher and better educated classes who are less tied to a particular locality by family ties. Persons of influence can thus often bend the rules and carry it off. The more territorially concentrated a caste is the greater will be its consciousness of itself as a coherent entity and the more stringent is its control likely to be over the individual members. High castes rarely have any organisation strictly comparable to the lower ones. They may have a *sabha*, an association, but a *panchayat* and officials are rare. Rules of caste among high castes are maintained by the force of public opinion and the feeling of caste members. Informal ostracism may be applied by some members and not by others. For instance, Gandhi was excommunicated by leaders of his caste in Bombay following his first visit to England in 1924 but caste members at his home at *Rajkot* took no notice.

From the point of view of caste relationships in daily life, only the local caste group of *jati* has meaning for the individual. Mandelbaum (1968:39) comments:

a villager typically identifies with his *jati* so closely because so much of his social world is encompassed within it and therefore his idea of who he is cannot be separated from what his *jati* is. He is continually identified by others as part of his *jati*. *Jati* is thus a leading reference category in village life.

The local caste group exists within the ideological categories of the four *varnas*, (*varna* being a Sanskrit word meaning colour); these comprise Brahmins (priests), *Kshatriyas* (warriors), *Vaishyas* (traders) and *Sudras* (workers). Most *jatis*, especially in South India, fall into the *Sudra* category and very few belong to the select first two whose members call themselves the 'twice born'. Untouchables (or *Adi-dravidas* meaning indigenous people, a term used in South India) are left out of the system altogether. In terms of determining one's caste membership only the local caste groups and the *jati* are important, because they are groups, that is they have a concrete reality and a known membership or structure. *Varna* membership is important when a group tries to change its status, although other castes may know it is *Vaishya* or *Sudra*. It is difficult for an individual to survive in India without relatives, even in migrating from village to city it would be unusual for an individual to go alone. While educated Untouchables may appear to be members of higher castes or may claim to be so for temporary benefits, the need to marriage partners and kin as a resource group discourages permanent passing (Kolenda 1978:105). Barrington Moore (1966), writing of the heyday of British India in the 1940s, commented that caste remained tremendously persistent and flexible, a huge mass of locally co-ordinated social cells that tolerated novelty by generating another cell.

Typical of the distinctions between different *varna* can be found in the account by Andre Beteille of Sripuram, a village in Tamilnad, South India. In this village the major cleavages are between Brahmin landowners and non-Brahmin *Sudras* and Untouchables. While Brahmins have different skin colour and features to others, they also, according to Beteille, appear more 'refined' and 'cultivated'. He comments that

the real physical differences of the Brahmins and the popular belief that they constitute a different race have led to their being isolated to a much greater extent in Tamilnad and South India as a whole than in the rest of India (Beteille 1971:49).

In Tanjore, particularly, Sanskrit has been a major influence on the Brahmins, enriching thought and giving their speech a particular character. Non-Brahmins specialised in Tamil studies and literacy did not extend to Untouchables. Familiarity with Sanskrit is regarded as a sign of refinement and a high social value is placed on it. The pursuit of learning and attendance to the spiritual needs of the people were often combined with ownership of land by Brahmins. Although this has changed in recent years to include occupations such as school teaching and clerical work, no Brahmin has adopted manual work.

Manual labour, on the other hand, has played a large part in the lives of *Sudras* and more especially on untouchables, whose work in general has been of a

non-specialised and unskilled kind. Deliege notes that all over India, *Harijans* provide a labour force which may be drawn on at will. This rural proletariat only owns its own labour power to make a living and therefore exists in a permanent state of economic dependence (Deliege 1992:171). Although the Hindu scriptures emphasise that the harmonious working of the social system is dependent on co-operation between castes, most Brahmins have little to do in the religious sphere with non-Brahmins and untouchables. Except for a few families of temple priests, Brahmins do not today and did not in the past offer services to lower castes in Sripuram. Although Brahmins have been instrumental in keeping alive the 'great tradition' in India through their Sanskritic scholarship which provides an overarching basis for unity among Hindus, they have not entered into social relations with Sudras or untouchables in the ritual or ceremonial sphere. Sanskritic elements are often reformed by villagers so that they become part of a local cult. For instance, the great goddesses of the Hindu pantheon often become transformed into local deities with their own festivals and rituals. These innumerable local deities of village origin are important to ordinary villagers and it was these local gods and goddesses whose worship formed much of the folk religion brought with the indentured to South Africa. Fuller (1988), in an important article maintains that the village deities can legitimately be seen as symbols of caste structure, wherein the high castes are always in a complementary hierarchical relationship with the low castes (Fuller 1988:33).

While the sort of folk belief common to village India was brought to South Africa with the indentured, nevertheless the enforced move away from their rural homes did radically alter the lives of those Indians who came to Natal. Patterns of hierarchy, of purity and impurity, of caste distinctions and group belonging could not easily be maintained in an alien and often hostile environment. The presence of the Brahmin, the linchpin of Indian society, was missing in the new world of the indentured. Those indentured who arrived in Natal were forced to rebuild their lives without most of the familiar institutions which surrounded them in India. While Hinduism remained the religion of the majority, it lacked the sanskritic validation of the ancient Indian traditions and consisted mainly of those elements of village ritual remembered and fostered by the indentured.

There are two ports of embarkation for indentured labourers in India, Calcutta and Madras. Most of those who went to the West Indies and Fiji embarked at Calcutta and came from North India, while Madras supplied the majority of the indentured for South Africa. The protector of Indian Immigrants at Madras reported that the main flow of recruits came from the overpopulated Tamil districts where the landless labourer was at a hopeless disadvantage. A majority of these people were from low castes or were untouchables. Although the latter numbered a fifth of the total population of Tamilnad, in certain districts, such as Tanjore, they formed up to 27% of the population. The majority of the Madras recruits came from Tanjore,

Trichinipoly and South Arcot with another flow coming from the Telegu speaking areas to the north.

Beteille (1971) comments that the majority of people engaged in agricultural work in the district he studied in Tanjore, South India, were non-owners of land. They could be divided into two classes—tenants and agricultural labourers. Security of tenure was always a problem for lessees. Although traditionally tenants might inherit their tenancies from their fathers, landlords could also evict tenants for non-payment of dues and other reasons. Agricultural labourers differed from tenants or lessees mainly because they lacked security of employment. While the tenant had work for at least a season through his lease, the labourer had to seek work from day to day. Untouchables were not wanted as tenants in the traditional system because they rarely saved and had little moveable property and were thus bad risks as far as landlords were concerned. These landless labourers were thus the first to be affected by famine and drought such as was widespread in southern India in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Although some of the indentured hoped to go back to their homes in India after making some money in Natal; others, especially those from higher caste families, knew that their indenture would break caste prohibitions and that they would become outcasts to their families at home. Kuper says that the economic motive alone is seldom enough to explain why the immigrants left home. Family ties and tensions were also involved and these explain why, for instance, one of a number of brothers would immigrate and why some returned and others did not (Kuper 1960:217-235). Among the case histories cited by Kuper is that of S. Govender, a Tamil pensioner.

I was an orphan. After my parents died I and my two sisters went to a relation, but he was also poor. His wife was not like a mother. Then came drought and we were all hungry. Another boy and I went one day to Velapuram where we met the recruiter who promised us a lot of money. After five years I reindentured. There was no one to go back to. I had no replies to the letters I sent home.

Such stories were typical of indentured Tamil men but the recruiting agents found it far harder to persuade women to emigrate, and, since women were expected to work in the fields with the men, those with young children were discouraged. Freund (1991:419) notes that had the employers of indentured labour had their way, they would have brought to South Africa only healthy, working males but the Indian government insisted on a proportion of women to men in each boatload of at least thirty five women to every hundred men, which was, of course, hopelessly inadequate. Of the women who did indenture, some were young widows, condemned to a life of subjection to their in-laws in India with no hope of remarriage, others were women escaping from an unhappy marriage and a few had illegitimate children or had been deserted by their husbands. Because far fewer women emigrated than

men, however, they were in great demand. Serial marriage or concubine type relationships were the norm in the early days on the estates when men were unwilling to legitimise relationships with women whose origins they were unsure of. At first, then, marriage in any conventional sense was unusual among the indentured and certainly it was impossible to emulate the pattern of marriage along caste lines as in India.

Beall (1990:166) notes that for many Indian women, marriage was not an option, especially for widows and for those who had been passed around the barracks from man to man and who bore the scars, both physical and psychological, of that experience.

One of the factors which militated against the indentured returning to India was the type of emigration and whether the emigrants left India as individuals or in groups. To a great extent the indentured left as individuals or with a relative or friend, but more often with strangers. Some of these people became friends on the long voyage and were known as 'boat brothers'. Boat brothers might be from the same district in India or even from the same village but what was important was that these relationships cut across caste barriers, although they did not include intermarriage at this stage. Boat brothers shared the same barracks room on the estate, kept one another company and looked after one another when ill (Kuper, 1960).

Perhaps the most important factor to affect individual indentured immigrants was that caste restrictions did not often survive intact the journey from India. Firstly, high caste immigrants lost caste merely by crossing the ocean (although, as we have seen there were those, like Gandhi, who were able to ignore such taboos). Secondly, life on the ships was inconsistent with caste rules. People could not be rigidly separated in the holds and once having lost caste status by coming on board the ship, they were less inclined to stick to rigid rules of diet. Mayer recounts the possibly mythical account of one old woman of her ship setting forth from Calcutta bound for the sugar estates of Fiji, with each caste cooking food at a separate hearth. Suddenly a wave rocked the boat, the pots fell over and the food was mixed. The passengers had the choice of going hungry or of eating the polluted food and they chose to eat. After that, food restrictions ended (Mayer 1973:158). While the old woman's story may have been a way of rationalising the end of dietary restrictions, Mayer records that none of his informants could remember any attempt to reintroduce restrictions of food or drink in Fiji.

In South Africa there was little organised effort to segregate untouchables; although one informant did say that untouchables would have been seated and fed separately at weddings in the past (if their caste status had been known), and the wife of a high caste man of North Indian origin said that her husband would not accept food or drink from members of lower castes. Thus altogether immigration destroyed

one of the main props of the caste system, the maintenance of purity through diet and touch, caste practices survived in the form of personally recognised customs among individuals and families according to different circumstances and inclinations. Van der Burg and Van der Veer (1986:516) note that the key notion 'purity' underlying both society and religion (in India) has become a mere sentiment in Surnames Hinduism, colouring but not determining religious practices and discourses.

Occupation was another upholder of both caste separateness and caste rank. In India, occupations were graded on a scale of relative purity, which also involved indices of caste rank. At the same time, the fact that occupations were exclusive to members of certain castes was a jealously guarded right. Occupations such as barber and priest were interdependent and the only occupation which could be followed by members of any caste without incurring pollution was agriculture. Although work on the estates was not in itself polluting, it destroyed status differentiation based on caste occupation and the economic dependence of one caste on another.

Smith and Jayawardena note for Guyana (1967:51) (and the same is true for Natal), that the division of labour in the sugar estates was based on economic and technological practices which belonged to a culture quite foreign to that in which caste was embedded.

It was administered by managers who were not concerned with the preservation of traditional Indian ways. The assignment of immigrants to jobs in factory and field bore no relation to caste statuses, taboos or specialisations. Men of different castes performed the same jobs, worked in the same gangs and were paid at the same rates. Consumer goods were purchased at the estate store and there was no place for *jajman* relations.

The political system of the estate bore no relation to the caste system since decisions were made by European managers and executed by European overseers. These decisions had to be obeyed by all labourers, regardless of caste, and management officials presided over estate courts where social policies were laid down and enforced and disputes settled. Workers were not allowed to form associations to regulate any important matters regarding their economic or political interests. The estate managers were interested in maintaining an orderly and disciplined work force and to this end sought to control all aspects of social life in their domain.

The caste system received no support from the structure of authority in the estate. Managers dispensed rewards, favours and privileges in accordance with work, loyalty and obedience, irrespective of caste. They had little sympathy for, and enough authority to destroy, a parallel hierarchy of power and prestige which could interfere with their freedom to deploy the labour force. Authority based on caste had little prospect of persisting outside the labour sphere since managers could, and did, intervene in any matter which directly or indirectly affected discipline.

After the immigrants had fulfilled their terms of indenture and moved from the estates, the old pattern as known in India, did not return. Firstly, there was no need for many of the old occupations in the new country. Metal pots replaced the clay ones made by the potter in India and most small farmers did their own repairs, mended their own houses and so forth. Few Indians living in towns or villages in Natal carried on specialist work, and those who did, did not necessarily belong to the appropriate caste. One exception was that Hindi speaking priests remained Brahmins, although not all men of the Brahmin caste became priests. At one wedding of a high caste Hindi girl which I attended, the young Brahmin priest who came from a nearby town to officiate, was training to become a teacher and said that his father had not been a priest, but his grandfather had been one. He said he hoped to study further in India. Among Tamil speakers and other south Indians no hereditary caste of priests arrived with the indentured and informants stated that anyone with the necessary inclination and training could become a priest.

Another feature of the caste system which was changed by emigration was that traditionally one's caste membership was ascriptive; that is, it was inherited at birth and could not be changed. However, indentured immigrants could, and did, change their caste names as individuals. A false caste name could be given to the recruiter, and, once landed, individuals were under no obligation to furnish more than one name. Although fellow workers usually ferreted out approximate caste status (through eating habits, dress and such like indicators), some individuals did change their caste affiliations in a way which would not have been possible in the village setting of India. Many of the caste names adopted in South Africa are actually caste titles but, as Pandian (1983:191) notes, 'titles have the potential of become caste names and an individual may use one or more caste labels to denote his caste identity.' Caste status then became something flexible in Natal and only important generally on the level of varna (or caste category) when marriage was being considered (Kuper 1960: 26).

## Conclusion

In terms of this analysis, caste could not survive as a system in Natal Indian society, although some elements may influence behaviour. The pure-impure hierarchy does not differentiate social groups but individuals and refers only to temporary states (such as childbirth) to which everyone is subject and from which everyone can be released. The factor which caused the particular elements of the caste system to dissolve were mainly caused by a lack of any connection of the system to the sources of power in Natal society. Caste members could not form on-going social groups on the estates because no-one had the power to organise them. Again, in the towns no person or group could exercise control over others. Caste values and rules were

reduced to unenforceable moral scruples. Only within the domestic sphere did various beliefs and practices persist at times. All legitimate power was in the hands of government and estate administration. In the rare cases when *panchayats* or village councils were recreated they became subordinate to a local Health Board and had no legal power to enforce or counter the laws enacted by the bureaucratic government.

As Vertovec (1990:227) notes, religious components of ethnic ideology, though in essence considered by believers to be 'ahistorical', are (not) necessarily frozen or fixed in form; these, like secular features, are part of a wider milieu, and may undergo modification in response to contextual changes. Among those Indians who paid their own way to South Africa and entered business or the professions, caste consciousness rather than structure persisted, largely because they had greater economic security, brought their families with them from India and often retained contact with caste members in their home villages in Gujerat and elsewhere in north India. In time, religion and language differences became broader and more clearly recognisable divisions among Indians in South Africa than caste or varna. The ultimate sanction of caste rules is outcasting and in South Africa no caste organisation had power to impose this drastic punishment. While a family might ostracise a member it cannot excommunicate him or her. Power, then, is the crucial variable in the disappearance of caste in its original form in Natal.

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# South African Telugu Surnames: A Linguistic Analysis

Variyakshi Prabhakaran

## Introduction

In Andhra Pradesh, India, every Telugu speaking person (also called *Āndhra*), possesses a family name called '*inti pēru*' (lit. 'house name' in Telugu). Of all the linguistic groups, *Āndhras* are the only ones who possess these unique house names and they attach great importance to them. These Telugu family names have a syntactic role. They appear to stand in an adjectival relation to the given names. That is, as an adjective in the Telugu language precedes the noun it qualifies, so too the family/house name (*inti pēru*) precedes the given name, which is a noun.

The Telugu population in Andhra Pradesh is heterogeneous in its caste composition and comprises ±25 endogamous castes. They can be arranged into clusters according to their mutual functional habits, prohibitions or associations in sharing food and drink, and participation in marriage and other ceremonies. There is no synonym for caste in any Indian language (Prabhakaran 1997:165). The Indian words that 'caste' supposedly translates, is *jāti*, which means a large kin-community or descent group, and *varna*, which implies a classification based on function (Kak 1993:118). Prabhakaran (1997:180f) lists caste variables in Indian Telugu society and their caste name endings. Most Telugu castes have certain suffixes attached to their names to indicate their caste hierarchy. Thus, unlike in western or African contexts, Indian (e.g. Telugu) family names are derived from their caste system, among various other sources. This has been dealt with in detail elsewhere (Prabhakaran 1998:62f). In the South African situation, however, Telugu speakers have lost this unique possession of having a house name. Like all other South African, they have a surname which is written at the end of their given names. These surnames derive from personal names, caste names and titles, and nicknames.

In this contribution, an attempt is made to linguistically study South African Telugu surnames. In the South African context, very little attention is paid to the linguistic aspects of onomastics and Indian names are not an exception.

The article is divided into two parts viz. a) the history of Telugu surnames in South Africa and methodology—how data was collected for this study; and b) a linguistic analysis of the data. The data analysis demonstrates various linguistic variations and changes that occurred due to the Telugu language's contact with 'in-group' and 'out-group' languages viz. Tamil and English respectively.

### Telugu Surnames in South Africa

It is interesting to note that when the indentured Indians arrived from India, the patterns of their surnames started changing (Prabhakaran 1998b:56). Some points of importance are reiterated in this article. It is observed from the ships' lists that during the initial stages of their immigration the Telugu *inṭi pēru* (house name or family name) had not been documented by the British emigration authorities in India or even in the colony of Natal. The authorities recorded the fathers'/ mothers' names along with other details such as their caste names, birth marks, given names, place of birth and the *kūll* (labourer) number given to the Indians. Thus, the whole concept of having a separate identity as Telugu speakers had already been destroyed at the time of their embarkation. Above all, all *Āndhras* along with *Tamiḷs* were regarded as *Madrāssis* (people coming from Madras, India) due to the common port of their embarkation at Madras (Prabhakaran 1992:142f). Tamil speakers do not have a separate house name but they use their fathers' names as their first names, (which always precede the given names). Although matrilineal naming practices among the Dravidians were in use during ancient times, such practices disappeared after the medieval period. Tamil and Telugu speakers do not use their mothers' names as their first names any more.

South African Indians (particularly the *Āndhras* and the *Tamiḷs*), however, use both patronymic and matronymic names as their surnames (last names) at present. Similarly, due to their upward social mobility (Prabhakaran [1999]) many Telugu and Tamil speakers use their caste titles such as *nāidoo/naidu*, *reddi*, *paḍayāchi* and *gavender* (always with upward mobility) (cf. Prabhakaran 1997:180-182).

### Methodology used for Data Collection

Over the years, a sample consisting of  $\pm 1000$  Telugu and Tamil surnames were collected of which 446 are Telugu surnames. The data for this article comes from various sources including surnames taken from telephone directories, R.K.Khan and St.Aidens hospitals' patient records, from various doctors' surgery records and from local (Indian) newspapers. I have also collected surnames from various clothing industries and from shoe factories where the lower-class Indian surnames could be obtained. The Metropolitan voters' list, student records from various schools, and students' registration records from the University of Durban-Westville were further

sources for my data. I have also gathered data from fieldwork conducted within KwaZulu-Natal, from a questionnaire survey and lastly from formal and informal interviews conducted by my research assistants and by myself.

While selecting the sample, if a surname was considered to be very frequent (e.g. *nāḍḍoo*, 'a caste title given to certain Telugu caste people') or very rare (e.g. *adakāthavan*, a Tamil name given to a male which means 'a person who is difficult to subdue or to defeat') one example of each was included in the sample. Special attention was given to the surnames which were known to have different variations (e.g. *nāḍḍoo* is considered to be a Tamil/ Telugu surname whereas *nāḍḍu* is considered to be a 'pure' Telugu surname) and meanings; and those which had notable linguistic features such as grapheme and phonemic variations.

The surnames thus collected were computed, analyzed and semantically divided. Since the aim of the study was to explore South African Telugu surnames, objective judgement was made as far as the surnames were concerned. Various telephonic interviews, along with formal interviews, were also conducted to establish phonetic change and semantic processes that occurred in the data.

## Data Analysis

The second part of this article focuses on linguistic analysis of the STe -surnames. This section is sub-divided into two parts viz. a) phonological and graphical observations; and b) semantic process noticed.

### 1 Phonological observations

In this sub-section, an attempt is made to statistically analyse the frequency of vowel and consonant usage in the STe surnames. However, before analysing the data, it is important to mention certain phonological rules of the Telugu language.

#### 1.1 Vowel-Consonant frequency

In the Telugu language (as in Zulu/ Xhosa), almost all words end in vowels. The only consonant endings are in /m,w,y/ (Kostic et al 1977:62). However, even these can be optionally followed by predictable vowels, viz. /u/ after bilabial /m,w/ and /i/ after the palatal /y/. Other consonants like plosive stops, retroflexes, affricates etc. occur initially and medially (single, geminated or as members of clusters). The vowels /i,e,a,u/ occur in all the three positions (initially, medially, finally), whereas the vowel /o/ has limited distribution in final position (Sastry 1984:70).

When meaningful elements (morphs) are strung together in continuous speech, certain changes take place among the Telugu vowels and consonants which combine. This phenomenon is called *sandhi* (Krishnamurti 1957:179). Unlike English, Telugu (and other Dravidian languages) have many *sandhi* processes. If the

change takes place within a word, then it is called internal *sandhi*; but if it takes place between words, it is called external *sandhi*. Lastly, it is important to mention that *sandhi* includes such processes as loss, assimilation and simplification.

The following vowel-consonant frequency (both phonological and graphemic) is observed in the data (see tables 1-3).

**TABLE 1 - Vowel-Consonant frequency of the South African Telugu Surnames**

Phoneme	Relative frequency % Position		Rank Position	
	Initial	Final	Initial	Final
Vowels	17.7%	54.5%	80	244
Consonants	82.3%	45.5%	366	202
Total	100.0%	100.0%	446	446

The Vowel-Consonant frequency of the South African Telugu surnames above is further sub-divided into the following tables (see tables 2-3) for more clarification.

**TABLE 2 - Vowel frequency in South African Telugu (STe) surnames**

Phoneme	Relative frequency % Position		Rank Position	
	Initial	Final	Initial	Final
<i>a</i>	12.3%	19%	55	84
<i>ā</i>	3.5%	---	16	--
<i>i</i>	---	10.3%	--	46
<i>u</i>	0.2%	13.9%	1	62
<i>e</i>	1.3%	1.6%	6	7
<i>ē</i>	---	2.7%	--	12
<i>o</i>	---	0.4%	--	2
<i>ō</i>	0.2%	6.5%	1	29
<i>æ:</i>	0.2%	---	1	--
<i>ai</i>	---	0.2%	--	1
Total	17.7%	54.5%	80	244

TABLE 3 - Consonant frequency in South African Telugu (STe) surnames

Phoneme	Relative frequency %		Rank Position	
	Initial	Final	Initial	Final
<i>p</i>	5.8%	----	26	--
<i>d</i>	1.4%	----	6	--
<i>b</i>	4.5%	----	20	--
<i>c</i>	9.1%	----	41	--
<i>d</i>	2.5%	----	11	--
<i>g</i>	7.0%	----	31	--
<i>j</i>	1.8%	----	8	--
<i>k</i>	7.4%	0.4%	33	2
<i>l</i>	3.2%	2.7%	14	12
<i>m</i>	8.1%	10.7%	36	48
<i>n</i>	9.3%	2.7%	41	12
<i>h</i>	----	15.2%	--	68
<i>r</i>	7.2%	1.1%	32	5
<i>s</i>	4.7%	1.4%	21	6
<i>t</i>	2.0%	----	9	--
<i>v</i>	4.1%	----	18	--
<i>y</i>	1.1%	11.2%	5	47
<i>dh</i>	2.3%	0.2%	10	1
<i>dw</i>	0.2%	----	1	--
<i>gn</i>	0.2%	----	1	--
<i>sw</i>	0.2%	----	1	--
<i>vy</i>	0.2%	----	1	--
<i>ay</i>	----	0.2%	--	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>82.3%</b>	<b>45.5%</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>202</b>

Table 2 illustrates that vowel /a/ has the highest frequency at both initial (12.3%) and final positions (19%). It is surprising to note that the vowel /i/ is not represented in the initial position because it is one of the four vowels which occur in all three positions of Telugu words (which include surnames and names). Similarly, the commonly found vowel in the initial position viz. /u/ is very poorly represented in STe surnames (cf. Sharma 1975:56). It is also interesting to note that the long

vowels /ɔ/ and /ɛ/ which have no final positions in the Telugu words have a considerable percentage of relative frequency in the final position. Lastly, the diphthong /ai/ is found in the final position due to Tamil language influence on STe.

Table 3 reflects that almost half of the surnames (45.5%) in the data have consonant endings, including plosives. This contradicts the above mentioned Telugu phonemic rules. A considerable percentage viz. 15.2% of the data consists of glottal /h/, the highest frequency of the consonants in the final position. It is pertinent, however, to add that this glottal /h/ is mostly not pronounced. The writer hypothesizes that this occurred due to the distorted spellings written by the authorities at the time of registration during the indentured period or may be even later during the post-indentured period. It is worth of note that /h/, unlike Indian Telugu surnames and names, has no initial representation in the STe surnames. The highest frequency in the initial position is for /n/ (9.3%) followed by /c/ (9.1%). The relative frequency in the final position (11.2%) of /y/ although permitted optionally by the grammatical rules, is highly significant. These tables illustrate phonetic (including graphemic) changes noted in STe surnames. Lastly, /m/ has a notable percentage of representation in the final position.

It is necessary to mention in this context that all South African Telugu surnames could be divided according to the etymology of the root prefixes and/or suffixes. Those aspects of the Telugu surnames are not focused in this contribution.

## 1.2 Phonological and Graphemic Changes

Due to the Telugu language contact with other dominant 'in-group' languages like Tamil and 'out-group' languages like English and Zulu, one can observe various phonological and semantic changes in the data. It is interesting to note that while some of these changes confined to STe surnames and names only, some of them are also found generally in STe. The language change is reflected in semantic shift, loan blends, widening or restriction of meaning, amelioration and pejoration (Prabhakaran 1994: 69-72). This contribution, however, does not focus its attention on such aspects. In this sub-section an attempt is made to analyze commonly found phonological and graphemic changes. In certain cases rarely found changes are also included. It is important to note that although various examples are found for phonological changes the researcher provided only a few examples in each category.

In this article phonological changes (both phonemic and graphemic) mean the changes that are found in general usage of the surnames in relation to their respective original forms found in Indian Telugu (ITe).

## 1.2.1 Vowel changes

Vowel /a/ being the mostly occurring vowel in all three positions, many types of changes are observed in this vowel. They are listed below.

## 1.2.1.1 /a/

a) *a-* > *æ-*

In the initial position the vowel /a/ remains unchanged.

e.g. *abbāyi* > *abhāi*  
*abbāyi* > *abōy*  
*akkayya* > *akiah*

However, only in one entry the initial /a/ found to be changed (phonemic change) as /æ:/.

e.g. *appalaswāmi* > *æ:ppelsāmy*

This change is due to Anglicization of the Telugu surnames.

b) *-a:* > *-æ:*

In the medial position (particularly after the first syllable)

/a:/ changed into /æ:/. It is relevant to mention that this change occurred not only in STe but also in other Indian languages (e.g. *pāṇḍay* > *pæ:nḍay*, *gāndhi* > *gæ:nḍ(d)hi*). English being the dominant 'out-group' language to the Indians almost all the Indians have shifted their mother tongue to English and their ethnic mother tongues are heavily influenced by South African English.

e.g. *āyānna* > *ayæ:nna/ayæ:nna*  
*āyāsawāmi* > *ayæ:sāmy/ayæ:sāmy*  
*rāmuḍu* > *ræ:mdu*

c) *-a-* > *-φ-*

In consistence with the rules of STe, *-a-* is dropped in the medial position (cf. Prabhakaran 1996:122), in *sandhi* or without *sandhi*. It is pertinent to add that this change is optional in ITe, but usually noticed in STe.

e.g. *basavayya* > *basviah* (with *sandhi*)  
*daḍayya* > *d(d)āḍiah* (with *sandhi*)  
*rāmadaś* > *ræ:m/rāmdās* (without *sandhi*)

d) -ay > -ia

In the process of *sandhi*, -a- becomes -i- as noticed in the above and foregoing examples, thus making all the surnames which have the kin suffix -ayay into -iah. This change is noticed in all surnames without any exception.

e.g.	<i>erra + ayya</i>	=	<i>erriah</i>
	<i>gaddi + ayya</i>	=	<i>gaddiah</i>
	<i>guruvu + ayya</i>	=	<i>gurviah</i>
	<i>kista + ayya</i>	=	<i>kistiah</i>

e) -a > -ā-

This vowel change is optionally noticed in the following examples.

e.g.	<i>lingadu</i>	>	<i>lingādu</i>
	<i>gangau</i>	>	<i>gangādu</i>
	<i>gangalu</i>	>	<i>gengālu</i>
	<i>chengau</i>	>	<i>chengādu</i>

f) -a > -u-

This type of change is noticed in medial positions (particularly in the first syllable) in many surnames. However, in some places this change is optional.

e.g.	<i>bangāru</i>	>	<i>buṅāru</i>
	<i>gangalu</i>	>	<i>gengālu</i>
	<i>gangamma</i>	>	<i>guṅgamma</i>
	<i>lakka</i>	>	<i>lukka</i>

g) -a > -e-

This vowel change in medial position is noticed in many surnames.

e.g.	<i>alamēlamma</i>	>	<i>alemēlamma</i>
	<i>appalasāmi</i>	>	<i>ā:ppelsāmy</i>
	<i>aruṅchallam</i>	>	<i>arnachellam</i>
	<i>chaṅgaḍu</i>	>	<i>chēngādu</i>

h) -a > -a or A

In the final position vowel /a/ although remains unchanged in many surnames, some STe speakers pronounce the final /a/ either as /a/ or /A/ as noticed in the following examples.

e.g.	<i>bullamma</i>	>	<i>bulamma</i>
	<i>achchanna</i>	>	<i>atchnA</i>
	<i>ellappa</i>	>	<i>ellapA</i>
	<i>gurappa</i>	>	<i>gurappa</i>

i) *-a* > *-o*

Similarly, /a/ also becomes /o/ in the medial positions.

e.g.	<i>campāmaṇi</i>	>	<i>campāmoni</i>
	<i>candramaṇi</i>	>	<i>candermoney</i>
	<i>subrahmaṇi</i>	>	<i>sōbramony/money</i>

It is important to note in this context that these are more changes in forms of spelling. They haven't influenced actual pronunciation of the STe surnames.

### 1.2.1.2 /ā/

a) *ā-* > *-a*

In the initial and medial positions /ā/ optionally becomes /a/ as observed in these examples.

e.g.	<i>āḍāri</i>	>	<i>aḍāri</i>
	<i>āyanna</i>	>	<i>ayanna</i>
	<i>nāgappa</i>	>	<i>nagappah</i>

However, it does not change in these examples.

e.g.	<i>ācāri</i>	>	<i>āchāri(y)</i>
	<i>ādiprasād</i>	>	<i>ādipersād</i>

b) *-ā-* > *-ō-*

In the medial position, after labial nasals, /ā/ becomes /ō/ as follows:

e.g.	<i>ammāyi</i>	>	<i>ammōyi</i>
	<i>ammāyamma</i>	>	<i>ammōyama</i>

### 1.2.1.3 /ē/

a) *-ē* > *-ā*

This type of vowel change in the medial position is noticed in the following examples.

e.g.	<i>dēvanāgi</i>	>	<i>dāvanāgie</i>
	<i>dēvarājulu</i>	>	<i>dāvarājulu</i>
	<i>dēvasahāyam</i>	>	<i>dāvasagāyam</i>
	<i>taṅgavēlu</i>	>	<i>taṅgavālu</i>

#### 1.2.1.4 /u/ > /õ/

In the final position the vowel /u/ graphemically written as /õ/ as noticed in various examples. Sometimes this change occurs phonologically also.

e.g.	<i>nāyudu</i>	>	<i>nāidõ</i>
	<i>vēnugādu</i>	>	<i>vēnugāõ</i>
	<i>subbu</i>	>	<i>sõbõ</i>
	<i>subbaya</i>	>	<i>sõbiah</i>

However, /u/ is sometimes retained in the final position.

e.g.	<i>kannigādu</i>	>	<i>kannigādu</i>
	<i>kāsīgādu</i>	>	<i>kāsīgādu</i>
	<i>kṛṣṇudu</i>	>	<i>kṛṣṇadu</i>
	<i>gaṅgādu</i>	>	<i>geṅgādu</i>

#### 1.2.1.5 Shortening of long vowel

There are many examples where the length of the vowel has been shortened and the long vowel changed into a short vowel. This change occurred due to the influence of South African (Indian) English.

e.g.	<i>õ &gt; o</i>	<i>kōya</i>	>	<i>koya</i>
	<i>ā &gt; a</i>	<i>nāgappa</i>	>	<i>nagappa</i>
		<i>doravāḷḷu</i>	>	<i>doravaloo</i> etc.

#### 1.2.2 Consonant changes

##### a) -g- > -k-

Due to heavy Tamil influence on STe the medial /k/ is changed into /g/ as observed in a few examples. However, as mentioned elsewhere (Prabhakaran 1997:14) the STe speakers have borrowed this rule and reversed this process in the initial and medial positions where they substitute /g/ with /k/.

e.g.	<i>dhanabāgiam</i>	>	<i>d(h)anabākiam</i>
	<i>chockalingam</i>	>	<i>chocklink(g)um</i>

In some examples the borrowed rule is followed without any reversal as observed here. The surname (taken from personal name) akamma is pronounced and written as agamma resulting in semantic shift of the word (see semantic shift for more details).

##### b) -h- > -ϕ- (Procope)

Most of the present-day South African Indians tend to drop the glottal fricative /h/ in all the three positions of a word. The fricative /h/ is present in the educated

speech of the Telugu speakers. Although graphically represented and aware of the glottal fricative /h/ as a phoneme in STe words, most of the STe speakers avoid it in their speech context.

e.g.	<i>dhanabhāgyam</i>	>	<i>danabākiam</i>
	<i>dharmalingam</i>	>	<i>darmaling(k)am</i>
	<i>harijan</i>	>	<i>arijan etc.</i>

It is necessary to add an interesting note: that, due to Tamil influence, many STe speakers substitute the glottal /h/ with a /g/ in the medial position.

e.g.	<i>ahalya</i>	>	<i>agalya</i>
	<i>maharāj</i>	>	<i>magarāj</i>

It is worth noting that many STe speakers along with other South African Indians unnecessarily add (to make hyper correction) /h/ in all three positions in many surnames and names as observed in these examples. This change took place both graphemically and phonologically.

e.g.	<i>anurādha</i>	>	<i>hanurād(h)a</i>
	<i>muryālu</i>	>	<i>moothālu</i>
	<i>manthri</i>	>	<i>mundhree</i>
	<i>guravayya</i>	>	<i>gurviah</i>

c) -r > φ

Due to English influence the consonant /r/, which is phonemic in the final position of ITe, is silent in STe and STe speakers tend to drop it even in (Indian) Telugu words. This is another common feature observed amongst STe speaking community.

e.g.	<i>prabhākar</i>	>	<i>prabkā</i>
	<i>nāgār</i>	>	<i>nāgū</i>

They add it unnecessarily as hypercorrections in many places.

e.g.	<i>nāikar</i>	>	<i>nāika</i>
	<i>kīṣṭa</i>	>	<i>kīṣṭa</i>
	<i>pulligāḍu</i>	>	<i>pulligrādu etc.</i>

d) Lengthening the vowel before /r/

As just mentioned the STe speakers drop /r/ and tend to lengthen the previous vowel before /r/ (as observed before). They following examples also demonstrate such change.

e.g.	<i>prabhākar</i>	>	<i>prabākā</i>
	<i>nāikar</i>	>	<i>nāikā</i>

e) *d-* or *-d* > /d/

This change also takes place due to English influence. Many present-day STE speakers and South African Indian English (SAIE) speakers tend to substitute the unaspirated voiced dental stop /d/ with voiced retroflex /ɖ/ as observed in the following examples.

e.g.	<i>dēvadās</i>	>	<i>ɖēvɖās</i>
	<i>dās</i>	>	<i>ɖæ:s</i>
	<i>dandayya</i>	>	<i>ɖandiah</i>
	<i>dāvasahāyam</i>	>	<i>ɖēvasagāyam</i>

There are other various minor phonological changes noticed in the data. However, they are not discussed here as they are not consistent.

### 1.3 Morphophonemics

#### 1.3.1 Sandhi

As discussed earlier, the term *sandhi* covers interfaces between phonetics and phonology and between phonology and morphology (Sastry 1994:181). The term *sandhi*, however, is a cover-term for many divergent phenomena which include assimilations or dissimilations, allomorphic or morphophonemic alternations (Jayaprakash 1991:69). In this sub-section an attempt is made to illustrate such *sandhi* processes observed in the data.

##### 1.3.1.1 a + a > a or -v + -v > φ

(cf. Jeevarathnachary 1988:42)

e.g.	<i>appa + anna</i>	>	<i>appanna</i>
	<i>cinna + appa</i>	>	<i>c(h)inappah</i>
	<i>anna + ayya</i>	>	<i>anniah</i>

##### 1.3.1.2 a + a > ā or -v + v- > vv

e.g.	<i>kannika +</i>	<i>amba</i>	>	<i>kannikāmba</i>
	<i>ndga +</i>	<i>amma</i>	>	<i>ndgamma</i>

##### 1.3.1.3 i + a > i + y + a

e.g.	<i>kanni + ayya</i>	>	<i>kanniyah</i>
	<i>kanni + amma</i>	>	<i>kanniyama</i>
	<i>jōgi + ayya</i>	>	<i>jōgiyah</i>

### 1.3.2. Syncope

In this process trisyllabic words are reduced to dissyllabic words.

e.g.	<i>rāmuḍu</i>	>	<i>rāmḍu</i>
	<i>raṅgaḍu</i>	>	<i>raṅḍu</i>
	<i>rāyaḍu</i>	>	<i>rāiḍu</i>
	<i>nāyuḍu</i>	>	<i>nāiḍu</i>
	<i>aruḍa</i>	>	<i>aruḍa</i>

### 1.3.3 Compensatory lengthening

e.g.	<i>nāgūru</i>	+	<i>vāḍu</i>	>	<i>nāgūrōḍu (nagoorōḍoo)</i>
	<i>pilāni</i>	+	<i>vāllu</i>	>	<i>pilānōloo</i>

### 1.3.4 Loss of syllable

e.g.	<i>anjamma</i>	+	<i>talli</i>	>	<i>ajmathally</i>
	<i>appa</i>	+	<i>rāvu</i>	>	<i>appāvoo</i>
	<i>aruṅa</i>	+	<i>giri</i>	>	<i>arnagiri</i>

### 1.3.5 Loss of gemination

Loss of gemination is a usual feature of uneducated and lower caste speech patterns in ITe. The educated lower caste ITe speakers, however, tend to retain geminations in their formal and informal speech contexts. However, it is mostly not found in STe surnames. This could be attributed to illiteracy and low caste background of the indentured immigrants between 1860-1911.

e.g.	<i>ammāyi</i>	+	<i>amma</i>	>	<i>ammōyama</i>
	<i>aṅka</i>	+	<i>amma</i>	>	<i>aṅkama</i>
	<i>cinna</i>	+	<i>appa</i>	>	<i>cinnapa</i>
	<i>chokka</i>	+	<i>lingam</i>	>	<i>choklingam</i>

### 1.3.6 Metathesis

The distorted spellings written by the emigration authorities resulted in various funny surnames, unusual surnames and derogatory surnames. In India, metathesis is usually observed in a few occurrences, and that also only among uneducated speakers. In STe, however, it is usually found in uneducated speech but sometimes in educated speech too. Due to a lack of understanding of the Telugu language and also due to language shift, many educated STe speakers do not even realize that

their surnames are written wrongly as indicated in the following examples.

**Original form**

*nāidu*

*chicocheṭṭi*

*prakāsamlu*

*perumā!*

*chinnamma*

**STe surnames**

*naiḍoo* (only two entries were found)

*chioccheṭṭi*

*paraskamloo*

*perulām*

*chianma*

It is relevant to add in this context that in Telugu and Tamil languages (like Zulu and unlike English), two vowels can not be written in one place i.e. the Telugu grammatical rules do not allow a cvvc or vvcc etc. order. If someone studies the above examples one finds that many of the STe surnames do not follow this grammatical rule.

## 2 Semantic Shift

Although various semantic processes viz. loan blends, loan translation, widening or restricting meanings, amelioration, pejoration etc. have been observed in the data, the researcher limits her discussion only on the semantic shift observed in the data. It is interesting to note that these semantic shifts occurred in the STe surnames due to misspellings and that STe speakers are not aware of such meaning shifts in their surnames. In many cases, the original meaning of the source term has undergone 'semantic shift' with an accompanying change in gender of the surname too. It is interesting to note that many of these misspellings occurred at the time of the immigration of the Indians to Natal.

There are almost 35 such entries found in the data. As it is impossible to discuss all these entries within this contribution, the author limits her focus to a few examples.

2.1 *ajmathally*. The ITe source word for this is *anjammatalli* in which *anjamma* means 'mother of Lord Hanumān' (the monkey God of Hindus) and *talli* 'mother' (duplication) - lit. 'the mother of Lord Hanumān. STe surnames with a distorted spelling *ajmathally* literally means 'mother of a male goat' (*ajma* means 'male goat').

2.2 *cheṭṭu*. The original ITe source word for this is *chittu* which means 'small boy' or 'coarse bran'. The vowel change from *-i* > *-e* resulted in semantic shift, giving *cheṭṭu*, which in Telugu means 'a tree'.

2.3 *gaḍḍiah*. This is taken from the ITe term *gaḍḍayya* in which *gaḍḍa* means 'an island, a lump, bank, brink' etc. and *ayya* means 'father' (lit. 'the man born on an island'). The vowel change from *-a > -i* resulted in semantic shift because the term *gaḍḍiah* literally means (*gaḍḍi* 'grass') 'man who eats grass'.

2.4 *nagaḍu*. The original ITe term is *nāgaḍu* which means 'lord of snakes'. However, this surname has changed into *nagaḍu* which means 'a person who does not smile' when the vowel change from /a/ to /a/ took place.

2.5 *nāḍu/naiḍoo*. The original ITe term *nāyuḍu* means 'a caste title given to the *kāpu* caste people'. However, in the STe and South African Tamil (SAT) context this term has many meanings such as *nāvāḍu* 'my (caste) fellow', 'a high caste man', 'a rich man', 'a Tamil surname', 'a Telugu surname' etc. (Prabhakaran 1998b:65).

2.6 *ḍāḍi*. The original source word is *ḍāḍi* which is a Telugu house name of a *gavara* caste person. In ITe *ḍāḍi* means 'fight, attack, war, battle'. This house name is derived from the achievement of a *gavara* person who 'defeated his enemy in a fight' and his successors used that name as a house name. However, due to Anglicization of this ITe word, *ḍāḍi* became *ḍāḍi* which means 'father'.

### Summary and Conclusion

In this article various aspects of linguistic analysis of these surnames such as semantic classification, morphology and syntax are not discussed owing to the vastness of the subject.

In earlier research on onomastics in South Africa, little attention has been paid to the linguistic aspects of onomastics and its contribution to linguistic and sociolinguistic descriptions. In his detailed study on naming in the Kashmiri Pandit community, Kachru (1998:3) draws attention to the linguistic component of onomastics and the neglect of this field by linguists. South African Indian names are no exception. The author feels that all aspects of the scientific study of Indian names in South Africa have been neglected owing to a lack of understanding of the Indian community in general and of the Indian languages in particular. In this article, an attempt was made to demonstrate one aspect of the linguistic process evinced in the STe surnames.

During research, various aspects of these Telugu and Tamil surnames, names, nicknames (e.g. phonemic, syntactic and semantic aspects) etc. were noticed which could be topics for future investigation. Many South Africans (including the

Indians themselves) not realising the traditional derivations, distort Indian names resulting in unintentional derogatory meanings. Some names have even been adapted phonologically from English into Telugu giving rise to quite comic meanings to the Indian names. It is pertinent to add that this contribution on linguistic analysis of the Indian surnames should not be seen as a final word on the topic.

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\* The financial assistance of the Centre for Science Development towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed in this contribution and conclusions arrived at are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the Centre for Science Development.

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# The Literary Phenomenon and the Maintenance of Human Meaning

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The present study is a companion piece to a previously published study entitled 'Executioners of Mystery', which appeared in *Scrutiny* 2 (1998). In that essay, I posit that in order to qualify for participation in disciplinarity, the domain of literary studies would need to satisfy three requirements – (1) an object of study (that is, demonstrable, necessary and sufficient properties common to all objects designated 'literary', (2) some foundational, axiomatic principles and (3) a set of procedures which promote rule-governance for intellectual activity. The evidence supports the observation that all three claims for disciplinarity at the site of literary studies are exceedingly weak. In spite of this, the site of literary studies flourishes, tempting one to suppose that it performs significant functions within cultural meaning and value. In the present study, in an attempt to answer the question, 'What operations are performed?', I am obliged to ask wider and logically prior questions within the human symbolic, which in turn requires a move into the attendant discipline of symbolic anthropology. Finally, I attempt to apply these anthropological observations to the literary phenomenon and its secondary productions.

## 1 Origins of Cultural Codes and the Symbolic

If symbolic behaviour is even half as important as Freud, for example, suggested, symbolic anthropology is the custodian of the richest of all the mines which are worked by the science of man (Melford Spiro 1969:214).

The term 'culture' has numerous meanings, both in academic and ordinary language. For our purposes, culture can be defined as the sum of human meanings and values within an individual consciousness at one moment. And this 'sum' need not be integrated, fully conscious, logical, or even factually correct. Culture is multiple and contradictory, subject to alteration. Culture is the ways in which an individual attaches bits from the flow of meaning to the self, or the ways in which individuals

are attached to meanings. Individuals are active creators and passive receivers, passive creators and active receivers of culture. Anthony Cohen states:

Culture ... is the means by which we make meaning, and with which we make the world meaningful to ourselves, and ourselves meaningful to the world (Cohen 1993:196).

These meanings are manifested in momentary gestures of assent, consent or dissent during the individual's participation in everyday life.

Alfred Kroeber and Talcott Parsons present culture and society as interrelated:

We suggest that it is useful to define the concept of culture for most usages more narrowly than has been done in most American anthropological tradition and have it refer to transmitted and created content and patterns of values, ideas, and other symbolic-meaningful systems as factors in the shaping of human behaviour and the artefacts produced through behaviour. On the other hand, we suggest that the term society—or more generally, social system—be used to designate the specifically relational system of inter-action among individuals and collectivities (Kroeber & Parsons 1958: 582)

Here, 'social system' designates the network of human interaction; 'culture' designates the systems of meaning which direct and constrain those human interactions. The distinction is at best blurred, indicating the inseparability of sociology and anthropology. Radcliffe-Brown makes a similar observation: 'Neither social structure nor culture can be scientifically dealt with in isolation from one another ...' (Radcliffe-Brown, 1957: 106). Simply stated, culture may refer to Durkheim's 'collective representations', whereas a social system refers to a state of affairs—the difference is between meaning and action, meaning structures and meaning-in-action. The distinction now begs questions about how meaning can ever be known except in action, since all representations of meaning are expressions, and thus qualify as acts. Perhaps the disciplines of sociology and anthropology, despite many differences in their styles of data collection and analysis, constitute the same discipline, one which explicates human-organizational systems and the meanings which direct them.

E. Cassirer, in *An Essay on Man*, proposes the centrality of symbol in human meaning systems:

The great thinkers who have defined man as an animal rationale were not

empiricists, nor did they ever intend to give an empirical account of human nature. By this definition they were expressing rather a fundamental moral imperative. Reason is a very inadequate term with which to comprehend the forms of man's cultural life in all their richness and variety. But all these forms are symbolic forms. Hence instead of defining man as an animal rationale we should define him as an animal symbolicum. By so doing we can designate his specific difference, and we can understand the new way open to man—the way to civilization (Cassirer 1976:25f).

What are the origins of symbolization as the central component of human meaning systems? In order to give substance to the claim that symbols regulate human meaning, it is necessary to make a few remarks concerning the Upper Palaeolithic.

The original 'centre' of any Palaeolithic economy had to have been survival. Successful Palaeolithic economies were those that survived. Survival practices were inevitably coded into a metaphysical system of conduct and meaning. The contention towards which I hesitantly move is that the broad and complex web of beliefs, imperatives, taboos and injunctions which constitute modern forms of social organization may be the end product of thousands of years of aggregation, development and structuring. During the Upper Palaeolithic, 40,000 years ago, Cro-Magnon man developed an impressive range of bone, antler and stone tools throughout the Old World (Marshack 1991). The populations of Africa, Asia and Europe underwent a population explosion (between 40,000 and 30,000 years ago) which was accompanied an explosion of creativity of a symbolic kind (Pfeiffer, 1982), as is evidenced by the production of non-utilitarian objects from bone, shell, coral and a variety of stones. The Russian archaeological site of Sungir, east of Moscow (dated at 28,000 years before present), reveals the bodies of an adult male and two children, each wrapped in thousands of carved ivory beads. This accumulation indicates a significant number of work-hours, thus establishing this burial as a noteworthy (and possibly quantifiable) event within the economy. Given that the burial of beads with the three bodies can have no material value, this site must indicate that the metaphysical has been accorded a prominent position within material life, indicating in turn that symbols operate strongly in communication and in everyday life (White 1993). There was an explosion of paintings, engravings, necklaces, the practice of cremation and the symbolic use of red ochre, throughout the Old World by 30,000 years ago.

The notion that 'cave art' served an 'aesthetic' function is pure modern supposition. Moreover, Palaeolithic pictorial representation contains numerous abstract forms, unquestionably symbolic (see Pfeiffer 1982:143 and Graziosi 1960). Studies of present-day hunter-gatherer pictorial representation reveal that aboriginal explanations of the symbolic meaning of drawings is vastly more rich and complex

than one could possibly speculate from the drawings (see Gould 1969). In short, the evidence of the Upper Palaeolithic and, in particular, the Magdalenian period (20,000—15,000 year ago), caused Francois Bordes to declare that the Magdalenian was the 'first of the great civilizations'. (Bordes 1953:445) What is evident is symbolic encoding, which has been a principal organizing activity of the species for at least 20,000 years, thus locating the symbolic at the centre of human meaning. Pfeiffer speculates on the human-organizational importance of cave art as follows:

This was not art for art's sake, nothing casual. It was bare survival-necessity. The development of prehistoric, preliterate mnemonics must have been the result of considerable trial and error. As an analogy, think of how many illnesses and deaths from eating poisonous and low-nutrition plants preceded the selection of grass seeds, legumes, and other basic foods. Failures of communication, misunderstandings and forgettings, late arrivals and nonarrivals, were just as lethal. The same ingenuity and attention to detail which we apply today in planning political campaigns, the design of buildings and machines, and theatrical productions went into the uses of art and special effects in the caves (Pfeiffer 1982:127).

Given the numerous indications of complex social, technological and spiritual life at this time, it is likely that language would already have achieved complexity. Auberg et al (1990) record, at a dig at Kebara, a 60,000 year-old skeleton with a complete hyoid bone, indicating that, anatomically, a wide range of speech sounds was already possible. It has been proposed that language is most responsible for this dramatic increase in skills and symbolic behaviour:

In an intelligent social species such as ours, there is an obvious adaptive benefit in being able to convey an infinite number of precisely structured thoughts merely by modulating exhaled breath (Pinker 1994:25).

Language became a strong social bridging agent, and provided a repository for metaphysical beliefs. A metaphysical realm—inhabited by deities, ancestors and animals—can thus be given precise shape and form. The metaphorical use of language is well suited to encoding and communicating the transcendental. And one may further surmise that this metaphysical realm becomes the inviolable storehouse of human wisdom, lore, belief and law. Deep-structure beliefs can be encoded, transmitted and enforced by means of symbolic language. The Sorcerer, a painting in the Pyrenean foothills dated at 15,000 years old is a mixture of human, bird and animal (see Lewin 1993). This totemic figure indicates a complex attitude to existence, one in which the symbolic intrudes into material life. With the invention and codification of the metaphysical, a symbolic space is created which becomes the

storehouse of human meaning and in which the imperatives of human organization are accorded transcendental status.

It is reasonable to propose that the symbolic functioned to encode the rules of social organization. This metaphysical repository of transcendental law may have been the most powerful agent in the creation of stable social-organizational patterns. By 20,000 years ago, perhaps as much as half of Europe was under glacial ice. The only way in which the species of modern man could survive and flourish in these punishing circumstances was by means of controlled group composition (Stringer & McKie 1996:202). One may speculate that this sophisticated metaphysical cluster of imperatives, the 'rules of the race', retained a singular, organically homogenous character until the creation of the comparatively modern scientific disciplines of mathematics, physics, and other procedural discourses which established their separateness from ancient lore or cultural axioms. These moments of separation or splintering (such as the emergence of the science of evolution) are characterized by great cultural crises as the totemic symbolic centre of human meaning is challenged and diminished. Consequently, the realm of deep-structure non-rational law shrinks until it comprises only religion and ethics—those notoriously invisible meaning-clusters, which continue to enthrall the species at its deepest levels. These powerful relics cannot be displaced by a mere few thousand years of rational disciplinary activity. Instead, their points of articulation—exegesis, moral tracts, metaphysical exhortation and the broad field of the literary phenomenon—have become more active and urgent sites for affirming and modulating the centre of human meaning and value, precisely because this centre disregards the principles and procedures of the modern disciplines. Encoded, symbolic survival strategies are not easily altered or relinquished—their great antiquity gives them powerful precedence over mere rational inquiry. The discourses of religion, ethics and the secular-sacred symbolic representations of the literary phenomenon can be regarded as vestigial places, the diminishing symbolic field which continues to house the ethical-metaphysical totems of the species.

Prior to the division of labour, according to Durkheim, function was less differentiated than in modern societies. One of the significant effects of undifferentiated labour is a more cohesive social unit, one in which individual existence is as a group member. The social order has a high degree of authority—of sacralization—and becomes the symbolic organizing principle of everyday life (see Durkheim 1893 & 1895). Thus, survival is synonymous with group survival, and group survival is strictly regulated and ruled by the symbolic order to which all members subordinate themselves. In short, the symbolic order was, in late Palaeolithic society, its lifeblood, its frame of reference, its knowledge and law, its metaphysics and ethics—an untranscendable horizon. It is that which Ludwig Fleck terms a 'thought collective' (*denkkollektiv*) which 'almost always exerts an absolutely compulsive force' (Fleck 1935:41).

The aim of this speculative digression into paleo-anthropology has been to emphasize two contentions, namely, that the immaterial edifice of human meaning is ancient, and that in its 'original' state, it was a singular system of great explanatory force. The present-day remnants of Palaeolithic knowledge-systems point to a tight nexus of first principles which once provided explanations of all material and immaterial phenomena. All-inclusive accounts of causality created the binding agent for the original master narratives. The result of a dramatic increase in knowledge in the last few thousand years has been the proliferation and development of specific, relatively self-sufficient knowledge disciplines, technologies and ideologies, all splintering off from the non-rational core. Contact with the non-rational basis of this core may principally be undertaken by religion, ethics and the literary phenomenon. There exists a vast array of crucial human information within this core for which only an imperfect, perhaps only rudimentary, explanatory discipline exists, namely symbolic anthropology. The elucidation of human meaning requires a sophisticated tool, especially because all knowledge-claims proceeding from its practice will simultaneously constitute new eruptions of the object of study. Roy Wagner reminds us:

Unless we are able to hold our own symbols responsible for the reality we create with them, our notion of symbols and of culture in general remain subject to the 'masking' by which our invention conceals its effects (Wagner 1981:144).

## **2 Axioms, Imperatives and the Realm Beyond Question**

Mary Douglas provides an interesting perspective on the formation of the 'institution' (which includes all deep structure imperatives) based on analogy:

There needs to be an analogy by which the formal structure of a crucial set of social relations is found in the physical world, or in the supernatural world, or in eternity, anywhere, so long as it is not seen as a socially contrived arrangement. When the analogy is applied back and forth from one set of social relations to another and from these back to nature, its recurring formal structure becomes easily recognized and endowed with self-validating truth (Douglas 1986:48).

Conventions need to be validated by an appeal to something other than themselves. And this may add support to Durkheim's insistence that religion is the unifying element of society because it is in the metaphysical realm that all conventions are given authority. The symbolic exists to order the material and is created specifically for that purpose. Douglas further observes:

Ancestors operating from the other side of life provide the naturalization analogy that seals the social conventions. The focus should be not on how they symbolize the structure of society, but on how they intervene in it. One could say that sitting back and receiving worship is usually the least time-consuming part of an ancestor's duties. The full job description includes continual, active monitoring of daily affairs in response to public demand (Douglas 1986:50).

This is true of the job description of the entire realm of symbolic value, including all secular-sacralized concepts beyond the concepts of religion and its handmaiden, legislative ethics. The symbolic is functional, not simply representational; it intervenes rather than simply embodies. The notion of the ancestor is useful in the constitution of the human symbolic because it accentuates the dynamic, legislative, active principle—'the ancestors are a socially necessary invention' (Douglas, 1986: 51). They confer natural status on the deep structures governing social relations. This natural status, and the realm beyond question, may best be approached by recourse to the notion of the axiom. Rodney Needham explains:

When we try to account for social forms, whether through direct involvement or with the relative detachment of a humane discipline, we naturally tend to rely on premises that we take more or less for granted. In a formalized subject these premises are properly described as axioms. The noun comes from the Greek *axiōma*, that which is thought fitting, decision, self-evident principle; from *axiōn*, hold worthy, from *axios*, worthy (Onions 1966: 66, s.v.). An axiom is not thought to require demonstration; it is accepted without proof as the basis for the logical deduction of other statements such as theorems (Needham 1983:2).

The derivation of the word axiom is thus traceable to worth and worthiness or that which is hallowed, beyond reproach and beyond suspicion. In human knowledge systems, that which is taken for granted becomes invisible while it conditions the basic shape of human expression and behaviour. The notion of the axiom may be transposed into cultural analysis so that one may speak of cultural axioms, the deep-structure network of the totemic and the culturally sacred. This network may be shown as the generative principle of cultural activity.

The proposal that cultures adhere to deep principles or codes has, for decades, been the site of fierce debate among structuralists, structural functionalists and configurationists. (See Singer, 1984:1-31, for a fine summary of the various epistemological and methodological debates in anthropology.) Having neither the space nor the expertise to reinvigorate this lengthy debate here, I wish to offer only

two brief observations. First, while this study favours the notion that deep-structure codes of behaviour, meaning and value govern all cultures, it makes no claim for a foundational equivalence or complementarity of all deep-structure culture patterns. Robert Redfield offers the following observation:

In coming to understand an alien way of life, as in coming to understand an alien art, the course of personal experience is essentially the same: one looks first at an incomprehensible other; one comes to see that other as one's self in another guise (Redfield 1962:488).

This 'family of man' proposition can neither be supported or refuted here. Only an exhaustive study of numerous specific cultures (and one which has overcome the problem of observational perspective) can support or refute this claim. Similarly, I can neither support nor refute the classic structuralist stance that all deep-structure codes and rules cohere into a single, homogenous system or structure which sets up no contradictions or conflicts in individual minds. Only an exhaustive analysis of the codes within complex human cultures can offer evidence one way or another. These matters cannot be settled a priori, in a theoretical manner, but must emerge as a conclusion drawn from large accumulations of evidence and analysis.

Perhaps the most sensible, inclusive, and internally rigorous methodological underpinning for a study of the literary phenomenon would be to follow Singer's proposal in favour of a semiotic anthropology after C.S. Peirce (see Singer 1978; 1980; 1984). Singer summarizes the claims of semiotic anthropology as follows:

The fruitfulness of the language analogy depends not so much on the obvious pervasiveness of language and other sign systems at the heart of social life as on the less obvious fact that the interpretation of signs presupposes an acquaintance with the objects designated by the signs and with the speakers and hearers of the signs (Peirce 1977:196f; Nida 1964; Barthes 1970). To interpret social and cultural sign systems as if they were 'languages' becomes an operatively fruitful procedure when one has such collateral acquaintance. This condition is not unique to the interpretation of nonlinguistic sign systems; it is equally a condition for the interpretation of linguistic signs. In anthropology such a requirement of experience and observation is called 'fieldwork'. Because anthropology fieldwork involves travel, and special experience, training, and study, a semiotic anthropology will contribute to a descriptive semiotic. Its methods and results will not be restricted to the formal or quasi-formal domain of pure semiotic. Although the definitions, rules, and theoretical constructions of pure semiotic will be useful to guide empirical research and analysis, such research and analysis will be something more than a logical deduction from pure semiotic. It will

include inductive and abductive inference as well, and presuppose acquaintance with nonlinguistic objects and events, and with speakers and hearers (Singer 1984:28f).

A semiotic approach, following Peirce's index, icon and symbol division, might be particularly appropriate to a study of the literary phenomenon as a contemporary site of the maintenance of deep human-organizational codes because the medium here is language, for which and from which semiotics was originally developed. Moreover, it may be true that anthropology is methodologically weakest in the area of the symbolic.

The realm of the symbolic should not be viewed as a static set of laws. Mary Douglas says of the maintenance of social order:

The orthodox anthropological interpretation, which was accepted right through the 1960s, assumed a self-stabilizing model in which every item of belief plays its part in maintaining the social order. However, some interesting upheavals in the last quarter century have thrown doubt on the existence of tendencies making for equilibrium in the societies studied by anthropologists. One factor is the theoretical development of the subject and its dealing with new findings. Among these, the most relevant is the growth of critical Marxist anthropology whose historical materialism rejects the homeostatic emphases of the earlier generation (Douglas 1986:28).

In opposition to theories of homeostasis and equilibrium, this 'critical Marxist anthropology' proposes only that the period of equilibrium may be brief, rather than long. What is common to both the 'orthodox' and the 'critical' here is that both place belief centrally in the social order. At any instant, a symbolically controlled social order exists, while during the following instant or the following century, this order alters. The process of maintenance and interrogation is ceaseless but, at any given instance, may appear static. As Douglas states:

The categories of political discourse, the cognitive bases of the social order, are being negotiated. At whatever point of this process the anthropologist clicks his camera and switches on his tapes he can usually record some temporary balance of satisfaction, when each individual is momentarily constrained by others and by the environment (Douglas 1986:29).

What needs to be accentuated here is that the nexus of codes is constantly in the process of alteration, although cultures have vested interests in making these codes appear to be homeostatic.

Dan Sperber says:

All these learned terms -signifier and signified, paradigm and 'syntagm, code, mytheme will not for long hide the following paradox: that if Lévi-Strauss thought of myths as a semiological system, the myths thought themselves in him, and without his knowledge, as a cognitive system (Sperber 1974:84).

Symbolic anthropology will always be haunted by this 'cognitive system' it proposes, for the proposition itself entails that symbolic anthropology is one of its products. The discipline then faces the prospect of forever being a fragment of its own object of study. Moreover, one must be reminded that the nexus of symbolic imperatives has no independent existence. From the perspective of anthropology, the metaphysical is operative only insofar as it constitutes some of the furniture of an individual, living mind. This observation leads directly to the debate concerning the primal constitution of the self. At one extreme, Ludwig Fleck proposes that the unconscious is cultural:

The individual within the collective is never, or hardly ever, conscious of the prevailing thought style which almost always exerts an absolutely compulsive force upon his thinking, and with which it is not possible to be at variance (Fleck 1935:41).

However, the long-standing dispute between structural anthropologists and Freudian psychoanalysts concerning the nature of the primal engine driving all human action and meaning has not been resolved. Does the id (or even the family) take precedence over the cultural unconscious in the governance of deep patterning in the individual?<sup>1</sup> Spiro offers an account of 'cultural propositions' and the process of internalization of such propositions. At the deepest level of acquisition, propositions instigate action or are affective, precisely because they have been absorbed into the self (Spiro 1987: 36ff). The usefulness of Spiro's discussion can be located in his own straddling of the disciplines of anthropology and psychology, which gives rise to the explanation of how a cultural proposition exists not only as part of a general, cultural belief system, but as a part of the individual's motivational system (Spiro 1987:38). Spiro gives a

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<sup>1</sup> I am aware that the term 'cultural unconscious' (derived from Rossi 1974) may be a confusion of competing disciplines. However, psychoanalysts must concede that much of the deep patterning in the individual is cultural in origin, while anthropologists must concede that cultural patterning can only ever occur within specific consciousnesses. My borrowing of the term 'cultural unconscious' does not dissolve the debate, but calls for a truce in the present study.

degree of technical specificity to the process whereby individuals absorb beliefs and how, in the process of deep absorption into the structure of the self, these beliefs pass into the realm 'beyond question'. This mode of inquiry does not treat cultural axioms as abstractions or as reconstructions of a group belief system but as active components of individual emotional life, giving rise to an 'anthropology of self and feeling' (Rosaldo 1984). It is not necessary here to debate whether or not all structures of thought and feeling are culturally determined. The value of psycho-anthropology in the present study is that it begins to isolate precise, 'local' ways in which culture operates at the level of the individual, thus confirming the existence and operation of imperatives within individual functioning which are of cultural origin.

This discussion of the cultural unconscious can be given greater specificity by mentioning Shweder's notion of the 'cultural frame' (Shweder 1984) which is defined as being grounded in neither logic nor experience, and which is thus non-rational. Moreover, cultural frames are participating elements in the construction of reality, which thereby locates them at deep levels of human functioning. However, to say that cultural frames are non-rational is, in my opinion, only to say that they could not be 'naturally' acquired by an individual as a result of logical deduction or as a result of real-world experiences and are thus 'cultural' in origin. But this does not mean that these cultural frames do not have a deep-structure logic or that they did not originate in the dim past as a result of logic or experience. The point is that these frames do not require validation by means of appeals to logic or experience. They become part of the furniture of cultural-mental space and have entered the realm beyond question.

### 3 The Literary Phenomenon and the Realm Beyond Question

I begin this section with a quotation by Ihab Hassan:

The question returns, stubborn, hidden in all our exactions: what precisely did I, does anyone, expect to find in literature? Beauty and Truth, really? The spoor of power? Some perverse pleasure of the text? Balm for loneliness, for loss? An endless vision going endlessly awry? The wordy glory of civilization? Occult knowledge? The redemption of reality? A mirror in the roadway, a pie in the sky? All these and none: simply a way to make a living? (Hassan 1993:2).

Hassan's blunt questions are appropriate. And perhaps the literary phenomenon is 'simply a way to make a living'. Nevertheless, anthropologically, there is nothing simple about this living, one which occupies such prominent cultural space. In an essay titled 'The Future of Literary Studies', H.V. Gumbrecht asks:

Is it not astonishing that governments, taxpayers, and parents have consistently financed academic disciplines whose functions are anything but obvious, even to their practitioners? (Gumbrecht 1995:508).

Remarkably, the literary phenomenon has escaped the intense scrutiny of modern anthropology, perhaps because literary theory itself has registered such strong claims to being the mechanism of inquiry into the literary phenomenon as a cultural activity.

Durkheim offers an interpretation of the literary phenomenon as a necessity:

By determining the main cause of the progress of the division of labour we have at the same time determined the essential factor in what is called civilization.

It is itself a necessary consequence of the changes occurring in the volume and density of societies. If science, art and economic activity develop, it is as the result of a necessity imposed upon men. It is because for them there is no other way to live, in the new condition in which they are placed (Durkheim 1984:275f).

Art (and for our purposes literature) as a strict necessity in complex societies, rather than as an exclusive or leisure pursuit, is a perspective seldom offered in modern times. For Durkheim, art is self-evidently crucial and central to the operation of human organization. In short, it is necessary to view the literary phenomenon as a fundamental social-regulatory device. Various mindshifts may be necessary for the analysis of the literary phenomenon.

The first is to view the components of the literary phenomenon—the production and reception of literature, or author, text and reader—as components of a single event. The ‘primary’ and the ‘secondary’ are structural elements of a larger whole. The production and reception of literature have been miscast in the division between literature (an artistic phenomenon) and criticism (a procedural academic discipline). They constitute components of the same endeavour—a mediated means of accessing the secular sacred. The second, related shift of perception is to view the literary phenomenon as a process rather than as a series of products—an act rather than a cluster of things, a ritual rather than a museum. A thing-based approach to the literary phenomenon causes all sorts of trouble. The text itself is seen to contain all meaning. The primary (that is, the literary) is inappropriately viewed as distinct from the secondary (that is, literary response, interpretation and theory). When viewed as an object-phenomenon, the first impulse is to separate objects. When viewed as an event-phenomenon, the impulse is to retain a strong sense of the whole and of the flow of meaning. Any spectator at a football game knows that in order to arrive at an appreciation of the game, attention must be focused on the process and not the

individual 'objects' of veneration (the players). Such object-veneration does occur in football, but only insofar as an object contributes to the process (the game). It is a natural human tendency to venerate things, precisely because this is the way that cultures attempt to transcend process. Nevertheless, the literary phenomenon is an extended totemic practice, a sequence of action. Significance and timelessness are seen, by our species, as necessarily linked. All types of veneration accentuate transcendence as if the ultimate goal of mortality was immortality. And because immortality is beyond process it follows that veneration is thing-based. This deep-structure human tendency has played havoc within the domain of literary studies because, despite the eclipse of the New Criticism, the discipline remains thing-based, with all of the concomitant blindnesses.

The cluster of phenomena described as activities within the literary phenomenon serves to mediate between the individual and matrices of human meaning, between initiative and norm. Mieke Bal says:

The integration of social norms and individual desires can be acted out, ideally, through language, since the expression of fantasies in language is culturally validated and allows for otherwise unacceptable thoughts to escape from repression. Language itself shares this conjunction of the utterly individual and the utterly social in its function as a tool that bridges the gap between the two as far as it is possible at all (Bal 1990:6).

An event-based anthropology of the literary phenomenon strives to achieve explication and comparison of moments of ritual action in the acts of writing, reading and theorizing. Thus, the basic unit of meaning is not the 'primary' literary text but all acts of encoding and decoding undertaken by writers, critics and theorists. Victor Turner may be of use in carrying this discussion further. Turner says:

I came to see performances of ritual as distinct phases in the social processes whereby groups became adjusted to internal changes and adapted to their external environment. From this standpoint the ritual symbol becomes a factor in social action, a positive force in an activity field (Turner 1967:20).

Simply stated, the literary phenomenon may be characterized as a series of cultural-participative acts centred in the affirmation or interrogation of the matrix of cultural meaning and value. The 'primary' text acts as a centering device with totemic status. And the 'secondary' activities (of response, criticism and theory) are communal totemic activities.

- These totemic occasions may be spatially and temporally singular and to-

temic specific as in conferences, colloquia, meetings of literary societies and award ceremonies or they may be spatially and temporally dispersed as in the production of published scholarship. The centering function performed by the 'primary' text provides a site of residence, a fixed point or an address at which anyone may call, in order to tinker with, or simply reinforce, this thick nexus of cultural meaning. David Raybin (1990: 20-21) makes the connection between Shelley's 'spirit of the age' and Pierre Bourdieu's notion of the doxa, the 'class of that which is taken for granted' (1977: 169). The text deemed 'literary' is an invitation to the individual to participate in a continuous totemic event constituted by the sum of literary-appreciative micro-events or moments. Providing the doxa (or network of cultural imperatives) with an address performs three crucial functions. First, the text is seen to anchor aspects of the doxa, giving them thing-status and, in the process, absents them from time and flux. Thus cultures can take comfort from the perennial and enduring nature of its doxa. Second, as an invitation, the text provides a forum for human expression of, and response to, aspects of the doxa. Precisely because the doxa is 'beyond question' it is not normally discussed. Revered textuality provides a suitable site for human participation in the doxa. Third, tinkering with the doxa may occur only under controlled conditions because, despite the fact that a doxa is constantly altering (usually in tiny steps) it is necessary for it to be seen to be transtemporal. Hallowed textuality offers a reassuringly stable and respectful venue at which doxa maintenance may occur. In short, so as to prevent deep-structure anxiety (and, in the extreme, a chaotic interregnum within cultural meaning) totemic symbols are brought to the surface under strictly controlled conditions.

The doxa may alternatively be described as the matrix of group meaning, Geertz's 'collective conscience' (1973: 220), a fusion of metaphysical and ethical notions which may never be articulated at the level of the individual. And by offering aspects of this web as timeless venerable objects or instances of 'art', what is offered in the literary phenomenon for group participation is non-negotiable negotiables. Only within totemic practice can the structure of group values be operated on; only within the strict confines of those revered objects and instances (which, in their cultural centrality, are deemed to have transcended culture), can the apparently non-negotiable be negotiated. At this stage in the development of anthropology, the precise structure and contents of each macro-cultural reservoir of deep-structure imperatives is insufficiently known. The proposal that the literary phenomenon is the site for the reaffirmation or destabilization of cultural axioms may have to await more specific anthropological data.

Art, for Victor Turner, exists in the 'subjunctive mood', in which 'suppositions, desires, hypotheses, possibilities, and so forth, all become legitimate' (Turner, 1977: vii). This is an activity quite apart from the routine enactment of collective imperatives. And, in the subjunctive mood, the process of 'art' may

generate restructurings of the 'collective conscience' which, according to Turner, 'may have sufficient power and plausibility to replace eventually the force-backed political and jural models that control the centre of a society's ongoing life' (1977: vii). In *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors*, Turner goes so far as to place the phenomenon of art at the very centre of cultural functioning precisely because it is absented from the everyday flow of the continuous, unreflective enactment and implementation of cultural imperatives. The very liminality of art provides it with a special status. The subjunctive mood presumably takes many forms in culture ranging from shamanism and ritual, to poetry and dramatic performances. Each form functions as a bubble beyond everyday life, one in which deep-structure imperatives may be renegotiated. Oddly enough, this notion returns us to Shelley's postulate that artists are 'the unacknowledged legislators of the world', as Turner (1974:28) observes, although it is the entire event-cluster of writing, response and interpretation which constitutes the liminal act—the entire literary phenomenon rather than only the literary 'artefact'.

In *The Ritual Process*, Turner offers the following account of liminality:

The attributes of liminality or of liminal personae ('threshold people') are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. As such, their ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualize social and cultural transitions (Turner 1977:95).

Precisely because of its indeterminate status within structured human meaning and convention, the liminal act functions to reflect on human meaning either to reinforce or to modify it. It is simultaneously curatorial and revolutionary, tradition-supporting and tradition-altering. It functions to re-assert 'common sense' or to introduce 'uncommon sense' (Turner, 1985: 160) into the cultural unconscious. Turner adds:

A community of human beings sharing a tradition of ideas and customs may bend existentially back upon itself and survey its extant condition not solely in cognitive terms but also by means of tropes, metaphors, metonyms, and symbolic configurations ... (Turner 1985:124).

Turner's speculations on what may be termed 'axiom maintenance' might provide valuable groundwork for an anthropology of the literary phenomenon. Another study which does much to establish a discipline of the culturally totemic is Warner's *The*

*Living and the Dead* (1959). Warner excavates and analyses the ritual and totemic practices in 'Yankee City', thus applying the anthropological perspective to an instance of the deep imperatives operative within a modern New England urban community. This perspective needs to be applied to the literary phenomenon, although with a more expansive theory of the 'symbol'. Warner describes symbols as follows:

... the essential components of a symbol are the sign and its meaning, the former usually being the outward perceptible form which is culturally identifiable and recognizable, the latter being the interpretation of the sign, usually composed of concepts of what is being interpreted and the positive and negative values and feelings which 'cluster about' the sign. The sign's meaning may refer to other objects or express and evoke feelings. The values and feelings may relate to the inner world of the person or be projected outward on the social and natural worlds beyond (Warner 1959:4).

In Warner's work the tendency is to seek singular totemic objects or drawings to describe the field of totemic symbols which 'relate to the inner world of the person'. What is neglected in this process is a focus on discursive tracts (in this instance, poems, plays and narrative fiction) as performing similar totemic functions. While it is true that anthropology has paid attention to mythological and religious narratives in order to access the human symbolic, the realm of the literary has not been accorded central symbolic status in such an investigation. The theory of symbols (as developed by Peirce, Levi-Strauss, Durkheim and the host of theorists who have refined and expanded our knowledge of the functions of symbols) needs to be developed so as to incorporate the literary phenomenon within its scope. This enterprise is quite different to the widespread practice of identifying specific linguistic symbols in a literary text because it seeks to locate the totemic or symbolic value and function of entire texts or portions of discourse in addition to the symbolic value of individual words. What unifies all of these discursive units of radically different sizes and characters is function. To return to the above passage by Warner, it is the 'values and feelings' which 'cluster about the sign', the various semantic enclaves invoked by various literary-discursive tracts, that should fall under the gaze of symbolic anthropology. The cultural-symbolic function of the literary phenomenon may be difficult to discern because the totems are occluded within literary discourse (or in fact are the discourses themselves), providing symbols of extraordinary complexity and opacity.

Deep-structure cultural imperatives—that which otherwise might be called the cultural unconscious or the symbolic grammar of human organization—require association with other forms of authority, especially those which exist entirely beyond question. In this way, such cultural imperatives increase their authority by increasing their axiomatic status. These are deep taboos which operate as axiomatic

of the universe. And the two most prominent of these are 'nature' and the 'metaphysical'.

'Nature' must be subjected to scrutiny because what is referred to here is the set of properties culturally ascribed to nature. Between the strictly detailed scientific knowledge (of each species, each eco-system and each meteorological event) on the one hand, and the rich and complex mythology ascribed to nature on the other hand, there is a gulf. It is the latter culturally-designated symbol cluster that concerns us here, one which is entirely human in construction, a realm which reflects cultural norms and myths, to which myths and ideologies appeal for 'truth'. Similarly, the 'metaphysical' realm is a truth place, proposed and sacralized by mortals, then accorded independent existence. In short, the world above, and the 'natural' world around us, constitute two realms beyond contest. Both realms are thickly mystified, rich in centuries of enculturation, labyrinths of taboo. It is not my intention here to enumerate the multiple qualities associated with these realms. Rather, it need only be stated that all other realms aspiring to axiomatic and transcendental status gain enormously by association with these realms. And the literary phenomenon—in both its 'primary' and 'secondary' manifestations—is no exception.

The history of world literature reveals a perennial obsession with 'nature'—as mother, as origin, as centre, and as the resilient heart of the planet. Palaeolithic pictorial representation suggests that this has been so for at least 30,000 years. (One may even speculate that the species has always revered and symbolized nature, for obvious reasons.) And, in literary criticism (the 'secondary' products of the literary phenomenon), there are frequent conceptual appeals to the 'natural': terms such as 'organic unity', 'rhythm', 'coherence', 'form', 'growth' and 'beauty' may all be making direct appeals to the 'natural realm beyond question'. The literary phenomenon, in both its primary and secondary manifestations, is rich in appeals to culturally legislated versions of nature.

The metaphysical realm plays an equally prominent role in the literary-phenomenon. The history of world literature has always had strong links with all aspects of the metaphysical—with organized religion, mysticism, the world of 'faery', truth, beauty (in its eternal, rather than transitory nature), the unchanging and the immortal. Literary criticism has been eager to maintain strong links with the metaphysical. The term 'literature' has been defined as that which transcends the origins of its birth and which has universal, transcultural and transtemporal value. To participate in the literary is to be sublime. The notion of canonicity is the attempt to assemble sets of texts which are always, in themselves, beautiful and true. The canon is a literary-metaphysical construct. The practice of literary criticism is to be of service to the supertext; the critic is the handmaiden to the shrine of literature. Moreover, literature has always been presumed to have an ethically legislative function, and most ethical norms have a strong metaphysical base.

This brief discussion of the literary in terms of the human categories of nature and the metaphysical suggests that the literary phenomenon is at the very centre of the imperatives of human organization. It is part of the reservoir of human-organizational meaning and value. In order for anthropology successfully to scrutinize the meaning clusters, or high-order symbols generated within the literary phenomenon, attempts will have to be made to isolate the terms which best express these deep norms. These may be beyond words because of their axiomatic, often invisible existence. Moreover, they may best be accessed as implied clusters within entire texts or portions of discourse. However, as a preliminary investigation, the following terms may be identified as deep-structure values expressed 'in' texts:

authority	harmony
balance	humanity
beauty	integrity
clarity	propriety
elevation	purity
equality	specificity
freedom	truth
generality	wisdom
grace	wholeness

I have listed these terms alphabetically because there is a potentially infinite number of ways in which the meaning-clusters possibly generated by these terms could be arranged in terms of synonymy, complementarity or opposition. In addition to those above, the following terms may be identified as deep-structure values expressed 'by' texts:

complexity	universality
form	veracity
subtlety	verisimilitude
perspicacity	

When one begins to discuss ways in which these terms, inhabiting the literary phenomenon, might mean, one is led to the notion of 'semantic enclaves' (Wallis, 1975). This is useful because the term can include all shapes and sizes of clusters from single terms to entire volumes, genres and literary-historical periods. The literary phenomenon attempts to make these enclaves addressable in language—to bring them to the social field in a particularly useful, easily dispersible form, namely within and by means of complex written language.

Roy Wagner defines human meaning systems as follows:

In every 'culture', every community or communicating human enterprise, the range of conventional contexts is centred around [sic] a generalized image of man and human interpersonal relationships, and it articulates that image. These contexts define and create a meaning for human existence and human sociality by providing a collective relational base, one that can be actualized explicitly or implicitly through an infinite variety of possible expressions. They include such things as language, social 'ideology', what is called 'cosmology', and all the other relational sets that anthropologists delight in calling 'systems' (Wagner 1981:40).

The collective relational base is established by means of symbols (abstractions which regulate and define the relational base) which, in time, come to attain their own prestige and importance, distinct from the numerous real-life instances which represent their presence or absence. Thus, the founding concepts of each society become valued in themselves and all members can unequivocally give allegiance to a symbol such as 'justice' or 'purity' without necessarily having a 'full' concept of justice or purity in his or her consciousness at the time. Allegiance to an empty (or scantily-filled) concept is a shorthand way of endorsing the relational base of society, like using acronyms for which one has forgotten the original term. According to Wagner:

The symbols abstract themselves from the symbolized. Because we are obliged to use symbols in order to communicate, and because these symbols must necessarily include more or less conventional associations among the sum available, the effect of symbolic self-abstraction, and the consequent contextual contrast, is always a factor in symbolization (Wagner 1981:42f).

Moreover, Wagner makes the distinction between the conventional and the particular, the former referring to the set of conventionalized principles and prescriptions with strong moral force and the latter to individual performance which both participates (to some extent) in the generalized convention and which inhabits its own situational particulars. This may seem an obvious distinction but it may have strong explanatory force when applied to the literary phenomenon. Here, 'significant particulars' are offered (in the form of simulations of discrete human situations) whose relation to the convention is strongly stated or implied. This relation can be supportive or interrogative—in either instance, the reader is led from the particular to the significant convention and is asked, by the specificities of the simulated particular, either to endorse or to question the rightness of one or more aspects of the significant convention. Wagner continues:

Convention, which integrates an act into the collective, serves the purpose of

drawing collective distinctions between the innate and the realm of human action. Invention, which has the effect of continually differentiating acts and events from the conventional, continually puts together ('metaphorizes') and integrates disparate contexts. And the cultural dialectic, which necessarily includes both of these, becomes a universe of integrating distinctions and distinctive integrations, drawing people together by resolving their continuous action into 'the innate' and 'the artificial', and distinguishing individual persons, acts, and events by combining innate and artificial contexts in novel and highly specific ways (Wagner 1981:53).

One of the functions of the literary phenomenon—and perhaps its most important function—is to re-integrate contexts in new ways, or to re-inforce prevailing integrations. The literary phenomenon is one way for the individual to negotiate the 'dialectic of invention and convention' (Wagner, 1981: 55) at deep levels in cultural logic. Wagner comments on the literary phenomenon as follows:

Our novels, plays, and movies place familiar relationships (like 'love', 'parenthood', 'tolerance', 'democracy') in exotic, historical, dangerous, or futuristic situations, both to control those situations and make them meaningful and to recharge the relationships themselves (Wagner 1981:59).

Moreover, the acts of endorsing and questioning aspects of cultural logic perform the important function of interpreting culture—'filling' totemic symbols, re-rooting them in specificity and thereby bestowing on them the appearance of living symbols. However, a science of complex symbols may be fraught with difficulty. Wagner observes:

A science of symbols would seem as inadvisable as such other quixotic attempts to state the unstateable as a grammar of metaphor or an absolute dictionary (Wagner 1981:xviii).

Such a science may be unable to lift itself clear of deep thought-norms in order to conduct its business from a position outside of the semantic enclaves and, moreover, it may not have the capacity to create an investigative vocabulary beyond the terms listed above. Nevertheless, while the task is enormous and probably flawed, it may not be impossible.

In a discussion of Durkheim, Mary Douglas says:

He taught that publicly standardized ideas (collective representations) constitute social order. He recognized that the hold they have upon the

individual varies in strength. Calling it moral density, he tried to measure its strength and to assess the effects of its weakness (Douglas 1986:96).

The notion of 'moral density', of internalized and standardized ideas, comes close to describing the place of the literary phenomenon in its capacity as the site of secular-sacred collective representations, an integral part of which representations is the belief that we are entering a 'dangerous, new liberty'. Douglas explains:

When we also believe that we are the first generation uncontrolled by the idea of the sacred, and the first to come face to face with one another as real individuals, and that in consequence we are the first to achieve full self-consciousness, there is incontestably a collective representation (Douglas 1986:99).

The literary phenomenon invites individuals to remain faithful to collective representations or to consider new versions of collective representation.

What are the qualities which make the literary phenomenon so suitable as a medium for the presentation and maintenance of the secular-sacred symbolic or the realm of cultural imperatives? First, it offers itself as 'make-believe' insofar as it frequently seeks to mimic representation of the real while insisting on its own disqualification from real-life representation. This provides an 'as if' quality, an eternal fictionality within which to explore the sensitive spots of the human symbolic. In the same way that eunuchs are permitted intimacy with royal wives, literature is allowed intimately to offer life simulations because it can only ever be symbolically intrusive. Literature is permitted to mimic because it is deemed to be not of the same order as real-life representations. Of course, the ontological distinction between factual and fictional narratives can be neither neat nor simple. 'Factual' narratives such as history may be regarded as participants in rhetorical and narrative convention, which complicates their claims to simple facticity (see, for example, Hayden White, 1978 and 1987). And 'fictional' narratives, such as a novel by Dickens, offer representations (of mid-Victorian society) which might qualify as accurate depictions while no claims of veracity are sought for the characters or the specific events in which they participate. Nevertheless, these philosophical issues seldom intrude into the macro-cultural notion of 'fictionality', which retains a certain simplicity.

The second capacity enjoyed by literature as a medium for the representation of the secular-sacred symbolic is that by means of the mechanism of free indirect style or interior monologue, it can offer (or claim to offer) the immediate contents of consciousness or consciousnesses in one narrative. Fiction can burrow deeper than narratives claiming to offer 'real-life' representations, because authors of fiction have unlimited access to the consciousnesses of their characters.

Many of the 'great' characters of literature participate in greatness because they are regarded as quintessential representations of aspects of 'human-ness' (as a result of the epistemological licence authors have with their characters.)

Third, literature can emphasize or accentuate whatever aspect of human organization it chooses. This capacity for selection produces numerous genres—from lyric, to the epic and dramatic (and all variations within and between these genres) in order to highlight some aspect (either explicitly or implicitly) of human organization, meaning and value. These three qualities of the literary—eunuch-status, interior licence and the capacity for selection—enable the literary phenomenon to act as an exceptional site for the maintenance of the human symbolic.

Melford Spiro reminds us that

the social functions of symbol systems largely depend on their cognitive meaning, and the meanings which symbol systems have for social actors derive from and are related to their social context (Spiro 1987:287).

It is important to remember that while anthropologists enumerate and describe the imperatives or symbolic deep-structures which constitute the core belief system in any society, they may pay inadequate attention to their cognitive meaning in individual minds. How do members of a society ingest these deep codes? The answer to this question can be ascertained only by means of extensive empirical research. Members receive indications of these codes from an array of sources—the popular media, religion, the family, instructional institutions and peers, to name a few. But the content of these signifiers may be almost nil. Every member of a society may hold fiercely to the notion of 'equality' but with no knowledge of political systems or the precise and numerous ways in which capillary power operates in complex societies. One of the strong sites at which members may begin to 'fill in' their empty deep-structure symbols is the literary phenomenon, as here they are offered some details of the content of one or more of these high-order symbols—as well as a strong authorial interest position relative to the symbols—all within a compelling exemplary instance. As Turner points out:

A single symbol, in fact, represents many things at the same time: it is multivocal not univocal. Its referents are not all of the same logical order but are drawn from many domains of social experience and ethical evaluation (Turner 1977:52).

The multivocality of symbolism, in its broadest sense, is a key feature of the literary phenomenon, and is the mechanism whereby the secular-sacred symbolic is accessed. The employment of symbolism by writers does not imply that readers simply decode

inherent meanings. All participants within the literary phenomenon participate in ascribing meaning and significance to symbols and symbol clusters. It is the heterodox, multi-referential and evocative nature of potent symbols that attracts their repeated reiteration by all participants. Stephen Foster stresses the contingent, changing and social meanings of symbols:

Symbols and meanings are brought together however tenuously in the white heat of social events, not paraded about, already linked hand in hand, after being taken out of cold storage (a cultural repertoire) for the occasion. Here 'social events' also encompass interpretative practices (Foster 1990:124).

However, in the attempt to describe the literary phenomenon, it may be that there is no general explanation binding all instances. Steven Knapp says:

The right conclusion, to draw, in my view, is that it makes no sense, on any axiological theory, to assess the general costs and benefits of any very large and various set of institutions and practices ....

Whatever may be the specific benefits of particular literary works in particular social contexts, the right conclusion to draw about the ethical and political benefits of literary interest in general and as such seems to be, so far, that there may not be any (Knapp 1993:97f).

Knapp's cautionary remarks remind us always to ground all propositions concerning literature's functions and effects in specific cultures at specific times. Debates concerning the generality or specificity of functions within the literary phenomenon may only be settled by extensive anthropological investigation rather than by speculation. The present study has done little more than to point towards the possibility of an anthropology of the literary phenomenon, arguably one of the most dense and least penetrable of the sites of human meaning and value.

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# Perspectives on Bilingualism in the South African Context

Lawrie Barnes

## *Être Bilingue*

Bilingualism is a topic which is of interest not only to linguists, but also to psychologists, teachers, language planners, political scientists and other social scientists. It is an extremely complex phenomenon which should be viewed from a variety of perspectives. Although bilingualism is a well-known phenomenon, it is not easy to define. What does it really mean to be bilingual? Let us consider the following examples of bilingualism:

- 1) A young salesman, from a (linguistically) 'mixed-marriage' background, whose father has always spoken only English to him, and whose mother has always spoken only Afrikaans to him; he went to an English-medium primary school and an Afrikaans-medium high school.
- 2) A widow, living in an extended family situation, who was brought up as a Gujarathi-speaker, but now she speaks Gujarathi and English to her daughter and only English to her son-in-law and grandchildren.
- 3) A retired businessman who emigrated from Lithuania when he was 18 but has not spoken his mother tongue (Lithuanian) since his arrival in South Africa over 50 years ago.
- 4) A businesswoman who came from an Afrikaans-speaking home and has lived in Johannesburg all her life and whose first husband was Afrikaans-speaking, but her second husband and younger children only speak English to her.
- 5) A Zulu-speaking miner, living in Soweto, who has married a Sotho wife who cannot speak Zulu.

- 6) An Afrikaans-speaking professor of Economics at Unisa who spends most of his work time reading and writing in English but who seldom speaks the language outside of his work.
- 7) A three-year-old child from mixed Tsonga/Venda parentage who regularly uses a mixture of both languages.
- 8) A young man with Xhosa-speaking parents who grew up in exile in the USA and has recently returned to South Africa.
- 9) A nurse whose parents were Afrikaans-speaking but who was sent to an English medium school and has married an English-speaking husband.
- 10) A Zulu-speaking student who learnt English at school but has only come into contact with mother-tongue speakers of English since his arrival on the campus of Natal University a year ago.

Since each one of the above could be regarded as an example of bilingualism, they raise a number of questions. Which one of these examples should be regarded as the most bilingual? Is bilingualism a matter of degree and, if so, are some people more bilingual than others? What factors should be considered in deciding which individuals should be considered as bilinguals? Is it possible to construct a clear idea of prototypical bilingualism? Some bilinguals grow up as bilinguals in the home. Some acquire second languages later in life, and even discard the language of their childhood. Some have a good knowledge of a second language as a written language. In fact, it may even be better than their first language, and yet they speak the language with difficulty. Others are illiterate in their second language. There are numerous variations on the theme.

### **Definitions of Bilingualism**

In the light of the above examples, it is not surprising that an adequate definition of bilingualism has eluded scholars over the years. Definitions of bilingualism are notoriously vague. They range from Bloomfield's (1933:55) 'native-like control of two languages' to Haugen's (1953:7) claim that 'bilingualism is understood ... to begin at the point where the speaker of one language can produce complete meaningful utterances in the other language'. Many of the traditional definitions of bilingualism focus on the degree of bilingualism that a speaker possesses, but bilingualism is much more than a matter of proficiency in two (or more) languages. It is a dynamic and multifaceted phenomenon which needs to be examined from a

number of perspectives. The concept of bilingualism is closely linked to the concepts of multilingualism and plurilingualism, and these terms are sometimes even used synonymously. (Some scholars like Abudarham 1987:4 prefer to avoid the term altogether and speak of a 'dual language system', a more general term which they feel can accommodate all aspects of bilingualism.)

Traditionally, sociolinguists distinguish between two main types of bilingualism, namely *individual* and *societal bilingualism*. Individual bilingualism focuses on the cognitive aspects of bilingualism and is concerned with the study of the bilinguality of the individual. Societal bilingualism, on the other hand, is concerned with the interrelationship between language and social, political, educational, cultural, and economic factors and language in a speech community. Societal bilingualism falls within the domains of sociolinguistics and the sociology of language, whereas individual bilingualism is more in the domain of psycholinguistics and psychology.

In this paper we will view bilingualism from these two broad perspectives. The following three sections will focus mainly on issues pertaining to individual bilingualism and then we will move on to issues related to societal bilingualism, bearing in mind that all aspects of bilingualism are interrelated. Although the general features and principles of bilingualism will be explicated, special attention will be paid to issues that pertain to the South African linguistic context.

## Degree of Bilingualism

As mentioned above, the degree of bilingualism, or level of proficiency in two languages, has often been used as the basis for definitions of bilingualism. Bloomfield's definition (op.cit.) represents one pole on the proficiency continuum. This form of bilingualism is known as *ambilingualism*. The term was first used by Halliday et al. (1970) to describe a person who is capable of functioning equally well in either of his/her languages in all domains without any trace of interference from one language in the use of the other (Baetens Beardsmore 1986:7). Some regard this type of person as the only 'true' bilingual (Thiery 1976). Halliday et al. (1970) point out, however, that it is unlikely that bilinguals who are equally fluent in both languages will be equally fluent in all possible domains or topics, so that this type of bilingualism is likely to be extremely rare. A more realistic term is *equilingualism*, which refers to the case where the speaker's knowledge of two languages is roughly equivalent. The speaker has achieved roughly the same level of proficiency in both languages as his/her monoglot counterparts, but s/he is not necessarily equally proficient in all domains (Baetens Beardsmore 1986:9). This type of bilingualism is alternatively called *balanced bilingualism* (Lambert et al. 1958).

At the other pole of the proficiency continuum we have *semibilingualism*.

This term (which should not be confused with the term, 'semilingualism', mentioned later) refers to bilinguals who have a passive or receptive knowledge of a second language, but no active mastery of it (Hockett 1958). In other words, they can understand a second language but have difficulty expressing themselves in it.

The measurement of bilingual proficiency has been the object of much research and poses a number of problems (cf. Kelly 1969). Quakenbush (1992:61-62) defines proficiency as 'the degree to which a language can be used successfully in face to face interaction'. A variety of techniques have been employed to measure proficiency. For the measurement of oral proficiency two main types of tests have been used, namely (a) self-evaluation techniques and (b) direct testing. The most generally recognised method for measuring overall oral proficiency by direct testing is the one developed by the United States Foreign Services Institute (Adams & Firth 1979). A modification of the oral proficiency method for preliterate societies is the SLOPE test (Grimes 1992:53). The best known tests for proficiency in written English are the Cambridge Proficiency Examination and the Cambridge First Certificate Examination.

In the past in South Africa much of the measurement of bilingualism seems to have been done in a somewhat ad hoc way. One of the concerns of many employers in the past was how to ascertain a prospective employee's proficiency in the two official languages, English and Afrikaans. In some cases employers were happy with self-evaluation and in other cases the results of the matriculation examination for these languages were often used as a guide. At one stage the Taalbond examinations were also highly regarded. Teachers were required to have a bilingual endorsement on their teaching certificates to state whether they were able to teach through the medium of both official languages and the methods and standards were as many and varied as the institutions that issued them.

In the light of the current situation of eleven official languages in the country, there is a need for in-depth research on bilingual proficiency in South Africa and the development of techniques for measuring it. The sort of question that needs to be examined is what type and level of proficiency is required by hotel receptionists, nurses, senior company officials, business executives, public servants and teachers? Tests that meet practical requirements in all 11 official languages need to be developed. Hopefully suitable outcomes based programmes and tests will be developed for the measurement of language proficiency in specific vocational fields.

### **Acquisition of Bilingualism**

The acquisition of second languages has been the object of considerable research and debate. Bilingualism has often been viewed from the perspective of the timing or the context and development of acquisition. The literature on bilingual acquisition

abounds in terms relating to the timing of acquisition of the second language. We have infantile, childhood, adolescent, adult, early, late, primary, secondary and achieved bilingualism.

Haugen (1956) uses the term *infantile bilingualism* to refer to the acquisition of two languages from birth or infancy. Adler (1977) uses the term *ascribed bilingualism* to refer to this phenomenon. The term infantile bilingualism has now generally been replaced by the term *simultaneous bilingualism*. McLaughlin (1978) and Kessler (1984) regard any bilingualism acquired before the age of three as simultaneous bilingualism. Any bilingualism acquired after this age is regarded as *successive* (or sequential) *bilingualism*.

The issue of when a second language should be introduced (simultaneously or successively) has been hotly debated, but no conclusive research exists (Arnberg 1987:76-81; De Jong 1986:39-41; Harding & Riley 1986:46-66). Proponents of simultaneous bilingualism argue that the infant or very young child is uninhibited and less likely to offer resistance to learning another language. There is also evidence that phonological acquisition is much easier at this stage. Those who support successive acquisition maintain that presenting two languages at the same time in the early years can lead to confusion and 'mixed' language. However, the findings of Volterra & Taeschner (1978) have been used to refute this argument. They identified three phases in the development of bilingual acquisition in young children in which the bilingual child moves from an initial stage where the two languages are not separated to a final stage of complete differentiation. Although the bilingual child may appear to be confused by the two languages at first, it is claimed that this is only a passing phase in bilingual development (cf. Meisel 1987).

The above debate is also tied up with another issue which has long been the concern of psycholinguists, namely how bilinguals process their languages. Psycholinguists are interested in the nature of the mental representation underlying bilingual competence. The question has been asked whether the bilingual possesses two separate, coexistent systems or one merging system to accommodate his/her two languages. Following research by Weinreich (1953), Ervin & Osgood (1954) proposed two types of bilinguals, compound and co-ordinate bilinguals, based on environmental or acquisition context. Bilinguals who were brought up in bilingual homes and acquired two languages simultaneously or very early were regarded as compound bilinguals, whereas co-ordinate bilinguals were those who learned their second languages at a later stage. It was hypothesised that in compound bilingualism there is complete interdependence between the two languages, there being one underlying system of which the two languages are different manifestations, whereas in co-ordinate bilingualism there are two separate underlying systems and complete functional independence of the two languages. The issue of whether the neurolinguistic correlates of these different types of bilingual can be related to

acquisitional histories has led to controversy and confusion (cf. Baetens Beardsmore 1974; Lambert et al. 1958), but psycholinguists have continued to develop models of bilingual production and perception (cf. Romaine 1995:98-102). Many thorny issues remain, some of which will be discussed in the next section.

## Effects of Bilingualism

The effect of bilingualism on an individual can be viewed as positive or negative. Lambert (1974) introduced the terms *additive* and *subtractive bilingualism* to reflect this dichotomy. Where the acquisition of a second language can be regarded as complementary and enriching, the situation can be described as additive. In situations, however, where ethnolinguistic minorities are dominated by a more prestigious language, subtractive bilingualism is likely to arise. This is typically the case in language shift situations such as Welsh and Gaelic in Britain (Dorian 1977). The classic case of language shift in South Africa is the demise of the Khoisan languages. There was a progressive shift where bilingual Khoi speakers moved to a state of monolingualism in Afrikaans or Xhosa. In the current South African context, could we speak of subtractive bilingualism in the case of the Afrikaans or Xhosa-speaking child who is sent to an English-medium school? This is of course a highly debatable and complex issue. If the child's mother tongue is taken as a second language at the school there is some possibility of additive bilingualism, but in a monolingual school where the mother tongue is not even offered as a subject, the danger of subtractive bilingualism is ever present and at best the school produces bilinguals who are monoliterate.

Probably one of the most extreme forms of subtractive bilingualism is *semilingualism*. This occurs when a speaker fails to reach 'normal' monolingual proficiency in any language. Hamers & Blanc (1989:53) define semilingualism as

a linguistic handicap which prevents the individual from acquiring the linguistic skills appropriate to his linguistic potential in any of these languages.

The term *semilingualism* (*tvåspråkighet*) was first introduced by Hansegård (1968) to describe the linguistic deficit of Finnish-Swedish linguistic minorities in Tornedal, Sweden. The notion of semilingualism has been hotly debated (cf. Skutnabb-Kangas 1984; Toukomaa & Skutnabb-Kangas 1977; Martin-Jones & Romaine 1985). Although the term semilingualism is not generally accepted, the issues raised by the polemic surrounding it led to the development of threshold view of proficiency and the introduction of the notions of BICS and CALP to account for the differences between general conversational skills and the type of linguistic skills required to successfully handle academic discourse (Cummins 1984). Cummins

(1984) hypothesised that different types of bilingualism will reflect differences in cognitive development according to the threshold of competence reached (Romaine 1995:266). Above a certain level of competence bilingualism is positive but below it the effects of bilingualism can be negative. Without going into the whole debate around the issue, it is important to note that these issues have considerable relevance to the South African situation where the majority of the population are taught through the medium of a second language and where often the first language vernaculars are neglected educationally. Disadvantaged students are often disadvantaged because of linguistic disadvantage, or scholastic disadvantage is often compounded by linguistic disadvantage. There is an urgent need for more serious research and consideration of these issues (see also Macdonald 1991; Young 1988 and comments on 'diagonal bilingualism' below).

Another area which has been the subject of debate is the issue of childhood bilingualism. In earlier times considerable prejudice existed towards the idea of a child acquiring two or more languages at an early age. Even famous linguists like Jespersen (1922) argued that early bilingualism could have a detrimental effect on a child's cognitive and linguistic development (Arnberg 1987:21; Palij & Homel 1987:132). In their watershed study on Montreal schoolchildren Peal & Lambert (1962) found that French-English bilingual school children performed better on both verbal and non-verbal intelligence tests than their monolingual counterparts. Their findings, and other studies which followed, helped to dispel the myth that early bilingualism impairs intelligence. In one such study the South African researcher, Ianco-Worrall (1972), discovered that Afrikaans-English bilingual children were more advanced in their semantic development than their monolingual peers and showed greater metalinguistic awareness.

These discoveries had considerable impact on the Canadian education. While Canadian educators were experimenting with new forms of bilingual education such as the renowned immersion programmes, South African education remained entrenched in a policy of linguistic separation. Prior to 1948 various forms of bilingual education such as dual medium and parallel medium schools existed (Malherbe 1946), but with the advent of the apartheid ideology came the deification of the principle of mother-tongue education, which caused a move towards schools rigidly segregated along linguistic lines. In much the same way as the current 'right' of the mother to abortion has been forced on the unborn child so the 'right' to mother-tongue education was forced upon all to the exclusion of other rights such as the parents' freedom of choice of the language medium. Ironically, in black schools the right to mother tongue education was denied after std. 3 where either English or Afrikaans became the medium of instruction or language of learning (cf. Macdonald 1991). In the nineties, with the new political dispensation, much greater freedom exists in the choice of the language of learning in schools, but this has brought with it

great challenges in dealing with the complex set of historical, pragmatic, ideological and psychosociological factors involved in the issue of choosing and developing languages of learning in the classroom in our multilingual society. There is a great need for thorough on-going research in this area, before effective educational programmes can be developed to meet the requirements of Curriculum 2005.

One of the negative effects of bilingualism which has been identified is the problem of anomie or cultural dislocation. It is claimed that children brought up bilingually do not acquire emotional ties with any one culture, consequently some bilinguals do not feel that they belong to any one group or their dual/joint membership of two groups is experienced as a source of inner conflict. According to a survey by Grosjean (1982:268), such cases were found, but it was generally not perceived as a major problem by the majority of bilinguals. Arnberg (1987:14) also claims that the overwhelming majority of bilinguals do not find anomie to be a major problem. The problem of anomie has also been identified in South African research on bilingualism (Barnes 1991:23), but no real research has been done on it in this country.

### Societal Bilingualism

In contrast to individual bilingualism societal bilingualism refers to the ability of groups of people in a society to use more than one language. In other words, it is concerned with the phenomenon of bilingualism in a speech community. Baetens Beardsmore (1986:2) offers the following definition:

Bilingualism is the condition in which two living languages exist side by side in a country, each spoken by one national group, representing a fairly large proportion of the people.

Again, this phenomenon can be viewed from different perspectives. On the basis of language dominance Pohl (1965) distinguishes *horizontal*, *vertical* and *diagonal bilingualism* (see figure 1 below).

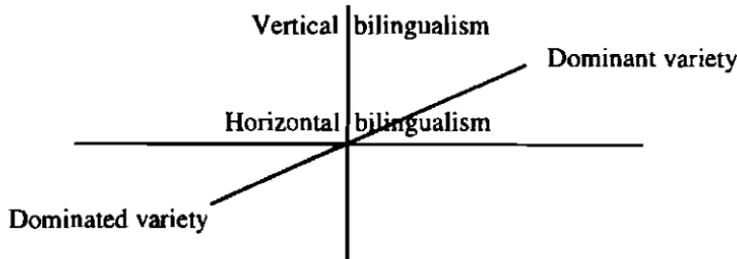


Figure 1 (from Haugen 1987:16).

Horizontal bilingualism describes a situation where two languages are accorded the same official, cultural and social status. This type of bilingualism is found, according to Pohl, amongst educated Flemings in Brussels, Catalans in Spain and Québecois in Canada. This could also be descriptive of English and Afrikaans in the white speech community in South Africa where neither language could be regarded as dominant. Vertical bilingualism describes a situation where a standard language is used together with a distinct but related dialect. This term is synonymous with diglossia (a term which goes back to Ferguson 1959). One of the best known examples of this type of situation is found in German-speaking countries where Hochdeutsch functions as a standard high status variety together with a local dialect of German which is regarded as a lower variety. In this type of society one variety is clearly dominant over the other. In the case of diagonal bilingualism a dialect or non-standard language functions together with a genetically unrelated standard language, e.g. Louisiana French and English in New Orleans (in the United States of America) or Maori and English in New Zealand. Perhaps this is the most typical type of bilingualism in South Africa. In South Africa, despite the existence of standardised varieties, the relationship of the African languages to English and/or Afrikaans in this country could be also be typified as diagonal bilingualism. A full discussion of this topic (which has been the subject of considerable research in many countries) is beyond the scope of this article, but it raises a number of issues pertaining to the South African situation, such as the question of language dominance, the role and development of vernaculars and minority languages and the whole question of language maintenance and shift, which are all of vital importance to language planners and educators in South Africa.

### **Quo Vadis?**

In this paper we have reviewed the major issues in the field of bilingualism: the definition and classification of types of bilingualism, the measurement of bilingual proficiency, the acquisition of bilingualism and some of the debates around issues such as the effects of bilingualism and the structure of bilingual societies. The scope of this field is vast and each one of the aspects discussed is a major study in itself. We have pointed out the need for viewing the topic from a multitude of perspectives and for conducting research from a multidisciplinary approach.

In a multilingual country like South Africa, issues around bilingualism are of vital concern to linguists, educators, businessmen, politicians, language planners and the community at large. There is a need for research to be conducted into many aspects of bilingualism in this country. Sociolinguistic profiles of bilingual/multilingual communities, issues such as the assessment of proficiency bilingual models of education, the use of code-switching in the classroom, family

bilingualism the issue of semilingualism, language attitudes and many more. Training and development of translators, interpreters, teachers and educational programmes are not possible without them being grounded in proper research. In the light of current developments and the vital role that language plays in our society, we will need to take up the challenge of multilingualism even more seriously in the 21st Century. Particularly in the field of education there is a need to develop and implement curricula to adapt to the changing needs of a multilingual country, but at all levels of society language issues will have to be taken seriously if we hope to foster prosperity and harmony in our society.

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# How Science Reveals the Universe, and How Humans Perceive the Universe to Be

Rembrandt Klopper

## Introduction

This issue of *Alternation* contains five contributions that are written within the theoretical framework of an emerging comprehensive discipline known as Cognitive Rhetoric. They are the one that you are reading now, Mark Turner and Gilles Fauconnier's 'A Mechanism of Creativity', two further essays by myself, 'In the Mind's Eye' and 'Untangling the Web', and Elsa Klopper's 'The Use of Conceptual Metaphor in Karel Schoeman's *Another Country*'. As is the case with specialist contributions, the latter four essays focus on particular aspects of Cognitive Rhetoric without really giving a systematic overview of this approach.

In this essay I am, therefore, providing a concise overview of Cognitive Rhetoric to provide the backdrop against which readers can read the above-mentioned four contributions. I shall show that an individual's subjective perceptions of the universe differ significantly from how science objectively reveals the universe to be, and that Cognitive Rhetoric provides us with a coherent framework for understanding how humans subjectively perceive the universe to be.

Before I however get round to characterising Cognitive Rhetoric, I want to focus on the attitude that theorising is superfluous in the so called 'soft' human sciences by taking readers on a brief tour of 'hard' science theories that have been formulated prior to or subsequent to Albert Einstein's epoch-making special and general theories of relativity. Einstein's theories, and all major subsequent developments in physics—from the sub-atomic to the cosmological level—aim to develop a unifying theory to give a coherent account for all phenomena in the physical universe. After briefly discussing a number of surprising implications of these scientific theories I outline Cognitive Rhetoric as a theory of knowledge.

## To be Human is to Theorise

I have decided to highlight the process of theory-formation in both 'hard' science and the 'soft' sciences because there is a new mood discernible in this country that can be

best summarised as impatience with theorising in the human sciences. This impatience is expressed in the demand that learning should empower people to achieve more than a mere passive understanding and appreciation of language, literature, social institutions and human culture.

It is pointed out with some justification by critics of the humanities that the theories of 'hard' science have a technological impact on the lives of ordinary people, but that the theories of the human sciences seem to be largely non-productive in this respect.

Are theories in the human sciences, therefore, superfluous relics of the past, clung to by redundant academics, or do we need theories to make sense of language, literature, interpretation and other aspects of human existence? We know that people communicate without conscious effort and instinctively understand the meaning of symbols. Why then do we need theorising at all? Why do we not simply focus our scarce resources on technological training and life skills training that will put bread on the table and butter on the bread?

There is a short answer, and a long answer, to this question. First the short answer: if we merely train people in mastering technological skills to the exclusion of systematically studying humanity's place in the natural order, particularly our cultural, intellectual and spiritual institutions, it will take only one generation to ensure that the highest achievement that any individual can obtain, will be to become a well-skilled technician. We will be a society of consumers, tinkerers and fixers of broken things if we do not generate fundamental knowledge in both the 'hard' sciences and the 'soft' sciences.

The more significant answer to the above questions is that we cannot come to any conclusions about anything at all if we do not apply the same process of association, between apparently unrelated entities, that is used to form scientific hypotheses and theories. All knowledge—simple or complex—is based on an associative process of concept formation<sup>1</sup>, concept conflation<sup>2</sup> and categorisation<sup>3</sup>, which in each individual culminates in an extensive associative theory of mind that entails the sum total of her/his ideas about how things coexist in the world. This

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<sup>1</sup> Humans form basic concepts like SELF, OTHERS, HERE, THERE, LINE, CIRCLE, SOURCE, GOAL, CONTAINER, INSIDE, OUTSIDE, SOLID, LIQUID, UP, DOWN, ROUGH, SMOOTH, TRUE, FALSE, REAL, IMAGINARY, etc. to form an understanding of ourselves in the real world.

<sup>2</sup> The term 'conflation' relates to how we combine concepts to form symbols. Words form one type of symbol. When we for instance use the word *run* as in *the man is running* we conflate the concepts move, self-control, intentional, using legs, regular and repeat sequence.

<sup>3</sup> We for instance categorise *tables, chairs, desks, cupboards, sofas, TV cabinets* etc. as types of *furniture*.

complex theory is sometimes appropriately referred to as *The-Great-Chain-Of-Being* theory. Regardless of whether we deal with so called hard science, the human sciences, or a person's everyday precepts of himself, his mind and nature, we use the same process of associating apparently unrelated entities, which actually do have a significant, but non-obvious relationship with one another, to form new insights about those entities.

Wellman (1992) details the stages that children go through to form their individual theories of mind to account for themselves as beings, their precepts of the natural order, as well as the fact that they actually have a theory of mind to account for such matters. Wellman provides empirical evidence that even three year olds have a basic theory of mind that distinguishes between mind and world, the difference between beliefs and desires, the interaction of beliefs and desires during actions, the intentional nature of individual behaviour, the nature of belief-desire-dependent emotional reactions, the grounding of belief on perception, and of fantasy on imagination. Lastly, Wellman shows that a typical three year old will have the insight that her/his particular mind is a sort of container that stores idea-copies of things that exist in the real world. If human beings as young as three years old form theories of mind to account for themselves in the greater scheme of things, how can we give an account of humanity and his artefacts within the natural order without doing so within a coherent, comprehensive theory of mind?

Let us take an example from everyday life to show that all our conclusions are based on theory formation. You are at home, expecting a visitor. There is a knock on your front door. Chances are that you will associate the knock with the person that you are expecting. By doing this you have formed a hypothesis—an assumption—that your guest has arrived. If you open the door and it is your guest, you have confirmed your hypothesis. A hypothesis that has been confirmed is known as a theory in the terminology of science. If the person at the door however is not the one that you expected, you have refuted your hypothesis. Both scientific proof and everyday reasoning therefore work according to the following simple six-step reasoning process:

- 1      You *perceive* a relationship of significance between two associated entities.
- 2      You *believe / assume* that you are correct.
- 3      You *test* the validity of your assumption by looking for counterexamples to disprove your assumption.
- 4      If you find counterexamples to your assumption you *know* that it was wrong.
- 5      If you fail to find counterexamples you tentatively *assume* that your hypothesis is correct.

- 6 Your assumption is considered to be factual knowledge until you or someone else finds counterexamples to *disprove* it, or to limit the scope of the facts.

If we associate entities with one another and subsequently verify that they are related in a significant way by failing to find counterexamples, we have *knowledge* that the relationship between them is significant. If we do not attempt to verify the significance of assumed relationships we can at best base our conclusions on personal *belief*. If we persist in believing something in spite of finding counterexamples to our assumption we are basing our belief on *superstition*.

If all human thinking is based on the above-mentioned process of theory formation, how can we insist that the human sciences must be devoid of theorising? By doing so we insist that all our conclusions about language, literature, society and human culture in general may only be based on personal belief, that our students must merely believe in our subjective value judgements. Doing so does not only weaken the human sciences, it also opens the way for flooding the human sciences with superstition and ignorance. Without systematically testing the validity of our assumptions about the relationships between entities, it is impossible to establish the boundary between ignorance and knowledge, it is impossible to determine which of our assumptions are based on superstition rather than reason.

## How Science Reveals the Universe to Be

In this section I briefly look at particular aspects of physical science at the beginning of the twentieth century, particular developments in these fields over the past hundred years and the mental model that we have of them at the end of the twentieth century. This section is not intended as a review of the development of science in the course of the twentieth century. I am referring to particular aspects of physical science to show that systematic scientific observation reveals the universe to be a far stranger place than humans perceive it to be in the course of everyday experience and observation.

### Science at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century

The Newtonian framework of science, as it had been developed up to the beginning of the twentieth century, portrayed the universe as a static, clockwork-like entity in which total order and predictability prevails. According to this view it was believed until the 1920s that the electrons of a particular element orbit their atomic nucleus in the same way that planets revolve around their suns in solar systems, which in turn revolve around their galactic cores to form a limitless, eternal, clockwork universe.

In the rest of this section I will outline a number of scientific breakthroughs during the twentieth century that have steadily altered the human perspective of the nature of the universe and humanity's place in it.

### ***Quantum Mechanics***

Max Planck's work at the turn of the previous century on the quantum nature of radiation gave the first indication that twentieth century science would be radically different from the Newtonian model that had dominated western science during the preceding 200 years. Our altered perspective probably started with Planck's theory of black body radiation, which suggested that matter can radiate or absorb energy only in small, discrete units called quanta. Planck's theory was refined by Einstein who postulated a dual manifestation of light, namely that it exists as discrete streams of quanta and as electromagnetic waves.

Building on work by Louis Victor de Broglie, Heisenberg, Born, Jordan and Dirac in 1925 presented the theory of Quantum mechanics. Shortly thereafter Schroedinger extended Quantum Mechanics by showing that discrete quanta manifest themselves as electromagnetic waves of radiation. Consequently Wave Mechanics posits that the negatively charged electrons orbiting the positively charged nucleus of an atom consists of a series of set electromagnetic waves, and that electrons change wave length orbits when they radiate or absorb energy.

### ***Matrix Mechanics and the Uncertainty Principle***

Applying the principles of Quantum Mechanics, Werner Heisenberg had formulated his theory of Matrix Mechanics, which postulated infinite matrices to represent the position and momentum of an electron inside an atom. One would only be able to probabilistically calculate either the position or velocity of an electron in orbit around the atomic nucleus because at any given instant it could occupy any position on the matrix. This meant that it was impossible to mathematically calculate the precise location of an electron on its set wave length orbit around the atomic nucleus. This insight was formalised in 1927 as the uncertainty principle, which stated that it is impossible to simultaneously specify the precise position and the momentum of any sub-atomic particle in its orbit around an atomic nucleus because the orbit exists as an array consisting of an infinite number of rows, each row consisting of an infinite number of quantities.

It has however proved to be difficult to calculate exactly the probabilistic orbits of electrons either as particles or as waves around their nuclei. According to Microsoft Encarta 1998:

Even for the simple hydrogen atom, which consists of two particles, both mathematical interpretations<sup>4</sup> are extremely complex. The next simplest atom, helium, has three particles, and even in the relatively simple mathematics of classical dynamics, the three-body problem (that of describing the mutual interactions of three separate bodies) is not entirely soluble.

Although no fundamental deficiencies have been found in Quantum Mechanics and Wave Mechanics, or in the Theories of Relativity since 1925, physicists have concluded that these theories are incomplete. These theories nevertheless form the basis of current attempts to account for a sub-atomic phenomenon known as the strong nuclear force, and for attempts to develop a unified theory for all the fundamental interactions that determine the nature of matter.

### ***The Theory of Relativity***<sup>5</sup>

A further major shift from Newtonian science was induced by Einstein's famous and complex Theory of Relativity, which is symbolised by the equation  $E=mc^2$  in the popular mind. Einstein's theory predicted that the motion of entities in space is not absolute as Isaac Newton thought 200 years before, but is affected by the gravitational variations of curved space-time because each entity warps the fabric of space-time around itself. In line with Max Planck's work in Quantum Theory, the Theory of Relativity also predicted that light is a form of electromagnetic radiation consisting of tiny, discrete electromagnetic quanta that are affected by the electromagnetism radiated by larger aggregates of quanta like planets and stars. This is why a ray of light, passing near a star, is bent towards the star.

Since its final formulation in 1916 Einstein's Theory of Relativity has dominated almost all aspects of science during the twentieth century, from our knowledge of entities on sub-atomic level to our present understanding of the origin, nature and development of the universe. It not only contributed to the development of nuclear science, but also laid the foundation for the discovery and understanding of cosmic events like the Big Bang and cosmic entities like Black Holes and Quasars, to mention but a few.

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<sup>4</sup> Those for Wave Mechanics and Matrix Mechanics.

<sup>5</sup> Einstein formulated a special theory of relativity that deals with physical phenomena on sub-atomic level, and a general theory in which he extended the principles of the special theory to physical phenomena on cosmological level. I am collectively referring to the special and general theories as 'the theory of relativity' because it isn't necessary to differentiate between them for the purposes of this discussion.

### ***Superstrings***

Although humans perceive space-time in four dimensions<sup>6</sup>, *superstring theory*<sup>7</sup>, a recent cosmological theory derived from quantum mechanics, postulates ten different dimensions. Superstring theory is based on the premise that matter in the universe does not consist of individual material particles, but of different manifestations of fundamental energetic entities called superstrings.

According to this theory superstrings are non-dimensional energy loops or knots that have different material manifestations depending on their states of oscillation. All forms of matter in the universe are manifestations of such superstrings in different states of oscillation. The manifestations of multiple strings exist in ten different dimensions, not only in the above-mentioned four dimensions that humans can directly perceive. According to superstring theory, what we perceive as distinct elementary particles<sup>8</sup> fundamentally consist of a little loops or knots of energy that oscillate differently for each type of particle that we observe. The energy oscillations of multiple superstrings therefore 'materialise' as different elementary particles in the three spatial dimensions that we can perceive. Different types of 'matter' are ultimately composed of many strings that are in different phases of oscillation. We perceive the different states of oscillation as discrete particles with different mass and different 'size'. A string that is oscillating more will form a particle with more energy and a greater electromagnetic charge than a particle that is formed by a string that oscillates less.

According to superstring theory, ten dimensions existed when the universe was formed during the Big Bang about nine billion years ago. The ten dimensions consisted of nine spatial dimensions and one time dimension. In the instant after the Big Bang, six of the nine spatial dimensions shrank without completely disappearing. Three spatial dimensions grew, and time remained, to form the four-dimensional space-time universe, as we know it today. The six 'extra' dimensions that shrank still exist, so tightly wrapped up around the known three spatial dimensions that we can't be directly aware of them, although they still play fundamental roles in the laws of physics.

### ***Chaos Theory***

While researchers in Quantum Mechanics, and Relativity were describing the electro-

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<sup>6</sup> Three spatial co-ordinates: height, length and depth, plus our psychological awareness of time as the fourth dimension.

<sup>7</sup> See Bogojevic, Jevicki & Meng (1988); Davies & Brown (1992); Green, Schwartz & Witten (1987); Greene, Aspinwall & Morrison (1993); Schwartz (1985) and Yau (1992).

<sup>8</sup> The electron, quark, neutrino, W-boson, gluon, photon etc.

magnetic nature of all things physical, and attempted to formulate a comprehensive theory incorporating the fundamental forces that determine the nature of matter, a new mathematical theory, known as Chaos Theory<sup>9</sup>, was formulated in the 1970s and 1980s in an attempt to determine underlying patterns of regularity and predictability in the seemingly unpredictable and random interactions of complex natural and conventional or humanity made systems.

A basic insight of Chaos Theory is that a minute change in the input of any complex, non-linear system could produce an unpredictable, massive change in its output. Chaos Theory is used to model how minor patterns originate in one sub-region of a complex non-linear system and subtly propagate through the whole system to cause unpredictable, chaotic interactions in a totally different region of the system. Some proponents of Chaos Theory refer to this as the butterfly effect, implying that changes as minute as a butterfly's wing-beat in China may have subtle but significant air pressure effects on global weather patterns resulting in a raging hurricane over the Caribbean islands. Chaos theory modelling is applied to diverse fields of inquiry such as cosmogenesis<sup>10</sup>, cognition, short-term weather forecasting and global investment trends.

The application of Chaos Theory in weather forecasting reveals that non-linear interactive systems are too complex to model accurately with the current mathematical and quantitative tools at our disposal. A good example of this limitation is the degree of accuracy obtained by the biggest weather forecasting computer in the world, at the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasting. According to a recent news report this computer is fed 100 million separate weather measurements from around the world every day, which it quantifies at a rate of about 400 million calculations per second in three hourly session, to produce a ten day forecast. Its forecasts are considered to be fairly dependable for up to two days. Beyond that its forecasts become speculative and undependable. Chaos Theory applied to weather forecasting reveals the limits of our ability to predict complex non-linear interactions by means of mathematical modelling.

Although I have not been able to trace more than anecdotal claims regarding the utility of Chaos Theory to forecast global stock market trends, the unexpectedness of occasional 'corrections' and 'slumps' on global stock markets perhaps indicates the limitations of Chaos Theory to model the dynamics of stock market trends and weather conditions.

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<sup>9</sup> This discipline is also known as Complex Systems Theory, Complexity Theory, Dynamical Systems Theory, and Complex Non-linear Systems Theory. See Gleick (1988); Lewin (1993); Prigogine & Stengers (1985); Rees-Mogg & Davidson (1992) and Waldrop (1992).

<sup>10</sup> A study of the origin and development of the universe.

### ***The Fractal Patterns Inherent in Time-stable Phenomena***

It is clear that proponents of chaos theory are still going through the learning curve when it comes to the application of this form of modelling to dynamic non-linear systems. When the theory is however applied to model the nature of time-stable phenomena it has proved to be more successful. Chaos Theory has for instance revealed to us that material phenomena show self-similar geometric patterns that are replicated at the same degree of complexity and detail at any level of magnification. This means that any particular segment of a fractal can be viewed as a reduced-scale replica of the whole.

Applying fractal design to information coding is causing a revolution in information transfer and storage. By detecting fractal patterns in digitised images and sound recordings by means of mathematical algorithms information can be compressed to a fraction of their original volumes and later re-expanded by using the same algorithms.

Fractal theory holds much promise to reveal hidden patterns of order within the apparent chaos of dynamic events. Furthermore, the utility of fractal theory in digital data compression begs the question whether language as a comprehensive process of information coding is not organised on fractal principles. In a subsequent section of this essay I will briefly look at the possibility that language-related cognitive phenomena such as categorisation and sentence patterning are organised on fractal principles.

### **How Science Models the Universe at the End of the Twentieth Century**

At the end of the twentieth century we have abandoned Newton's model of the mechanical universe. Our mental model of the universe characterises it as a place organised on self-same patterns from the cosmic to the atomic level. On subatomic level our mental model of the universe is however characterised by indeterminacy. Subatomic particles are oscillating superstrings that manifest themselves either as particles or as electromagnetic waves that have probabilistic orbits around their nuclei.

On cosmic level our mental model of the universe portrays it as a dynamic expanding entity, limited in both space and time<sup>11</sup>, having been formed and constantly being driven by catastrophic events such as:

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<sup>11</sup> One school of physics argues that contrary to our deepest intuitions time does not exist—that Einstein's theory of general relativity can only be unified with quantum mechanics if we abandon the concept that time is a fundamental aspect of the universe (Barbour 1999).

- 1      **The Big Bang** that caused the origin of the universe between 9 and 11 billion years ago;
- 2      Suns dispersed through the universe that spend their nuclear fuel after which they briefly flare up into *supernovas* before they burn up and collapse;
- 3      *Black holes*—countless imploded suns that have become gravitational sink holes in which matter is so super-compressed that a teaspoon of it would weigh the same a mountain—consuming all matter in their vicinity and even tugging at the edges of neighbouring galaxies. Astrophysicists for instance tell of one such massive structure, which they have named **The Great Attractor** and **The Great Annihilator**, that is stringing out and steadily swallowing up our galaxy, the Milky Way. Eventually also this sector of the universe will be closing down;
- 4      Regions in space termed *stellar hatcheries* or *stellar maternity wards* where suns are formed from stellar dust;
- 5      *Galaxies that drift through one another* and intermingle briefly (on a cosmic time scale) before proceeding on their altered courses to their eventual destinations;
- 6      Finally the envisaged *Big Crunch* where the whole universe will collapse inwardly on itself, where all matter will be super-condensed in pure radiation and disappear into a singularity.

We now perceive the universe not as a giant clockwork, but as a dynamic super-system driven by catastrophic events with random and chaotic results that cannot be easily described and predicted. We also know that our current analytic procedures do not allow us to model the behaviour of dynamic non-linear systems such as weather patterns or stock market trends.

### **Ordinary People's Perspective on the Scientific Model of the Universe: Hard Science, Weird Reality**

Perhaps the major lesson of twentieth century science for ordinary people is that nothing is as it seems, that reality differs markedly from the personal mental models that we individually construct to make sense of our place in the natural order of things.

In ordinary mental models the sun rises in the east and sets in the west every day. A person reclining against a rock under a tree on a cloudless, windless day, looking at a field where not even a blade of grass stirs, such a person perceives everything around him to be motionless. He does not have the sensation of spinning

around the axis of planet earth, which in turn revolves around the sun, which in turn is thundering around the core of the milky way at thousands of kilometres an hour.

Furthermore, nothing in the universe is situated where we perceive it to be. Because light travels at a constant speed of 300,000 km a second we see the sun where we were in relation to it<sup>12</sup> eight minutes earlier. We see the nearest star system where it was three and a half years ago, and remote galaxies in space where they were millions of years ago.

Because matter is energy that distorts the space-time fabric of the cosmos around itself according to the theory of relativity, astrophysicists consider the spatial fabric of the universe to curve back on itself, never reaching any kind of outer limits. This would mean that a ray of light travelling through the universe in a straight line would eventually end up back where it started<sup>13</sup>. The universe itself is consequently considered by some cosmologists to act as a super convex lens that distorts light. This causes us to observe multiple ghost images of distant galaxies from our particular vantage point in the universe<sup>14</sup>.

If very few things in the cosmos are where we perceive them to be, if a light ray can travel in a straight line and end up where it started, if we perceive regions of the cosmos that are mere ghost images of galaxies that are actually situated vast distances away from them, if we can perceive only four of ten dimensions of physical reality, then the cosmos is a far spookier place than we have imagined it to be in our myths and fantasies. Then science has made a 360° turn and is overtaking metaphysics from behind.

## How Humans Perceive the Universe to Be

Ordinary people use personal mental models to conceptualise the natural order of things. Our everyday perceptions of how things are differ markedly from the mental model of reality that science reveals to us. These models are based on each individual's perception of reality and are structured according to set cognitive principles. In the course of the twentieth century humanity has formulated a number of theories of knowledge to give an account for our understanding of reality.

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<sup>12</sup> In popular belief the sun rises in the east and sets in the west. We however know that the apparent movement of the sun across the sky, and day and night, are due to the fact that the earth rotates on its axis once every 24 hours.

<sup>13</sup> On 29 April 2000, cosmologists revealed that the universe is flat according to observations made over Antarctica with the Boomerang telescope, and that light consequently radiates only in straight lines, never bending back on itself (see Bernardi 1999; Reuters 2000; and Staff & Wire Reporters 2000).

<sup>14</sup> See the feature article 'Ghosts in the sky' in *New Scientist*, 19 September 1998.

### **The Rise and Fall of Theories of Knowledge**

Given how incredible the physical reality of 'hard' science is, humans obviously need a sound theory of knowledge to give a coherent account of how we perceive reality, how we form concepts of our perceptions, how we combine those concepts into language and how we interpret language during the process of communication. Unfortunately the major epistemological<sup>15</sup> theories of the twentieth century have proven inadequate to give an account of how we know things and how we communicate our knowledge. The theories that I am referring to are: *Hermeneutics* (the science of interpretation, especially of Scriptural exegesis; the study of human beings in society), *Phenomenology* (a description of phenomena; the science concerned with describing personal experiences without seeking to arrive at metaphysical explanations of them), *Structuralism* (the belief in, and study of unconscious, underlying patterns of thought, behaviour, social organisation, etc.), *Semiotics* (the study of signs, signals and symbols, especially in language and communication), *Generative grammar* (the description of language as a finite set of grammatical rules that enable humans to generate an infinite number of grammatical sentences), *Reception Aesthetics* (the study of how an author writes a text with an idealised reader in mind, and how actual readers interpret that text), *Deconstruction* (a method of critical analysis applied especially to literary texts, asserting that no text can have a fixed and stable meaning because language cannot adequately represent reality and because people who are interpreting a text superimpose their individual assumptions on the text during the process of interpretation), *Post Modernism* (a style of analysis and criticism in any of the arts that comes after an era known as the modernist era and that reacts against any modernist style, theory, or approach by returning to traditional materials and to some earlier, especially classical style).

Why have our theories of knowledge-construction failed us? Why does the study of language structure and literature have so little in common, let alone the study of social conventions and cultural symbols? If Einstein's theory of relativity has provided the tools to unify 'hard' science from the sub-atomic to the cosmological level, is it not possible to construct a similar unifying theory for the fragmented 'human' sciences?

In the previous sections I have indicated that scientific hypotheses have revealed the physical universe to be a more surprising place than we imagined it to be. I have also indicated that the major theories of knowledge of the twentieth century have failed to provide a coherent framework for the so called 'human' sciences. The reason for this, I believe, is because, broadly speaking, these theories

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<sup>15</sup> *Epistemology*: the scientific study of how humans acquire and communicate knowledge. From the Greek words *episteme* knowledge, and *logos* discourse. This, and all further definitions in this section are taken or adapted from Larousse (1994).

have attempted to give an objective account of reality—reality as it is ‘out there’, not an account of how we subjectively conceive reality ‘in here’. What is needed is not merely an account of how the physical universe is, but rather an account of the subjective mental model of reality that each of us conceptually constructs of the physical universe. An emerging theory of knowledge that attempts to give such an account of how humans conceptualise reality is Cognitive Rhetoric.

### **Cognitive Rhetoric**

Language should not be equated to cognition, for it merely forms part of a broader spectrum of types of cognition. Cognitive Rhetoric primarily deals with those aspects of symbolisation that form the basis of humanity’s language capacity, the actual processes involved in spoken and written communication. In short, Cognitive Rhetoric reveals to us not how the universe is, but how humans perceive the universe to be, how humanity associates those perceptions to form concepts, which he expresses as language during communication. The essential features of Cognitive Rhetoric are summarised in the following twelve sections.

#### ***The Perceptual Basis of Humanity’s Language Capacity***

1 Humanity’s language capacity forms part of his more general capacity to conceptualise and use symbols to represent entities observable by the human senses (visual sensations, sounds, smells, tastes and touch-sensations) as well as abstract entities (like emotions and ideas).

2 Our language capacity does not exclusively reside in specialised, dedicated neurological modules. One reason for this point of view is that many of our neurological structures are shared by language and other forms of cognition. A person’s language capacity and his musical capacity for instance reside in partially-shared as well as capacity-specific neurological structures.

3 The same basic cognitive process of conceptual integration is used for language<sup>16</sup> and other forms of cognition such as music and calculating.

#### ***The Role of Image Schemas in Concept Formation***

4 Because all elements of language are symbolic (meaningful), a theory of language may not posit non-meaningful abstract grammatical structures, rules, devices or features merely to justify another aspect of the theory.

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<sup>16</sup> Dirven & Verspoor (1998); Langacker (1987; 1990; 1991); Mandelblitt (1997); Ungerer & Schmid (1999).

5 Humans build up concepts about things around them by combining basic image schemas like point, line, centre, periphery, circle, square, triangle, long, short, horizontal, vertical, diagonal, close proximity, distant proximity, in front of, behind, smooth, coarse, regular, irregular, move, rest, source, route/path, target etc. These image schemas emanate from our physiological makeup and our vertical orientation when we are active<sup>17</sup>. By combining basic image schemas into complex image schemas humans derive dynamic concepts. If one for instance combines the image schemas long and vertical in relation to an entity that is perceived as a single whole one conceptualises the word *tall*. By combining the image schemas centre, periphery, vertical, move, regular sequence, same direction and balance one conceptualises words like *rotate*, *spin* and *pirouette*.

### ***The Fundamental Role of Categorisation in Concept Formation***

6 Categorisation forms a crucial part of humanity's language capacity. Humans use the shared and differentiating attributes of entities in inter-linked neural pathways in the brain<sup>18</sup> to categorise things, processes and events. We discern attributes such as COMPACT, DIFFUSE, ROUND, SQUARE, SMOOTH, COARSE, BRIGHT, DULL, DARK, SWEET, SOUR etc. by means of our senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell and feeling), and we use such attributes to categorise and inter-link words.

7 Humans categorise entities on at least three levels, namely a superordinate level (*plant*), a basic level (*tree*) and a subordinate level (*oak tree*). We have pictographic *gestalts* for entities at the basic level, but not at the superordinate and the subordinate levels. We can doodle a *tree*, but not a *plant* or an *oak tree*. Similarly we can doodle a *woman* but not a *human* or an *aunt*. Babies learn basic level words before they learn superordinate or subordinate level words. They for instance learn *cat* and *dog* before they learn *animal* or *Siamese cat* and *bull terrier*. Basic level words tend to form part of figurative language more often than superordinate level or subordinate level words. Humans for instance represent their ancestry by means of *family trees*, not by means of *family plants* or *family oak trees*.

### ***Prototypical and Atypical Members in Categories***

8 Categories have prototypical members that share all major attributes, and atypical members that share only some attributes<sup>19</sup>. *Mammals* for instance are warm-blooded, hairy, earth-bound animals with four limbs and teeth, whose offspring are

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<sup>17</sup> Johnson (1987).

<sup>18</sup> Lamb (1998).

<sup>19</sup> Taylor (1992); Ungerer & Schmid (1999).

born alive from the female member of their species, and who obtain nourishment by suckling her mammary glands during the early stages of their existence. By this definition *antelope, lions, rhinos, wolves* and *humans* are prototypical mammals, but *bats* are not because they are flying mammals, nor are *beavers, seals, walruses, whales, dolphins, or manatees* because they are aquatic mammals.

9 Meaningful language symbols are known as lexemes. Lexemes are associated with particular grammatical categories. A word like *crazy* is a prototypical adjective, while a set expression like *off his rocker* is an atypical one.

### *The Conflation of Concepts in the Formation of Lexemes*

10 Words are associated with lexical categories like nouns (*woman*), verbs (*break*), adjectives (*tall*), adverbs (*forwards*), pronouns (*you*) and prepositions (*on*).

11 Each lexeme consists of a number of concepts that are conflated (combined) and associated with a particular sequence of speech sounds or written letters. The sequence of speech sounds [m]+[æ]+[n], and the letters *m+a+n* are neurologically associated with the concepts [LIVING, MALE, ADULT MEMBER OF THE HUMAN SPECIES].

### *Conceiving Entities and Events in Schematic and Detailed Formats*

12 Humans have the ability to conceptualise entities in very schematic (general) or in detailed terms. One can for instance say: There is *something* under the table, or There is *a little red metal toy motor car with plastic windows and scratched bumpers* under the table.

13 Elements of language, including grammatical structures, are *symbolic* (meaningful). Particular grammatical structures have *schematic* (general) background meanings that give them the valence (binding potential) to accommodate particular words. In *transitive* clauses for instance the major grammatical structures have the following schematic meanings: *Subject*: the party that supplies the energy for an interaction and that actively controls the course of an event which affects another party. *Transitive verb*: an interactive event during which energy is transferred from an active, controlling party to a passive, affected party. *Object*: the passive party that is controlled and affected by the actions of an active party. Because a transitive clause has the above-mentioned schematic meanings it casts a semantic shadow that enables it to accommodate a great variety of utterances like for example: *The dog is chasing the cat, my aunt is writing a novel, James cooked dinner tonight and the boy is slicing the salami.*

14 The clause contains only one verb, but can contain a number of nouns such as in [SENTENCE [NOUN 1 *the dog*] [VERB *chased*] [NOUN 2 *the cat*] up [NOUN 3 *the tree*] [NOUN 4 *this morning*]]. In order to distinguish such nouns from one another in a clause we conceptually label them with semantic roles like Agent, Patient, Experiencer and Stimulus. Other semantic roles used to identify entities during interactions are Source, Target, Path, Goal, Benefactor, Beneficiary, Instrument, Locus/Place and Time. During conversation participants automatically assign semantic roles to the nouns in a clause like *the dog chased the cat up the tree this morning*, which will give the following representation: [SENTENCE [NOUN 1. Agent *the dog*] [VERB *chased*] [NOUN 2. Patient *the cat*] up [NOUN 3. Locus *the tree*] [NOUN 4. Time *this morning*]].

15 Humans experience a great variety of interactions between entities in real life, but only use 5 basic patterns to express our thoughts about such events:

#### Agent Dominates Patient

- (a) The boy broke the plate
- (b) The lady is wearing a blue dress
- (c) John wrote a poem
- (d) Sally sang a song

#### Co-agent Co-operates with Co-agent

- (a) John and Peter are taking (with/to one another) *or* John is talking to Peter
- (b) John and Peter are helping one another *or* John is helping Peter

#### Counter-agent Competes with Counter-agent

- (a) Sue and Jane are competing/arguing/debating (with one another) *or* Sue is competing/arguing/debating with Jane
- (b) The dog and the cat are fighting (with one another) *or* The dog is fighting with the cat

#### Experiencer Experiences Stimulus

- (a) Jack loves Judy
- (b) Andy hates peas

#### Stimulus stimulates Experiencer

- (a) Peas nauseate Andy
- (b) Horror movies frighten young children

#### Figure and Ground Relations in Perception, Cognition and Language

16 Figure and ground contrast forms the basis for all perceptual discrimination.

While reading this sentence, the individual words form the foreground, while the paper that they are printed on forms part of the background information. You can profile any background element and bring it to the foreground by focusing your attention on it. You can for instance inspect the texture of the paper, the width of the margins, or any of the background sounds that usually surround us.

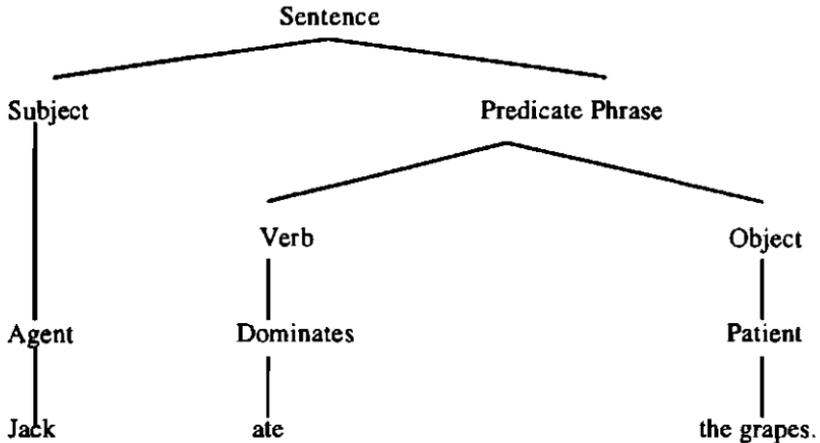
17 Every time a neurological operation is performed it becomes more entrenched, less susceptible to conscious awareness, and therefore more part of the background. Novel neurological operations however require more concentration than entrenched ones. Novel neurological operations therefore form part of the perceptual foreground. Typical examples of novel neurological operations that require a lot of concentration until they become entrenched are when one learns to ride a bicycle or to drive a car. After some practice such activities become routine (entrenched), background operations.

18 Humanity has the ability to conceptualise parts of greater wholes as independent entities. One can focus one's attention on a *hand*, ignoring the fact that it is part of an *arm*, which in turn is part of a *body*. When one conceptualises a part such as *hand* as if it is on its own, entities like *arm* and *body* form part of the conceptual information 'at the back of ones mind' as the saying so aptly goes. Because the whole forms part of conceptual background information one can metonymically say *John has safe hands* when we mean that he as a whole being is good at catching a ball.

19 In each utterance the grammatical structures that accommodate particular words are based on entrenched neurological operations, while the words themselves convey novel information that require concentration. Grammatical relationships therefore form entrenched background knowledge while the meanings of particular lexemes form novel foreground knowledge.

20 The conceptual process that we use to assign semantic roles to is called *grammatical blending* (Mandelblit 1997) which is based on the more general cognitive process called *conceptual blending*. Conceptual blending is also used when we conceive metaphor or when we make calculations. Conceptual blending entails projecting well-known (neurologically entrenched) information onto novel information to render the new information more readily understandable. In the case of a sentence such as *Jack ate the grapes*, semantic role pairs such as AGENT DOMINATES PATIENT form the image schematic background that enables us to blend (associate) the statement with grammatical functions such as *subject* and *object*. Because the grammatical functions *subject* and *object* and semantic role pairs AGENT

**DOMINATES PATIENT** are neurologically entrenched through constant use, they form the schematic background to the words of the sentence *Jack ate the grapes* that command our attention on the foreground:



21 In the case of metaphors, a well-known object like a ship can be used to render a lesser-known object like a camel more understandable by calling it 'the ship of the desert'.

22 The five semantic role pairs (AGENT-PATIENT, EXPERIENCER-STIMULUS etc.) that I outlined in the previous section form prototypical patterns that operate on the foreground of our attention when we conceive events. They are obligatory concepts in utterances.

23 Semantic roles like Instrument, Locus and Time are optional and normally operate in the background of our attention when we conceive events. They can be left unspecified in utterances: [SENTENCE [NOUN 1, Agent *Sue*] [VERB *tickled*] [NOUN 2, Patient *the baby*] (...)] unless we choose to bring them to the foreground: [SENTENCE [NOUN 1, Agent *Sue*] [VERB *tickled*] [NOUN 3, Patient *the baby*] under [NOUN 4, Locus *his chin*] with [NOUN 5, Instrument *a feather*] in [NOUN 6, Locus *the bedroom*] [NOUN 7, Time *this morning*]].

### Event Frames

24 All of the foreground and background concepts that one uses to conceive a coherent event together make up an *event frame*.

25 We use semantic roles to conceive *event frames* that contain all the essential foreground and background knowledge for a particular event. Events are interactions

between entities. If one for instance conceives an event where an active party dominates a passive party, both the Agent and Patient roles are needed to properly frame that event. The instruments used during the event, as well as the time and place of the event will be available as background knowledge if we want to include that as part of our framing of the event. Knowledge about the intrinsic nature of the entities that we refer to will also form part of background knowledge to the event frame. Because we know that glass is brittle, and we know that humanity has the ability to break things, we effortlessly use the schema AGENT DOMINATES PATIENT to structure the clause *John broke the glass*.

26 Most events are interactions between entities that cause a change of locus or a change of state. The clause *John picked up the glass* entails that the glass, is moved from one Locus to another. The clause *John broke the glass* entails that the glass is changed from a state of wholeness to a state of being splintered.

27 When we construct event frames in the course of thinking and talking, the meaning of each verb triggers the semantic roles appropriate to that event in the minds of language users. The verb *eat* will for instance trigger the AGENT DOMINATES PATIENT schema for a clause like *The boy ate all the sweets*. The verb *taste* will however trigger the EXPERIENCER EXPERIENCES STIMULUS schema for a clause like *The boy tasted the sweets and didn't like them*.

### Conceptual Metaphors

28 Figurative language in general, and metaphor in particular form a pervasive part of everyday language. The EXPERIENCER EXPERIENCES STIMULUS schema for instance forms the basis for sentences that refer to literal events as in *Jane saw/heard/smelt/tasted/felt the meat boiling on the stove*. All of these verbs can however also be used figuratively with the greatest of ease as in *I see what you mean* (I understand what you mean), *I hear you* (I agree with you), *John smelt a rat* (John suspected that something was wrong), *Our team tasted victory* (Our team won), and *Sue feels insulted by what Andy said* (Sue was emotionally upset by what Andy said). Very basic metaphors, known as conceptual metaphors, play an important role in structuring our perceptions about the events of everyday life<sup>20</sup>. Typical examples of such conceptual metaphors are *life is a journey* and *argumentation is warfare*.

29 Since the time of Isaac Newton science has been dominated by the conceptual metaphor that the universe is a mechanical construct. Under the influence

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<sup>20</sup> Fauconnier & Turner (1994); Fauconnier (1985); Lakoff & Johnson (1980a; 1980b); Lakoff & Turner (1989); Turner & Fauconnier (1995); Turner (1991).

of the mechanical universe metaphor we have dammed up rivers and transplanted body organs. The Newtonian mechanical universe conceptual metaphor is at the moment however being supplanted by an organic universe metaphor that sensitises us to the vital interrelationship between things. Using this metaphor we begin to understand the consequences for life on earth if we fill the atmosphere with green house gasses, if we convert rain forests to houses, furniture and packing crates. The organic universe metaphor probably also plays a role in new attitudes about primary health care, namely that it is better to prevent disease by a healthy lifestyle, than to replace diseased organs. Under the organic universe metaphor we are also seeing advances in the engineering of new breeds of animals, new sequences of genes to cure genetic ailments, and the cloning of life forms.

### ***Semantic Roles and Event Frames in Narrative Scripts***

30 Humans create narratives by using semantic roles like *Agent*, *Patient*, *Stimulus*, *Experiencer* and *Instrument* to link sequences of event frames as coherent narrative scripts. Individual events such as *A poor man had only one lamb* and *the poor man took care of his lamb* are linked to form a coherent narrative script because one can see that *man* is the same *Agent* in both events, and that *lamb* is the same *Patient* in both instances.

31 When we combine role sequences for persons in such narratives we form images of heroes, villains and victims: An *Agent* who helps a victim is a hero. An *Agent* who harms a victim is a villain. A *Patient* who is harmed by a villain and helped by a hero is a victim.

### ***Image Schemas, Conceptual Metaphors, Event Frames and Scripts in Artificial Intelligence***

32 Work is in progress to combine image schemas, conceptual metaphors, event frames and scripts in the form of *X-schemas* in artificial intelligence routines that will enable self-programmable parallel distributive computers to learn from experience just as humans do, and particularly to communicate with us by using ordinary language and by 'thinking' according to humanlike mental models<sup>21</sup>.

### ***The Primacy of Direct Verbal Communication***

33 The most basic function of language is to express concepts during direct

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<sup>21</sup> Bailey et al (1997); Feldman et al (1996); Grannes et al (1997); Narayanan (1997).

verbal communication. Three elements are required for direct verbal communication, namely two human participants and a theme. The two participants are the speaker (the first person) and the hearer (the second person). During the conversation, they focus their attention on the theme (the so called third 'person') and exchange new information about it.

34 Language is used most regularly during direct verbal communication when the two human participants take turns as speaker and hearer. When one participant monopolises the conversation, it becomes a monologue—an irregular form of communication during which the hearer easily loses interest and stops concentrating on the theme.

35 Written language is a secondary form of communication. It approximates conversation in narratives when it portrays a speaker and hearer exchanging ideas during direct conversation. In such instances, the reader becomes a silent observer of the reported proceedings. Forms of writing (such as this essay) that directly disseminate information, approximate monologues (or diatribes if they are badly written and blatantly seek to influence their readers' values) and are therefore the least regular forms of communication.

## Fractals and Recursive Patterns in Language Structure

While I discussed aspects of fractal patterns in nature with the editor of *ALTERNATION* I was asked to comment on the possibility that language structure shows patterns of fractal organisation—the phenomenon where an entity reveals self-same patterns of replication on all levels of organisation. Several aspects of language structure are organised on the principle of recursiveness which could be a clue to fractal organisation:

1 Word categorisation entails that superordinate lexical categories contain subcategories, which in turn contain sub-subcategories: within the superordinate category *artefacts* we get a subcategory *furniture*, which in turns contains a sub-subcategory *chair*, which in turn contains a sub-sub-subcategory *lounge chair*, which in turn ....

2 Directional prepositional phrases (PP) can contain other prepositional phrases like [<sup>PP</sup> *out* [<sup>PP</sup> *of the house*]].

3 The use of epistemic verbs<sup>22</sup> enables one to string together multiple senten-

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<sup>22</sup> Epistemic verbs like *see, hear, feel, think, know* etc. all relate to forms of knowing.

ces (S) as in [<sup>S 1</sup> *Jack thought* [<sup>S 2</sup> *Peter knew* [<sup>S 3</sup> *Jane heard* [<sup>S 4</sup> *Sam felt* [<sup>S 5</sup> *Andy claimed* [<sup>S 6</sup> *Sue lied*]]]]]]]

While at first blush such language patterns may look like fractal replication they are not. Lexical superordinate categories, basic level categories and superordinate categories differ in significant ways. Lexical organisation from superordinate categories like *artefact* and *furniture* through the basic level category like *chair* and the subordinate category *lounge chair* show a change of meaning from the generic to the highly specific. Furthermore, while ordinary people have picture gestalts<sup>23</sup> of basic level lexemes such as *chair*, they do not have gestalts for superordinate level lexemes such as *furniture*, or for subordinate level ones *lounge chair*.

Recursive language patterns such as the stringing together of directional prepositional phrases and multiple sentences that contain epistemic verbs are the exceptions, and are in any case self-same in a very limited way. One reason for this limitation is the fact that humanity can hold between only five and seven thoughts in his short term memory at a time<sup>24</sup>. This in itself would in my view make self-same patterning at various levels or organisation impossible in language.

## Conclusion

In this essay I have tried to give a concise, easily understandable overview of the essential aspects of Cognitive Rhetoric as frame of reference for the four specialist contributions in this field that appear in this issue of *ALTERNATION*.

Because of current misconceptions about the need and role of theorising in the so called soft sciences I began this essay by discussing a number of surprising conclusions that emanate from twentieth century science. I showed how hard science theories reveal the universe to be a truly alien place, a place that is in many respects different from the inner images that humans form of the natural order of things. I have shown that hard science theories attempt to objectively reveal the universe as it fundamentally is—a place that is alien to humanity.

Cognitive Rhetoric by contrast attempts to reveal how humans subjectively perceive the universe from our relatively safe vantage point, mother earth. It does this by showing how humans associate perceptions to form concepts, and how we express those concepts as language while we communicate with one another.

Finally, at the dawn of the twenty first century humans are taking the first steps to devise forms of artificial intelligence that are learning to think independently,

<sup>23</sup> Single mental pictures that can be easily drawn with just a few lines.

<sup>24</sup> Miller (1956).

and that will be able to communicate with us by using *Great-Chain-Of-Being* human mental models to conceptualise the nature of things.

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# A Mechanism of Creativity<sup>1</sup>

Mark Turner and Gilles Fauconnier

## Life on Mars

On July the Fourth, 1997, a Martian admiring the night sky above the ancient floodplain of the Ares Vallis, now a desert, would have seen the Pathfinder space probe parachuting toward the ground in a protective cocoon of inflated air bags. A multimillion-dollar space beach ball, it bounced fifty feet high before dribbling to rest, where the bags deflated. The lander retracted the air bags, unfolded to release a small exploratory roving vehicle, and beamed pictures of rocks back to the Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

An American Earthling, sitting at home, might have seen those rocks on television, interspersed with images of space aliens accompanying news reports about the fiftieth anniversary of 'the Roswell Incident'. According to believers, space aliens had crashed in Roswell, New Mexico, fifty years earlier, and the U.S. Air Force had covered it up. The Air Force, which once dismissed these rumors as absurd, now, on the fiftieth anniversary, admitted that the believers were not actually crazy. They had merely seen desert wreckage of secret high-altitude balloon tests involving capsules and dummies.

As the Mars rover began to analyze the rocks, an anonymous spoof appeared on the web:

*Valles Marineris (MPI)—A spokesthing for Mars Air Force denounced as false rumors that an alien space craft crashed in the desert, outside of Ares Vallis on Friday. Appearing at a press conference today, General Rgrmrmy The Lesser stated that 'the object was, in fact, a harmless high-altitude weather balloon, not an alien spacecraft'.*

*The story broke late Friday night when a major stationed at nearby Ares*

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<sup>1</sup> Paper read at the Second International Conference of the Literary Semantics Association, Freiburg, Germany, 2 September 1997 - also solicited for a special issue of *Poetics Today*.

*Vallis Air Force Base contacted the Valles Marineris Daily Record with a story about a strange, balloon-shaped object which allegedly came down in the nearby desert, 'bouncing' several times before coming to a stop, 'deflating in a sudden explosion of alien gases'. Minutes later, General Rgrmrmy The Lesser contacted the Daily Record telepathically to contradict the earlier report.*

*General Rgrmrmy The Lesser stated that hysterical stories of a detachable vehicle roaming across the Martian desert were blatant fiction, provoked by incidents involving swamp gas. But the general public has been slow to accept the Air Force's explanation of recent events, preferring to speculate on the 'other-worldly' nature of the crash debris. Conspiracy theorists have condemned Rgrmrmy's statements as evidence of 'an obvious government cover-up', pointing out that Mars has no swamps.*

We are guided to a blended story. The Roswell story itself has no Mars Pathfinder and no landing on Mars, while the Pathfinder story itself has no Martian Air Force, no Martian newspapers, and no sceptical public. These two stories share the scenario of a spacecraft landing in a desert, and they involve balloons. We must borrow parts of each of them to weave a blended story in which the Pathfinder lands on a Mars that has a government, rumors, newspapers, and an Air Force cover-up.

This selective borrowing, or rather, projection, is not merely compositional. Although the Air Force comes from the Roswell story, or more generally from knowledge of the United States, it is not projected blindly into the blend. The Air Force must be Martian, as must the Martians. To create them, we make use of pre-existing blended stories about fictional Martians, who are like us but not like us, who eat unhuman foods, who speak in unhuman languages, who live in subzero (Fahrenheit) temperatures, who communicate through extrasensory channels, who have roles and social organization, and so on.

We also make use of standard news reporting to give, in the blend, a Martian byline (Mars Press International) and a newsy prose style ('A spokething for Mars Air Force denounced as false ...', 'But the general public has been slow to accept ..'..).

The blend is a joke. It does not seem to be trying to tell us anything new about Pathfinder or about landings by aliens on Earth. In the blend, the Air Force is mistaken, maybe even lying, but those inferences and possibilities do not seem to carry back to the Roswell story itself. Some of the humor derives from accidental connections: both stories have balloons in space. Some people find the image of a spacecraft landing by bouncing inherently funny—a visual joke of the kind one might see in a Bugs Bunny cartoon.

Some of the humor comes from creative selective projection, bringing about, in the blend, telepathic denials, bizarre personal titles, and scare quotes for

strangeness, inaccuracy, and incredulity placed around garden-variety and referentially accurate words. The punchline involves sophisticated leaps in the attribution of invention: at first we credit the inventor of the blend for having equipped it with telepathic Martians, an Air Force, conspiracy theorists, newspaper reporters, and swamp gas, but then, inside the blend, the Martians accuse the General of having invented the swamp gas—which proves, since it contradicts their knowledge (actually, our knowledge, projected to them) about the physical environment of Mars, that he must be lying. We, outside the blend, appreciating the entire network, can find this accusation funny, a clever invention by the network's inventor, but the Martians, living in the blend, cannot.

This blend has a logic. The Martians can't object, as we can, that they don't exist. The language of the news report presupposes that there are Martian spokethings and that at least General Rgrmrmmy is telepathic, so these facts are straightforward in the blend. Nonetheless, residents of the blend can object to the presupposition by General Rgrmrmmy that there are Martian swamps, even though we, outside the blend, may believe that Martians could have no concept of swamps at all.

This spoof looks exotic, but it is the product of a basic, everyday cognitive operation which we call 'conceptual integration'. The principal statements of our research are Fauconnier & Turner (in press), Fauconnier (1997), and Turner (1996), but many other publications have appeared and many other people have contributed to the research program: Seana Coulson, Margaret Freeman, Douglas Hofstadter, Edwin Hutchins, Nili Mandelblit, Todd Oakley, Martin Ramey, Adrian Robert, Tim Rohrer, Douglas Sun, Tony Veale, Lawrence Zbikowski, and others.

We leave aside the structural and dynamic properties of blending, the competing optimality constraints on blending, the taxonomy of standard kinds of conceptual integration networks that result from those optimality constraints, and a range of other technical results. They can be pursued by investigating the web page for blending and conceptual integration<sup>2</sup>. We will instead give a brief and intuitive explanation of blending, provide some examples, and illustrate ways in which linguistic constructions prompt us to create conceptual blends.

## **Ghosts of Predators Past**

The Pathfinder blend is merely amusing, but blending often plays a role in the development and expression of scientific knowledge. The front page of the science section of the *New York Times* for Tuesday, 24 December 1996, carried a large photograph of a small American pronghorn chased by pen-and-ink prehistoric cheetahs and long-legged dogs. The American pronghorn is excessively faster than any of its modern predators. Why would evolution select for this costly excessive

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.wam.umd.edu/~mturn/WWW/blending.html>.

speed when it brings no additional reproductive benefit? The scientists propose that the pronghorn runs as fast as it does because it is being chased by ghosts—the ghosts of predators past .... As researchers begin to look, such ghosts appear to be ever more in evidence, with studies of other species showing that even when predators have been gone for hundreds of thousands of years, their prey may not have forgotten them.

The ancient American pronghorn, in the historical story, barely outruns nasty predators like cheetahs and long-legged dogs. The modern American pronghorn, in the modern story, easily outruns all its modern predators. In the blend, the modern American pronghorn is being chased by nasty ancient predators, marked as 'ghosts' to signal that they have no reference in the modern pronghorn's world. We are not confused by this felicitous blend: we do not expect to see ghosts chasing a real modern pronghorn; we do not think the modern pronghorn remembers the prehistoric predators. Instead, we know how to connect the blend to the story of the modern pronghorn: great speed was adaptive for the ancestors of the modern pronghorn, who faced nasty predators, and although those predators are now extinct, the instinctive capacity for speed survives.

The network of pronghorn stories is complicated by its use of generic stories for species—a species doesn't actually run, but we can think of the generic representative of the species: the cow chews cud; the pronghorn runs fast; and so on. How we connect the scene of an individual pronghorn to the generic story is an issue I leave aside. There are touches that make the blend seem natural: the existing phrase 'ghost of Christmas past' gives a basis for 'ghosts of predators past'. As Fauconnier & Turner (1994) and Oakley (1996) show, 'ghost' blends are frequent whenever an element from an earlier story has an effect but not an existence in a later story.

## Non-Euclidean Geometry

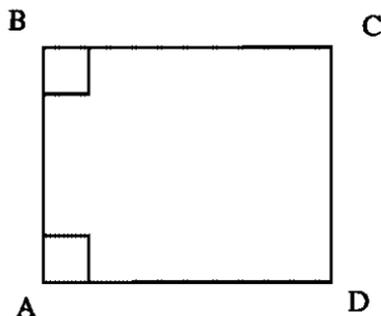
Blends can constitute basic scientific and mathematical knowledge. Consider hyperbolic geometry. As Kline (1984) and Bonola (1955) survey, the laborious birth of non-Euclidean geometry took fifteen hundred years. Euclid had defined parallel lines as straight lines in a plane that, when extended indefinitely in both directions, never meet. He had presented a sequence of proofs independent of the parallel axiom that show that two straight lines are parallel when they form with one of their transversals equal interior alternate angles, or equal corresponding angles, or interior angles on the same side which are supplementary. But proving the converses of these propositions appeared to require the parallel axiom:

If a straight line falling on two straight lines makes the interior angles on the same side less than two right angles, the two straight lines, if produced

indefinitely, meet on that side on which the angles are less than two right angles.

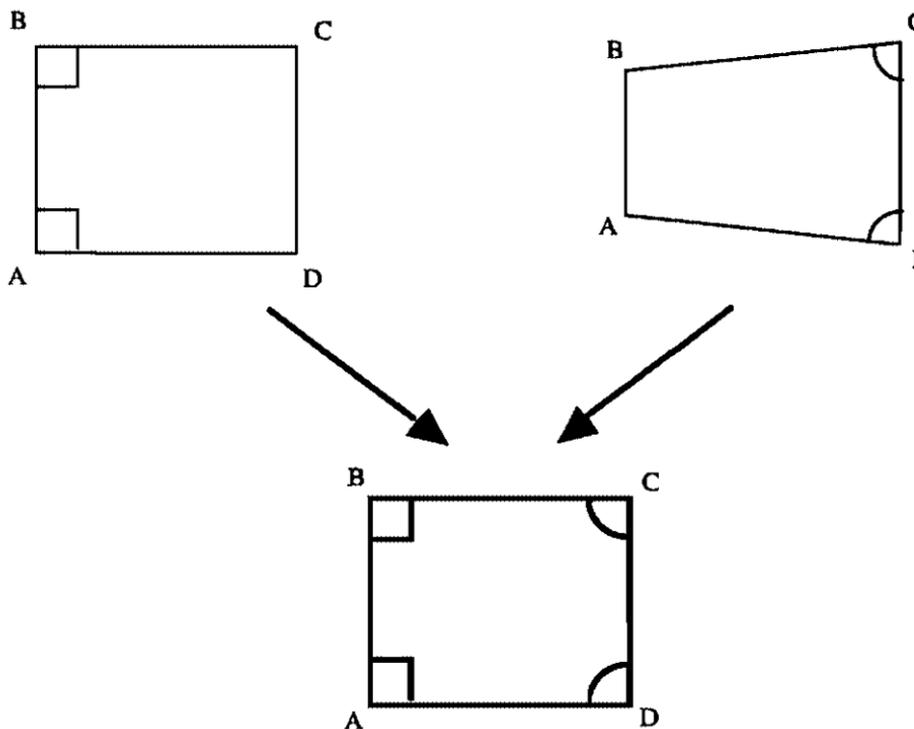
This axiom seemed to many geometers, probably including Euclid, to lack the desirable feature of self-evident truth. Rather than assume it as an axiom, they sought to derive it from the other axioms and from Euclid's first twenty-eight theorems, none of which uses the parallel axiom.

Gerolamo Saccheri (1667-1733) made the crucial attempt, as Bonola reports. Saccheri focused on a quadrilateral ABCD where angle DAB and angle ABC are right angles, and where line segments AD and BC are equal:



Without using the parallel axiom, it is easy to prove that angles BCD and CDA must be equal. Saccheri did this. If we assume the parallel axiom, BCD and CDA must be right angles. Therefore, if we deny that BCD and CDA are right angles, we thereby deny the parallel axiom. Saccheri did just this, in the hope of deriving a contradiction from the denial, which would prove the parallel axiom by *reductio ad absurdum*.

But if BCD and CDA are not right, they are still equal, and so they must be either obtuse or acute. Saccheri sought to show that, in either case, a contradiction follows. He assumed that they are acute; that is, he performed the following conceptual integration:



Both inputs are routine Euclidean figures. Both have a quadrilateral ABCD, equal line segments AD and BC, equal angles DAB and ABC, and equal angles BCD and CDA. The blend takes this structure from both inputs. But the first input has right internal angles DAB and ABC, and the second input has acute internal angles BCD and CDA. The blend takes the right angles from the first input and the acute angles from the second. The blend is impossible in Euclidean geometry, but Saccheri never really found a contradiction for this blend. He carefully drew many conclusions about this blend that he regarded as repugnant elaborations of the blend's inherent falsity but that today count as foundational theorems of hyperbolic geometry.

It is important to see that all of Saccheri's elaboration of the blend followed everyday procedures of Euclidean geometry. The input spaces are Euclidean and familiar; the elaboration procedures are Euclidean and familiar. The only thing new in the process is the selective, two-sided projection to create the blend. Saccheri's line of reasoning, far from being exotic, is the uniform strategy of all *reductio* arguments in logic and mathematics: a system of inferential principles that is taken to be consistent is applied to a structure that may not be consistent. Saccheri imagined

that he was conducting what could only be a *reductio ad absurdum* argument, and he hoped that the inevitable contradiction would be forthcoming. Those who came after him reinterpreted the same proofs not as *reductio* arguments but as steps in the development of a new and consistent branch of geometry.

It happens that there are many equivalent ways to produce a blend that delivers hyperbolic geometry. All that is needed is a blend that requires the interior angles of a triangle to sum to fewer than 180 degrees.

Saccheri is not credited with the invention of non-Euclidean geometry. As Kline (1972:869) summarizes and simplifies the history,

[i]f non-Euclidean geometry means the technical development of the consequences of a system of axioms containing an alternative to Euclid's parallel axiom then most credit must be accorded to Saccheri and even he benefited by the work of many men who tried to find a more acceptable substitute axiom for Euclid's.

Credit is given instead to Gauss, Bolyai, and Lobatchevsky for recognizing (but not proving) that hyperbolic non-Euclidean geometry is mathematically consistent, and to Gauss for recognizing that physical space might be non-Euclidean.

## Blending and Metaphor

If metaphor is the understanding of something in one conceptual domain, like business competition, by conceptual projection from something in a different conceptual domain, like boxing, then none of the blends we have seen so far is essentially metaphoric. The hyperbolic geometry network lies within the domain of geometry and the two inputs are not related by metaphor. The pronghorn network lies within the domain of North American pronghorns, and the modern pronghorn is the evolutionary, not the metaphoric, counterpart of the historical pronghorn. The Pathfinder spoof lies within the domain of spacecraft landing on a planet. Its input stories have literal counterparts: planets, spacecraft, landings, and balloons.

Yet metaphoric projections also typically involve blending in ways that have gone unnoticed. Here is an example that forces us to notice the blending. As I write, the Dow Jones Industrial Average has rocketed past 8000, but just a few months ago, it stood at 6500 as investors had become cautious, even bearish. Reuters news service reported:

U.S. stocks ended sharply lower on Wednesday after an attempt to extend a one-day rally was quashed. Market players said investors were unwilling to return to the market amid fears that rising interest rates would lead to further

losses in the days ahead. 'Everybody has their horns pulled in', said Arnie Owen, director of equities at Kaufman Brothers.

'Everybody has their horns pulled in' exploits a conventional metaphor in which a market charging up is a bull and aggressive investors with confidence in the market are also bulls. In the target story of investment, there is a linear scale of confidence in the market, linked as causal to a linear scale of investment. In the source story of bulls, a bull is a bull is a bull and the length of a bull's horns is fixed. But in the blend, length of horn is degree of confidence and investment, and so, in the blend, a bull/investor can increase or decrease the size of its horns.

Consider the standard view that metaphor and analogy make their contribution by projecting structure from the source to the target or by finding shared structure. The metaphor of 'horns pulled in' does not fit this view. It does not project the nature of horns from the source onto the target or find structure they share. Instead, it works by creating a blend. The horns in the blend have a variable nature incompatible with the horns in the source. Certainly this is an example of metaphor, and the metaphor is certainly unidirectional—we understand investors by projection from bulls and bears, not bulls and bears by projection from investors—but the central inferential mechanism is neither projection from source to target nor detection of structure they share.

There can be multiple inputs to a blend and an input can be covert. For example, it is possible that the 'horns pulled in' blend has, for some readers, a covert input of 'animal retracting its claws'. In lucky cases, there is linguistic or conceptual evidence indicating the covert input, but not here. It would be useful to have psychological tests for detecting covert inputs.

The 'horns pulled in' blend is noticeable, but for the most part, blending is itself a covert operation that escapes notice. Consider 'that's a two-edged sword', used conventionally of arguments or strategies that are risky since they simultaneously help and hurt the user. In the domain of literal swords, two-edged swords are superb weapons, better for stabbing since both edges cut and better for slashing since both edges slash. Their superior performance explains their development and deployment despite the relative difficulty of manufacturing and maintaining them. But a two-edged sword in the blend is quite different: one edge of the sword/ argument exclusively helps the user and the other edge exclusively hurts the user. It is not impossible for a literal warrior to be hurt by his own literal blade, the way it is impossible for literal bulls to retract their literal horns, but it is atypical, and even in the atypical scenario, it doesn't happen that one of the edges always hurts the user while the other always helps. If it did, the two-edged sword would be discarded for the one-edged model. This atypical scenario, recruited to the source under pressure from the target, still projects only selectively to the blend. The central

inference of the metaphor still does not arise by projecting the structure of the atypical scenario to the target or finding structure they both share.

## Chinese Flags In A Capitalist Breeze

Metaphor often involves multiple blending:

HONG KONG, Tuesday, July 1—As dawn rises for the first time over red Chinese flags officially fluttering here in a capitalist breeze, the most fascinating question is not how China will change Hong Kong but how Hong Kong will change China. (Nicholas D. Kristof, 'Year of the Trojan Horse', *New York Times*, front page, 1997).

A flag is a metonymic symbol—e.g., fifty stars for fifty states. Understanding a nation metaphorically as a physical object (e.g. 'Austria was crushed during the negotiations') does not delude us into believing that the physical flag is actually the nation it represents, but blending may be at work in this metaphor. There are, now anyway, many American citizens with no political opinion about the burning of cloth, no visceral reaction to the expression 'I despise America', and a firm belief in protected free speech who nonetheless become so distressed at the image of someone burning an American flag that they want to make the act illegal. They refer to the act not as 'burning an American flag' but as 'burning *the* American flag'. In such a case, the flag may count as more than mere metonymic representation. In the blend, an attack on the flag is an attack on the nation. We are not trapped inside blends, but emotional reactions generated there can, like inferences generated there, leave their mark on reality.

The ceremony of raising a flag adds another metaphoric connection to this blend—*higher versus lower* maps to *governing versus governed*. In the blend, the raised flag is simultaneously a physical object, a flag, a higher physical object, a political entity, and a government. What it is raised above is simultaneously a geographical or architectural entity, a lower object, and a governed political or institutional entity.

The blend is useful in giving a concrete and realistic representation of government. We learn in grade school the fiction that the blend had legal causality: planting a flag on 'discovered' land made it the territory of the 'mother nation'. The raising-the-flag blend, with its evident psychological and emotional power, was exploited during Britain's handover of Hong Kong to the People's Republic of China. The 'handover' was portrayed to the world in a riveting and memorable scene in which the British flag was lowered and then the Chinese flag was raised.

'Raising the flag' is a standard blend in which power relations are given entirely by the fact that the flag is above. In this blend, there is no significance in

which way the flag blows or even whether it blows at all. But in the *New York Times* flag blend, new structure has emerged: China, a nation, a government, a physical object, specifically a flag, is now affected by physical force, a breeze, capitalism, Hong Kong, the governed political entity. This new blend uses the standard metaphoric connection between physical forces and causation to give an odd inference: the higher, governing element is controlled by what it governs; China, the flag, is controlled by Hong Kong capitalism, the breeze. This irony is the point of the article. It is further elaborated in many interesting ways—if China had not taken over Hong Kong, had not raised its flag over Hong Kong, then Hong Kong, the breeze, would have had no opportunity to influence China, the flag.

There is a second interesting reversal in the *New York Times* blend. In a different standard flag blend, there is indeed significance in which way the flag blows and whether the flag blows at all. In this blend, the flag is not merely a physical object but also an animate agent: flag and nation are personified, or at least given some features of animacy. This blend underlies descriptions of the U.S. flag as 'proudly snapping in the breeze' and of the 'once-proud Soviet flag' now 'drooping'. In this blend, internal psychology of the flag/person/nation causes the movement/behavior of the flag. Appearance is the index of psychology. But in the *New York Times* blend, the movement/behavior of the flag/nation is caused not by China but by something else—Hong Kong, the breeze, capitalism.

Examples like these suggest that basic metaphors should be reanalyzed to determine whether they depend upon hidden conceptual blending. We have argued elsewhere that basic metaphoric connections—such as the metaphoric connection between anger and heat, or between failure and death—give rise to conventional blends like 'Steam was coming out his ears' and 'You are digging your own grave'. In fact, even the most famous of all basic metaphors, the 'conduit metaphor of communication', analyzed by Michael Reddy in 1979, requires conventional blending. In this basic metaphor, a sender (speaker) places an object (meaning) into a container (expression) and sends it (expresses it) to a receiver (hearer) who opens the container (processes the expression) to take out the object (understand the meaning). This metaphor underlies expressions like, 'I am trying to put my thoughts into words' and 'I am not getting much meaning out of this poem'.

But we can also use the conduit metaphor in saying, 'Most of the meaning this poststructural critic finds in *Paradise Lost* simply isn't there'. In the source domain of physical objects and containers, 'finding' something presupposes its existence in the location where it is found, so it must be impossible to find a physical object in a container if it isn't in the container. But in the blend, the object/meaning depends for its existence upon the mental work of the receiver, so it can be there for the critic but not for the poet.

## Visual blends

Before we turn to language, it is best to emphasize that blending is not restricted to language. Blending is, for example, common in visual representation, from Renaissance and early modern paintings of the Annunciation to contemporary newspaper cartoons. An issue of *The New York Times*, *The Economist*, *The Washington Post*, *Figaro*, or any American news magazine will usually include many visual blends, or rather, visual representations that evoke conceptual blends.

Consider an advertisement for a Zip disk, a data storage device in a squarish, flat housing. The circular hole in the middle of the casing reveals a metal circle used in turning the disk mechanically. The ad shows the Zip disk standing up, its central circle transformed into a camera lens. A small flash bulb and a shutter release button have been added, and a photographic print is rolling out of its lower section as if the Zip disk were a Polaroid camera delivering a print. The ad asks us to think of a Zip disk as a digital photo album—the storage disk is camera-like not in taking the picture but in delivering the picture, and is album-like in serving as a repository of the image. The image can go back into this disk-camera-album and come back out as many times as you like.

Visual representations that prompt for blends often exploit accidental connections ingeniously. The divided Apple Computer Corporation is depicted as a quartered apple, with printed circuits for flat interior surfaces and computer chips for seeds. An illustration on the cover of *The Economist* for a story about the dangers of genetic explanations of behavior depicts an abstract human being controlled like a puppet by threads/chains that are double helixes. A Samsung all-in-one office machine is depicted as a Swiss Army knife with its blades out: the helical corkscrew is the helical phone cord, and so on. A news story, 'Can Pepsi Become the Coke of Snacks: Using Fritos, Not Fizz to Conquer the World' shows distinctive snack foods pouring out of a Pepsi can. We are meant to construct a conceptual blend in which the Pepsi can is the Pepsi Corporation and the distinctive snack foods are produced by corporations owned by Pepsi.

An ad for the J.P. Morgan Company shows a man striding purposefully up the stairs. He is going to plummet, since the middle stairs are missing. But an enormous key—J.P. Morgan Company—is being pushed by three employees into place, its round head down and its blade in line with the stairs, so that its perfectly regular notches will serve as the missing stairs, arriving in place just as the man requires them to sustain his *ad astra* ascent into wealth. The caption for this visual blend exploits its unobvious nature—'Morgan means more than the obvious solution'. In small print, 'The obvious solution may not always be the one that takes you furthest'. Visual blends like these are common, once you look for them.

## Conceptual Integration and Linguistic Constructions

Conceptual integration typically works below the horizon of observation. It is a general cognitive operation with many functions and wide application. It is routine, cognitively cheap, and not restricted to exceptional examples. It occurs dynamically in the moment of thinking, acting, and speaking, for local purposes, but its products can become entrenched. Often, it builds on those entrenched products to yield hyperblends. It interacts with other cognitive operations, such as analogy, metaphor, mental modeling, categorization, and framing.

Research on blending includes research on language. We have often argued (see, e.g. Turner 1991:206), that expressions do not mean, but are prompts, usually minimal, to construct meanings by working with mental processes we already know. The meaning of an expression is never 'right there in the words'. Understanding an expression is never understanding 'just what the words say'; the words themselves say nothing independent of the richly detailed knowledge and powerful cognitive processes we bring to bear.

Many expressions prompt for blending. To make this point, we have often cited the example of a modern philosopher saying in seminar, 'I claim that reason is a self-developing capacity. Kant disagrees with me on this point. He says it's innate, but I answer that that's begging the question, to which he counters, in *Critique of Pure Reason*, that only innate ideas have power'. In the blend, Kant and the philosopher are holding a debate. Words like 'agree', 'disagree', 'retort', 'answer', 'respond', 'counter', 'yes', 'no', 'yes and no', and so on can be used to pick out elements in the blend, and we know the relation of that 'debate' blend to the input story of Kant and to the input story of the modern philosopher.

'McJobs' asks us to think of a blend that constitutes an extended category of entry-level, low-paying, stultifying, impersonal, insecure jobs that offer little opportunity for advancement. Adjective-noun compounds like 'artificial life' and 'military democracy' have the same purpose. Noun-noun compounds like 'house boat', 'computer virus', 'bond ghouls', and 'same-sex marriage' also suggest obvious blends.

## The Ditransitive Construction

It may be less obvious that clausal constructions can also prompt for blending. Consider the Ditransitive Construction in English, analyzed by Adele Goldberg (1995). A prototypical example is 'Bill gave Mary a gift', with prototypical syntax

NounPhrase1—Verb—NounPhrase2—NounPhrase3.

By itself, the verb 'give' evokes an abstract conceptual schema in which a causal agent, by some means, successfully causes the transfer of an object to a

recipient. Call this schema 'D' for 'ditransitive schema'. By itself, the verb 'pour' does not evoke D ('The water poured out of the drain pipe'), yet when 'pour' is used in the ditransitive syntax ('Bill poured Mary some wine'), the construction evokes schema D: Bill causes the transfer of a glass of wine to Mary.

For the complexities of the ditransitive construction and its relation to other constructions (e.g. 'I baked Joe a cake' versus 'I baked a cake for Joe'), we refer the reader to Goldberg (1995). Our purpose here is to use the English ditransitive construction as an illustration of the way in which a clausal construction can prompt for blending, especially including two-sided blending.

The ditransitive construction prompts for a blend B that has two inputs. D and ID is the abstract but highly-integrated ditransitive schema. I is a set of unintegrated elements to which the words refer. The blend B is *two-sided*, by which we mean that B takes some of its organizing schema-level structure from each of its inputs, D and I. Although Goldberg (1995) does not use the model of conceptual integration, various two-sided blends are implicit in her analysis. The following is a restatement of her claims in the vocabulary of the network model, with some slight changes.

If D and I have organizing schemas that match closely, their blend takes its organizing schema from both D and I. This is the case for verbs that inherently signify acts of giving an object (give, pass, hand, serve, feed ...), verbs of instantaneous causation of ballistic motion (throw, toss, slap, kick, poke, fling, shoot ...), and verbs of continuous causation in a deictically specified direction (bring, take ...).

But if the verb is a verb of refusal (refuse, deny) as in 'The boss denied Bill a raise', then the blend B takes the potential recipient and the potential patient from D but the causing of the not receiving from I, with the result that D is counterfactual with respect to B.

If the verb is a verb of giving with associated satisfaction conditions (guarantee, promise, owe ...), then the blend takes from I kinds of causal structure for reception that are not in D.

If the verb involves a scene of creation (bake, make, build, cook, sew, knit ...) or a verb of obtaining (get, grab, win, earn ...), then B takes from D intention to cause the recipient to receive the patient, and invites us to take success as well, but does not require it. If you 'feed Joe a cake', he almost certainly receives it, but not so if you merely 'bake Joe a cake' (and even less so if you 'bake a cake for Joe').

If the verb is a verb of permission (permit, allow...), then B takes enablement from I rather than successful causation from D.

If the verb is a verb of future transfer (leave, bequeath, allocate, reserve, grant ...), then the blend takes future transfer from I rather than successful causation of present reception from D.

These blends fall into conceptual classes, each class with its own two-sided organizing schema, and each with its associated classes of verbs. These two-sided conceptual blends, and the use of the ditransitive construction to evoke them, can become conventional, so that the ditransitive can be associated not only with the prototypical schema D but also with these various abstract two-sided blends.

In fact, this only scratches the surface of the conventional conceptual integration that can be prompted for by the English ditransitive construction. There are various metaphoric blends that have D as one input. Although Goldberg does not use the model of conceptual integration, there is a taxonomy of metaphoric blends implicit in her analysis, as follows:

(1) D is conventionally blended with an abstract schema for *causing an effect for an entity*. This produces a metaphoric blend in which the effect is an object and causing the effect for the entity is causing the object to come to the entity. This conventional blend inherits the ditransitive syntax from D, so one can say 'The medicine brought him relief' and 'She gave me a headache'.

(2) D is conventionally blended with a schema for *communication*. This produces a metaphoric blend, analyzed by Reddy (1979), in which meaning is an object and communicating it to someone is giving it to a recipient. This conventional blend inherits the ditransitive syntax from D, so one can say 'She told Jo a fairy tale'.

(3) There is a conventional blend of *motion of an object toward a recipient with perceiving*. In the blend, perceiving is reception of the 'perception' by the recipient. This metaphoric blend is exploited as a basis for producing a more detailed metaphoric blend, with D as one input and *causing someone to perceive* as the other. In this more detailed blend, a perception is an object and causing someone to perceive it is transferring it to him. This blend inherits the ditransitive syntax from D, so one can say, 'He showed Bob the view'.

(4) D is conventionally blended with *directing an action at another person*. In this metaphoric blend, the action is an object and directing it at another person is transferring it to her as recipient. This blend inherits the ditransitive syntax from D, so one can say 'She threw him a parting glance'.

(5) There is a conventional metaphoric blend of *constructing an object out of parts and developing an argument*. In this blend, facts and assumptions used in arguing are parts used in constructing. This blend is exploited as a basis for a more detailed blend, of D and *granting facts and assumptions to an arguer*. In this more detailed blend, granting a fact or assumption to the arguer is transferring it to her as recipient. This blend inherits the ditransitive syntax from D, so one can say, 'I'll give you that assumption'.

There is an interesting final case. Goldberg observes correctly that in expressions like 'Slay me a dragon', one of the input spaces has an agent performing an action for the benefit of someone else, and the first postverbal noun refers to the

beneficiary while the second postverbal noun refers not to what the recipient receives but rather to what the causal agent acts upon. We offer the following explanation, which we think follows the spirit of Goldberg's analysis closely even though it uses the model of blending and a mildly different array of input schemas.

D inheres in a more detailed but highly conventional schema D'. In D', someone brings a benefit to someone by transferring an object to him. For example, 'Bill gave me a dollar' is typically understood as meaning not only that a dollar was transferred but that a benefit (e.g., the ability to purchase) was conferred by means of the transfer. 'Mary poured Bob a glass of wine' is typically understood as meaning not only that a glass of wine was poured with the intention of transfer but also that a benefit (e.g., wherewithal for pleasure or nourishment) was intended to be conferred by means of pouring and (intended) giving. Of course D is not always an instance of D': 'My child handed me his banana peel' is probably D but not D', because there is no intended conferral of benefit. Nonetheless, the ditransitive syntax is attached not only to D but also to D', and, depending on vocabulary and context, it is usually a good strategy to try to interpret ditransitive syntax as evoking D'. In the ditransitive construction, the second postverbal noun always refers to the patient (metaphoric or not) of the causal agent's action, whether or not that patient is also the transferred object (metaphoric or not).

What happens in 'Slay me a dragon', 'Carry me two messages' (said by the Queen to her messenger), and 'Slide me a bass trombone' (sung by James Taylor to the band) is a two-sided, selective projection to the blend, with D' as one input, as follows. From D', the blend takes a causal agent performing an action on an object (metaphoric or not) and the intended consequent conferral of a benefit on someone, but the blend does *not* take the reception of an object. The blend inherits the ditransitive syntax associated with D', and, as always in the ditransitive, the patient of the causal action (*a dragon, two messages, a base trombone*) is assigned to the second postverbal noun.

### The XYZ Construction

The XYZ construction is specialized to evoke blending. 'Money is the root of all evil' and 'Brevity is the soul of wit' are examples of this construction, first noticed by Aristotle, in the following passage:

'As old age (D) is to life (C), so is evening (B) to day (A). One will accordingly describe evening (B) as the 'old age of the day' (D + A)—or by the Empedoclean equivalent; and old age (D) as the 'evening' or 'sunset of life' (B + C).  
—*Poetics*, 1457B.

Consider 'Vanity is the quicksand of reason'. The XYZ syntax prompts for a conceptual mapping scheme involving conceptual integration<sup>3</sup>. The scheme is complicated: X (*vanity*) and Z (*reason*) are to be grouped into a single mental array; Y (*quicksand*) is to be placed inside a different mental array; some unspecified cross-domain mapping is to be found in which Y (*quicksand*) is the counterpart of X (*vanity*); an unmentioned W (e.g., *traveler*) is to be found in the Y (*quicksand*) domain such that W (*traveler*) can be the counterpart of Z (*reason*); X and Y are to be integrated (*vanity-quicksand*); W and Z are to be integrated (*reason-traveler*); the X-Z (*vanity-reason*) relation is to be integrated with the Y-W (*quicksand-traveler*) relation. A great deal—what the relevant conceptual domains are, their internal organization, what W and the other unmentioned counterparts might be, the nature of the relevant relations, and so on—must be constructed by the understander without further formal prompting.

The products of XYZ mappings are diverse:

*Adams Morgan is the Greenwich Village of Washington, D.C.*

*He's the Babe Ruth of Hungarian kayaking.*

*Sex is the ancilla of art.*

*Sex is the poor man's opera.*

*Children are the riches of poor men.*

*The wages of sin is death.*

*The harlot's cry, from street to street, / Will be Old England's winding sheet*  
(Blake).

In 'Vanity is the quicksand of reason', the two mental arrays connected by the mapping (the *quicksand* space and the *reason* space) are radically unlike: one involves geographical travel while the other involves internal personal psychology. In contrast, 'Adams Morgan is the Greenwich Village of Washington, D.C.', has two mental arrays that share a specific conceptual frame: *city and its neighborhoods*. In 'Paul Erdos is the Euler of our century', the mental arrays connected by the mapping share not only a frame (*mathematician*) but many details not standard for that frame: both Euler and Erdos were exceptionally prolific; both lived a long time; both worked in a number of fields; each was eminent but never quite attained the status of a mathematician like Gauss and Newton; and so on. 'Erdos is the Euler of our century' feels quite different from 'Vanity is the quicksand of reason', but they

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<sup>3</sup> For the original work on the XYZ construction, see Mark Turner, *Reading Minds*, chapter nine, 'The Poetry of Connections, III'; and Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, 1994, 'Conceptual Projection and Middle Spaces'.

involve the identical syntactic form paired with the identical pattern of conceptual mapping.

## **Satan, Sin, and Death**

Literary works frequently prompt for highly intricate blending. Milton's portrayal of Satan as father in the second book of *Paradise Lost*, analyzed in Turner (1987), is an extended display of two-sided blending.

The commonplace notion of Satan is already a blend for which a conceptual domain has been elaborated. Satan is a blend of individual human being—thinking, talking, desiring, intending, and so on—and theological ontology. In the theological space, there are eternal features (e.g. evil) as well as non-human powers and limitations. Satan is anthropomorphic, but he has theological features and unhuman conditions. The blended domain for Satan is quite elaborated—Satan has like-minded colleagues in the form of a cohort of devils; Satan and the devils form an intricate hierarchical organization of social groups; and so on. This blended domain is entrenched both conceptually and linguistically. Consequently, although the blend is in some ways two-sided, expressions like 'The devil made me do it' or 'Get thee behind me, Satan'—or even expressions based on further blending, such as the reference to a child as a 'little devil'—do not feel especially figurative.

Milton extends this blend in ways that seem strikingly figurative and allegorical. Milton's theological space includes evil, disobedience, sin, death, and their relations, as well as the psychology of the prototypical sinner confronted with spiritual death. Milton's kinship space includes progeneration and kinship relations, especially the role *father*. He adds to the kinship space a pre-existing blend, of the birth of Athena from the brow of Zeus.

In Milton's blend, Satan conceives of the concept of sin; a fully grown woman, Sin, leaps from his brow. Satan is attracted to sin/Sin: he has sex with her. Although he does not know it at the time, his involvement with sin/Sin has a consequence, namely death—in the blend, Death is the male offspring of Satan's incestuous involvement with Sin. Death rapes his mother, causing her to give birth to a small litter of allegorical monsters.

After Satan has been sent to Hell and has decided to try to escape, he meets two characters at the gates of Hell who have been stationed there to keep him in. They are Sin and Death. He does not recognize them.

The mental spaces that contribute to this blended story—the kinship space and the theological space—correspond in some ways but not others. Milton draws from both of them, selectively, to create a two-sided blend. For example, he takes exclusively from the kinship space Sin's intercession between Death and Satan—father and son—when they are on the brink of terrible combat.

He takes exclusively from the theological space many central features, as follows. In the theological space, the cast of mind that goes with thrilling sin ignores the fact that mortality and spiritual death are sin's consequences and is appalled to acknowledge them. Hence, in the blend, Sin is surprised to have conceived Death, and she finds her son odious. Next, in the theological space, mortality and spiritual death overshadow the appeal of sin and are stronger than sin; acknowledging death devalues sin; willful, sinful desires are powerless to stop this devaluation. Hence, in the blend, Sin is powerless to stop her horrible rape by Death. In the theological space, the fact of spiritual death brings ceaseless remorse and anguish to the sinful mind, and the torments of hell bring eternal punishment. Hence, in the blend, the rape of Sin by Death produce monstrous offspring whose birth, life, actions, and relationship to their mother are impossible for the domain of human kinship:

These yelling Monsters that with ceaseless cry  
Surround me, as thou saw'st, hourly conceiv'd  
And hourly born, with sorrow infinite  
To me, for when they list, into the womb  
That bred them they return, and howl and gnaw  
My Bowels, thir repast; then bursting forth  
Afresh with conscious terrors vex me round,  
That rest or intermission none I find.

Milton creates unobvious correspondences between the kinship space and the theological space. For example, he blends the unusual scenario of disliking a child with feeling horror at the fact of death. He blends the unusual scenario of a son raping a mother with the effect of death on sin.

Perhaps most ingeniously, he blends the unusual medical frame of traumatic vaginal birth that physically deforms the mother, making her less attractive, with the way sin becomes less attractive once death is acknowledged as its outcome:

At last this odious offspring whom thou seest  
Thine own begotten, breaking violent way  
Tore through my entrails, that with fear and pain  
Distorted, all my nether shape thus grew  
Transform'd.

Although Milton's portrayal of Satan as a father is two-sided, it preserves considerable structure associated with *father* and *birth*. Consider first the paternity of Death. The 'father' has human form and speaks human language, is excited by feminine beauty, and has anthropomorphic sex with an anthropomorphic female in a

prototypical human scene. There is a birth through a vaginal canal. The son inherits attributes of both father and mother. Father and adolescent son have a conflict over authority. And so on. Now consider the paternity of Sin. The father again has human form and speaks human language. There is an offspring in human form, who emerges from a container-like body part and who develops into a sexual being.

Other examples, taken from *Death is the Mother of Beauty*, show a different projection from the space of *father* and *birth*. ‘Satan, liar and father of lies’ does not take the anthropomorphic offspring. ‘The acorn is the father of the oak’ takes neither anthropomorphic form nor anthropomorphic progeneration for either father or child. ‘Thy wish was father to that thought’ (Shakespeare) does not take physical distinction for either father or child. Similar two-sidedness appears in ‘Fear, father of cruelty’ (Ezra Pound), ‘Pain is the father of complaint’ (Sidney), ‘Love’s extremity is the father of foul jealousy’ (Spenser), and ‘Pale desire, father of Curiosity’, (Blake).

Consider as a final example the XYZ expression ‘The child is the father of the man’ (Wordsworth). The two inputs—father-and-child versus child-growing-to-man—come from the same conceptual domain, human life. But the example feels figurative, for the following reasons. First, the cross-space connections are highly resisted because they run counter to usual categories: *Immature child* in the first input has as its counterpart *father* in the second input, and *grown man* in the first input has as its counterpart *immature child* in the second input. Second, the blend must integrate frame-level structure from both inputs in a particularly surprising way. The chronological *child* in the blend takes from the input of father-and-child the relative influence (and even causal role) of the father, but it takes from the input of child-to-grown-man the relative *youth* of the child. The chronological *man* in the blend takes from the input of child-to-man the maturity of the man, but it takes from the input of father-and-child the dependency of the child.

The oddness of its counterpart connections and the extensive two-sidedness of its blend help make Wordsworth’s line feel figurative. But the syntax and mapping scheme of ‘The child is the father of the man’ are the same as the syntax and the mapping scheme of ‘John is the father of Mary’. Both prompt for a conceptual mapping scheme involving conceptual blending.

## The Scope of Blending

The cognitive study of language, which seeks an approach to language fitting the empirical facts, goes beyond both a philological interest in the history of words and a formal interest in the patterns of grammar to a cognitive scientific interest in basic mental operations that underlie language and that are indispensable to human understanding. Conceptual blending is a basic mental operation. It plays a role in grammar, semantics, discourse, meaning, visual representation, mathematics, jokes,

cartoons, and poetry. It is indispensable to the poetics of literature because it is fundamental to the poetics of mind.

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# ***In the Mind's Eye:*** **The Role of Conceptual Blending** **in having Others See What you Mean**

**Rembrandt Klopper**

Only man<sup>1</sup>  
while roaming  
between present, future and past  
stumbles across the crevice to the caves  
of reason.  
(D.J. Opperman - *Fire Beast*)

## **On Humanity's Language Capacity**

Reduced to its essence language is a neurological process that enables an individual human to give others access to her/ his innermost conscious awarenesses, and to gain access to the innermost conscious awarenesses of others, thereby creating a mental state of shared or communal consciousness known as communication.

Communication is a meeting of minds during which two or more individual participants use extensive sets of symbols in a complex variety of patterns to see eye to eye, to have in mind and exchange concepts about the same aspects of a commonly experienced present, a remembered past an envisaged future or an imagined alternative reality.

Traditional approaches to grammatical description such as Structural Linguistics<sup>2</sup> and most modern approaches such as Generative Grammar<sup>3</sup> assume that

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<sup>1</sup> Alleen die mens / tref in sy swerwe / tussen hede, toekoms en verlede / die spleet tot grotte / van die rede. D.J. Opperman in *Vuurbees*.

<sup>2</sup> Sapir ([1921]1949); Jespersen ([1922]1968); Bloomfield ([1935]1953); Harris ([1951]1969) and Gleason ([1955]1970).

<sup>3</sup> There are hundreds of possible references to Generative Grammar, the dominant theory of the twentieth century. Radford (1992) gives a good overview.

literal language is natural language, and that figurative language is a specialised or even deviant adaptation of literal language.

In this paper I will firstly show that figurative language is natural language as much as literal language is, and secondly how conceptual blending, an associative process of cognitive projection, forms the basis of figurative language.

## Figurative Language as Natural Language

Forms of figurative language such as metaphor, simile and metonymy are generally assumed to be deviant forms of literal language that are confined to literary styles found in poetry, prose and drama. It is also assumed that the language of everyday communication, as well as the language of science is literal. Even Searle (1984), a prominent exposition of the cognitive basis of speech acts, assumes that literal interpretation is the primary mode, and figurative interpretation the secondary mode of interpretation. By Searle's account people initially attempt to make a literal interpretation of what they hear or read, and failing that, they resort to figurative interpretation.

This view however takes no account of the parallel distributed nature of cognition, and particularly humanity's cognitive capacity to simultaneously interpret lexical (semantic) and syntactic cues as reported by Kutas & Kluender (1991).

I would like to suggest that this anticipatory capacity enables a person to instantly discern between figurative and literal language on the basis of the extent to which two sets of semantic information are neurologically entrenched (habitually associated with one another). Consider for example the Adjective-Noun combination *red pen*. If asked about the meaning of this expression people will unproblematically reply that it can either refer to a pen that is red on the outside, or a pen containing red ink that one uses if one wants to make red markings on a document or drawing. Whatever the predominant interpretation is in this case, will be a matter of subjective preference, not a matter of logical necessity.

Now consider the meaning of the expression *red face*. It can be interpreted as a face that is literally red due to exertion, overexposure to the sun, or having been painted red. It can also be interpreted as a metaphoric reference to embarrassment. *Red face* is predominantly interpreted as referring to embarrassment, in spite of a literal interpretation being possible people have come to associate this combination of adjective and noun with embarrassment.

Knowing then that humanity's anticipatory capacity entails that each of us cognitively provide a framework of semantic information as context for the lexemes to be interpreted, and assuming that this capacity enables one to instantly discern whether an expression is figurative or literal, how do we conceptually make this distinction? There are several competing theories that try and answer this question. The one that makes the most sense to me is known as conceptual blending.

## Conceptual Blending

The theory of conceptual blending (Fauconnier & Turner 1994; Turner & Fauconnier 1995) forms part of the general theory of Cognitive Grammar (Langacker 1987; 1990; 1991; Sweetser 1993; Fauconnier 1985; Cutrer; 1994 and Cognitive Literary Theory (Lakoff & Turner 1989; Turner 1991). Collectively these disciplines are referred to as *Cognitive Rhetoric*.

Conceptual blending accounts for a person's capacity to interrelate and blend concepts extracted from his vast conceptual network of knowledge. It is a momentary process of symbolisation that selectively interrelates concepts from two separate cognitive domains, a target space and a source space to conceptualise a new perceived relationship known as a blended space.

Blending should not be equated to the fusing of information. During blending the various types of information belonging to the target, source and blended spaces are interrelated, but remain conceptually distinct in each space.

## Metaphor as Conceptual Blending

When a person not familiar with life in desert circumstances for instance uses or interprets the metaphor *The camel is the ship of the desert*, he uses the ship, a commonly known means of transport as source to explain aspects of the camel, a lesser known means of transport. The ship is used as source to project known concepts onto the camel as target to generate new insights about the camel. By arriving at new insights about the camel he has performed the act of conceptual blending. The process is explained and schematised below.

1 Of all the things that one knows about ships and the sea, and camels and deserts, only those comparable aspects are selected that relate to ships and camels as means of transport.

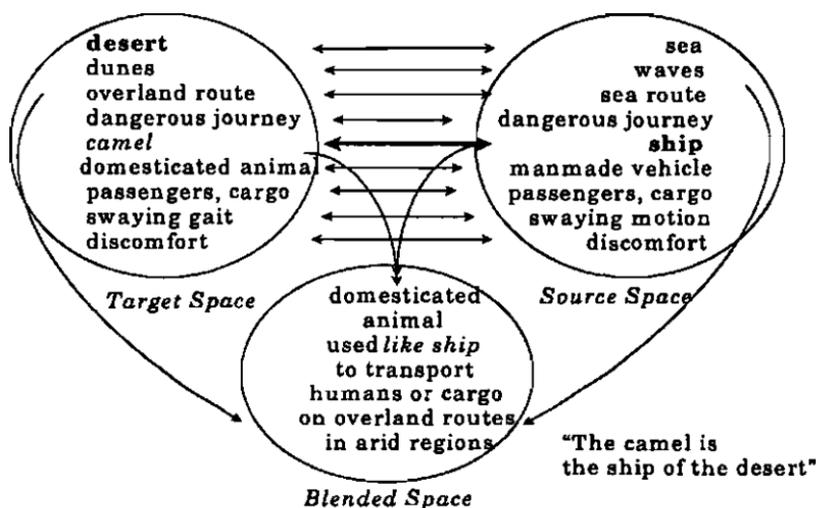
2 Only the lexemes *camel*, *ship* and *desert* are overtly supplied to the interpreter by the metaphor, with all other elements of meaning in the target and source spaces being covertly drawn from his conceptual network of knowledge.

3 *Ship*, the better known entity in the source space is analogically equated to *camel*, the less known entity in the target space.

4 The interpreter initially conceptualises the differences between the seascape and landscape by contrasting desert and sea, dunes and waves, camel and ship, but subsequently focuses on similarities by noting that a ship as a humanly made vehicle is comparable to a camel as a domesticated animal, by noting that both are used to carry passengers or cargo, that both have a swaying motion that causes discomfort during a journey.

5 Some interpreters may also note that as far as the availability of fresh water is concerned the sea is as arid as a desert.

6 The sets of information in the source and target spaces about the ship and camel form the basis of the projected information in the blended space about the camel being used like a ship to transport humans or cargo on overland routes in arid regions.



The two top circles in the representation contain the essential concepts of the target and source spaces, and the bottom circle the concepts of the blended space.<sup>4</sup> Interrelated concepts in the source and target spaces are indicated by bi-directional horizontal arrows. Concepts projected from the source and target spaces to establish new insights in the blended space are indicated by downward-curving arrows.

A metaphor like *The camel is the ship of the desert* is so powerful because it in quick succession creates and releases psychological tension in the mind of the interpreter. The metaphor initially evokes incredulity by comparing two diametrically opposed regions like a desertscape and a seascape. The tension is subsequently released when a rationale for belief is presented in the form of subtle similarities such as the featurelessness of both topographies, the visual similarities between dunes and waves, the fact that uncomfortable and dangerous journeys are undertaken over both

<sup>4</sup> Fauconnier & Turner have a three space model and a many space model of conceptual blending. I am explaining the three space model.

regions, by comparing the camel with a ship, and lastly by the fact that both traverse regions that are hostile to those who do not have enough fresh water.

## The Ubiquity of Metaphor

Metaphor is not merely a literary device, for metaphors are commonly used in all forms of linguistic expression - in spoken as well as written language, and in all genres of written language, whether they be fiction, historiography, scientific formulation or legal discourse. I will use four examples where light and darkness are used metaphorically in diverse fields of knowledge to illustrate this point.

In all religions of the world light is equated to morality and darkness to immorality. Christ for instance called himself *the Light of the world* and called the perceived Source of Evil *the Prince of Darkness*.

Historians equate barbarism with darkness and civilisation with light when they refer to *the Dark Ages* and *the Age of Enlightenment*.

Physicists literally refer to non-visibility and figuratively allude to lack of human understanding of things cosmological when they use the term *black hole* for a super-dense entity in space where matter is so compacted by its gravitational field that it emits no visible light, or for that matter any form of radiation known to humanity.

Jurists equate legality to that which is visible and illegality to that which is concealed or shrouded in darkness when they *reveal* a witness' *concealed* motives, or when they present new evidence that has *come to light*.

## Conceptual Metaphors

The pervasiveness of metaphor in everyday language was for the first time highlighted with the publication in 1980 of Lakoff & Johnson's *Metaphors we live by*. Since then research about human cognition has increasingly confirmed the central role of metaphor in our conceptual system, in our perception of things around us, in how we interact with the physical world, and particularly with our fellow human beings. Such basic, concept-structuring metaphors have become known as conceptual metaphors.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980a) and (1980b) discuss scores of conceptual metaphors. I will for the purposes of illustration just refer to two conceptual metaphors, namely firstly the metaphor based on humanity's view of things around him resulting from his vertical / upright orientation, and secondly the metaphor based on humanity's awareness of his own self.

The vertical dimension enables us to perceive that which is nearer to the ground as being less than that which is further from the ground. We structure our concepts of more and less in terms of the conceptual metaphor HIGHER IS MORE,

LOWER IS LESS. Prices and the value of shares go *up* or *down*, they can be *sky high* or *rock bottom*. The economy can be in an *upward* or *downward* phase.

We also structure our concepts of *better* and *worse* in terms higher and lower by means of the conceptual metaphor HIGHER IS BETTER, LOWER IS WORSE. One can be *upbeat* about something, or *downcast*. We consider people to be of *high* or *low* intelligence. We have a *high* or *low* regard for them, depending on whether or not they have *high* or *low* moral standards. People can be of *high* or *low* upbringing, and have *high* or *low* self esteem.

Man's self-awareness essentially is self-centredness as expressed in the conceptual metaphor WHERE THE SELF IS, IS GOOD; AWAY FROM THE SELF IS BAD. An unacceptable person can be a *scatterbrain*, can *go to pieces*, *fall apart*, *go to the dogs*, *go crazy*, *go off his head* or *go to hell*. A person that one approves of on the other hand can *have his act together*, be *coherent* in relation to his own self, or in relation to your-self can *come to his senses*, *come right*, *come to power*, *come to a conclusion*, or be an *up and coming* young lawyer. If one is trying to convince someone of your point of view, you can say: *Come, let's think about it*, *Are you with me so far?*, *You're way behind me*, or *We're miles apart on this issue*.

## What Metaphors Reveal about Domains of Knowledge

Persons associated with particular domains of knowledge, such as physicists or lawyers for instance, invariably engage in ongoing metatheoretic discussions of their chosen discipline or profession. The thematic patterns of metaphors used in such a profession clearly reveal how such participants view themselves and their discipline or profession.

The adversarial nature of legal proceedings for instance is based on the conceptual metaphor ARGUMENTATION IS WARFARE. *Opposing* council are *engaged in a battle of wits*. If council for the *defence* has a *strong case* he will present *unassailable arguments* and will *outmanoeuvre* or *outflank* opposing council. Council may in the end *concede defeat*. One can *sink* your opponent's defence, or an argument can *blow up in your face*.

If we say that a witness who changes his testimony *beats a hasty retreat* we are invoking another battle field image of yesteryear, namely that of the drummer who instructed his comrades by means of the drum-beat to attack if things went well, or to retreat as the tide of battle turned against them.

When we say that *someone is upholding the law* or that he has *high moral standards* both these metaphors simultaneously obtain their power of persuasion from two independent conceptual metaphors, namely HIGHER IS BETTER and ARGUMENTATION IS WARFARE. We liken the law or morals to the medieval standards which were held aloft for encouragement and unity over columns of foot soldiers, thereby signalling to them that the battle was going well.

## Conclusion

In this paper I demonstrated that figurative language is natural language as much as literal language is, and I showed how metaphor as an instance of conceptual blending contributes to the process of interpretation by allowing the interpreter to conceptualise new interrelationships in terms of that which he already knows.

Language structure is a neurologically stabilised cognitive process of symbolisation that allows human beings to habitually use lexemes in predictable sequences and patterns of combination. Conceptual blending is an extremely powerful momentary cognitive process of selectively associating apparently unrelated concepts that are in fact significant and contribute to a new understanding of some aspect of reality. Blending not only plays a key role in the process of creating new insights by interrelating concepts in one's mind, it also is the almost invisible doorway through which each individual passes in the meeting of minds.

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# ***Untangling the Web:*** **Inferential Links in a Narrative of Deceit, Repentance and Forgiveness**

**Rembrandt Klopper**

The regions of the mind remain uncharted<sup>1</sup>.  
(D.J. Opperman - Night vigil at the old man's side)

## **Motivation**

In this paper I analyse the parable that Nathan told to King David about a rich man who slaughtered a poor man's lamb to feed a visitor. As analytical procedure I utilise the theory of conceptual blending that was first formulated in Fauconnier (1985) as a theory of mental spaces, but which has subsequently been expanded and refined by Fauconnier & Turner and others, and renamed the theory of *conceptual blending*.

When I first came across a reference to Nathan's parable in Turner (1996) I decided that it would be the ideal narrative to test Fauconnier and Turner's theory of conceptual blending. Reading the events before and after Nathan's visit to King David along with the parable, we have a surprisingly frank account of how David lusted after the wife of one of his subjects, how he made her pregnant, how he had the hapless man assassinated so that he could take her as one of his wives, and finally how he repented and accepted his punishment when confronted with his deceit. It is a compact but powerful tale of deceit, repentance and forgiveness. Precisely the elements required to demonstrate how we blend a variety of mental spaces while interpreting narratives.

Finally, I chose the parable because its small event stories and small action stories reflect traces of somatic marking<sup>2</sup>, a neurological process described by Damasio (1994).

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<sup>1</sup> Die streke van die gees bly ongekaart - D.J. Opperman: Nagwaak by die ou man.

<sup>2</sup> The theory of somatic marking states that all of our memories of past events are co-indexed with the emotions that we experienced at the time when the memories were formed.

## The Great Mind-Body Divide

The humanities in general and language studies in particular are being marginalised across the globe at the end of the twentieth century. The beginnings of this process can in my view be traced to the distinction that the seventeenth century French Philosopher Rene Descartes drew between the human body and the human mind as separate entities, and his subsequent linking of mind and metaphysics.

The Cartesian dilemma, as it has come to be known, is also a problem of the first order for the philosophy of science<sup>3</sup>, for it reflects present-day uncertainty about the relationship between the metaphysical and the physical. Three centuries after his death Descartes is known as 'the father of the mind-body problem'<sup>4</sup>. A number of twentieth century philosophical approaches<sup>5</sup> have proven inadequate to resolve this intractable problem, among them structuralism, phenomenology, existentialism and behaviourism.

The Cartesian dichotomy is having a negative impact on all types of qualitative human endeavour. By this I do not mean that Descartes caused the problem, merely that his formulation exposed a flaw in how man perceives his inner self in relation to the physical world.

Due to this same flaw the technocratic forces that shape the course of the twentieth century systematically value the quantitative over the qualitative. All material things are fair game. That which can be seen, touched, counted, measured, weighed and calculated can be bartered, traded, bought and sold, and is therefore considered more valuable than things metaphysical, things that can be merely understood.

The humanities have been seriously damaged by the way in which the Cartesian dichotomy has been applied to relegate the non-saleable to the realm of metaphysics, the twentieth century limbo destined for all that is considered to be non-scientific, non-technological, non-useful and imprecise.

Most texts evoke implicit subtexts in the human mind<sup>6</sup>, and subtexts are easily used as pretexts to marginalise that which is not immediately serviceable. Consequently we have during the latter half of the twentieth century also witnessed the steady marginalisation of Linguistics and Literature because they too are perceived as being metaphysical and without real practical merit.

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<sup>3</sup> See Putnam (1985; 1990) and Lakoff (1986, chapters 15 and 16).

<sup>4</sup> See New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia Release 6 (1993) Grolier Electronic Publishing, Inc. and Popper (1972:253-311).

<sup>5</sup> In order not to reinvent the wheel I merely mention these fields here without summarising or discussing them.

<sup>6</sup> The exclamation *There is no bread in the house again!* can for instance have the subtext *You should have bought bread* or *You have again forgotten to buy bread*, etc.

Is there any escape for Linguistics and Literature from the horns of the Cartesian dilemma? Happily there is. Going back to the principles established in classical rhetoric two millennia ago four interrelated disciplines - *Cognitive Semantics*<sup>7</sup>, *Cognitive Grammar*<sup>8</sup>, *Construction Grammar*<sup>9</sup> and *Cognitive Literary Theory*<sup>10</sup> - have since the nineteen eighties found common ground by studying man's language capacity as a general cognitive process, and by increasingly studying cognition as an actual neurological processes with physical manifestations. These disciplines are consequently converging by studying semantics, syntax, phonology, prosody, metaphor, narrative, figurative language, literature and persuasion as interrelated aspects of cognition. Following Turner (1991) I will use the term *Cognitive Rhetoric* to refer to these converging disciplines.

Stated briefly, the solution conceived in *Cognitive Rhetoric* entails negating the Cartesian mind-and-body divide by rediscovering the essential nature of man's language capacity, namely that it is *embodied consciousness*, a specific symbolic manifestations of general cognitive processes that all human beings use to *make sense* of that which they perceive of reality by means of their senses. The concept *embodied consciousness* does not merely entail being aware through all of one's senses. Within *Cognitive Rhetoric* it furthermore entails that the merging of sensual awarenesses forms the basis of conceptualisation, which in turn forms the basis of language structure and interpretation.

By studying language structure and interpretation as part of the general process of cognition, one can mediate the body-mind divide, one can put the whole human being in focus again, true to the original meaning of the term *Humanities*.

Our objects of investigation and the theories that we construct to analyse them are not objects *out there* at all. They are *subjects in the mind*.

## **Keeping Language in Mind**

### ***Remembering the Present***

Generalising from neurophysiological references such as Stein & Meredeth (1993), Edelman (1989, 1992) Calvin (1996a, 1996b) and Damasio (1994) one can give the following brief characterisation of the neurological basis for perceiving, conceptualising and language expression: When one or more of our senses are

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<sup>7</sup> Lakoff & Johnson (1980a; 1980b); Fauconnier (1985); Lakoff (1987); Lakoff & Turner (1989); Johnson (1987) and Sweetser (1993).

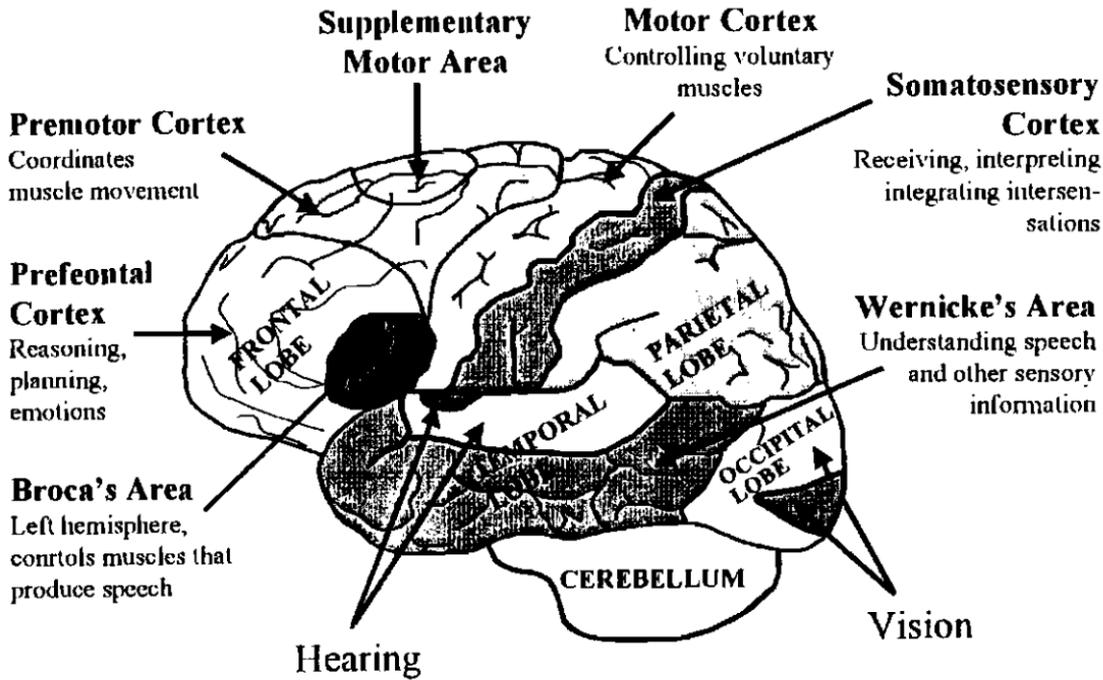
<sup>8</sup> Langacker (1987; 1990; 1991) and Deane (1992).

<sup>9</sup> Goldberg (1995); Brugman (1988); Fillmore, Kay & O'Conner (1988); Koenig (1993) and Lambrecht (1994).

<sup>10</sup> Turner (1991; 1996) and Fauconnier & Turner (1994).

stimulated by a source or multiple sources outside the human body the resultant sensory impulses are transmitted along synaptic pathways to regions of the cerebral cortex such as the occipital lobe, the temporal lobe, the adjacent motor and somatosensory cortices, the premotor cortex and the prefrontal cortex. These areas are indicated on the graphical representation of the different brain regions below:

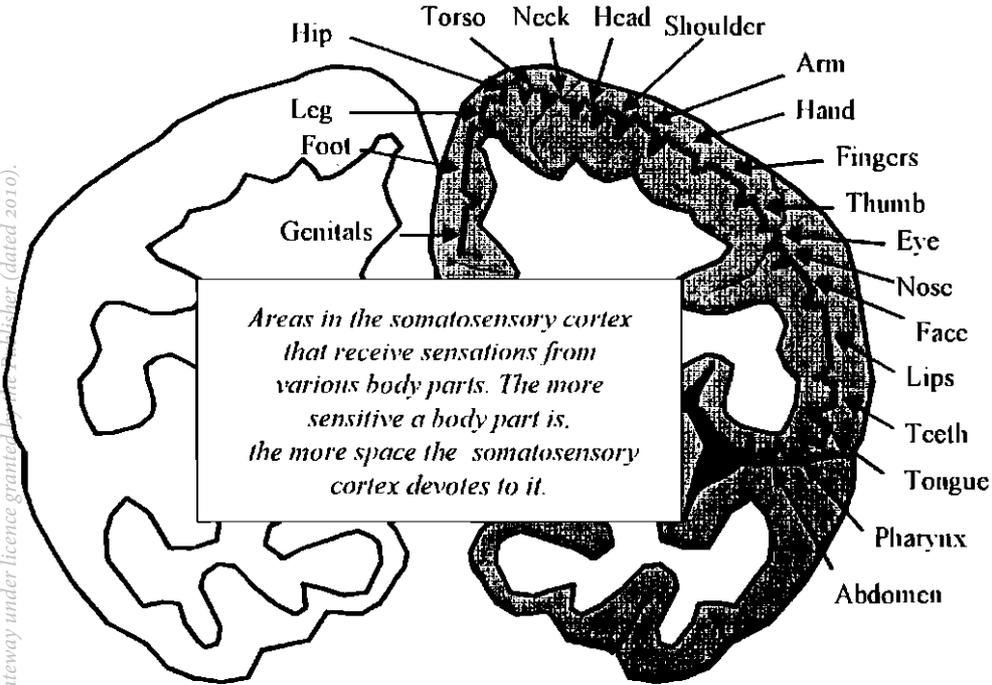
Online Gateway under license granted by the Publisher (dated 2010).



**Side view of the four functionally specialised, but interdependent lobes of the left hemisphere of the human brain**

I am providing the representation for orientation purposes only. Discussing language areas like Broca's area and Wernicke's area will detract from the focus of the paper, namely how mental spaces are formed when one reads and interprets a literary text.

In the somatosensory cortex impulses from individual senses activate sets of neurons that are coherently organised into sensory maps (for example visuotopic and tonotopic maps). These sensory maps are inter-linked to create an inter-sensory awareness of an object that is being observed. In this way an object like a cat for instance, and the sound that it makes, are associated in memory. These impulses are then transmitted to motor maps in the adjacent motor cortex for the purpose of co-ordinating the muscles that control the sensory organs. The locations of the sensory maps for the different body parts in the somatosensory cortex are schematised below:



**Cross-section of the somatosensory cortex of the human brain showing the locations of the sensory maps for only one half of the body**

The more sensitive the body part, the greater the proportion of the somatosensory cortex devoted to it. It is worth noting the extraordinary proportion of body maps, from shoulder to thumb, that are devoted to the parts of the body that are involved when one manipulates things.

When the synaptic potentials in the somatosensory and motor maps are repeatedly activated by a particular type of incoming sensation, like the image of a blue vase that one sees, the synapses are encoded to remember the vase. In this way memories are created of objects and events. Such stored impulses form part of one's long-term memory if they have become neurologically entrenched. Because particular sets of neurons in the motor maps are however used consecutively to process the impulses of different objects, the memories of prior objects often fade under the influence of impulses of the subsequent objects.

If a person has neurologically encoded the impulses representing an object like the blue vase, and he sees the vase again at a later stage the incoming impulses will activate the stored memories, allowing the experiencer to determine whether he is encountering a known or an unknown scenario. In other words, we do not merely *observe* the present. To paraphrase Damasio (1994), *we remember the present* by matching incoming sensations against remembered previous experiences.

### ***Emotion-soaked Memories***

All memories are emotion-soaked, or somatically marked, according to Damasio (1994). Somatic marking entails that every memory of an event or object is co-indexed in the somatosensory cortex for the emotive body state that pertained at the time when that memory was formed. If a person experienced joy, anger or lust at the time when he last saw someone, and if that event became neurologically entrenched, he is bound to experience the same emotions the next time he sees the person.

Humans experience three basic types of body-state emotive marking, namely unpleasant emotions, neutral emotions, and pleasant emotions. Because unpleasant and pleasant emotions are intimately linked to the human drive for survival they readily spring to the foreground in our consciousness. You immediately know (remember) whether you like or detest a person every time you come across him.

Memories that are formed of everyday events are somatically marked with a subtle, neutral emotive body state. Such memories usually operate in the background. Upon remembering such an event one will experience a hardly noticeable feeling of wellbeing, a feeling that all is OK.

Conceptual equivalents of somatically marked memory can be clearly seen in both language structure and narration. The particular lexeme that a person selects from a range of lexemes reflects somatic marking. One can *make an error*, *make a mistake*; *foul something up*, *screw something up* or *fuck something up*. A female

human being can be *a goddess, an angel, a lady, a woman, a tart or a bitch*. Food can taste *divine, like manna, delicious, scrumptious, nice, alright, bland, funny, bad, horrible or like shit*.

Positive or negative somatic marking is also reflected in the degrees of comparison of adjectives as in *friendly, friendlier, the friendliest, bad, worse, worst*, or by using adjective intensifiers as in *very nice* or *absolutely fantastic*. Emotive adjectives and intensifiers that contain more than one syllable as in *un-like-ly* or *ab-so-lute-ly* can be coded for even stronger negative or positive emotions if an expletive is inserted after the first or second syllable of the word as in *This is an un-fuck-en-like-ly story* or as in *That's ab-so-bloody-lute-ly fantastic!*

Narratives generally recount extraordinary, often dramatic events full of passion, anger, love, lust, hatred, joy, sadness, gratitude and euphoria – the pleasant and unpleasant somatic states. Neutral somatic states on the other hand would mainly be found in those sections of narratives where the scene is set for immanent dramatic events that are to follow.

Events, dramatic or mundane, do not consist of pure emotions suspended in limbo, but of human figures who do exceptional, emotion-filled things to one another. To mentally construct the figures and events of everyday life, or of fiction, we use image-schemas.

### ***Image-schematic Elements in Language***

Johnson (1987) describes image-schemas as “nonpropositional structures of imagination” (p. 19), “...structures that organize our mental representations at a level more general and abstract than that at which we form particular mental images.” (pp. 23-24). Because image-schemas “exist at a level of generality and abstraction” particular image-schemas can be used repeatedly “as identifying patterns in an indefinitely large number of experiences, perceptions, and image formations for objects or events that are similarly structured in the relevant ways.” (p.28).

A very basic visual image-schema like a square for instance can form part of the rich visual images that we observe of two dimensional objects like a handkerchief, a page, a school quad, or as part of three dimensional objects like a box, a table, a suitcase, a wardrobe, a building, etc.

On the neurocognitive level both Edelman (1989 & 1992) and Calvin (1996b) relate human concept formation and language to the theories of image-schemas and metaphor that have been developed in Cognitive Rhetoric<sup>11</sup> to account for the symbolic nature of human thought. I quote three paragraphs from the account

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<sup>11</sup> Johnson (1985); Lakoff & Turner (1989); Turner (1991); Turner & Fauconnier (1995); Turner (1996) and Robert (1997).

given by neurophysiologist William H. Calvin regarding the crucial role that image-schemas play in cognition in general and in grammar in particular:

Underlying our vast network of interrelated literal meanings (all of those words about objects and actions) are those imaginative structures of understanding such as schema and metaphor, such as the mental imagery that allows us to extrapolate a path, or zoom in on one part of the whole, or zoom out until the trees merge into a forest...

Schemas are often about one thing relative to another. They include the little words of grammar – only a few dozen in number – that position things or events relative to each other on a mental map: relative location (*above, below, in, on, at by, next to*), relative direction (*to, from, through, left, right, up, down*), relative time (*before, after, while*, and the various indicators of tense such as *-ed*), relative number (*many, few, some, the -s* of plurality), relative possibility (*can, may, might*), relative contingency (*unless, although, until, because*), possession (*of*, the possessive version of *-s, have*), agency (*by*), purpose (*for*), necessity (*must, have to*), obligation (*should, ought to*), existence (*be*), nonexistence (*no, none, not, un-*), and more.

Other common schemas are blockage, center-periphery, full-empty, more-less, near-far, splitting, attraction, balance, matching, removing a restraint, attracts, circles, part-whole, and the easy to misuse containment. Note that schemas tend to refer to movement, rather than static properties (they're often *structures* of an activity, not *attributes* of an object such as wet or cold). Even more than abstracts, schemas are flexible enough to fit many similar situations with differing details (Calvin 1996a: Chapter 10).

Because I focus on narration in this paper it is not my intention to give a systematic account of how grammar is formulated in Cognitive Linguistics. It is however worth noting in passing Calvin's first paragraph: "Underlying our vast network of interrelated literal meanings (all of those words about objects and actions) are those imaginative structures of understanding such as schema and metaphor..." Calvin's formulation implies that grammatical structures essentially are based on schematic (very general) as well as metaphoric elements of meaning.

According to the theory of image-schemas proposed in Cognitive Rhetoric the event structure of sentences can be understood in terms of basic concepts (image-schemas) like AGENT & PATIENT, EXPERIENCER & STIMULUS<sup>12</sup>, BE, MOVE, REST,

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<sup>12</sup> The Agent is the active party and the Patient the passive party in any event. The Experiencer feels sensations formed from the image of a Stimulus.

CAUSE, SOURCE, PATH, DESTINATION and CONTAINER. Particular image-schemas are combined to structure sentences on generic level. Certain sentences are perceived to be similar because they share image-schematic structure at the generic level. By this account sentences like *The baby crawled into the closet*, *The car drove into the garage*, *The students sauntered into the lecture hall* and *The snake slithered into the crevice* all share a common dynamic event structure at generic level in the form of an image-schematic story AN AGENT VOLITIONALLY MOVES ALONG A PATH INTO A CONTAINER.

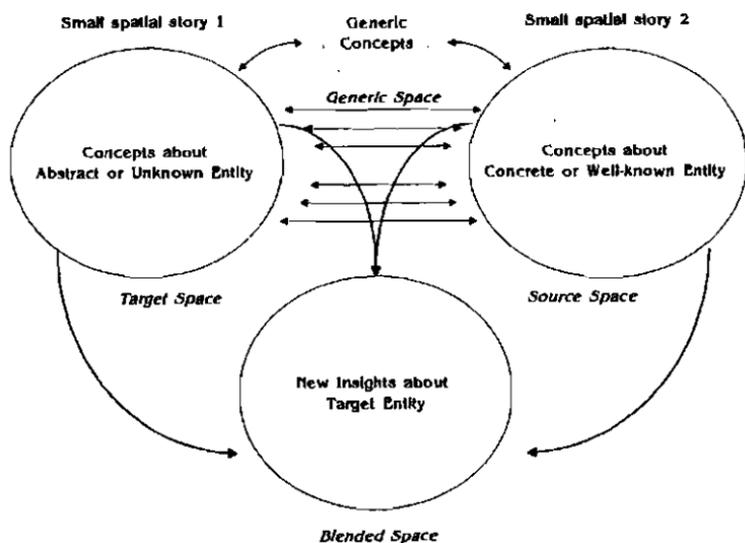
The theory of image-schemas enables us to formulate grammars that show an intimate relationship between general cognitive operations and man's special gift of using language to reveal (or hide) his innermost feelings to others during communication. It allows each sentence to narrate its own little story. Narration becomes the nursemaid of language learning and language maintenance.

## Conceptual Blending

### Mental Spaces

An important aspect of language use and interpretation is a process termed conceptual integration, or conceptual blending as it is known in Cognitive Rhetoric.

During blending apparently unrelated sets of concepts are equated by simultaneously extracting them from one's broad domains of knowledge to at least four types of smaller mental spaces, a generic space, a source space, a target space and a blended space.



The term "space" as opposed to "domain" implies that only a limited number of concepts are extracted from one's overall world knowledge to these mental spaces. Such extracted concepts are considered to be organised into tightly integrated scenes that are equated to form inferences in the fourth space, the blended space as shown above.

The general purpose of conceptual blending is to understand that which is new or abstract in terms of that which is known or concrete. The act of blending entails that we analogically equate entities that we generally consider to be different in significant respects by focusing on unexpected similarities between them. It is the unexpected similarities that enable us to project the features of the concrete entity onto the abstract entity, thereby arriving at a new understanding or blend of the abstract entity.

Knowledge that is less well understood is the target of well understood knowledge during conceptual blending. I will briefly illustrate the process by referring to metaphor, which is one of the manifestations of conceptual blending. If one is for instance irritated by the behaviour of a fellow driver, of which one after all knows very little (target space), one's knowledge of the general behaviour patterns of pigs (generic space) will serve as basis for small action story *A pig pushes other pigs away from the trough* (source space). This small action story, along one's general precepts of what constitutes fair road behaviour (generic tautological space), will enable one to metaphorically address the offending driver with any of the pejorative appellations: "Road Hog!", "Pig!" or "Swine!" (blended space).

### ***The Scope of Conceptual Blending***

According to Fauconnier & Turner (1994) conceptual blending is not limited to the interpretation of figurative language. It is used in the perception of all kinds of symbolic interrelationships that involve comparing things. Types of interrelationships that Fauconnier & Turner mention are: the integration of events into coherent scenes, problem solving, conceiving novel actions and designs, scientific innovation, discerning humour, interpreting forms of figurative language such as parable, fable, metaphor and metonymy, interrelating paradigmatic (semantic) and syntagmatic (syntactic) concepts to give content to grammatical constructions such as noun phrase, verb phrase, prepositional phrase adjectival phrase and adjunct, hypothesis formation, invention, discovery and mathematical calculations.

Fauconnier and Turner consider conceptual blending to be a fundamental aspect of human cognition. Their view coincides with that of the neurophysicist William H. Calvin who considers various types of comparing - the essence of conceptual blending - to be a central aspect of human intelligence:

Not only can many species learn abstract symbols and a simple language, but some clearly can learn categories... Closer to intelligence are the power of analogies, metaphors, similes, parables, and mental models. They involve the comparing of relationships ... (Calvin 1996a: Chapter 10).

## **Multiple Blends in Narratives**

The process of blending need not only entail a simple pattern where concepts from generic and source spaces are mapped onto a target space to obtain a blend. During narration concepts from multiple input spaces are usually involved. Any narrative has coherence because the mental spaces containing the various elements of meaning that constitute the narrative are *inferentially* linked to certain other mental spaces.

### ***Propositional Links and Image-schematic Story Links in Narratives***

Before I proceed to show how blending works in an actual narrative I want to briefly discuss the nature of inferential linking by contrasting two forms of this phenomenon, namely propositional linking and image-schematic linking.

#### ***Propositional Links***

In Cognitive Rhetoric propositional links are accorded great significance, because it is considered to be more than the necessary and sufficient logical operators used to establish the truth values of statements. Propositional links are accorded a fundamental role in the process of concept formation because propositional knowledge is considered to be grounded in the recurrent concept-structuring image-schemas that emerge from our bodily experience. According to Lakoff & Johnson (1980), Johnson (1987), Lakoff (1987) and Deane (1992) propositional image-schematic links form an intimate part of the processes of conceptualisation and conceptual integration.

Deane (1992) points out that sentences derive their coherence and stability from the fact that there always are at least two types of conceptual linkage between the elements that make up a sentence. One of these links invariably is a propositional link.

One of the functions of propositional links therefore is that they help us determine whether a statement is true or false. The sentence *The angry dinner guest strangled the waiter* partly derives its structural coherence from the fact that there are four propositional links that bind it together:

- 1 Someone strangled the waiter. (*If true*: He isn't alive any more, and he did not die in any other way. *If false*: He wasn't strangled, or he is still alive, or he died in another way).
- 2 Someone strangled the waiter. (*If true*: He is dead, and it isn't another person who was strangled. *If false*: he is alive, or it is another person who was strangled).
- 3 The dinner guest strangled the waiter (*If true*: It wasn't someone else who strangled the waiter. *If false*: Another person strangled the waiter).
- 4 The dinner guest was angry (*If true*: He wasn't in another state of mind. *If false*: he was in another state of mind).

Propositional links directly structure small spatial stories like *The angry dinner guest strangled the waiter* as indicated in the above-mentioned four statements. They however also indirectly structure the image-schematic stories that are associated with each small spatial story. This claim means that the small spatial story *The angry dinner guest strangled the waiter* and its image-schematic equivalent *An angry Agent harms a Patient* are structured by the same set of propositional inferences.

From the brief account and examples presented above it is clear that propositional links operate on concept formation level as well as sentence formation level to give coherence to concepts and to help define the structural integrity and coherence of sentences.

### ***Image-schematic Story Links***

Image-schematic stories impart image-schematic roles to small spatial stories and link different narrative lines (themes) to give overall narratives cohesion and momentum. Image-schematic stories are the narrative equivalents of the event frames that I outlined in chapter 4. I will explain the role of image-schematic story links in narratives by analysing their role in the parable found in 2nd Samuel 12:1-14. It is the parable that the prophet Nathan told to King David during a confrontation between them sometime after David had made the wife of one of his soldiers pregnant, and then had the hapless man assassinated so that he could take her as one of his wives:

<sup>1</sup> The LORD sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, "There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. <sup>2</sup>The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, <sup>3</sup>but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb that he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him.

<sup>4</sup>"Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him."

<sup>5</sup>David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, "As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this deserves to die!"

<sup>6</sup>He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity."

<sup>7</sup>Then Nathan said to David, "You are that man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. <sup>8</sup>I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more.

<sup>9</sup>Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. <sup>10</sup>Now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.'

<sup>11</sup>"This is what the LORD says: 'Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity upon you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. <sup>12</sup>You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.'"

<sup>13</sup>Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." Nathan replied, "The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. <sup>14</sup>But because by doing this you have made the enemies of the LORD show utter contempt, the son born to you will die." (*The Holy Bible, II Samuel 12*, verses 1 - 14.)

### ***King David's Initial Blend***

Conceptually the above-mentioned narrative sets up two event frames consisting of an outer and an inner frame. The outer frame sets the background for the crucial events narrated in the inner parabolic frame. The outer frame contains the figures and events relating to Nathan's visit as God's envoy to King David. The main figures of this event frame are a SUPREME BEING who is portrayed as the source of a message, His MESSENGER to one of his UNDERLINGS, and of course the MESSAGE that is being delivered. The message is in the form of a parable, a type of narrative that is constructed with the potential of rendering sequentially dual interpretations during the processes of interpretation and reinterpretation. The inner event frame needed for

the initial reading of the parable contains three independent small spatial stories that are schematised below in *Nathan's Ruse against King David I* at the end of the article. In my analysis I will use the numbers assigned to the conceptual spaces in the schema.

For reasons of economy I paraphrase the small stories that I identify in the biblical narrative. Following Turner (1996) I differentiate between event stories and action stories. Event stories recount everyday mundane scene setting events that are somatically marked neutral. Action stories on the other hand recount dramatic events that are somatically marked either for pleasant or unpleasant emotions.

A non-parabolic initial interpretation of Nathan's narrative renders three distinct small stories: (3) A poor man cares for his only ewe lamb like for one of his own children, (4) A rich man with several flocks of sheep slaughters a poor man's lamb to feed a visitor, and (5) A judge sentences an accused in a property dispute case between two neighbours.

Space (3), which recounts how the poor man cares for his only ewe lamb, is clearly a scene setting event not meant to elicit strong emotions from King David. Spaces (4) and (5) recount two action stories that intend to elicit strong emotions from King David, namely a feeling of outrage at the crime and satisfaction in giving the right verdict.

Image-schematic stories are generic spaces that impart image-schematic roles to small event stories and small action stories, while generic causal tautologies imbue such stories with moral sense.

The small story in space (3) *A poor man cares for his only ewe lamb like for one of his own children* receives its thematic roles and sense of event from the image-schematic story in space (1) *An Agent protects a Patient*. The story in space (4) *A rich man with several flocks of sheep slaughters a poor man's lamb to feed a visitor* receives its thematic roles and sense of event from the image-schematic story in space (2) *An Agent harms a Patient*. The story in space (5) *A judge sentences an accused in a property dispute case between two neighbours* receives its thematic roles and sense of event from the image-schematic story in space (3) *A major Agent controls a minor Agent*. In turn the image-schematic stories are structured by the event frames of the small spatial stories.

The first small event story in space (3) *A poor man cares for his only ewe lamb like for one of his own children* is imbued with moral sense by a generic causal tautology in space (6) *Love causes loving behaviour*. The second story in space (4) *A rich man with several flocks of sheep slaughters a poor man's lamb to feed a visitor* is imbued with moral sense by the generic causal tautology in space (7) *Greed causes greedy behaviour*. The third story in space (5) *A judge sentences an accused in a property dispute case between two neighbours* is also imbued with moral sense by the generic causal tautology in space (7) *Greed causes greedy behaviour*.

By virtue of his royal status King David assumes that he is the judge who has to give a verdict and blends these seven mental spaces without realising that he is dealing with a parable. He declares the accused guilty and stipulates what reparations the perpetrator must pay to his victim.

### ***The Generic and Tautological Nature of Norms and Values***

The precepts that we term values, norms and laws are intrinsically generic and tautological. They are generic because they state requirements that must remain valid for all comparable events regardless of time and place. These precepts are at the same time tautological because human beings at a very basic level perceive states of mind to be the driving force for norm-related behaviour. Stated in neurological terms, when a person's synaptic potential is activated in a configuration that will cause feelings of lust, he will be eager to engage in lustful behaviour.

### ***King David's Subsequent Blend***

After King David's verdict Nathan confronts him and accuses him of being the guilty one. This precipitates King David's second blend, which is also schematised in *Nathan's Ruse Against King David II*, also at the end of the article.

A further five mental spaces have been added to the first schema. They enable the interpreter to make the same inferences that King David would have made after he realised that he was dealing with a parable.

The five additional spaces are: Space (8) A husband loves his wife, space (9) A powerful man takes a defenceless man's wife, space (10) Lust causes lustful behaviour, space (11) A messenger from a Supreme Commander arrives at his commander with bad news, and space (12) A king has one of his soldiers assassinated on the battlefield.

The small event story in space (8) *A husband loves his wife* is inferentially linked to the generic causal tautology in (6) *Love causes loving behaviour*. It is also linked to the small action story in space (9) *A powerful man takes a defenceless man's wife*, and indirectly via space (9) to the generic causal tautology in space (7) *Greed causes greedy behaviour*. The new causal relationships inferred from such inter-linked mental spaces gives the narrative its parabolic power of persuasion.

The story in space (9) similarly obtains its dual parabolic value because it is inferentially linked to the small action story in space (4) *A rich man with varlous flocks of sheep slaughters a poor man's lamb to feed a visitor*.

The generic causal tautology in space (10) *Lust causes lustful behaviour*, is inferentially linked to the small action story in space (9) *A powerful man takes a defenceless man's wife* and to the small action story in space (12) *A king has one of*

*his soldiers assassinated on the battlefield.* It is also linked to the generic causal tautology in space (7) *Greed causes greedy behaviour*, establishing a powerful link between lust and greed as drives in immoral behaviour.

By blending the new contents of mental spaces (8) to (12) with one another and with the spaces of the initial blend the second meaning of the parable becomes clear. By making the correct parabolic equations King David realises:

- 1 I am the accused, not the judge.
- 2 God is the judge.
- 3 Nathan is God's messenger.
- 4 Uriah is the poor man who lost the ewe lamb that he cared for.
- 5 Uriah's wife is the stolen lamb.
- 6 Uriah can't be compensated, for I secretly took his life.
- 7 I am a thief and a murderer.
- 8 Someone close to me will openly sleep with my wives and my unborn son will die.

## Summary

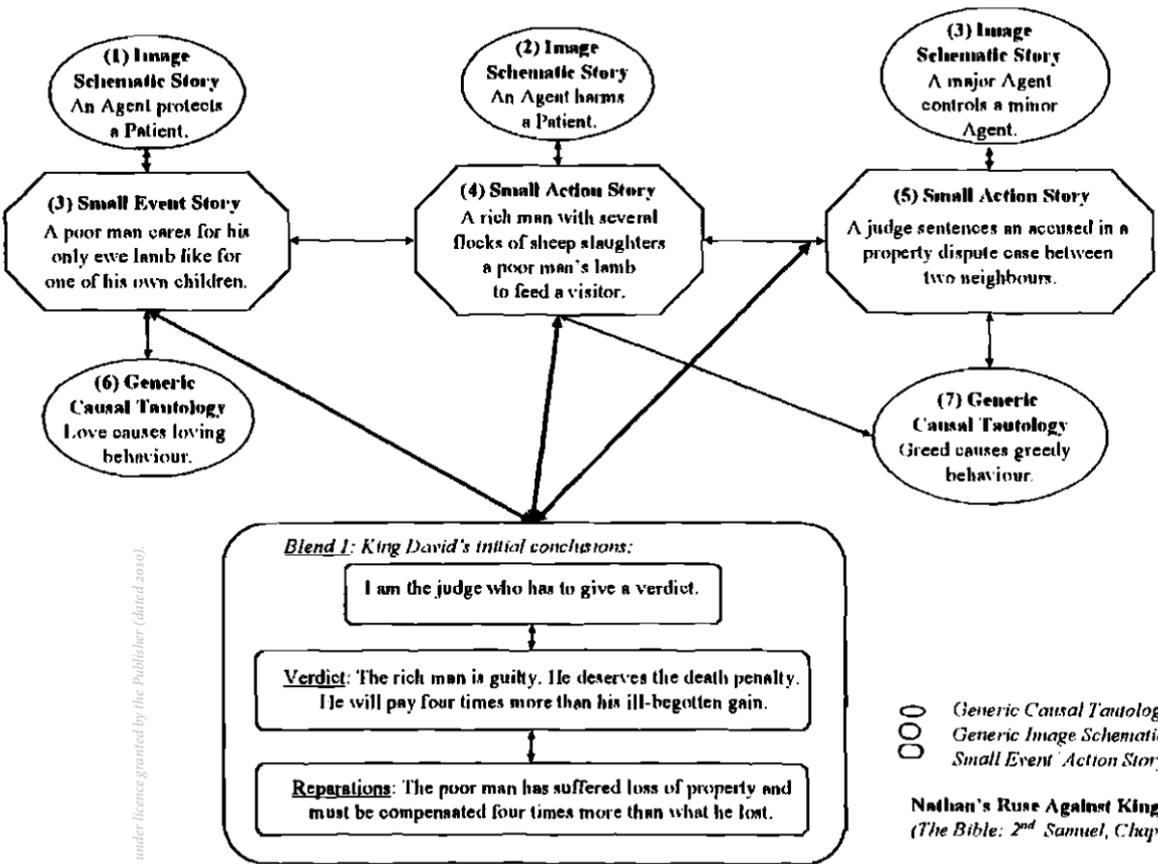
I began this paper by pointing out that the study of language and literature is being marginalised because these disciplines are not perceived as having utilitarian value. I have traced the root cause of the problem to the three century old Cartesian dichotomy that differentiates between the human body and the human mind, and which relegates mental matters to the realm of metaphysics. I have shown how the Cartesian dilemma is being resolved in Cognitive Rhetoric, which treats all mental processes, including language structure and narration, as products of actual physical cognitive operations in the brain.

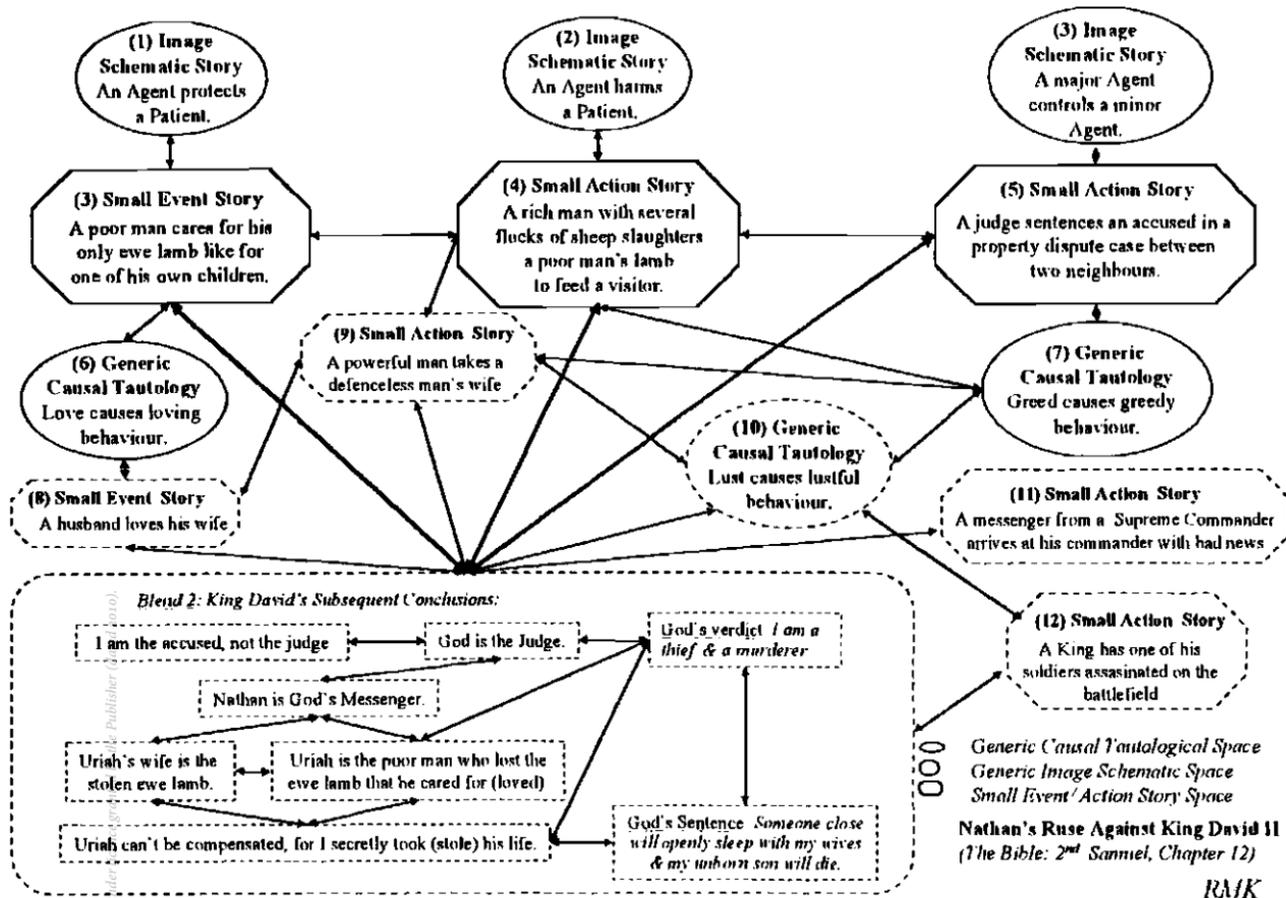
I have briefly outlined the theory of mental spaces, which was initially developed by Fauconnier, and is subsequently being refined by Fauconnier & Turner and others. I showed how a variety of mental spaces interact in the process of interpreting a the parable that Nathan told to David.

## Conclusion

I began this paper with a quote from the Afrikaans poet D.J. Opperman, which can be narrowly translated into English as *The regions of the mind remain uncharted*. I want to end the paper by saying that we have now begun exploring and charting the inner world residing in the mind of man, with its inner spaces that contain all our images

and concepts of the outer world, and the symbolic systems that we use in here to express our concepts and precepts about everything out there.





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# The use of Conceptual Metaphor in Karel Schoeman's *Another Country*

Elsa Klopper

## Preview

There are two interrelated symbolic substrates running through Karel Schoeman's novel *Another country*. The first consists of a series of images that accumulate to form the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY. The second symbolic substrate consists of a series of images that portray the Jungian psychic process of individuation. In this article I limit my analysis to the metaphorical conception LIFE IS A JOURNEY.

## Cognitive Literary Theory

The theoretical framework for this analysis is cognitive science which draws on the resources of disciplines such as psychology, computer science, artificial intelligence, aspects of neurobiology, philosophy, anthropology and linguistics. The general focus of this field is human cognition, as formulated in the following quotation:

Cognitive scientists want to know how cognition typically works in normal adults, how it varies across individuals, how it varies across different populations, how it varies across different cultures, how it develops, how it goes wrong in neurologically impaired patients, and how it is realised in the brain (Von Eckhardt 1993:6).

Literature is also studied in cognitive science under the sub-discipline known as *cognitive literary theory*. Turner (1991:17) envisages the study of literature from a cognitive perspective as follows:

Language is inseparable from conceptual thought; conceptual thought is inseparable from what it means to have a human body and lead a human life. A human being has a human brain in a human body in a physical environment that it must make intelligible if it is to survive. This is the

ground, I think. of human cognition, and the source of the everyday conceptual apparatus we bring to bear in making what is usually automatic and unconscious sense of our worlds. This conceptual apparatus seems to be everywhere expressed in the substance and shape of our language, and to constitute the basis of our literature. The study of language to which I look forward would analyse the nature and processes of this conceptual apparatus, its expression in language, and its exploitation in literature. It would see literary language as continuous with common language, and meaning as tied to conventional conceptual structures that inform both common and literary language in a continuous and systematic manner. Our profession touches home base when it contributes to the systematic inquiry into these linguistic and literary acts as acts of the human mind.

According to Turner, literature should therefore be studied as the expression of everyday capacities in order to help us understand those capacities. He points out that literature lives within language and language within everyday life, which connects the study of literature to whatever is basic to human beings.

The assumption that the study of literary language can be used as a tool for understanding our world and ourselves forms the focus of Lakoff and Turner (1989). They claim that the use of metaphor is not exclusive to poetic language but that it is omnipresent in ordinary language and is a basic tool of human thought. Lakoff and Turner point out that we commonly use a variety of metaphors to talk about experiences, events and processes and that our conception of these matters is reflected by the metaphors we use.

The essence of metaphor is to understand and experience one kind of thing or experience in terms of another. Lakoff and Turner (1989:59) give the following description of this metaphoric process:

... aspects of one concept, the target, are understood in terms of ... aspects of another concept, the source. A metaphor with the name A IS B is a mapping of part of the structure of our knowledge of source domain B onto target domain A.

A domain is a system of concepts constituting a general field of knowledge structured in terms of mutual relations, e.g. the domain of journeys involve travellers, routes, types of paths travelled, destinations, places of departure, vehicles, companions, etc. The types and structures of domains are determined by culture. Using, the metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY means to have in mind correspondences between, for instance: a traveller and a person living a life; the road travelled and the course of a lifetime; a starting point for a journey and the time of birth; the destination of the journey and the purpose of life. Because we conceptualise life in terms of these correspondences

between a journey and life, it is possible to make sense of the metaphoric mapping of structure from the domain of journeys to the domain of life.

Metaphors are so commonplace that we often fail to notice them in everyday language. If, for instance, we refer to somebody's death saying:

He passed away/He's gone/He's left us/He's no longer with us/He passed on/He's been taken from us/ He's gone to the great beyond/He's among the dear departed,

these expressions are all instances of a general metaphoric way we have of conceiving of DEATH AS DEPARTURE. This type of metaphor, underlying a variety of expressions, reflects our experience of something in terms of something else, and is known as a *conceptual metaphor*. To express our conception of all-encompassing matters such as life and death we usually have a variety of conceptual metaphors which may be used in both ordinary and literary language.

Although authors of literary texts use the same modes of thought as we do, they often extend, elaborate or combine the mechanisms of everyday thought in ways that go beyond the ordinary. By means such as these, literary language becomes richer and more complex than ordinary language, requiring more effort to interpret. This process of complexification focuses our attention on the theme of the literary text.

In the remainder of this article I want to focus on Karel Schoeman's novel *Another country* to analyse how he utilises interrelated metaphors to develop the theme of this novel.

### **Karel Schoeman's *Another Country***

*Another country* was originally published in 1984 in Afrikaans as '*n Ander land*, and was also translated into German and published in 1993 as *In Einem Fremden land*. The novel received a great deal of attention in Afrikaans literary circles: it was reviewed in all the major newspapers<sup>1</sup>, several research articles<sup>2</sup> were devoted to the novel and it received four major South-African literary awards<sup>3</sup>. Critics' evaluation of the novel was generally very positive, although in some instances they were less

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<sup>1</sup> See Bertyn (1984); Brink (1984); Britz (1984); Cilliers (1984); Du Plessis (1985); Olivier (1984); Van Zyl (1985); Venter (1985).

<sup>2</sup> See De Jong (1988); Ferreira & Venter (1995); Grobbelaar & Roos (1993); Renders (1987); Venter (1991).

<sup>3</sup> The novel was awarded the Old Mutual prize (1984), the W.A. Hofmeyr prize (1985), the Hertzog prize (1986) and the Helgaard Steyn prize (1988) as well as the Independent Award for Foreign Fiction in March 1991 after its publication in Britain.

impressed: André P. Brink (1984) was of the opinion that, despite its undisputed literary merit, the story suffers from defects such as 'boundless dullness, from a piling up of trivialities' and 'an irritating hyper awareness of the differences between Africa en Europe without developing the narrative potential of these differences'<sup>4</sup>; Marianne de Jong (1988) objects against the main character, 'Versluis' subjective experience' creating the possibility that 'the reader can interpret 'n *Ander land* as stating that the white experience of Africa can only be relayed in the form and by means of white experience itself'.

Although critics focused on various aspects of the text, there is a general consensus about key issues like the following: the basic theme is Versluis' coming to terms with the inevitability of his own death; the story is slow moving and there is not much dramatic action; the main character has great difficulties in coming to terms with the differences between Africa and Europe; inter-textual relations between *Another country* and classical literary works like Virgil's *Aeneid* and Dante's *Divine Comedy* enrich the basic theme of the text.

The basic story in *Another Country* can be summarised as follows: Versluis, a sophisticated, well-read Dutch bachelor from the upper middle class, who suffered from tuberculosis, arrived in Bloemfontein in the late nineteenth century. At that stage Bloemfontein was considered a suitable climate for convalescence by people from Europe suffering from chest ailments. Versluis initially experienced his new surroundings as alien and disagreeable in comparison with the sophisticated city life in Delft that he was accustomed to, but eventually he came to terms with his surroundings, his illness and inevitable death.

### **A Metaphoric Reading of *Another Country***

I want to propose that the powerful impact of the story of Versluis' coming to terms with his own mortality and the alien country in which he finds himself can be attributed to the fact that the central issues in *Another country* corresponds to the composite conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY. For Versluis this started out as a literal journey, the one that he embarked on from Delft to Bloemfontein, and during which he lost consciousness as a result of his illness. The end of this literal journey is described in the first sentences of the novel:

When the journey ended, he did not even know it: he was not conscious of the fact that they had arrived, and that the seemingly endless clattering and

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<sup>4</sup> ... 'grenselose grysheid, van opeenstapeling van beuselagtighede' and "'n irriterende hiperbewustheid van die verskille tussen Afrika en Europa sonder dat dit werklik narratief ontgin word' (Brink 1984).

lurching, creaking, swaying and shaking of the coach had abated (Schoeman 1991:1)<sup>5</sup>.

The description of Versluis' recovery, as reflected in his own thoughts, and in the comments of the other characters in the novel, is formulated in such a way that a systematic correspondence is created between his return to life and the journey that he undertook. So, for instance, when Versluis first regained consciousness, Frau Schröder remarked '...you have returned to the land of the living' (p. 3). His own experience of this process is reported as follows through the narrating voice:

After the long period of silence, the long withdrawal, he once more had to involve himself in conversation; out of this silent territory bridges led back to the other bank, to the world of other people, messages, gestures and obligations. He had to return, .../Back across the bridge to the old, familiar bank, to the well-known country, to life that had in his absence continued its uninterrupted course (p.6).

On the basis of our knowledge of the conceptual domain of journeys, we recognise that structure from that domain is being used here in connection with recovery, with coming back to life, and we understand that this must be interpreted metaphorically. Versluis' expressions and thoughts make sense to us because we think of death as departure, and because we know that Versluis has been so ill that in his own, and in other characters' experience he has been 'away' and has had to return to 'the land of the living'.

After the arrival of a severely ill English woman at the hotel where Versluis resided, he felt so threatened by her presence that he requested the Lutheran pastor, Scheffler, to help him find more suitable accommodation (pp. 40-48). His subsequent move to Mrs. Van der Vliet's home is portrayed as an escape from some threat from which he has to flee in order to start a new life. This new phase of his life is described as a road that '... extended once more before him' (p. 60). After he settled down in Mrs Van der Vliet's large, cool, well-cared for house he felt '...grateful for the silence and the orderliness of the house where nothing threatened or encroached upon him, where nothing disturbed him ...' (p. 71). This feeling of safety and peace did not last, however, for the symptoms of his illness remained and became more pronounced until eventually, he fainted at the ball and was told by Doctor Kellner that there was no cure for his condition (p. 180), and that he was in the process of dying. The remainder of the novel portrays Versluis' struggle to accept the idea of

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<sup>5</sup> From here onward I refer to Schoeman (1991) by giving page numbers only as in (p.1), (p.10) etc.

dying. His struggle to accept his fate is also metaphorically equated with a journey, as is particularly evident in the last paragraphs of the novel:

Once, when he had just arrived here; once, in another time when he had still been strange here, alienated from the country in which his stay, as he had thought, was to have been a merely temporary one - once, his walks in the evening had taken him to the edge of the town and he had hesitated there, wavering before the landscape that had lain open before him, unknown and unknowable, and an inexplicable fear had filled him at the sight of that emptiness. But there was no cause for fear, he thought as he began to walk slowly and without hurrying back towards the landau, leaning on his cane. The emptiness absorbed you and silence embraced you, no longer as alien wastes to be regarded uncomprehendingly from a distance; the unknown land grew familiar and the person passing through could no longer even remember that he had once intended to travel further. Half-way along the route you discovered with some surprise that the journey had been completed, the destination already reached (p. 311).

### **Acceptance of Destination and Destiny**

Versluis' acceptance of death is very strongly linked with acceptance of 'the country in which his stay, as he had thought, was to have been merely temporary'. This country is in the first place the destination of his literal journey, in other words Africa, to which he came, in the hope that his poor health would benefit from the dry inland climate.

After he regained consciousness, Versluis became aware of his surroundings and was reassured by the discovery that what he had left behind was not as distant as he thought it would be, though at the same time he was confronted with the differences between Africa and Europe. So, while he was still drifting between sleep and wakefulness after regaining consciousness, he was lulled by the sound of well-known folk songs from outside, but then again surprised by the heavy roar of thunder, the clatter of hail on the corrugated iron roof, the call of voices in a foreign language, the presence of the black man in his room, he realised that this country '... is indeed alien, ... seas and continents separated him from all that was familiar, in spite of all appearances' (p. 5).

The duality of his new surroundings made it difficult for Versluis to come to terms with it, as is evident from passages like the following:

The kind of life that he found in Africa was much like the one that he had left behind in Europe .... It was in any case a reasonably convincing

imitation at the furthest reaches of the world, beneath a more relentless sun and alien stars, upon such dismal and desolate plains, and in the first days of his acquaintanceship with his environment he could not suppress a certain feeling of disappointment. Was this why he had embarked on his long journey, to find in an alien world a reflection of his own familiar one, only without the comforts and refinements to which he was accustomed? (p.25).

If so much were not familiar, the things that were alien would not be so irritating by being unexpected, he thought to himself ... Finally one was no doubt grateful to discover so many things here in the heart of Africa that had survived the transplantation from Europe, but the process had occurred too half-heartedly ... (p. 38).

Versluis' difficulty to adjust to Africa was due to the fact that he was still trying to hold on to the world he had left behind and the fear to venture into the unknown world of his destination. He experiences elements like the heat, the dust, the blinding light, the crude Dutch spoken by the people as 'disturbing reminders of Africa' (p. 38), which breaks into the more familiar pattern he could relate to. He was still 'longing for the safe and familiar world at the other end of the globe'(p. 51) with comforts like

blinds and curtains to subdue this harsh light, ... a tranquil room in which an armchair stood ready and the clock ticked away with a hardly discernible sound ... (p. 51).

In the early stages of the novel Versluis' experience of the African landscape is described as '...a terrain which he could not always deal with or assimilate easily' (p. 114), as something that filled him with aversion, revulsion, loathing and fear. He felt that he could never become a settler in this land, that his stay would only be temporary. However, he gradually learnt to accept the fact that he could not return to where he came from. When he for instance attempted to write to the Netherlands, he realised that there was '... really nothing to write to those that had been left behind, ... There was no road, there was no path along which a message could reach them across this distance.' (p.65). When he attended the ball organised in honour of the German Kaiser and realised that he was ill, Versluis was overcome by an urge to get away, but then came to the conclusion that it is no longer possible:

But where could he flee? He wondered as he stood there drinking the water. Back through the night ... to Mrs Van der Vliet's house; to the rented bed? ... No, he thought, further than that, to the end of a journey that would take

many days, a sea voyage of weeks, to the house that stood empty at the other end of the world, irrevocably beyond his reach (p.169).

Up to this stage the concepts 'place of departure' and 'destination' can be interpreted literally, but after Versluis fainted at the ball and was told by Doctor Kellner that there was no cure for his condition and that he was in the process of dying (p. 181), Versluis underwent a process where the acceptance of destination has to be understood also in terms of a psychic acceptance of death. This is reflected in Doctor Kellner's answer to Versluis' question as to whether he was dying:

To accept the appearance of death; to accept the principle that you, too, have to die; to accept your own personal death as it draws gradually nearer - each of these stages constitutes a fresh crisis, and when the time finally arrives to die, then the crisis of dying is perhaps the easiest of all. To die is actually not that difficult ... But to accept the idea of dying, that involves a struggle, sometimes even a life-long struggle.

That this constituted a turning point in Versluis' mind, is proved by the resigned way in which he accepted the doctors words:

There was nothing more Versluis thought ... That is all, he thought; that is all. It was actually very simple .... It was so simple, so obvious ... to tell someone that he was dying. And so simple to hear the news (p. 181).

That the doctor's diagnosis, and Versluis' reaction to it, represents the end of a phase in the novel is also structurally signified by the fact that it is placed at the end of chapter two. Chapter three portrays Versluis as resuming his life in the routine of Mrs Van der Vliet's home 'more slowly and deliberately than usual' (p. 182) as if he had a goal towards which he was working. He also locked away his writing desk and instructed the servants to remove the Dutch newspapers from his room, knowing that he would not read them again. This constitutes deliberate actions to cut his ties with Europe, and directly after these decisions had been taken, Versluis' thoughts about the African environment reflect his realisation that he had begun to accept it:

His new environment had already begun to grow familiar to him - yes, he realised even this land with its severity and heat, even this town with its dusty streets and outhouses, its cows in back yards and its dogs in the streets. All its indolence, indifference and outlandish narrow-mindedness, he was growing accustomed even to these things, not to the point of acceptance, but at least to the point of forbearance (p. 183).

The metaphoric equation of death as the end of life's journey and Africa as the end of Versluis' literal journey is emphasised by the way in which the African landscape is portrayed towards the end of the novel. Versluis left Europe in winter, arrived in Africa in mid-summer, and experienced the change to autumn and eventually to winter, which corresponds with the time of his death. The changes that winter brought to the landscape are described as destructive, as reflected in Van der Vliet's words to Versluis:

The winters here destroys everything, not like in the Netherlands where the rain still nourishes the earth. Whatever survives the drought here is killed by frost. There is no mercy (p. 236).

Furthermore, the coming of winter is portrayed as a process of transformation and refinement by which the landscape is stripped of everything that is excessive. As Versluis' physical condition deteriorated, he became acutely aware of this natural process of change and he associated himself with it, waiting along with the landscape for the inevitable outcome of this process:

The country was changing, and day by day Versluis discovered ways in which it was transforming itself around him(...) - each day it was refined further and the lines of the landscape stood out with greater clarity. The trees changed colour in the orchard, along with the willows along the spruit and around the dam, and the falling leaves were blown away by the wind, ... The severity of the sun had been tempered, and the white sky retained hardly any heat. Motionless the land lay stretched out, the wide, empty streets of the town, the houses in their cleanly stripped gardens. And the veld that surrounded them, bleached as white as bone beneath a lofty sky, sparse and cold, as it grew towards winter: without motion, without sound it lay waiting and increasingly he too found himself lowering his book to listen, ... (p. 246).

The terms in which the coming of winter are described, correspond to how we think of the process of dying. Versluis' association of what is happening in his own life with what is happening in the African landscape makes sense to us because this equation corresponds with the conceptual metaphors: A LIFETIME IS A YEAR and DEATH IS WINTER.

When Versluis had finally reached the end of his life's journey, his complete acceptance of Africa is signalled by his insight of becoming part of the earth in the same way as the plants of the barren winter veld:

These tough, thorny plants, as colourless as the veld, the low bushes, the isolated windswept trees, had sent their roots deep into this earth, had anchored themselves amongst the stone, feeling along layers of rock in the dark earth for the last, scant nutrients. In this earth he thought, in this ground, among stones, among the twisted roots of these tough plants, in this country ... (p. 310).

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# What Difference does Difference Make?

Mabogo P. More

## Review Article

*The African Difference: Discourse on Africanity and the Relativity of Cultures.*

by Oyekan Owomoyela

Johannesburg & New York: Witwatersrand University Press & Peter Lang, 1996, 236 pp.

ISBN 1 86814 295 7; ISBN 0-8204-2881-7

African intellectuals, as Bennie Bunsie observed, are of two types—those who valorise and embrace the Western life-world and its values, language, science, philosophy, and culture and those who attempt to recover their lost heritage from centuries of colonial, foreign and imperialist domination. Central to the former is the explicit rejection of African identity politics that is based on the supposed belief that Africans as a group have certain essential characteristics that extend to all Africans. From this current emerges what Edward Said called varied groups of 'little Europes' that required the replication of the European (Western) ethos and the simultaneous devalorisation and depreciation of everything African.

The latter group finds perfect representation in Cheikh Anta Diop's excavation of pre-colonial African history and Aime Cesaire's *Return to my native land* which signalled the first articulation of the African's resentment and rejection of the kind of scientism believed to ground the arrogance of Western culture's self-image. As an alternative to the Western colonial episteme which he rejects, Cesaire calls upon Africans to affirm their own reality, life-world and authentic culture. Fundamentally, Owomoyela's *The African Difference* constitutes a continuation of Cesaire's project which puts strong emphasis on African difference. The chief difference between Cesaire and Owomoyela, however, is that while Cesaire's target was European colonialists, Owomoyela's chief target is not the colonialist *per se*, but the westernised and therefore alienated Africans seeking to 'obliterate racial and

ethnic identity or difference, and ... yearning for assimilation of and into the spirit of Europe' (p. x). Against this tendency, Owomoyela issues an invitation to the reader to join the battle for Africa or Africinity,

which is in a new and more difficult phase than during colonialism, more difficult because in the earlier phase the lines were drawn, and the choices were simple—submission to an alien rule or insistence on self-determination. The enemy was also easily identifiable: he was a foreigner and an oppressor. Now the issues are not so clear-cut and the adversary not so easily apparent. He/she is not necessarily foreign, and his/her rhetoric is often patriotic and bolstered with a concern, undoubtedly genuine for 'development', or scientific and technological advancement (p. xi).

Central to Owomoyela's project, therefore, is an attempt to show that Africans who reject differences in favour of Western universalism, presuppose the Western as the centre, a standard that decenters Africans and consigns them to the margins. Among the notable culprits under Owomoyela's attack are: Kwame Anthony Appiah's *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (1992); Paulin Hountondji's *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality* (1983); Kwasi Wiredu's *Philosophy and an African Culture* (1980); and a host of others.

*The African Difference* is a collection of essays originating, as the author says, 'from an unabashedly pro-African conviction' (p. x) and originally presented at conferences and published in various academic journals over the years. Their selection and publication together in book form is not without a guiding thread that binds them together. This unbreakable thread is the vigorous insistence on African difference, particularity and identity and a serious engagement with the historical, traditional and contemporary situation of the African continent. However, Owomoyela warns, this insistence on African difference and specificity is not merely to advocate difference for its own sake, but because the valorisation of the Western ethos by most influential Africans committed to Western values and culture, threatens the very existence of African historicity, culture, traditions and identity.

As will be evident, *The African Difference* is a hybrid text, deconstructively and reconstructively addressing a number of diverse, important issues that would require separate lengthy articles for adequate treatment. What we can however highlight are the major themes that constitute the core of the work. As its title suggests, the main concern of the text is a defence and valorisation of African uniqueness and difference in the face of constant and prolonged attacks. It is a search for, reconstruction and reconfiguration of 'African Identity' in the face of massive alienation, and a plea for African 'humanity' and 'dignity' against massive dehumanisation.

Despite the numerous important, interesting and contestable issues articulated in Owomoyela's text, I want to focus on only two of these, namely, the notion of 'difference'—which constitutes the main organising principle and aim of the text—and the 'Language Question'. First, I shall move from the premise that dialectically, discourse on 'difference' is simultaneously discourse on 'identity'. With this assumption, I shall therefore briefly show that conceptions of difference or identity constitute what one may call 'the politics of ambiguity', that is, that these notions function both as hegemonic and oppositional, as inclusionary and exclusionary and as straddling between essentialist and non-essentialist paradigms. This ambiguous character, however, signals a much more profound issue: power. Identity and difference, therefore, are concerns about domination, oppression, subordination, resistance, liberation, dignity and humanity; in short, relations of power. Second, through the mediation of Frantz Fanon and Ngugi wa Thiong'o, I examine the Language Question in post-colonial and post-apartheid conditions and argue for the equal centring of African languages as vehicles of African culture.

### **Difference and/or Identity**

Philosophically, the concept of identity designates 'the relation in which any object stands all by itself to itself' (Gasche 1994:205). Thus, from formal logic, the law of identity posits that a thing is the same as and implies itself. The metaphysical and ontological equivalence of this law may be discerned in Leibniz's law of indiscernibles according to which no two things in the universe are exactly the same; Schelling's idealistic philosophy of identity according to which the Absolute is the One in which nature and spirit, freedom and necessity are identical. In effect, the law of identity states that anything (A) is equal to and identical to itself. Which in turn means that a thing (A) cannot be different from itself, it is either itself or it is another thing (B). Construed in terms of Owomoyela's text, it would mean that an African possesses a unique African identity, no matter how constituted, different from any other and identical to itself. This Africanness constitutes the African difference.

The discourse of identity is by logical inversion, therefore, simultaneously the discourse of difference. Identity is inherently exclusionary precisely because it entails the existence of an Other who is not 'I' or 'we' and therefore different and excluded. As Sartre (1966:319) puts it,

it is by the very fact of being me that I exclude the Other. The Other is the one who excludes me by being himself (sic), the one I exclude by being myself.

In other words, all identities are constituted through their opposition to, and exclu-

sion of an Other. The reality of African difference would therefore require the presence of that which it negates and excludes for it to attain self-knowledge and self-consciousness. Similarly, its Other (the West) requires Africa for its own being. Both are therefore dialectically related to each other. *Ontologically*, therefore, difference is a necessary constituent of being. But, are differences politically, ideologically and/or culturally necessary?

There is much in Africa that requires defence against erasure and thus there is definitely a great deal to be said for Owomoyela's position of African difference. Indeed, this postmodernist 'politics of difference' contains creative responses of resistances to totalitarian regimes by marginalised, oppressed, discriminated against or dominated groups<sup>1</sup>. The valorisation of African cultural identity through 'Negritude', 'African Personality' and 'Black Consciousness' movements, for example, were an expression of oppositional resistance against cultural and racial degradation, imperialism, colonialism and dehumanisation. Sartre's (1988:296) real meaning in characterising these movements as 'antiracist racism' seems to have been missed. For, in terms of his perceptive dialectic, Negritude's 'antiracist racism' will, as a negative moment, dialectically lead to the ultimate transcendence of racial differences.

Today, Afrocentricity is such an oppositional resistance against the decentring Eurocentric discourse that parades as an incarnation and expression of universal human cultural essence. The politics of difference, therefore, functions effectively both as a critique of existing power relations and as a project of self-empowerment for marginalised groups. It is a weapon of those whose voices were silenced, whose histories were subsumed under the dominant outlook. As Cornel West (1993:4) puts it, the politics of difference is 'oppositional in contesting the mainstream for inclusion', it constitutes a means of resistance in the face of subordination and domination. Identity (difference) of any kind is indeed an important and essential aspect for many people to give meaning to their lives, vital for their secure sense of self-respect and thus essential for their sense of belonging

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<sup>1</sup> See Gregory Jusdanis (1996:105): [I]ndigenous peoples of North America have increasingly conflated their tribal differences into a politico-ethnic identity as Indians in order to seek resolution to their grievances more effectively. They have utilised a category already created by whites in pursuit of their interests. Latinos are also forming a pan-ethnic consciousness on the basis of the Spanish language and Latin heritage in response to the urban experience, racism, and government policies of welfare and affirmative action. Asian American are also defining themselves collectively as a distinct racial and ethnic community, a blend of geographically, culturally, and linguistically related groups.

and security. Identity politics, thus, has and still plays a liberatory role among the 'powerless'.

Besides its *ontological* exclusionary and inclusionary nature and thus its openness to all sorts of charges, prominent of which might be 'racism' or ethnocentrism<sup>2</sup>, African 'difference', seen in the light of the above, might also easily be subject to the popular charge of essentialism. For a thing that is always identical to itself is always the same, immutable, fixed and forever constant, hence identifiable as itself. In terms of ethnographic interpretation, each human group—ethnic group, race, or nation, has an essence that defines it and makes its members what they are: African, Indian, Chinese, European, etc. If the defining characteristic is culture, then that culture must be a stable and fixed whole in which individuals more or less fully participate, and in virtue of which participation they can properly be identified as Africans, Chinese or Europeans. Put differently, what is identical must always remain the same both in appearance and essence regardless of time and circumstances. It is therefore this essence or identity which, if mislaid or lost, must be brought back through rediscovery and excavations by means of language, myths, traditions etc.

Moreover, Owomoyela's constant use and endorsement of the locution 'traditional' and 'Africa' definitely generates a particular essentialist image of Africa. The term 'African traditional' as Campbell Mamoh (1985:79) correctly objects to those who foist it, ripples with images of naiveté, stagnation, low intellect, superstition, magic, immutability, fixation, and non-progression. Instead of this ideologically loaded and contestable term, 'traditional' people such as for example Fanon and Mamoh, speak of 'pre-colonial' or 'Ancient' Africa.

Owomoyela is aware of these difficulties and continuously attempts to distance himself from those assumptions 'whose effect has been to concoct an essentialist image of the African' (p. 132). In an anticipatory response he warns:

I will warn ... that the ensuing argument adopts the position that one can make valid general statements about Africa, Africans, African cultures, African relational habits and the like without necessarily suggesting a monolithic uniformity over the entire continent in any of the particulars. Furthermore, descriptions of, and assertions about, aspects of African life in the following pages cannot be construed as implying their eternal fixity and immutability through history (p. 167).

But this response would be appropriate if the charge, a la Hountondji, was that Owomoyela assumes Africans as a monolithic and homogeneous racial, and cultural

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<sup>2</sup> See Neugebauer (1991:64f), for the charge of racism and invidious nationalism in discourse of African particularity.

group. Of course, east and west, south and north Africans are different. We cannot deny this, but at the same time we cannot set ourselves the trap of over-generalising from the existence of some differences among Africans to the existence of nothing but difference as deconstructive anti-essentialists do. Commonalities do indeed exist among Africans as among other groups.

I would assert that the peoples and cultures that spring to the 'educated mind at the mention of Africa have enough that is fundamental in common to legitimize significant generalizations, always with the understanding, of course, that all generalizations admit (and indeed presuppose) exceptions (p. 167).

Of course, one cannot deny these commonalities that constitute Africans as Africans, different from others. For example, Africans share common problems, history, experiences and cultural practices such as 'lobola' and an anthropocentrism which is community-centred and variously called 'communalism', 'African humanism' or known in Southern Africa as the much paraded and sometimes vulgarised '*Ubuntu*'<sup>3</sup>

... [T]he African individual is perceived as a member of a specific community, that is to say, his or her being-for-itself can only be linked to his or her being-with-others. The individual is essentially a relational being who gets significance and pertinence by his or her integration in a given human community (p. 178).

But there is more to the charge of essentialism than the mere accusation of homogeneity. It refers itself to the question: What is an African? This question has lately assumed ideological rather than metaphysical significance considering that one never, especially in the South African context, encounter a similar question about other groups. Such questions are never asked at all because it is presumed that they are fundamentally unaskable<sup>4</sup>. The question: 'What is an African', which should, like most questions of the type 'What is ...', be one about the defining essence of a thing which enables us to identify that thing (A) from any other thing (non-A) is fundamentally a metaphysical or ontological question. From a metaphysical (*ontological*) point of view, two laws—the law of essence and the law of existence—are operative. According to the law of essence, 'a thing can not be without being a

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<sup>3</sup> See Okolo (1995:13-26), for a detailed argument on the cultural sameness of African humanism. Also, see Steve Biko (1996), especially chapter 8.

<sup>4</sup> It is no accident that the only other groups subject to this kind of question are women and Jews. See Heinamaa (1997); Barker (1997) and Sartre (1948).

particular kind of thing'. The law of existence, on the other hand, states that 'a thing can not be a particular thing without being'. Owomoyela, understandably, is not interested in the metaphysical dimensions of the question, a question best left to philosophers. His concern is, rather, the existential dimension of the question which can be phrased in the following manner: 'What is to be an African?'

The notion of difference/identity may in certain situation also be an instrument of oppression, depending on prevailing power relations, as was the case with apartheid. This system, as we know, was based on a 'differentialist logic' that established group differences or identities as absolute, incommensurable and incompatible, based, presumably, first on biology and later ascribed to culture. The shift from biological to cultural difference was highlighted by De Klerk in the famous February 1990 speech in which he made repeated appeals to 'cultural difference', 'own affairs', 'group rights' and 'ways of life'. Disregarding the role of power in exclusionary or inclusionary practices, some critics may then, as we mentioned above, accuse Owomoyela of a racism predicated on 'differentialist logic'. Witness Christian Neugebauer's critique of ethnophilosophers for identity-thinking. Neugebauer, utilising the standard Marxist critique, views identity-thinking in Africa as the expression of a bourgeois class which is powerless to lead its society. African identity-thinking (including ethnophilosophy)

as a product of colonial and neo-colonial relations, is, in this perspective, tendentially a form of racism, as the fictitiously created 'tribal' (or 'African') identities are just the pre-forms of national or tribal chauvinism, equally fictitious superiority-claims, discrimination and finally racism (Van Hensbroek 1991:116).

In defence of Owomoyela, it might be instructive to notice that the problem with the deconstructive anti-essentialist such as Neugebauer, is that they erroneously attempt to deduce a normative politics of culture from an ontological conception of identity and difference. Consequently, they tend to see all identities as essentially fictional and repressive and all differences as essentially exclusionary without duly taking into account prevailing relations of power. Thus, what they posit, as Nancy Fraser (1996:69) observes, 'is tantamount to surrendering any possibility of distinguishing emancipatory and oppressive identity claims, benign and pernicious differences'. Besides, unlike the differentialist logic of Apartheid, Owomoyela (p. xi) does not at any time posit absolute African difference. As he himself says:

Difference simply for its own sake may be perverse; but antipathy towards difference in any form (call it alterity) is a worse form of malady, for its end is a loss of self and of identity, in other words, self-annihilation.

Moreover, to speak of Africanness, even though basically exclusionary in nature, does not necessarily constitute racism as such. It may just as well be to make a selection of a number of characteristics about Africans which are perceived to be common or equivalential, characteristics which are significant only in relation to, and in terms of the difference from, say, European or Asian. To differentiate between cultures, nationalities, and so on, cannot in itself count as an expression of racism. The reason of course, as we suggested earlier, is that racism is—among others—about power, and as Biko (1996:25) insisted: 'One cannot be a racist unless he has the power to subjugate'. In the global village, Africa at the moment, does not possess the power to exclude or include, subjugate or dominate. Therefore, difference does actually make a difference depending on the possession of power.

### **The Language Question**

Owomoyela's text opens up with a piece on the postcolonial dilemma of writing in the (m)other tongue, a subject that has generated passionate responses from African writers such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Ama Ata Aidoo, Chinua Achebe, Gabriel Okara, Es'kia Mphahlele, and Wole Soyinka, among others. The 'Language Question' in African literature, indeed in African philosophy as well, has been one of the most contested issues in postcolonial discourse. Certainly, this problem has not been peculiar to literature and philosophy but has permeated the entire fabric of African social, political and cultural existence. Hence, in 'Language, Identity and Social Construction in African Literature' Owomoyela asks: 'What is the connection between language and cultural identity? What danger does the continued ascendancy of European languages pose for the vitality of African languages?' (p. 3). The significance of this chapter lies in its allusion to the thorny issue raised by Frantz Fanon concerning not only the indissociability of language from culture and philosophy, but also the claim that language is a technology of power.

In the main, two opposite theses may be identified, which we shall call: (a) The Retentionist Argument and (b) The Culturalist Argument. For the former position<sup>5</sup>, European languages play a socio-political unifying role in the midst of

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<sup>5</sup> In a piece that resulted in heavy contestations, 'Colonial Legacy and the Language Situation in Cameroon' Godfrey Tangwa, articulating the retentionist position, argues that: (a) There is no reason at all to regret the fact that foreign languages (English and French) have overtaken indigenous languages; (b) foreign languages, imposed on Africa by irreversible historical accidents, can be domesticated and used as vehicles for national unity, integration and development as well as for global dialogue; and (c) the search for an indigenous national language is unnecessary and politically inadvisable. Therefore, English or French must be the national language of Cameroon.

linguistic fissures created by a plethora of diverse linguistic segments of contemporary African communities. European languages serve as a cohesive, unifying force in Africa's postcolonial nations and therefore should be encouraged<sup>6</sup>. A lighter version of the retentionist position is what is called the 'domestication' thesis which is an attempt to marry African language phrasing with English, an English less marked by English culture. For example, Chinua Achebe, Es'kia Mphahlele and Gabriel Okara have attempted to develop this hybrid language in which English is localised in accordance with African idiom, metaphor, symbolism; the African experience<sup>7</sup>.

The Culturalists, referred to by Alamin Mazrui (1993) as neonationalist, reject the use of European languages in literature for the simple reason that to learn and speak a language, in Fanon's view, is to take on a world, a culture. According to this thesis, '[c]ultures have intimate links to particular languages: take a language away from a culture, replace it with another and that culture will be radically altered' (p. 5). Sadly, Owomoyela, whose position resonates with the culturalist argument, consciously elides Fanon's and Ngugi's contributions to the culturalist position, while he castigates Ngugi for his Marxism, and especially his Marxist defence of women. Owomoyela's view is that if the African heritage and cultural difference have to be protected, preserved and maintained, African languages are the vehicles through which this politico-historical-cultural specificity can be achieved. This, ironically, resonates with the position which Fanon and especially Ngugi, defend.

Echoing the Sapir-Whorf linguistic determinism hypothesis, both Fanon and Ngugi wa Thiong'o articulated the view that language determines a person's basic ontology and cultural metaphysics. Indeed, while articulating the alienating influence of foreign languages, Fanon (1967:38) argues that to speak an alien language is to acknowledge, accept and interiorise the culture inherent in it, for 'To speak a language is to take on a world, a culture'. Fanon thus conceives of language as a reservoir of culture with ontological status. In a passage that assumes a Sapir-Whorfian position, he describes the problem of the influence of French on the Antillian native in transforming them into 'white Negroes' thus:

The Negro of the Antilles will be proportionately whiter—that is, he will come closer to being a real human being—in direct ratio to his mastery of

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<sup>6</sup> For the debate that ensued from Tangwa's piece see, Bongasu Tanla Kishani (1994); Chris Uroh (1994); and Godfrey Tangwa (1995). For further arguments against this view, see Ayo Bangbose (1990). In our context, Neville Alexander has devoted much energy into the Language Question.

<sup>7</sup> See for example Gabriel Okara (1970) and an interview of Es'kia Mphahlele by Richard Samin (1997).

the French language. I am not unaware that this is one of man's attitudes face to face with Being. A man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language (Fanon 1967:18).

This, for Fanon, constitutes one kind of alienation, existential alienation. At the political and ideological level, language becomes an instrument of power tied to class. In a colonial or neo-colonial situation only a few acquire petit bourgeoisie (intellectuals) status through colonial education. Since every language has words full of ideological connotation and value ladenness, those who learn the language, absorb and interiorise the ideology of the ruling class. They begin to see the language and values of the coloniser as a means of enlightenment and social progress. As they seek to be European, the colonised are increasingly alienated from their individuality and culture, in short, from their Africinity.

Expanding on Fanon, Ngugi addresses the problem of how culture relates to language and how the self participates in that relation—in other words, does language construct culture or does culture construct language. For him, language is both the constructed and the constructor of culture. Since this is the case, to write in a European language is to risk being absorbed into the culture manifested by that language. Hence he states:

Language, any language, has a dual character: It is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture .... Language as communication and as culture are then products of each other. Communication creates culture: culture is a means of communication. Language carries culture, and culture carries ... the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world (Ngugi 1986:13-16).

Articulating the role of language as a technology of power, Ngugi argues that the domination of native languages by languages of the imperial power, is critical to the domination of the mental universe of the colonised. Thus, in the colonial school:

[t]he language of an African child's formal education was foreign. The language of the books he read was foreign. Thought in him took the visible form of a foreign language .... [The] colonial child was made to see the world and where he stands in it as seen and defined by or reflected in the culture of the language of imposition (Ngugi 1986:17).

Ngugi's subsequent decision to write in his African language was a conscious reaffirmation of the dignity of African languages and also a liberation or decolonisation of the African mind.

Owomoyela's exploration of the 'Language Question' is unfortunately clouded by his passionate anti-Marxism, such that he becomes incapable of seeing any convergence of views between himself and the Marxists. In his view, besides being 'indisputably a European product', Marxism is also anti-African—languages in particular—for it propagates the use of colonial Western languages in African literature, Ngugi, a Marxist, notwithstanding. One would have thought that Owomoyela, in the spirit of, for instance, Kwame Nkrumah in *Consciencism*, would find common course and convergence between socialism and African communalism. On the contrary, one would also have thought that a possible line of attack against Marxism would be that taken by Tsenay Serequeberhan in his article 'Karl Marx and African Emancipatory Thought' in which he deconstructs the Eurocentrism in Marx's metaphysics. This, however, does not happen, for the simple reason that Owomoyela's main focus is on African Marxist literary critics who 'claim for it [Marxism] the right to usurp the space of indigenous systems of social organization' (p. 94).

A reading of Ngugi reveals much more in common between him and Owomoyela than what the latter is willing to admit. Ngugi's main concern is fundamentally the problem of alienation in Africa, particularly that of Westernised African intellectuals. This concern is primordially not different from Owomoyela's. For, Ngugi laments the alienating effects of European languages, culture, politics and values on the African mind. His project, just as Owomoyela's, is the decolonisation of the African mind from invidious Eurocentrism. According to him, colonial education had only one object: 'to alienate oneself [the African] from one's immediate environment, and so by implication identify with Europe' (Ngugi 1985:21). It is therefore ironic that Owomoyela should not only take issue with Ngugi's so-called 'Eurocentric Marxist feminism' but completely ignore him when discussing the 'Language Question'.

Furthermore, a position that does not take the issue of language and power into serious account, as Owomoyela's position, is inadequate. In South Africa, the work of Elizabeth de Kadt<sup>8</sup>, with its focus on power relations and language, continues and develops the Ngugian tradition. According to her, the dominance of a particular language in a multi-lingual society such as South Africa, is contingent on the existing and prevailing power relations within that particular society (de Kadt 1991; 1996). The fact that Mandela or Buthelezi would use English rather than Zulu when addressing millions of Zulu-speaking rural people in Kwa-Zulu Natal is an indication of the location of power; not in rural Zululand but in Lower Houghton, London or New York<sup>9</sup>. Sport in South Africa is without doubt highly racialised. Thus, the fact

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<sup>8</sup> For a discussion of the interlink between language and power, especially within the South African context, see the work of Elizabeth de Kadt (1991; and 1996).

<sup>9</sup> See Herbert Vilakazi (1997) and Neville Alexander (1997).

that soccer—a sport with predominantly black spectators in this country—should be broadcast in English on TV when rugby or cricket very seldom have commentary in an African language, demonstrates the power relations and the location of power in this society. Finally, the fact that at universities located in Africa such as the Universities of Zululand or Durban-Westville or Natal, only one African language—among so many in South Africa and Africa—and a host of European languages (English, French, German, Latin, etc.) are offered as courses for a degree, aptly demonstrates where power is located: Europe.

There is more to the presence of English than meets the eye. Europe has infiltrated the African's secret corners: homes, meetings, social gatherings, literature, family and interpersonal relations. Europe becomes the mediator in the lives of Africans who use English—whether domesticated or not—as a medium of communication. The ubiquity of English arrests the African's effort to overcome European power and tutelage. Sartre's observations in his 'Black Orpheus' are worth citing here:

In order to incite the oppressed to unite, they [black leaders] necessarily rely on the words of the oppressor's language ... the colonist has arranged to be the eternal mediator between the colonized; he is there—always there—even when he is absent, even in the most secret meetings. And since words are ideas, when the Negro declares in French that he rejects French culture, he accepts with one hand what he rejects with the other; he sets up the enemy's thinking apparatus in himself, like a crusher. This would not matter: except that this syntax and vocabulary—forged thousands of miles away in another epoch to answer other needs and designate other objects—are unsuitable to furnish him with the means of speaking about himself, his own anxieties, his own hopes (Sartre 1988:301).

Thus, in many different ways, the language of the colonialist in a (post)-colonial context is used against the natives. Whether in school, cinema, television etc. the colonised is constantly reminded of her language deficiency. Until the skewed existing power relations are transformed, the inequalities and hierarchisation of languages will continue to remain intact.

Given the practical, economical, class and even social problems associated with writing (m)other tongue, perhaps a more rational approach under the present prevailing power relations between the West and Africa, is to posit what psycholinguists call co-ordinate bilingualism. This is the view that human beings have the ability to operate in two or more languages in such a way that neither language and its cultural or worldview baggage become hegemonic. Such a person is able to cross 'cultural and cognitive boundaries to a different mental universe'

(Mazrui 1993:352) each time she/he speaks either language. In essence, as Mazrui (1993:352) points out, 'a coordinate bilingual 'controls' two cultures and two 'worldviews' corresponding to the two languages in his/her repertoire'. In my view, this constitutes a weaker culturalist position which claims that, because language has some influence on cognition in a culturally specific manner, therefore, the privileging of African languages in Africa for the Africans is a necessary condition for the maintenance and protection of African cultural difference. The central concept here is 'privileging' because it does not completely exclude other languages but merely strongly recommend the use of indigenous languages. There are, to be sure, other equally competing influences on cultural specificity. But, the advantage of this view is that, because of its anti-determinism, it thus creates space for Africans to denounce the privileging of foreign languages while at the same time writing in English themselves, as Owomoyela grudgingly acknowledges.

The centrality of language in any (post)-colonial country therefore, cannot be overemphasised. As Rob Nixon (1994:55) aptly states,

If the language, as centerpiece of a national cultural identity, is weakened, that may hasten other forms of decline. It may readily enfeeble, for instance, land or educational claims—to regional autonomy or to schooling in pupil's mother tongue.

## **Ethnophilosophical Difference**

African philosophers have scarcely discussed the Language Question in the serious manner in which African literary figures have done. Yet, the language problem has emerged every now and then. The question, therefore, about which language(s) African philosophy should be conducted in is a question about identity and difference. Two articles articulate Owomoyela's concern with the Language Question and its links with African philosophy. The first, 'Africa and the Imperative of Philosophy: A Skeptical Consideration' continues the argument about language and culture through the debate between ethnophilosophy (Temples; Kagame; Mbiti; etc.) and professional philosophy (Pauline Hountondji; Kwasi Wiredu; Peter Bodunrin; Odera Oruka; etc.) in African philosophy. The chief targets are the 'professional philosophers' who Campbell Mamoh refers to as the African 'neo-positivists'. According to Owomoyela, the neo-positivists are guilty of anti-ethnophilosophy, anti-recidivism, anti-African culture and tradition and finally anti-African studies programmes. In short, in the same way as Westernised African novelists and writers valorise and promote the use of Western languages in African literature (chapter One), so Westernised African professional philosophers valorise Western philosophical canon and methodology (scientific) over and against ethnophilosophy, culture and tradition.

But, he argues, the valorisation of Western methodologies and science are misguided precisely because the belief in a world of ancestors and spirits, though pre-scientific, is a requisite counteragent to the scientific approach to nature. That Africa has been conquered by the West in no way indicates that African values and belief systems are inferior to Western value systems. The difference between Africa and the West is a consequence of difference of values in different civilisations. Owomoyela embodies the 'deconstructive challenge' of African philosophy which aims at unveiling 'Eurocentric residues in modern Africa that still sanction—in the guise of science and enlightenment—the continued political subordination and intellectual domination of Africa' (Serequeberhan 1991:22).

Owomoyela's attempt to spell out the conditions for the possibility of African Philosophy, rescued from the trappings of neo-positivism, is unfortunately philosophically disappointing. It certainly does not fully articulate the conditions necessary for African Philosophy to thrive, as the title suggests, but continues the interrogation of African literature. Macien Towa, on the contrary—who in my opinion is unfortunately lumped together with Hountondji as a neo-positivist valorising Western ethos—in his 'Conditions for the Affirmation of a Modern African Philosophical Thought' enunciates institutional, material and methodological conditions for affirming African thought system as philosophical. The failure of Owomoyela's project however, may be explained by the fact that for him, African philosophy should be defined in terms of an all inclusive 'African knowledge, or what I have chosen to call African philosophy' (p. 67). Hence, part of his project is to explore 'issues pertaining to knowledge in Africa' (p. 62), a mammoth task not to be treated in a single 236-page book, I must say.

Chapter Five deals with the interesting and heavily contested issue of 'the supposed distinction between traditionalism and modernism'. According to Owomoyela, modernism, and all the characteristics ascribed to it—rationality, empiricism, efficiency, motion, change, technology, democracy, empathy, literacy, consensus etc.—has, especially through the media and the Gulf War been paraded as the sole property of the West and in particular of America. In other words, there is a tendency to insidiously interlock modernisation and Westernisation, such that all that does not obey or even attempts to resist Western standards, gets disqualified as 'traditional'. The result is that Third World and other developing countries are automatically excluded from the ranks of the modern because they are presumed to be 'traditional'. As a consequence, 'traditional' peoples come 'under pressure to distance themselves from their cultures and convert to Westernism, to become whites ... because the Western option offers a better existence overall' (p. 104). In other words, 'modernism is familiarity with Western realities and adoption of Western ways' (p. 105). His argument is that characteristics (modernity) imputed to Western culture are not the sole prerogative of the West but are also part of the African tradition. Modernity has

to be explored from the different positions and perspectives represented by other forms of knowledge, of agency, and other ways of life in the world arena.

Chapters six and seven examine the issue of gender in traditional Africa. First, gender representation in the works of influential African writers such as Ama Ata Aidoo's *Anowa*, Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Devil on the Cross*, and Miriama Ba's *So long a Letter*, are examined and found to be wanting. Influenced by Western feminists' perspective, and Western ideologies, these writers, according to Owomoyela, fail to investigate gender relationships in African societies from an African perspective. The problem therefore is that knowledge and values from the analysis of one society are applied to another radically different society. Approached and analysed from an African perspective, Owomoyela avers, gender relations in traditional African societies are not as oppressive as they are depicted and represented. Then follows (chap. 7) a defence of specific African practices and institutions such as marriage, the supposed imposition of marriage on women, the alleged perversion of polygyny etc.

Owomoyela's discussion of gender brings to mind Molara Ogundipe-Leslie's book *Re-Creating Ourselves: African Women and Critical Transformation* (1994). Her thesis is that Africa's problem-plagued terrain can be rehabilitated and that women are integral to the recovery process. Owomoyela seems to agree with this and approvingly quotes the Women's Research and Documentation Center newsletter in Nigeria (Wordoc) which urges that 'Both sexes (or genders) must certainly take a hand in building the modern nation, one whose structures must be the recognition of the equality of the sexes' (p. 140). But here the agreement ends, because Ogundipe-Leslie accuses African men, a charge that applies with equal force to Owomoyela, not only of double standards but also of resisting gender equality. African men, she argues, 'seem to be often riled by the idea of equality between men and women. They are not opposed to equal opportunity, equal pay for equal work, or equal education, but with equality between men and women, they are uncomfortable' (Ogundipe-Leslie 1994:209). The validity of this discomfort surfaces in Owomoyela's insistence that by 'equality of the sexes ... I do not mean sameness of the sexes' (p. 140).

Chapter eight continues the argument for African difference in the field of African Studies programmes. It defends charges made on African Studies as an invention of Europeans designed to facilitate the subjugation and colonisation of Africa. But, the author asserts, 'we can safely assert that since the 1960's at least, African Studies has been in the main non-hegemonic and anti-colonial' (p. 217). The problem, however, is that the discipline has largely attracted scholars who not only lack commitment to Africa but harbour patronal attitudes as well. His general argument is that African Studies programmes and Africanists, while passing off as champions of African interest, have consciously or unconsciously pathologised Africa and Africanity. The irony of this chapter for us in South Africa is that despite being in

and of the African continent, African Studies departments (programmes) are visibly absent (forbidden?) in our institutions, especially at Historically Black Universities.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, cultural resistance has always been an integral and determining component of Africa's struggle for liberation and resistance against Western hegemony. Amílcar Cabral, the foremost African theorist who stressed culture as a site of resistance to foreign domination, warned long ago that the domination of a people 'can be maintained only by the permanent and organised repression of the cultural life of the people concerned ... for as long as part of that people can have cultural life, foreign domination cannot be sure of its perpetuation' (Cabral 1979:139f). The struggle and resistance against Western cultural imperialism to which Cabral refers has its historical roots in earlier cultural-political concepts such as Negritude, African Personality and Black Consciousness and is presently expressed through Afrocentricity. When one considers the broad ideas of these articulations, it seems clear that one of the major problems that has for so long dominated them is that of identity and difference.

If Afrocentricity is the restitutive act of inscribing authentic African subjectivity; if subjectivity is negotiated within the terrain of culture; if Afrocentricity is a struggle whose goal is de-alienation and decolonisation of the African subject; if it is an assault on the authority and universalistic pretensions of Western culture, if it seeks to dispense with alien views and make Africans and people of African descent in diaspora African-centered; and lastly, if, as Molefi K. Asante (1996:61) holds, Afrocentricity 'is concerned with African people being the subjects of historical and social experiences rather than objects in the margins of European experience', then, *The African Difference* is an Afrocentric critique of African literature par excellence, Owomoyela's protestations against certain Afrocentric claims over Egypt notwithstanding. European occupation of Africa, as Oluoch Imbo observes, forced a choice upon African people: They could either embrace the difference (from Europeans) attributed to them by colonial discourse, or they could deny any difference and assert the equal worth of their humanity. Owomoyela does neither of the two. He steadfastly refuses to embrace the difference attributed to the Africans by colonial discourse and he simultaneously does not deny the difference. He reconfigure this difference in a different manner.

African people, as represented by Owomoyela, desire nothing else than simply respect and recognition for being different. They are proud to be different and do not wish to be assimilated to the mainstream Western culture, but at the same time do not want to be discriminated against or regarded as inferior because of their difference. In the words of Tzvetan Todorov, 'we want an equality which does not

necessarily entail identity, but also difference, which does not degenerate into superiority /inferiority (in Larrain 1994:32).

This is certainly a richly rewarding text for all those concerned with the relationship between African intellectuals and the culture from which they come. Indeed, the relevance of *The African Difference* to (post)apartheid South Africa is unquestionable. For the questions and issues articulated by Owomoyela are to a large degree the same issues and concerns articulated and grappled with by recent publications such as, William Makgoba's *Mokoko: The Makgoba Affair* (1997), and Kwesi Kwaa Prah's *Beyond the Colour Line: Pan-Africanist Disputations* (1997).

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## *Alternation*

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*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 or both in 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 stiffe in Word Perfect 5-6, Word for Windows 6 or ASCII. If accepted for publication, 10 original off-print copies of the article will be returned to the author.

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, a list of previous publications and a written statement that the manuscript has not been submitted to another journal for publication.

*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).

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- 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.
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