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The Marginal

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Some of the assumptions which have appeared in the corridors of time are that societies/institutions learn from history, or that, in taking the successes of history into consideration, institutional protagonists have society at large as their concern. This may even be a general feeling – of the historical 'conclusion' to distance individual 'after social refinement' – that in the mirror of history's abyss, we may even become re-entitled despite the past derestrictions which our like undergo. This mirror is through the reflected South African psyche. Alternatively, some would wish to 'forget' the past, to start over anew – given the premises of the constitutionalised new dawn over the Southern African landscape.

Such optimism may, however, register a serious lack of hope by not recognising that any mythology progressively masters its own reiteration, or even new excursions, subjugations and repressions. Once the institution has thrown away its life-oriental crutches and feels attempts at rejecting a seriously disorientalised society, it starts to move according to its own laws – again.

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

For Beauty is nothing but the beginning of terror, which we are still unable to endure, and we are horrified by it because a serenely disarming quality reveals us (Stephen Mitchell trans.)

This tragic wisdom was also captured by Schopenhauer, Dionysius' friend (cf. Nietzsche 1982:601):

...the terrible transient of the children of chance and hardship, why do you torment me by saying what it would be much more charitable for you not to learn? The best of all things is something you will never be able to comprehend or grasp, not to be born, not to be, not to be anything. But the second best for you is to die soon (ibid.).

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

on short and long every constraining every positively with its rules and regulations – without anxiety of estates, divides, and itself up against, banishes, incremented – not least, constraining the organs – language and labour. Secondly, with a free value – means the history why does the human being pursue and as a value and truth rather than pleasure and wealth? – are there ways in which one can deal with modernity's excesses?

Alternatively said: Why do we enjoy and not only pleasure but also amplified by tragedy, even tragedy? Why do we, in reality, delight in suffering, not in the public sphere as in a speech, give pain an essentially negative role in life?

There, I think, are two of the questions – paradoxical as there are – which provide the door forth to look at *Aboriginal* – and precisely because of the true down

First and foremost is not the simple view that defending of ourselves or any enlightenment – neither that South Africa is currently filled with a new reversal of privilege – nor that literature is branded as irrelevant. The main reason, either as that posed by the rational optimists – the authors of tragedy, those propounding the Socratic truth on virtuous knowledge, all vice is from ignorance, the virtuous man is the happy man. It is before the economy of one, the belief in the omnipotence of reason that tragedy and with it, pleasure itself, are banished, even though it, seriously escapes oversimplification, Nietzsche's (1987: 617) is phrased still deeper – true – that in literature!

...but, however, character is inactive when it appears only to be able to use his knowledge in some instances. While in all productive people, nature is the creative and ultimate power, and common sense is more efficient and useful than it is. In Nietzsche's instinctive reaction, the public conscience – not the individual – is criticised as paralysing (ibid: 617).

Reflecting on how much has been struck by this belief in technology and its alliance with either an implicit or firm's mysticism, Wilhelm Reich (1973: 161) echoes a similar sentiment from a different angle when he said:

[Man] dreams about how these machines make it so easier and so more efficient a great capacity for enjoyment ... And in reality? *The machine is more efficient with confidence in the human capacity to destroy it if the machine differs from him in any way ...* The advance of civilization – which was determined by the development of the machine world and in turn with *oversimplification, alienation of the human personality, and repression*. In the construction of an machine, man follows the laws of

mechanics and lifeless energy. This technology was already highly developed long before man began to use it. How he himself was constrained and organized – which, finally, reduced very gradually, patiently and very often under the moral threat of his fellow man to discover his own nature, he manifested that time in man, the very he has learned to express in machines ... *The machine is the over of the technology of modern civilization*. But living truth is not a machine, it is fundamentally different. It is not mechanistic. The specific biological energy, energy, they have which is not determined by mechanical forces.

In this argument – one can invoke Lenin (1989: 296: 300) who – often in different context and nearly forty years later – added the analysis of modernity's misreading of economy and language to that of the engine. The positive part's recognition of language as object of study, language as discourse itself and language's critical value. Such recognition, however, merely functions – is seen to state what has already of the machine. What to some degree escaped modernity's wonders, however, is that – and finally tragedy – a literature which was being produced as modernism flooded the new world!

Concerning the economic, again, Hay, Hoff, Avner (1994: 171) (p.2) already pointed to the excesses of industrialisation – not least the overproduction of consumer goods which already in direct inverse relation to the increase of alien, poverty and crime – society paid for the excesses of their industry with a new means to manufacture modernity a provider of opulence and comfort. Even though this is one of our few – if not only – questions he raised to which he never found an answer, and despite his own proposal – for state intervention and Keynes' answer concerning the 'free' and public works – which does not produce immediate consumer goods, the main question still being South Africa's rate of poverty.

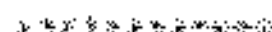
So, who or what speaks for humanity's actual energy, for literature and for poverty?

Only tragedy.

Modern tragedy belongs in the highways and byways, on the streets, on the pavements, on the city's go-broke strip, in jail and in the rural field – spaces where time knows no progress – our fortune. These are the realms of the poor, the excluded, the incarcerated, culture's forgotten, the overlooked and often much edited – tragedy as a necessary, tragedy's anger and civilization's discontent.

¹ Cf. D. Foster's division into – 1) for literature, cf. Foster, DeLuze & Guattari (1997), or 2) a better literature within which a critical language or change, no war is – not officially recognised, 3) a minor literature within a major language, and 4) a critical or postcolonial literature within a major language (cf. Foster, DeLuze & Guattari 1997). On the link with a sense of [Afro-]American language literature.

May is, literature belongs with its characters and its *langue* with women, the author's vocation – fittingly explored in Cecil Ashburn's (1960) title for his collection of essays on *Buffy Head: The Tragic Life*.



In some of the various pleasure binary Derrida – as did Homo – attempted to bring this fact into the centre, most concisely summarised by Fagelson (1993:28):

The aesthetic begins as an approach to reason, but we have to rethink Derrida and think it through in a number of newly suggestive ways to replace what they are meant to observe. What if it were the case that not only morally but cognitively it all were on the edge, and the need for translation and translation, for the cognitive as necessary and false, were in fact a necessary bond? The more we have to give for Derrida in Butler, the more Homo who we confront with differing models to a species of human art, then even to collapse knowledge of fields of hypothesis, of field in humanised feeling, the truth may of the nature of a fiction, or a subject in a cognitive construct and history on a level of infinite alterability. For good measure, he also argues that pleasure primarily – the very basis of the cognitive order – rests already on our imagination. Ethics and the political order – the state – arises from the unknown or *impossible* for telling it.

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

Freud (SSS:579) himself initiated the social uses of his theory of the unconscious – which he similarly labelled only because transfixed with the rise of modernity – when he concluded that ‘civilization [or culture] and its discontents’ inheres to the instability of a ‘pathology of cultural annihilation’ or in current parlance, a socio-cultural account of the marginal – the sub or post – humanised on the fringes of humanity’s loss: ‘By towards culture, Freud (1955:268) argued that this may be because of the conflict man experiences between the pleasure principle and his invention and consequent development of culture. Seen as “developed in order to “ward off injury and threat” (Freud 1985:268), a culture(s) – not least as it is institutionalised – have its discontents – individually, but also socially. The social consciousness arises due to modernity’s cultural or sociological pressures’ (Black 1982:423). This understanding has been developed in primarily three ways, in the *social unconscious – political*

economic nexus, the *psycho-nexus* – *time and space nexus*, and the *social unconscious – psycho-economic* nexus (cf. Van den Hoop, 1970).

In the *social unconscious – political economy nexus*, the unconscious is the ‘grossed physiological (biotic) and biosocial (cultural and psycho-social) nexus’ (Freud) and the ‘social and economic historical forces’ which ‘pass through an evolution in the process of man’s socio-economic development’ (Marx) where ‘common ground’ (Freud) (1985:101,105). This indicates at least three perspectives (cf. Freud 1985:97,107n1), firstly, the unconscious does not only come before the conscious, but more importantly that ‘[t]he logic of the psycho process comes before the subjective logic of the human beings who participate in the human process’ (Fensterberg, 1981:97). Secondly, as ‘collective unconscious’ the social unconscious symbolically effects activities which reveal certain aspects of social reality not held in social consciousness (Jung 1936:334). Thirdly, since social and economic historical forces also have an individual element, the ‘repression of the primary cultural desire’ (cf. Marx & Engels 1989:423), such repression causes our ‘passion’ to be separated off from the ‘whole living individual’ only to satisfy that one. As such, it ‘takes on an alienated, separate character, and is thus determined not by common sense (Hegel’s Spirit) but by “being” or “living”’.

the empirical development and self-expression of the individual, which in turn depends on the conditions of the world (Hörsing/Rehder, in: *Handbook of Freud Studies* (Gruen & Lupton, 1992:21).

The individual becomes ‘the slave of one alienated passion’ (Freud 1955:107) and ‘has lost the experience of time, of a world and alienation of man’ (1985:100).

In the *psycho-analytic – psycho-political nexus*, it is essentially the rise of western hegemony with its emphasis on social transformation and the accompanying negation of others’ (minor) cultural differences and boundaries under the sign of western civilisation, that the social unconscious was born. Socialisation, modernity which is central to individual life (Beckett 1954) was so thoroughly idealised/suppressed – if not destroyed – resulting in the separation of particular people (as particular time-space nexuses) for purposes of control, leading to collective neuroses (cf. Horley 1987, 1999). Thus, the hegemony of one (western) culture, people had to continuously repress the cultural values and norms into which they have been socialised.

Within western rationalist capitalism, science and technology produce desire. Here, it’s the contradictions in western society which bring about neuroses, i.e. the contradictions between capitalism and humanity, the creation of needs and then more profit. Ultimately, and ultimately, the hypocrisies of personal identity in the face

– Cf. esp. Derrida (1982:128,129, 138:194, & 1993:31, 277) and for the creation of literature and literary studies as a socio-cognitive perspective, cf. Derrida (1986:159–200).

of the reification of 'true' rules (cf. Van den Berg, 1970:231, 236ff). In African context, Mphahlele (1973:61) says – in a text which should be compulsory reading for any aspiring academic/student – of 'his' spirit:

An inner zone, unbreakable. Always having to maintain equilibrium. You walk with this double-mindedly as a convinced man. You learn to cope with the presence of 'one' rule and its white enemies. Now you have to cope with what they 'sell' on your mind, so you will always be a colonised man. (Only political independence might try to help you turn that 'one' rule into something dynamic, the dialogue between the own and the new world. The pendulum swings between reaction and attack, between the means and the ends, between a living past and the aspirations, the imperatives of a new being; Ambivalence.)

In the *socialisation* process, the danger is that there may arise a conflict between the different social selves – not only between which an individual is socialised. That an individual is socialised into a variety of 'social selves', diffuse it socialisation encompasses, whilst society provides as possible an idea how to learn to live as 'a plural self', or has to exist as a multiperspectivity, has been variously articulated in situations of transformation, or in Africanising societies, the individual must be both one or more of the selves. On learning the social self, the individual then has a host of manners, an *umuntu*. The external social self is then integrated to the social unconscious. It then follows that the social unconscious is the result of the disintegration of society or the generalised other in its social and disintegrated antagonistic prisms, while the individual does not have social access to the external generalised other any more. In the context of *colonisation* dynamics – an individual's learning of appropriating and rejecting cultural elements in the group to which it belongs – one may experience *euphoria* or *disphoria*—*euphoria* when the individual appropriates and experiences what society (a significant other) condones, *disphoria* when this relationship is distorted (cf. Sullivan in Mkhazhy 1954:1).

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¹ For a further study of James (1931, 1908) for multi-form societies, cf. Blackman (1973); for inter-personal prisms in a society, cf. Siliya (1968); Sorokin (1933 [1957, 1947]; for a social self related to a significant other with whom one is in a broken, cf. Feenstra & Rank (1944); Goffe & Mills (1964) on disintegrating societies, cf. Mkhazhy (1954).

² For a further elaboration on inter-subjectivity in this article, see especially the external reference book of Herbert Marcuse (1979).

Since its inception, *Athabasca* – as did the CSsALL (cf. Smith & van Wyk, 1998) – has attempted to clear spaces different from those we know and in which we are socialised and institutionalised. Different from past language journals, it has also attempted to create a forum from which scholars could ideologically play in an existing (past) descriptive hegemony. In addition, this project has as aim – in the *interregnum* or the twilight/dawn – to inscribe existing discourses into the journal text of the South African literary and language margins – to uncover 'some diverse set of meaningful concerns' (cf. Dreyfus 1993: 512f) which would provide an insight into 'our' expansive cultural landscape. This, of course, with hegemony not only existing but also in a cultural recognition and appreciation of 'our' diversity but also feed into Ntshole Ndebele's (1994:9) statement concerning the future of literature in South Africa when he said:

The role of literature in this situation, [...] is not an easy matter. It throws up a problematisation of its own within the broad cultural or social ones, but attempting to understand. Writers, rather than critics, are likely to provide the ultimate direction. Hopefully critics will pose the questions that will assist writers in their work (p.1).

As possible reasons for the Ntshole's statement, this issue of *Athabasca* was conceived under the joint scholarship of John van Wyk, Lindiswa Mkhazhy and Janita Smith. It is neither intended as the product of some victimised marginal within a context of political indifference, nor as an attempt to resolve the antinomy between romantic privilege, independence, capitalism and out-thrust competitiveness, exploitation and aversion. Rather, it aims to put in the forefront the presumed tragedy of the marginal, the sub-cultural – an attempt to reposition the marginal as struggle up in the inescapability of a normative prism. As such, it is also to be a supplement – a paragon – the divorcing site where the person's but also society's 'splits' – or common impediment – become more obvious but also more penetrable for the cognitions beyond of creative patterning in the folds of an ethnically South Africa.

Though various crises and limits and focusing attention on some of the crisis-crossing boundaries are limits which make South Africa such a bordered and margined landscape, authors in this issue of *Athabasca* provide an angle on the South African literary page from different perspectives. Possibly because each perspective is situated and constructed by particular circumstances – making the outline on tragedy in a particular way – they provide some idea of what a South African literature may yet be.

But maybe, this issue's intention is nothing else – or more – than something like the Old Comedy's *parabasis* – to ventilate a matter of public interest or to hold up a number of imaginary mirrors, in the face of the new Socratic 'I' tragedy's

Entropy consciousness emerges in the jarring over-world of salt-cause misappreh's de-
structive certainty of fault and its satisfaction of desire through the sublimation of the
other (illegally, then it is in the elicits and excursions of tragedy's incense of man's na-
tality that both artist and crime may find their imaginative ground and South African
people's exultation.

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finality that both artist and critic may find their imaginative ground and South African
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Marginalia¹ on Marginality

Helm Viljoen

Wie order en dink, hoe altyd tassen weerk.
 Als van een vy in kindie gromdend
 (idem 1959:8)

Marginal notes on marginality—in the margin of what is already in the margin of. Of what? Some was, page of society – a society page. And in the margin of that. My motto is by Peter Wani, a marginal African poet who wrote a lot about marginal states and marginal figures. Celebrating the serenity of his estate at Penney, he here presents Voltaire as envious of being trapped between big France and little Geneva—console us in an off feeling free in this marginal state that contains ‘all the elements of the good life’. The two lines of the motto are not easy to translate, *as is* does mean ‘be calm’, but also ‘to haunt’ or ‘to frequent’. An approximate translation could be:

He was structured and made always haunts
 I therefore live too freely in this border-land

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

The notion of marginality has played a crucial role in conceiving relations between different groups and cultures, especially in postcolonial thinking. And indeed, Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks (1995:49) attributes much of the melancholy of postcolonialism for its lost innocence having been used to construct much of its regional and ethnic heterogeneity, to ‘an inadequately constructed notion of the margin’. In what follows I will try to elucidate the notion a bit more adequately by looking first

¹ Notes written in the margin of a book or manuscript by a reader or editor (Oxford 1992).

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

1st note: The written page and the margin

A quote from the Dutch poet of the 17th c. Luciebert, might shed some light on the matter. As well I might, since his pseudonym is a combination of *lucht* (light) and *bergt* (mountain)—‘burning with light’. It also alludes to Lucien, literary ‘light’ (Luce), the name of the principal deity, but in Dutch also the word used for safety matches.

het boek reik rijk staat haer ogen aan
 wach diep en hart met haar vorm.
 Het boek is zo zacht want weet (Luciebert 1974:211)

the book are they herself wait for eyes
 become visible, white/black are her arms
 the book is so black book.

The 1st linguistic version embodies the book as a handsome woman. Opening the book reveals the white margin like a woman sketching her arms. The white on page (or poem) and her black breasts, repeatedly repeated. Not once, but two centimetres. The page has become flesh – warm and life-giving.

As this example indicates, speaking of marginality implies that we think of society as both like and not like a giant page or book with some things or some people within it or relegated to its margins, for the metaphor to make sense, it needs a society has to be understood as high society, the in-crowd, the dominant or hegemonic group. At the very least it implies a conception of culture or society as like a clearly demarcated square – a space with well-defined boundaries where it is desirable to be as near to the centre as possible.

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

In any case, since marginality is based on a written/print metaphor, it seems to be not centred on the logos, but on writing – it is not logocentric, but grammatocentric or grammatophilic. What does it mean to talk of a grammatocentrality? With a mark or tra-

might? The second wariness of the letter as centre? Marginality seems to define a boundary around a certain space without a centre. Still, it is nearly impossible to think of a margin without also thinking a centre where categories of relevance are laid down, dictated, written – where laws are created. Yet the margin is a space beyond writing beyond the categories – virgin, unscripted, a space just off the guided, the written page, not part of it, yet the not part of the context. A zone of undecidability.

If we talk about a vast text, to which text do we appear? To the book of nature, the book of society (the record of significant events or issues, for example, the change from the Talmud to the Book of Law or the Law, the Book of the Bible)? The metaphor means that we can see the world as one big book with its margins a few pages – to clarify a point, to raise a question, to sum up, to indicate the outline of the argument or a topic, to note a non-primordial, to gloss. The margin is a space where the author can make his mark – can have his voice heard. It is the part where nothing has been written (yet) – empty, virginal. A space where those who want to write can – to cite from *The sound of music*, The pen is the centre.

By a strange logic, the margin is therefore a privileged place for writing. And that is even justification was explicated when, to cut costs, exam books were torn out without margins. Where can the master class write his message to the student? "There is no margin, we are on the edge with the final say, make his mark and by doing so, rub out the oblige text to be a mastery? To write in the margin, it seems, is to risk to subject.

What can one write in the margin of society to enhance your own subjectivity? Where lies beyond the margin, the typography of the hyphen?

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

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

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

of those in power. The normal social rules no longer apply to him. He becomes marginal in the sense that he finds himself 'on the borderline of any recognised and relatively stable area, either territorial or cultural' (Khalid 1984: 83) and the implications of the terms – of 'dislocation, readjustment, and some degree or form of 'abnormality' (Khalid 1984: 83) – apply to him. Contact with the 'other' in culture has made his own culture and the assumptions of empire strange to him – he now finds himself on the margin of two cultures, but a member of neither (Stonquist 1957: 21). He has become, in the original sense of the term proposed in 1921 by R. V. Kipling, a *marginal man*.

As we know from personal experience, to be marginalised means to look longingly at the centre – to be bound in a desire of desire to being somewhere or someone else. Coetzee's magistrate perhaps does not long to be elsewhere, but to be more fully a sense of self – the innocent state in which he has not yet realised that he is lost at a moment of empire, that he was part of history and culture – he is still in it.

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

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

In any case, being excluded from the centre leads to loss of self-esteem and dignity and a negative self-perception. Marginal people lack recognition and respect and it is the risk of multiculturalism and the acceptance to belong to them the sense of being themselves – to return them to their fullness selves and in many cases self-fulfilment and self-realisation to them. They have to be drawn back into the safe, bounded space of fear (Khalid-Crecks 1990: 83).

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

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

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

The racial experience of event and idea that history and progress, new nation building, signifies a people, nation, a national culture as an unproblematic and unifying or stabilizing force is only a fiction. For the nation and psychological function of nation now bring to bear on cultural production and political progression the effect of the ambivalence of the nation as a narrative strategy. As an apparatus of symbolic power, it produces a cultural disjuncture of categories like sexuality, class affiliation, sectional, national, or technical difference in the act of writing the nation. What is displayed in this disjuncture and repetition of terms is the nation as the measure of the liminality of cultural modernity (Bhabha 1993: 106).

In other words, a nation is not a unity, but a *Dissim/Nation*—an appellation and a performance, a rhetorical figure created on a temporal plane by 'repeatedly [turning] the streets, patches and pages of daily life into the signs of a coherent national culture' (Bhabha 1994: 143).

But what does liminality entail?

Footnote: The marginal and the liminal as zone of contact and exchange

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

In the transition phase—when they cross the margin or liminal threshold—the subjects pass through an area and period of social limbo. In the third phase, the subjects are finally and symbolically returned to a new, relatively stable, well-defined position in the total society' (Turner 1989: 27).

The transitional or liminal state is a state of moving away from one's usual state—in the region. Here a person becomes stateless, ruleless. The subjects are often deprived of clothes and names and saturated with music. People in such a liminal

state, like initiates in tribal schools, are often considered to be even sexless, as their nakedness symbolizes. It is a state marked by spontaneity, concreteness, immediacy, modesty, and egalitarianism. Here, Turner (1990: 126) writes, 'Communitas emerges where social structure is not'. Communitas, the sense community, of being together with other people, emerges for Turner through the interstices of structure, in liminality, at the edges of structure, in marginality, not from beneath structure, in inferiority' (Turner 1990: 128). The point is that the essence of liminality, according to Turner (1990: 28), is that it analyzes culture into factors and allows them to be recombined in free or haphazard patterns. In other words, the liminal is a zone of transformation.

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

In the United Kingdom Reconciliation Commission, such a liminal state has been constructed. Participation is optional. Though not statusless, applicants for amnesty lose their ordinary status and even their status as accused or sentenced persons under the law are assigned a special status of being exempt from prosecution. In this special liminal state and according to the rules, through a kind of public confession to truth, is supposed to emerge.

People in a liminal state upset the normal order of events, question normality. This, which is not understood, questions society's assumptions. And society's reaction is not only to reject but often to declare such people to be on the devil's party. This demonisation is enacted in Peter Flann's novel *Voltaire at Barney* (1958: 8). The protagonist with the image of little Geneva losing its glory against Voltaire as agent of the devil.

Waiting for the Barbarians (Unelze 1981) can be regarded as an extended meditation on marginality. As the example of the magistrate indicates, the marginal is an in-between—a zone between two different systems where contact and exchange becomes possible. In this in-between a very crude exchange takes place: pot of goods or materials—there is very crude commerce or communication. Most of bestial people get captured, are tortured and, measured, some returned to their own. And such trading seems to be occluded from the outset. The marginal in this case also forms the boundary between the known and what is beyond the known, beyond knowing, perhaps. It is in any case impossible to know the other, yet enslaving the other seems to be necessary in order to have a sense of the self.

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

always the case that beyond the margin lies the unknown or the not yet known? Where the categories of the own system becomes dubious? Where there are no maps? Here no cages? The margin is the zone where categories, systems of reference become deconstructed, where the power of dicta/control meaning becomes irrelevant for freedom to become so, where power is questioned and no longer applies automatically or of its own sake. This linkage to the beyond is frightening and for this reason what lies beyond often gets relegated to the devil.

This is the case in *Paijies*—Kauzika Uyens' recent acclaimed film (1997). It tells the story of the restoration of the marginal family of Hendrik McDonald. McDonald is a director of an insignificant railway hotel in the middle of nowhere, in the collections of his wife and of himself is equally marginal, though he desperately tries to maintain his status by building it in his back yard. He humiliates his daughter with his clumsy efforts of building a boyfriend. The old love songs, like 'Somewhere in Time with you' he sings along with, suggest a nostalgia for better times. For his wife no longer shares his need and his family's marginality or abnormality is marked by the fact that his young son, Willem, can no longer speak.

By mistake a circus troupe gets stranded on this hotel. The marvellous world of the circus, where a giraffe can walk through the kaobon wild, twisting his umbrella, leading an elephant by his trunk, gives us the first inkling that things might change. In trying to mesmerize when power he has lost to the non-verbal and ethnic people, Hendrik suffers a very obvious figure/ground. Yet the signifier, with the highly significant name of Manuel, remains behind, and it is he who starts a process of healing by showing Willem the power of play, song and dance, animation, masks, costume and make believe.

After a quarrel between Hendrik and Katjea, Willem runs away to his friend, Manuel. Manuel sends him back, but the police has already been called, and they give Willem's *toygoose* in the back of the trolley he comes with. The police is a spectrally *double-coded*, sacred ritual. When the broader society learns about the power of circling, the police and the church is marshalled. This indicates how closely the marginal and the dominant are associated. In the confessional house of sorcery and Mania, 'that Beelzebub', as one of the messengers call him (Richard 1998:73), is shot down as a scapegoat. Luckily, he is only wounded. But still, the power of art restores the frozen family relations, saving other things by making Hendrik reveal that the snake in his small hotel was a voluntary or self-caught decision, he took the job, because he was jealous of his attractive wife. Willem begins to speak again and his sister resumes playing the piano.

² The actual film differs in some detail from the published script, but not in this case. In fact, the film is more explicit about the demonization, or in the church scene Manuel is also referred to as 'Beelzebub', son of the devil.

The film hinges on the meaning of *paijies* and *toer*. *Paijies* is a *draver*, a spell or a magic pot, and *toer* means both 'to compare, to juggle', 'to charm, to enchant and to bewitch'. White and black, magic and the devil's art get combined. This place of limbo, of loss of status, loss of social integration is very aptly named *Toerwester*. Maria, Refreshing Waters, Willem's instruction into the magician's and clown's arts take place in the margin of the margin. It is an old, old story born a little way removed from the station.

The transformative process is only complete after the family becomes fully demystified and is forced to leave the *Vulstuisden*, the biggest social event of the year. This leads them to realising their own humanity. 'I am Hendrik McDonald', McDonald says, and his whole family follows him in this. Realising that they are Dutch, strange, but still human means that they can be transformed and so they do. The local party scene indicates. Only by proclaiming the marginal to be authentically human re-negotiation becomes possible.

Clearly, as *Fokke* had eaten, in his way, make believe, play, imagination in a fictional zone— it subverts in questions by its existence, it has its own realities. This 'The' just like Zakes Mda's *Steps of Dying* (1997) reveals the regenerative and restorative power of the comic vision. To be human is to eat, to see, men, shagreened, existence, your own alterity and identity. This again proves that the margin is the authentic. *vanman*.

The liminal state is the state traditionally occupied by art and literature. The anti-structure of such liminal states loosens the boundaries, so they have to be policed by censorship, for example. And art, so it seems, can flower only in such marginal states— somewhere hidden, somewhat withdrawn from the public eye. The marginal is a zone of transformation and metamorphosis, of transcending and rising.

4th note: The marginal and the semiosphere

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

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

As an example of the semiosphere he suggests 'the sea' (1990:120).

³ These words are not in the script.

imagines a museum hall, where exhibits from different periods are on display, along with inscriptions in known and unknown languages, and instructions for deriving them. Besides, there are the explanations composed by the museum staff, plans for tours and rules for the behaviour of the visitors. Imagine also in this hall tour-leaders and the visitors, and imagine a full-on, a single mechanism with *no a priori sense* (132). This is an image of the semiosphere. Then we have to remember that all elements are in dynamic motion and relations which are constantly changing.

The whole magnificent synthesis of the semiosphere is constituted on very few basic principles – bivalence (or duality), and asymmetry.

Asymmetry is clear in the relation between centre and periphery. The centre is formed by the natural languages of a particular culture as the organising core. The semiosphere is always organising itself by self-description – for example, by writing grammars and codifying laws. Here a dialectics of organisation and flexibility is at work. What the semiosphere gives by self-description are unity and definition, what it loses are indeterminacy, a capacity for more flexibility and potential for dynamic development.¹ (1990:128)

The semiosphere determines how I describe myself, what occurs as a need, what exists. That is why what is beyond the boundary of the semiosphere is unknown, and regarded as evil, demonised. In the centre the norms and life more or less coincide, but at the periphery the norms contradict the semiotic reality underlying it (Lotman 1990:129). That is why the margin, the periphery is a zone of recreation and reconstruction. (The area of semiotic dynamism', Lotman (1990:131) calls it.

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

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

and what is internal. In short, its function is to 'collect, filter and adapt the external into the internal' (1990:130).

Lotman (1990:130) points out that the design of human settlements under the semiosphere. The most important public and administrative buildings tend to be placed in the centre; less valued social groups are settled in the periphery' – as happened under the Group Areas Act.

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

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

It is in Lotman's sense that we today can perhaps elude tense Afrikan literature and culture as marginal. In the usual sense of the word it can be regarded as displaced from the centre. It has become demonised in many respects. But in the heightened dialogue with the new emerging centre it is pouring forth, sending out a volume of texts (in Lotman's phrase), like Postcolonial literature, and at the same time sending back, pouring out what has been has received and recorded. A vibrant literature is writing back to the centre – trying to transcend it.

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

The semiosphere, the space of culture, something that, according to Lotman, is marked out and re-calculated place – it creates like the sun, realms of activity both in different places, in the digital – and in the analogue, radiating constantly powerful waves with enormous energy. But unlike that of the sun, the energy of the semiosphere is the energy of a transition, the energy of thought (1990:130).

Social space, in Lotman's view, is therefore not homogeneous, but scattered and split by countless margins – and at each of these space information is created.

5th note: The marginal and the postcolonial

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

Of course, the picture of marginality that emerges from *Native* is ever simplified, since racial factors, class, race, nation and ethnicity are excluded. What does marginality become in a postcolonial context where these factors are in constant motion? Or rather where race and nation becomes a central site of innovation and critique?

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

The second is 'margin as irreducible other' – the condition for the production of our discourse (and our positive knowledge) that must be acknowledged as incommensurable and 'irrecoverable' (Seshadri-Crooks: 1995:60). This second sense she turns back to Bourdieu. It is the margin as condition of possibility: the 'thought and unthought that makes positive knowing possible' (Seshadri-Crooks: 1995:60).

Seshadri-Crooks goes on to argue that these two definitions (the marginal as the excluded and as the 'limit') map out the 'limits' of postcolonial scholarship which is many ways bound to be self-critical of the enterprise of finding the 'real' margin, the authentic critical position and 'minor' resistance centredally the conditions for the production of its own discourse' (1995:60). The tension between the excluded and the limit seems to maintain the innovative power and the oppositional status of Postcolonialism.

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

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

Conclusions

In my marginal times I have traced the idea of the margin through different periods of time. In Bourdieu's view, as he quotes Voltaire, the margin contains the elements of the good life and is a site of freedom, freedom and a point from which the world can be surveyed into, actually. The analysis of the metaphor of the margin has pointed out that it does not imply a centre, though, perhaps, we do need one. Marginal man, being on the fringes of society contrasts with our accepted notions of the beloved and enclosed self. Unlike the magistrate in *Waiting for the Barbarians* (Cortázar 1991), who discovers in himself the wish to be outside history and wants for ever in a state of waiting, a state of limbo, being marginal has recently become a privileged subject position, which the centre wants to incorporate in itself, incorporation or appropriation, however, seems only to a misrecognition of the other – forcing the other into our own categories. Turner's views on the liminal and the liminal cross the way to regard the margin as zone of contest and exchange and of 'the recombination and innovation'. The marginal thereby becomes a zone of negotiation and of the authentically human, as the analysis of *Native* informs. Turner's views on the authenticity of the sociosphere simply support the position that the margin is a semantic horizon, a zone of transformation. At the same time he posits a notion of margins, since he regards social space not as homogeneous, but as fringed by 'intermediate margins' where semantic activity can take place. In so doing, he makes everybody marginal in some sense.

Turner's view of the long-term structural cycles of cultures is much too idealistic to fit the present situation of Africans. In fact, as our own margins have been perceived we can only devise strategies of creating new information, like Senkabe's (1988) strategy of the *novel* or Okaka's of *novels as knowledge-creating events* (resp. Senkabe 1994:88, 112, 93). We cannot get outside history and reach a point of total authority, but by a kind of double movement we can, on the one hand accept the hegemony, but on the other try to enter into dialogue with it, to use and subvert it, and by our interventionary writing about a change in the configuration of the signifiers.

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Writing from the Margins, or the Decentering of English Literature¹

Erhard Beckwith

Human experience, as insights provided by 'the linguistic turn in philosophy' have made abundantly clear, is primarily 'read' and thus predetermined by language. That is, every sign we see is a 'signification' (Saussure, 1972:52), which implies that, instead of being a transparent window on the world, it is already replete with meanings derived from a more or less arbitrary construction of reality that, in a dialectic process, is subject to certain changes within that reality. In the social world it is even through classifications which, in their turn are motivated by the social world itself (cf. also in Cerquiglini 1983:111). The language game 'Helsinki' is in no way exempted from this process, especially in view of the more recent social-political-historical changes brought about by what goes by the name of 'decolonisation' (referring as it does to the assertion of 'the colonised's' autonomy and unity in the wake of (in this case Dutch) colonialism).

It is not only the primary code of language but also the secondary linguistic code of literature that is affected, essentially:

¹ The Nigerian content of English is studied. This is so pragmatically, given the enormous size of the English-speaking world (Stefan J. Schif 1977: 9).

George Stinner observes, and it was one of the first to recognize the potential for "therapy innovation" such that "conditions are capable of being met" (p. 10).

So far, an obvious truth may be seen: in an index of linguistic money, one finds that a significant portion of the writing being produced not only in American English, but also in African, Australian, English, Chinese, and West Indian, is not a display of linguistic skill, an expensive danger in linguistic resources, a new source largely about money, the British see to Giddens or Schatz (1977: 13).

Fitz-Gibbon, J. & Beckwith, V. 1991. *Journal of Zoology* 1991: 281-292.

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

There is the education, the opportunity to study the words of the history of the English language and of its literature more comprehensively, more rigorously than the general school curriculum made it possible (Schiff 1977: 19).

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Such a premise goes a long way towards rendering meaningless any assumptions of essential and thereby centre 'Englishness'. A whole range of theoretical texts with widely differing approaches such as Jacques Lacan (1966: 87-97), Maurice Blanchot (1966), Jacques Derrida (1967), Edward Said (1978) or Niklas Luhmann (1984) have each shown that every concept of selfhood implies the constituting 'other' and hence the suppression or marginalisation of 'the Other', a process where ideological considerations also come into play.¹ The concept of good and evil is a prethetical one, but coincides with categories of Otherness (Hansson 1981: 113). What is made clear by a statement like this is that the difference between self and Other is currently based on a 'negative identity' (Derrida) whereby the self is only definable in terms of what it is not. Thus any seemingly 'neutral' 'inner physicist' (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 1989: 53) of humanism stands revealed as an emblem of division of the world into a centre and its periphery that largely owes its existence to a combination of Western economic and military superiority which, in their turn, ensured Western control of the means of symbolic representation. Only in such a context was it possible to pose the European self as the centre, or better, as the norm, and to despise the Other as a difference or deviation from that norm. Put in very simple terms this meant, '... others have less in, than myself' (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 1989: 88).

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Clearly the dominance of the centre in its interpretation of experiences has not changed, but the experience at the periphery can only be evaluated (Zentgraf 1986: 11).

While this is surely would be the consequence arising from an understanding of the symbolic, and hence mythical, opposition between a central and a marginalised periphery: 'The English Wives Back', is not a famous slogan coined by Salma's Rustabe. What is at stake here is to deconstruct the old binary oppositions, thereby establishing proof that any self is inextricably enmeshed in a 'topographical identity' (García 1990:11), an insight that automatically leads to the dissolution of those oppositions. In the end, the old author begins to break down (Griffin and Hutchins 1998:8).

Through Mo, in his novel *La Mandala* Fessenden has shown in a largely graphic manner to what an extent Europe's supposedly civilised and dominant position vis-à-vis his colonies had been, right from the start, a co-ordinated relationship of mutual dependence. The whole intercourse between Britain and her various colonies was, as he sees it, based on two economic triangles, the 'West India' and 'Atlantic triangle' and the 'East India Triangle' (Mo 1981:29-32). Both of which in one or other interpenetrated each other to form a kind of Darwin's star with Africa's slave being unable to exist without the other. Africa's slaves were shipped to the West Indies and America, there to work on the plantations where the tobacco, the sugar cane and the cotton much needed by Britain were grown; the cotton in its turn was processed by white slaves in the mills of Northern England, to be exported to India where the cotton was grown that was needed in order to pay for the tea and sugar needs imported from China to Britain. So much for the intricate web of interdependence between

literature, especially the novel, cannot remain unaffected by such interdependencies. The colonial and more especially the postcolonial novel produced on the fringes of the Empire is bound moreover to question the author's assumption of centrality, in the process developing its own particular aesthetics with one specific extending from the initial familiarisation via the gradual adaptation and translation towards the final rejection of the author's narrative modes of representation. To what extent the essential categories of the European bourgeois novel get challenged and thereby will be examined more closely in the following.

James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), as Barry Hignett has argued with typical eloquence, is regarded as the most perfect example of a colonialist aesthetic in that it is such a radically modern departure from the more established means of novelistic representation that only two scenes in it, externalizing perceptions of a semi-colonial backwater like Dublin:

The same might be said about the book's large half-length portrait of the United States' Southern states, which includes a brief treatment of the region's political and economic life, but the editorial policy as there was to include only the most recent. For the supposed subjects of anything, the individual or less the present, the authoring agent of it is a historical, dead, not empty, some less, is difficult to imagine how can

the title of 'The map of realism' that in the experience of linear time which is always on the side of Caesar' (Rorty 1996:322).

Figlio's definition of Modernism and (Post)Colonialism is an extremely valuable tool for placing as it does literary developments on the fringes of the Empire within the context of other achievements such as Modernism or Postmodernism; that are normally considered to be the sole property of the centre. Seen in this light the (post)colonial novel's stance against European conceptions of 'the self and of the world at large is a double-barrelled one. Firstly it is directed against the hegemony ideology, namely de Gaulle's 'value order, meaning, control and identity' (Kushnir 1985:13), secondly against the realist novel whose definition in the words of Roland Barthes is the 'ideogrammatic figure' or 'proportional analogy' (1985:3-8) of that ideology and can thus be construed as the very embodiment of European colonialist idealism. It is understandable that literary reaction with its emphasis on 'l'insolite, le déviant, le déclassé' (Kushnir 1989:107) was closely tied to the ideals and applications of the dominant middle class. George Steiner is certainly right in stating 'the decline and partial death' (Steiner 1979:342) of those ideals in a world that has changed quite drastically and the literary texts themselves as well as formal upheavals of the novels to genre have to be seen in this context.

Pierre Bourdieu has aptly demonstrated to what an extent European realism, especially when viewed against the backdrop of modern or postmodern innovations, the genre and independent recently (or at so recently), is both bound to a narrow-minded 'ethnocentrism':

... society in granting certain representations of 'reality' the privileged status of 'realism', confirms its own ethnological certainty that only the images of the world conforming most closely to what it perceives to be reality in the end, that is 'objective' (1991:102).

If one defines realism as the interplay between

well-ordered chronological sequence... the rational correlation between what is an external and what is internal, the causal connection between 'what one' does and the 'except' the public laws' of existence (Wagner 1984:7).

the main novels in categories of character, action, space and time that combine to make up its representation of the world leave the narrative situations where 'reality' is always proven as being 'real' as well as transparent. These up and mythical European 'fantasmes ou idé' (Lévy 1988:10), however, must be overcome in order to make us realise that there are numerous other possible constructions of reality that are no

compatible with our categories of perception, thereby exposing the classical Western novel that usually goes by the exclusive name of 'The Novel' as the merely 'national version' (Chikwena, Onwuchikwa & Maduburke 1985:19) of a genre that is multifarious in the extreme and that gets practiced all over the world and under such historical conditions that differ vastly from the European context.

IV

The postmodern transformations and the ensuing decentering of the narrative situation by which all traditional notions of what constitutes character, action, space and time have become overturned (Hochmann 1986:1-5-224) thus making the analogies of 'intensity' prevalent in the postmodern novel are equally to be found in the (post)colonial novel; 'ways of coming to terms in what, in this case, are conditioning factors, because of an altered cultural context, are different'. But even so the analogy holds, as will first be shown by analysing how the closely intertwined categories of character and action get undermined.

While the alienation of the postmodern self basically derives from the fact that 'it is no longer free to dispose of its image because of constant interference from the unconscious as well as the distorting power of language, the (post)colonial subject is faced with an even more complex situation. For the colonial 'manic man' (Bhabha 1984:125-133) neither the unconscious nor the language he uses nor the crises he is faced with are his own because they have been superimposed from the outside on a colonial 'politics of dominance and subordination' (Ashforth et al. 1989:33) there is a vast potential of alienation where numerous factors combine to render self-determined action and a sense of selfhood extremely difficult if not altogether impossible. What has also to be taken into account is the fact that the ego, as Michel Foucault has argued, is a fairly recent European 'invention' of man although the subject positions in other non-European cultures are much less clearly defined.

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

... our Western novel... addresses itself rather to the individual as hero or heroine, to the solipsistic or wage-slaving, mania and mental malady of his or her innermost springs (Mo 1987:361).

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

Nkomo has shown with regard to African novel-writing where, as he rightly observes, the clash of individual and communal values which the European model is principally based on, remains a more or less alien element because it is 'essentially hostile to African traditional society' (Nkomo 1981:1-6).

All these diffusions of the individual naturally determine the formal properties of the (post)colonial novel, especially in the way the action is structured: Where subjects, for one reason or another, are not in control of their own actions and cannot, or do not want to, determine their own course of action, there is not to be found the usual linear sequence of implanting an action consistent with its syntagmatic 'temporality' (Garcemas in De Sousa 1996:175) from within via knowledge and capacity to the final deed plus the ensuing change or effect brought about by it. All these elements are strangely incoherent radicalized forms of action' (Hoffmann 1988:176) where passivity has superseded activity and a negation has displaced the reality principle. The normal step-by-step logic of action with its implications of causal necessity has thus been supplanted by a contingent, loosely associated series of events.

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

...the Western novel manifests that along a line we could interpolate and impose its 'linear'... It may muddle, but eventually it proceeds along a course of cause and effect, each contributing to the momentum of the whole. The plot is a veritable engine, which advances along a well-trodden path... (Mo 1987:359)

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

[The novel] is a plot which is the plot of another. It was made up of separate episodes... which may refer only to themselves and be joined by the luck of chance... (Mo 1987:359)

All this goes hand in hand with a different concept of time. European culture, as Mo puts it, is committed to 'progress and advance', whereas the Chinese 'looks in upon the Past and has no notion of progress but a spiral decline from a golden age to a better one, or, in fact, as well as in all else' (Mo 1987:359). The two opposing notions of time are best metaphorized, as Mo does, as a 'maple tree' and 'ghost'. It is noteworthy in this context that the new European concept of time cannot very close to resembling the postmodern assumption of living 'in an era of post-history or of negative progress where all the old historical ideologies no longer seem to be viable. Another factor responsible for the loss of 'linear temporality' and hence for the further 'spatialization' of time in a non-colonial condition is furnished by the numerous

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

For the culture of the novel this means that the Aristotelian notion of narrative as *mimesis* proceeds with a clearly defined beginning, middle and end is no longer a viable one. In a novel, where tradition where events and actions are arranged in a chronological order a 'natural' sense of temporality is capable of evolving from which the linear progression of the narrative then emerges (Hoffmann 1988:168). However, as Irwin states, such a temporal ordering gives rise to the notion that we are, in fact, dealing with what can be termed 'referential time' or 'time as such' which is felt to be homologous with the linearity of narrative discourse – hence the conception that a narrative is marked by 'time as evidence temporally over something' (Garcemas 1996:69). With an aesthetics of non-temporality, however, where narrated time is subject to free itself from the linear constraints of narrating time imposed by the syntagmatic sequencing order of its linguistic presentation, it is the achronical co-existence of events that no longer supersedes events and the narrative meanings derived from them and all part of a 'spatial form' where the temporal periodical continuity of any 'natural' chronology, freely vacillates between past, present and future and time is subjected to the 'non-chronological, geometrical configuration' of purely aesthetic structures untried of any 'true element'.

'Space becomes spatialized, time becomes spatialized' (Hoffmann 1988:115) – his position is right in line with Derrida's opinion that the 'linearity' of a sign to its simultaneously existing yet ungraspable Other comes from a 'temporalization' as well as an 'espacement' of meaning. With regard to the (post)colonial novel this has the effect of isolating narrative situations to such an extent from their context that they become mere episodes that are logically as well as temporally unrelated with what went on before or what comes afterwards, even to the extent that they ceased to become 'useless tableaux or reflexions, or perhaps even turn into extensive descriptive passages that render any ongoing and coherent chronology impossible. Thus, to use Umberto Eco's words, a 'poetics of fiction' has been supplanted by a 'poetics of cross-sections' (1985:222-223). The only principle of coherence remaining in this case consists in formal patterns of patterning, chaotic, contrastive, serial and other relational kinds of arrangement.

Much postmodernist and/or 'Aristotelian' ways of telling stories can also be found in oral narratives where the narrator constantly digresses or repeats himself so that

the transmission of experience in any way is also inevitably partly ritualized, according to the rules of 'folklore' (Barney 1994:144).

This is of major importance for the (post)colonial novel, as Salman Rushdie's (1988:211) or Chingiz Aitmatov's (1988:xxvii-xc) emphasis on the relevance of the oral tradition for the novel or Aitmatov's writing has shown. At any rate, what is considered extremely difficult by an anti-teleological type of narrative is the sense-making operation of the reader because where the narrative has no 'natural' or 'linear' end-point, created by its chronology, it is more or less impossible for the reader to assign all its facets of meaning in such a way as to form a coherent whole that satisfies his desire to know what the story is 'all about'. The (post)colonial novel is thus the very artistic embodiment of a 'now and elsewhere in space' which annihilates temporal time and history' (Ashworth et al. 1989:34), of a spatial concept of time that is aimed directly at 'upsetting the centre's arrogant assumption of "linear" time or history being all on its side'.

Space as – in the sense of Kundera – that category where 'changes of our perception of the world are made visible is not, of course, exempted from the process of discovering desecration so far. A subject incapable of acting that is forced to withdraw into passivity or imagination, in fragmented, spatial time—all these are not the dis-empowering qualities of a new zone where space is a stable entity. Whereas the western subject experiences geographical or social space as a reliable command or physical environment – in Raymond Williams' words as 'the knowable community' (Williams 1974:14) – this is rendered fluid or unstable when the alienated (post)colonial subject experiences it as 'unknown, unknowable, new, warring society' (Williams 1974:14). As such, an experience becomes precarious and observation of space gets reflected into a multitude of aspects that resist being assembled into one coherent picture. This means that space, which is normally something in itself, becomes changeable and hence Europeanised. The loss of reality incurred by a fluid spatial dimension has been described by the Indian author Arundhati Ghosh as

the knowledge that reality is fluidly changing – that the spaces that surround us, the vast one infinitely, can become suddenly and without warning, as fluid as a man in a flash flood (1989:309).

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

This becomes tangible in the hypothetical changes of the European environment imagined by Chingiz Aitmatov: one of the protagonists in Rushdie's *Saturn's Verse* if the average temperature in London were to rise by only ten degrees on a night the city would change beyond recognition – there would be an abundance of palm trees and other exotic plants everywhere, the social and sexual mores of the inhabitants would improve considerably because the natural British reserve would give way to emotional spontaneity. Especially the loss of the protestant work ethic would mobilise resources of creativity that have been lying dormant for so long. This would become most strikingly visible in the improvement of English football: instead of a covert kick-and-rush play one would get more refined ball treatment and better intellectual control of the game. The 'impification of London' (Rushdie 1988:354) would indeed be a last but perfect revenge wrought by the periphery on the centre because the supposedly negative qualities of the despised Other would thus finally catch up with the self, or as Hanif Kureishi has argued: After thirteen years of Thatcherism certain parts of South London look just as idyllic as a sense of the less nice areas of Caledonia, even with a large numbers of Indian shops and take-aways (Kureishi 1989:25-6).

V

The four main constituents of the narrative situation we have dealt with – displacement, fiction, space and time – not only stand in a relation of reciprocal analogy with the real structure of human experience' (Červenka 1978:93), as the Czech structuralist Miroslav Červenka has put it. The transformations described so far, however, have led to the dissolution of the usual as well as spatio-temporal configurations of the real, that the result achieved is 'a considerable deviation from everyday experience' (Červenka 1978:125). The spectrum of deviation extends all the way from an 'idealism that is mainly due to a continuous rupture withdrawing from the reader the consolation that borders the real' (Lyons 1988:31) via wildly fabricating, magical realism, where the real and the 'phantasmic' intermingled right to the metaphorically displaced world of the grotesque. One may safely say that all these types of idealism are to be found in (post)colonial fiction.

The conclusion to be drawn from all this is that the world as presented through the looking glass of the (post)colonial novel is not compatible with a stable European-bourgeois conception of reality. In addition to the general urgency of all oppressed to seek refuge from a dreary reality in the realm of imagination the (post)colonial novel, because of its experience with systematically distorted reality, is imbued with a sense of how inartfully 'thickers', to use a Hindi/Urdu formula, what is world as it really is, nothing but the essentially symbolically constructed simulacrum of an original that is not there in the first place. Sometimes these last two constructs are so vio-

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

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

... via the distortions of the conventional surface of things, the spontaneous 'of normal' reality gets exposed, thus having laid the otherwise hidden essence of being in a less deplorable (Kleemann 1973: 128).

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

... the work of a text works on the concealing of the dominant discourse as a technique – instead the dominant discourse presents itself exactly as the presentation of objects on the retelling subject (Kleemann 1989: 134–42).

This tendency on the part of the dominant discourse to repress all other voices and their differing constructions of reality is counteracted in the (post)colonial novel by a 'systematic refusal of any such dominant discourse' (Kleemann 1989: 134–135). Accordingly the texts are often redefined into a multifaceted polyphony, thereby shamelessly laying bare their own status as mere artefacts without any claim to referentiality. Thus the dominant discourse is made to compete with a host of other voices.

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

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

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

... The women seem to have taken over; they marched in from the periphery of the story, to demand the inclusion of their own images, histories and chronicles, entering male territory, narrating in all manner of female idiom, yes, to secure male plot reflected, so to speak, through the mirror of its reverse' and female was it (50–133).

If power is installed via discursive construction, so what can or cannot be said, then the first step to emancipation consists in making heard the previously suppressed voice of the Other. 'The multiple, if first, language' (Deleuze/Guattari 1986: 17) – such a demand is adequately fulfilled in the (post)colonial novel, which is – in the sense of Antonia Derrida – 'form-enacting meaning' (Hatch & Short 1981: 345) – the formal manifestation of its own content by being the very epitome of anti-legal and lifelessness.

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

poetry, fiction, song, and essays, lists of poems, recipes, letters, and a host of traditions and even styles (all of which may appear to be interunavoidable and indispensable to the narrator's requirement of being able to advance the tale or deepen his reader's understanding of it) (Minchin 1989: 135).

Sometimes such syncretism goes so far as to completely blur the distinction between linear writing between various persons as is the case in Mithobi Mukherjee's *Pravara*, a portmanteau-word made up of prose, poem and drama. In a text like this the generic identity of the novel as an essentially narrative type of discourse has been turned on a head.

To sum up. Through the dysfunctional, truly 'non-European' (Kristeva 1989: 167) syncretism of the discourses the (post)colonial novel quite consciously rejects any easy identification of its future or thematic potential. The specific way in which it helps to dismantle the classical narrative model of representation that, as has been shown, gives its chronological and anecdotal organisation by means of context, is the essential contribution the non-European novel is capable of making to the new picture of the contemporary English novel. Depending so freely on the third, marginal formation of the genre after the alongside Anglo-American Modernism and Postmodernism, it can its self-imposed limits of vision, so that finally we Europeans (for various *consignes de la relativité*, *données d'adhésion* after tout le zéro est nul) are ... (Todorov 1982: 317).

Thus the English novel has 'inherited' from the outside, from the periphery, such a vast leather bag of words that more of them than it appears to be 'more English than English' (Ashcroft et al. 1989: 195). At last, in the matter of *Signature* Todorov's

possibility is thereby fulfilled: 'Vivre la différence dans l'égalité' (Todorov 1983:319). Put otherwise, Seen in this light Babel was not a regrettable accident in the history of human communication but, on the contrary, a unique stroke of good luck (Steiner 1975).

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Duytsman altyd kallom: leke Hottentots doot makom

Ampie Coetzee

The title is a quotation from a c. 17th Century Hottentot-Dutch
add-in to the Khoikhoi grammar Dierhem always kept
for the Hottentots. (Quoted by Willem van Marne, 1988).

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

It is problematic to think about genealogy or beginnings. When Friedrich Nietzsche criticised genealogy he used many words: 'Entstehung', 'Urkunft', 'Abkunft', 'Ursprung', 'Ursprung', 'Anfang' (for a full 1911/140). These various in meaning, enough to create the concept of a beginning. But the extent to which a beginning is dependent on constructs is quite clearly stated by Nietzsche in his "The Genealogy of Morals".

There is no set of conditions imposed a priori on an action, but that the actual causes of a thing's origin and its evolution, the manner of its incorporation into a system of purposes, are worlds apart from everything that exists, no matter what its origin. It is paradoxically maintained by those who speak in terms of beginnings alone. (Nietzsche, 1961: 109).

And he goes on:

No matter how well we discuss and think through the actual, psychological origin of a legal institution, a custom, a political system, and an artistic genre, a whole truth we cannot directly understand anything of its origin. (Nietzsche, 1961: 109).

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

In a situation of European settlement, it is asking sense to consider the status of written literature among the Khoikhoi, the earliest indigenous people in southern Africa to be

Duytsman altyd kallom.

consider the colonial and missionary presence a systematic way. It is in making sense in the context of European settlement to consider the beginnings of Afrikaans expression. (1966: 12).

And Sauermeier, in writing about early Dutch writing in South Africa: "This literature one can then consider as the origin of Afrikaans literature" (1973: 24).

I have to go beyond what is today considered as literature. I have to go to a vague place somewhere in an uncertain time where peoples from Europe met and confronted the indigenous the southern shores of Africa. From the conquests that followed our present identities – or dissolution of identity – were constructed. In the texts that invaded and created a South Africa.

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

What I wished to reveal is not an order, side by side, side by side, but the birth of knowledge, the knowledge of a new order of language, and the knowledge of an order of history, and to relate them to an archaeological discourse that was contemporary with them during a period extending from the second century to the nineteenth century (1970: 3).

To strip, by, there was, moreover, the theory of wealth, language. A network of analogies existed at the early times of colonisation between classification of nature, the analysis of wealth, and language as representation. In the classification of the indigenous people representations – in language and drawings – were discriminated throughout the 'civilized' world. On these the Khoikhoi, would be represented as the most disgusting (Haugen 1981). As early as 1719 Peter Kolb in his *Cape of Good Hope and Bushmen* already complained about the 'ignorance and imperfection' in the accounts of the people about the Cape of Good Hope. He talks of the 'beauty of travellers, the prostitution of mercenary pen', and that 'the pictures we have upon the Hottentots, not only differ widely in their most essential parts of history, but hardly have the good luck to hit upon the truth in any one article' (Kolb MDCCLXXIX: 123). And yet, when he represents their language, he says, for instance:

Their language is certainly a composition of the most gross sounds, but even were it composed by my people, I should look upon it as the discourse of speechless brutes, if he meant, or meant nothing of learning or education but to speak to nature. (Kolb MDCCLXXIX: 123).

And, particularly the following:

Have a care, for they are looking upon us a whole nation of dumbness – a land of the incommunicable words and gestures of the tongue in which their own tongue is absolutely incommunicable – for the most part, hardly intelligible even to those they come to visit. (Kellie McDonald 1988: 132)

In short the colonisers have no language. Not only do they struggle to speak the coloniser's language, which already marks off the barbarians, but the language they speak among themselves represent them to the coloniser as 'barbaric'.

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

Seeking the voice of the 'other' has been attempted before in postcolonial times, in other countries, in other contexts. The work of Frantz Fanon comes to mind (*The Wretched of the Earth: The Question of the Other* 1986), and the projects of Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (*Selected Subaltern Studies* 1988). But to suppress the old narrative, or to rethink it in terms of text and narrative may be a fruitless exercise for the changed South African. Perhaps, you may wonder, should it not be a reader from the work of the previously colonised to undertake a task such as this? Why would a descendant of the coloniser be interested in seeking out the voice of the marginalised? The colonial, sometimes?

One could answer in various ways, but for this project the relationship between the marginalised 'other' and the genealogy of a South African literature is the prime motivation. The white literatures in this country could not have come into existence without the colonised 'other'; nor could not have been produced without erasing the 'other'. Then the question also has to be asked to what extent was this 'erasure' dependent on the creation of the 'other'? What is ultimately the difference between the 'same' and the 'other'? Now that there should be South Africanists/lyricists/classically be no more difference in the colonial sense between them and us, we might wish to see them in our colonial texts of the past.

It only these texts were monodimensional!

Within the classifications of nature and this world also include the indigenous (or indigenous, even in Keesen Meyer's modern literary history there is a chapter 'Der Indio, singen im Volkstum der Völkchen' (Animal, Native and Folklore in Narrative Art) – within this classification there is representation of the 'travel' (or travel, anthropologist, quasi-ethnologist, though his there are no women in my research so far) particular, armed visitor, and the representation is descriptive. But sometimes the writer

'The first spontaneous comes with regard to the stranger, to a foreigner, to a colonist, since he is different from us by his appearance and/or by his social inferior barbarian, if he does not speak our language. It is because he speaks none at all, even if he speaks, as Columbus still believed (Honnay 1983: 76).

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

I would like, briefly, to examine such an example. The story of Dykamma. But the epistemology of any kind of reading should take not only the contents of a text into account, but also text as discourse. The following is from Ollie Barker's (1626–689) *Southwicks de schryfinge der dykammache Gheschiede* (1668), which was apparently a compilation. Four manuscript accounts, as Dapper never appeared, 1801 edition. The story he tells here does not agree completely with the official records, and the official records do not agree with each other. A close reading of all the various texts and of their translations to English from 17th century Dutch provides another narrative 'that of the text'.

Here is a translation of Dapper's version:

One morning in June 1650, after the war had already lasted three months over Houtag's (including his Dorset) was overpowered by five or six horsemen, as they were coming off with two cattle which they had taken from a herd. They may be a Dutch pirate ship. The Houtag, seeing no more of means of flight or means of any more, defended himself bravely. They wounded two of the horsemen, one through the arm, and under the other's arm, the other in the spine. But one of them could repeat the duty of working to one of them, with the gun, and standing by the other, who died at their own weapons. One of the three who were shot, a man named Eskam, was taken to the boat and there, with his neck already severed, he was found. A sword wound in the head, but he had, when he was shot, escaped by jumping down a steep bank, but was a man which, high power, best service and education.

The wounded Eskam, brought into the fort, was asked why his people had made a treaty with the colonisation, and tried to come during a conversation, he said that he was a man and a man. We then overcame by the name of his own people, he replied by asking why the Dutch had thought over the land of the Houtag, and why he was the head of the other, which by seven years on the lands to which they had to drive their cattle or pasture, said that they had never had other or better grazing grounds. The reason for all their attacks, he continued, was no longer than to cover themselves from the heat and equinox came to them – since they had only were accustomed to sleep every four months of their grazing grounds, which they always possessed undisturbed and only showed us at first as a refreshment station, but they also saw their lands divided out among the Dutch. Their knowledge by the hands of the Dutch, and because of the Dutch, they said they ought not to be. He asked finally what we were here for, he said, the same thing happened to us. Moreover, he added, they showed how we were overhauled and taken only with the Dutch, and he said, which, according to their way of thinking, would have no other object than to bring them and all their wives, children and property, and domination. To this he then replied: your people have once been ill but they have arrived. He said, however, and you must accordingly have well on the idea of getting it back again through peace or through war.

Ekman's idea on the last day. His last words were that he was only an angry, arrogant person, but that he thought we should arrive at his chief to the best and also as soon as later. The probability of returning to each of us was his, or of finding whatever arrangements might be found best to put an end to the unpleasant damage on the premises. This being approved, two or three fishermen were sent to request Chief Ekogsoo to come to the boat so that an oral treaty of peace could be established. But the attempt was fruitless, for although the above mentioned above and asked them, they would discuss ending or fighting with the same vehemence whenever they saw a chance, so that we could find of no means of bringing this dispute to final and sensible close (Ekogsoo to 1923: 12-17).

The editor of the collection of essays on the early Cape Hottentots from which this piece is taken, J. Schapera consistently criticises DuPreez for his incoherence and deviation from the prime objective.

There are, however, as far as I can determine at the moment, two texts from which Dapper could have constructed his story: the one from a diary manuscript of Commander Jan van Riebeeck, dated 19th July 1659, and the other from a letter he sent to the Directors of the VOC in Holland, on the 28th of July 1659, reporting the incident. (and, perhaps, also from a letter dated on the 29th of July 1659, as well as a diary inscription on the 23rd of Aug. 1659, at Schapery 1933:14 and 16). Without taking the original Dutch versions into account (Van Riebeeck's style is quite complicated and sometimes ambiguous) these two texts differ from Dapper's narrative in the following aspects:

- the name of the woodcock Flycatcher is not given
- more details given about the skinkish,

¹⁷ For example, Dagron's version of this episode, while substantially accurate, does not agree in every particular with the original records. The paragraph is evidently based on an 1890's dispatch of May 28, 1899, to L. J. S. 1.1.1. This correspondence was duly made not to Lehmann but to the Gloger as when they came to see the bones. The German name chapter is *Leichenkunde*. *Die Leichenkunde* is described in the writings of Oloffe Dagron (1868) Wilhelm Ruge (1888) and Johannes Gloger in Gloger's book (1893). The *Van Sijcken* Society, Cape Town, 1905.

[illegible]

- the wounded, captured Melechor does not say what Elyantra is saying
- the reason for the actions of the Hrothgors is not given

What is particularly significant is a footnote attached by the editor of the text. Schenker:

In the Journal, his passage is not clear but, with the help of a description of the flight, which appears in a letter to Barre dated 29 July 1683, it can easily be understood the meaning. Dornier, as it is said, received a boat in the back but nevertheless had a difficult and escape. According to the prisoner – a sailor who spoke Dutch reasonably well (this would then be the former AGC) – the three men were disarmed but the Europeans had taken possession of their boat, and Dornier had encouraged the Hottentots to retire to the bushes and he promised to return to overpower the foe (1993, 199).

Seigrist's intervention as editor, two and a half decades after adding names, to Dapper's collage and my uncertainty more than half a century later, gives consistent life to the idea, in that it becomes part of it, because

In due matter of the discourse of text we have then in Harper's narrative a stitching together of various official notices of a skirmish which took place between the Dutch and the Khmêr. A narrative and a report. The official diary and letter are the reports ascribed to an authority, in this case War 3 (hereafter's initials: the Dutch East India Company); and for these reports there is no set guidelines, a kind of master-text in a specified form designed to give the necessary information about the subject and their conditions of existence.¹ This would then be a record, in time and within spatial and temporal proximity of the incident and of any event's occurrence. Memory and reportage reduced to the minimum. The official report would be like a sketchification—a classification of events. The moment of textualising being the creation of the moment in history.

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

¹⁰ 'Om ervoor te zorgen dat die informatie betrouwbaar was, werden er meerdere onderzoeken naar zeker was de journalisten over op meer letten. Het p. Kist met volhijden dat voor de eerste expedie a onder leiding van Christian van Donsop in februari 1968 werd opgesteld. In plaats van een uitgebreide lijst van de expedie van De la Chastre (1963-1968) p. 101-102 p. 196-198). Note the six geologists Van Nieuwenhuis and van der Meer (1968).

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

In the representation of the 'author' in travel writing, classifications, reports, diaries it seems that the generic of the text has to be taken into account. For whom was it written? Who or what, therefore, controls it, has power over it? What is the determining master text? The discourse of the text is part of the discourse of its originator – and the beginnings of texts are concurrent, coincident with South African literature. But at the moment I can say no more than that. (Van der Walt)

Cartography is particularly noticeable, and potentially problematic, in opening up a field of entangled and confused fragments, or documents, that have been smoothed over and reassembled many times (1997: 140).

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

Marilet Siemert

The notion of spatiality, examined in terms of the different ways in which people respond to the geographic space around them, is a central issue in current post-colonial studies. A variety of semiotic systems record these different forms of engagement with the land, the speaking culture and culture in ways that are often 'relational' and 'contextual'. In South Africa these semiotic formations are especially significant, in the context of our history of colonisation, residential mobility, and in the more recent 'space' field past, of urban migrations and forced removals of people from the land. As a semiotic response to space, these systems also mark special forms as regards the problematic issue of 'land' (and) distribution.

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

South Africa's early hunter-gatherers – I avoid the problematic formulation 'San' nomenclature (cf. Chabuen 1996:214) as far as possible – were not a homogeneous group, and some generalisation due to my particular focus will therefore inevitably occur. I also realise that to consider rock art only in terms of a 'writing' system – as I am doing here – is in itself incomplete: like all responses, it is both or more representative than a mere grouping of signs and symbols (cf. Sklar's 1999:234).

To briefly illustrate the way in which South African rock art can be seen to relate to the land, I follow a mainstream approach in current research (Lowe & Williams et al. 1999, and Parkinson et al. 1998), according to which the paintings express 'semiotic engagement' with nature, a process central to the existence of 'the ancient

people. By its very nature shamanistic experience, indeed for example by dancing or rhythmic clapping, was meant to impact on the – and through men-making activity not, or when participating in the hunt through out-of-body experiences. Already in Bleek's (1968/1931) research from the late nineteenth century there is reference to 'sacred movements' (gestiments) named *huwe*, and which denote 'dances ... in their bodies'. Rock paintings can be seen as a kind of pictographic with picturing power of somatic power activated by the dance. In its simplest form the act takes the form of an epiphany, the picturing of zigzags, dots and grids seen in rock paintings), and in its most complex form as a male hallucination, (and as the depiction of geographic features, people and animals) (Lewis-Williams 1988:136).

On the other hand however, as shown later also by Skelton (1995:313) and Lewis-Williams (1988:136), the boundary between 'this world' and 'the world of the spirit' does not figure in the Basimian perception of reality, and is a Western construct. The dance experience expressed through the rock art thus constitutes a bridge between 'interior and outer' – which transcends the difference between 'mental image and material landscape'. Depictions of people and animals are for example often integrated with cartographic phenomena, thus contributing representation of the observed landscape with terms which originate entirely in the mind, such as a grid life with an 'epiphany grid' integrated within its body.

Neuropsychological research (Siege, 1977) on altered states of conscious awareness shows how ordinary perceptions of space and time fall away during 'trance states' – an experience so overwhelming that it can be described only by way of metaphor. However, as subjects move into the deepest state of trance,

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

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

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

To describe a new to-one relationship between visual sign and mental concept is therefore severely limiting. Literally inscribed line or on to the landscape, the rock art encodes a single process through which the signifier and signified are so interpenetrated that they become merged, and the dichotomy of subject (the viewer) and object (depicted image), similarly dissolves. As generally accepted in contemporary art and literary theory, our new offering to article of African art practice in particular, an archaeologist claim that

there is no division between subject and its boundary, it can no longer be taken for granted that a 'real object, thing, or being' is separate from the person who experiences it (Graham 1997:30).

In similar fashion, a shamanistic reading of the rock art would specifically insist on the physicality of the surrounding space being integrated into the shamanic practice. Not only does this refer to the land – namely becoming an 'induration' amount of the actual plant dye and Europe blood applied as colour pigment), but a solid shape and irregularities in the rock surface participate in the 'picturing process'. As a male-to-male would also though, and the spatial relationship between the rock surface and the viewer as being an essential component of meaning. For example, rock paintings are often found high up on the ceiling of caves, or in places where the geographic position of the rock face forces the viewer to be on his or her hands or back. The composition of the work – often consistent and thus suggestive of conventions as regards 'orientation and organisation' (Mackenzie *et al.* 1996:211) – does not always relate spatially to a viewer's normal standing position. Similarly, the sometimes circular compositions defy gravity and disorientate the viewer, a disorientation which even as being part of the paintings' shamanistic content. Any attempt therefore to re-orientate these paintings according to Western notions of framing, as is often the case when reproducing them for publication or research purposes, deprives them of an essential part of their meaning (cf. Skelton 1995:323).

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

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

My second example of the way in which an 'official' 'imagined' semiotic system facilitates engagement with geographic spaces is the travel writing of the early colonial travellers to South Africa. The rather vague notion of 'space' to be explored, rapidly led to its appropriation through language; the landscape was (felt to be) alien, inpenetrable, until a language (was) found in which to write it, speak it, represent it (Pretzer 1988). Through naming, classifying, mapping, and also through the practice of sketching or painting, the landscape was 'fixed' as a European grid of knowledge and control. Although most of these early travellers were official delegates to South Africa, or were on missions to the land, some were just passing by as hunter-explorers. All their writing, however, was intended for the approval and admiration of a specific audience, namely their peers or employers in Europe. As testified by the multiple editions and cross-translations of the period, the conviction with which these texts present the natives as the master discourse became the measure of their success. In summing up what led to the way in which the rock art speaks from within the land with which it is engaged, early colonial travel writing apparently appropriates it from 'above' a manner widely expounded by theorists such as Said, Spivak, Fanon and many others. For the sake of my closing argument, I will briefly elaborate on this by way of specific examples.

The irony of naming geographic features which already had indigenous names was often missed by the colonial travellers, as when the French missionary Arnaudet (1836:130) mentions that the mountain his party has designated *entree* (entry) or *mont d'entree* (mountain), is called *Pafong* by the natives. Theorists such as Said (1978) and Vaswathan (1980) draw on such examples to show how colonial texts create and reinforce 'knowledge' of both the colonising self and the colonised other—in this case, the land. In this regard Carl Linnaeus' system of classification, published as *The System of Nature* in 1750, was an effective instrument in turning the 'other' (every alien, animal or mineral encountered) could hierarchically be placed in a hierarchy and given a Latin name, a process which suggested order and control over the new land. Even the unknown southern sky was subjected to a similar procedure when the French Jesuit astronomer Abbé de Lacaille classified stars on 10 000 plaques during a stay

at the Cape from 1751 to 1753. The effect of this on navigation and the associated imperial impulse is self-evident. Here a fuller account of the naming practices and other related points on early European travellers to South Africa, see Schreier & Shabal (1996:9, -101).

The mapping of terrain by the colonists is often singled out as a form of graphic control over the blank and potentially threatening landscape, a semiotic activity which further enhances the sense of power evoked through naming and classifying. Politically motivated, mapping is, even a 'rational' activity:

A map is an instrument of power / knowledge. The mapper, in asporting earth, already exercises power over the shared terrain, re-presents it as an map, even as the map becomes a field of knowledge (Pear 1987:271).

In conjunction with mapping, the construction of landscape or space in colonial travelogues is considered. On a scale the strangely disorientated, passive gaze of a Ian Pratt (1992:7) calls 'the scaling terrain' the European (male) subject of travel writing 'whose imperial eyes look out and possess'. Postcolonial theorists stress the way in which the landscape is plays out, and given its role features, or seen from an elevated position such as a hill top which, in conjunction with cleared plainses and as the starting up of Africa (see para. 1.3, page one 181-129), suggest a subject position of power vis-à-vis the new land. To reinforce this view, critics have, for example, highlighted the way in which many typically African features were superficially seen in terms of economic development. Thus Livingstone (1857:126) writes of the grassy plain in Natal, that 'every inch of good land ... may be made to produce an average of ten tons of hay', and Barrow (as quoted in Pratt 1992:61) refers to a swamp 'that by one simple drain might be converted into a very beautiful meadow'. This compulsion for improvement or economic development is considered so striking a feature of colonial writing that Pratt (1985:126) calls it the 'traveler's convention', thus once again foregrounding the confidence and implied authority of the colonial subject.

Considered equally symptomatic of this superior attitude is the way in which illustrations of the period subvert the romanticising conventions of Europe and then to ignore the reality of the African landscape. As potentially threatening, threat the land thus appeared tamed and is made harmless by viewing it through the familiar European lens. This refers particularly to water-colours or engravings made on the travellers' return to Europe, and which were often based on verbal descriptions or sketches done on sight from the colonies. A large number would be engravings depicting the flora in the case of the case of Greek's sculpture (cf. Tachard, 1688:141) during the Neo-Classical period. In European art, in verbal descriptions of landscape too, the visitor's (and what their European image of reference has taught them to expect) the artificiality of the scene

remains unchallenged. Colonial, for example, is defined by its absence, as when Bartlett (in Coetzee 1988: 2) stipulates: 'In Africa we look at white for those fine, beautiful units with which the sun of autumn eyes the forests of England.'

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

It seems essential, however, to avoid this trap of postcolonial 'bizarro' on which would in any examples of semiotic response to space that state as an opposition between the seemingly non-aggressive and holistic stance of the rock art, and the explicit authority and domination of space in the travel-writers' accounts. The fact is that both these 'marginal' semiotic systems exercise control of the landscape. In some of the homing way in which the rock art seems to speak from *within* the space with which it is engaged, it nevertheless implicitly aims to control the land through, for example, the shaman's ritual's coin-making activities and out-of-body participation in the hunt. This notion of control can be extended to the semiotic practice of tracking the hunter identities and traces his quarry by scanning the earth in a way reminiscent of the coloniser's so-called appropriating gaze. The Bushman mentally 'reads' what is written or 'coloured' in the sky, (cf. Kuperus & Worley 1993: 30, 33) and indeed his scanning and creative ability to narratively 'read' distance and anticipate the whereabouts of his prey (Caldenberg 1990: 43). In a similar fashion the colonial, for example, semiotic's cartographic tendency to mentally project future economic development of the land (the idea implied by the colonial travellers' carting and mapping activities) is more explicit, but the semiotic practice of both groups clearly represent positions of power in the way they engage with the land. Only when brought into conflict would one become the dominant mode. As such they constitute a kind of 'writing on the earth' (Van der Walt 1993: 23) which to this day has left clear ideological traces in the context of the postcolonial and ongoing sense of space appropriation—which includes the navigation of cultural space—they therefore illustrate how 'historical shifts in power formations may boldly re-draw, re-name and re-inscribe the land to match the day' (Stenger and Stichel 1996: 100).

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

So can the problematic *self/other* (or *centre/margin*) contention be sidestepped by focusing, as I have done here, on semantic systems which on the surface avoid the possibility of sustained dialogue by engaging an *other* which by its very nature is intransigent seems much more silent. Even if that was the case, and it is not, the notion of identity would simply be transferred to the difference of response to African space. Any power/real practice which ignores this dynamic, would distort the polyphony of discourse in general, and ironically increase precisely the self-referential authority claimed by colonial power. As a dangerously tedious way reading then, such practice would simply promote cultural separation.

What the above suggestive extension of Africa versus Europe then attempts to highlight is that in spite of surface appearances, both semantic systems under scrutiny possi-identical positions of power *over* the land, albeit by different means. Moreover, as exemplified by colonial cartography and political power, the *centre* which underpins the system also has to be seen as a contingent construction, much like the semantic systems in which it pertains, always remains relational and context-specific.

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

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

Critical awareness of the way in which semantic systems bridge the nature/culture divide creates precisely such a space, and allows the *self/other* distance to be constructively explored. The notion of *two good* versus *one of* falls away as the contingent quality of power is revealed by the contextual authority of semantic systems in power—a process which not only discloses discursive dialectical relationships, but also suggests certain parameters for signification cross-cultural understanding.

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

Helize van Vuuren

N. K. Purohit, *Chander-Samant*
Safely placed in the Northrup
J. S. Co. (1911:283)

9

Stunning from increasing interest in Holocaust literature, it has been suggested that the irony is the literary – or Ghanaian – made pay-off of our times' (Palman & Lamb 1992: 7). Since November 1998 when the Truth and Reconciliation Commission started its work under Bishop Desmond Tutu, restimony has become part of the fabric of a South Africa trying to come to grips with its past. The efficacy of the healing power of this painfully slow process was recently remarked upon by ex-Siaka Kutiako: 'it will take decades, generations, and people will assimilate the truths of this country piece by piece' (Kang 1999: 6). Akyaba and Rueda's testimonies can be seen as part of the truths of South Africa's history. The contrasting values and identities encapsulated in these testimonies illustrate something of the historical and socio-political tensions in this nation's current reconfiguring.

Transcripts of McCabe's, the Hustler convert's diaries in 1873 was preserved in English and in his home language. Now, by the German philologist Wilhelm Bleek in *Specimens of Bushman Folklore* (1861). The testimony of Roedark, a Swazi labourer awaiting his death sentence in 1874, was recorded by the missionary Albert Bachmann in German and sent to Berlin after his death. A hundred years later Peter Delius found the document in the East Berlin archives and translated it into English. The story of Roedark's conversion was annotated by the historian and published as *The Conversion: Death Cell Conversations of 'Roedark' and the Missionaries* (Lanham 1975) (1984).

The elderly Xara man with three names—*Ekuliro* (meaning 'dream', *taq*) or *ula dleem*—spent July and August 1873 telling the folk, including aged ex. W. Ingram

Black his life story. After having spent some time in the Breakwater jail in Cape Town for stock theft, and then almost three years in the Bleek household, he shared his story of Xhosa life with the sole purpose of dictating as much as he could of the narratives and customs of the ancient nation. *Xhosa*. ‘IKabuo was intent on returning home. “Then I knowed that I am waiting for the moon to turn back for me, that I may return to my place” (Bleek & Lloyd 1911:299). He left a basket and a half liter for his ‘place’ at Bhererpo near Konharth in the north-western Cape. Two years later both of them had died.’

In August 1876 a Sotho migrant labourer called Roozack, was arrested on a farm near Tydenburg in the northern Transvaal after a fight with a Pedi man called Majen. Majen died in the fight and although Roozack protested his innocence claiming that it had been a fair fight, Roozack was imprisoned. For five months he did hard labour in Tydenburg prison. At the court passed the death sentence in February 1877. For one and a half months he was kept in solitary confinement, awaiting the confirmation by the Executive Council of his death sentence. During this period he tried to hang himself in desperation, but was cut loose:

I was far from being to be condemned to death, I had to wait so long for execution. I wished to be dead but was stopped. I don’t want to live as like this, I want to die now. (Delfs 1994:74)

The German missionary Naeffig¹ started ministering to him, together with a mission convert who spoke Sotho. John Potlamo Naeffig’s kept notes of Roozack’s spiritual development to send to his Berlin headquarters later. On 19 April the sentence was confirmed and after baptising Roozack at 4 am on Thursday 21 April, he was led to the gallows and executed.

On a factual level the life testimonies of *IKabuo* and Roozack might seem not to have much in common except that they both originate from the end of the nineteenth century. Yet close analysis proves otherwise. They are both colonialised subjects under colonial rule, acting passively (the one to go to war, the other for his death) and in the power of colonisers. In the intention they give their testimonies, locked up intimately with an intersection of another culture, speaking a different language – the one a German placologist, the other a German missionary. Both *IKabuo* and Roozack were illiterate. Their testimonies are, however, preserved in written form, after having undergone various processes of translation and mediation. Bleek spoke German and English and was still mastering the Xhosa language.

II

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

cases translation in one further language is part of the mediating process.

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

With literary studies becoming increasingly interdisciplinary it is not strange that much attention is focused on forms of cultural discourse such as testimony where one finds a ‘superimposition of “literature”, psychoanalysis and history’, or phrased differently, elements of the historical, the clinical and – for poetical – the political (Felman & Laub 1992:6/41). With reference to Holocaust literature Slavoj Žižek remains how-

The story of a revelation is that the transmissible narration of his survival in the story is the movement between life and death (Felman & Laub 1992:44).

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

Felman and Laub describe the typical conditions of the ‘testimonial process’:

There needs to be a bearing, the intimate and total presence of one other – so the narration of one who has suffered. Testimonies are not analogies; they cannot take place in solitude. The witnesses are talking to somebody (1992:33).

Testimony also foregrounds the role of memory which is essential ‘to order the witness another’ (Felman & Laub 1992:29) and ‘to appeal to a community’ (Felman & Laub 1992:334). What is normally testified to, is a ‘first-experience ... whose overwhelming impact is invariably pitiable to the near the limits of the witness and of witness-ing’ (Felman & Laub 1992:305). The individual voice of the testifying witness also tends to represent an absent community on whose behalf the testimony is made.

Yet it needs to be stressed also that one must be careful to ‘go to the heart of trauma and to broaden, even universalize, the perspective of victimhood’ (Felman 1995:546) because human life itself can be seen as ‘an endless adaptation to the “traumatizing” ... which persists from birth to death’ (Hirshman 1992: 946). Hirshman sees the relevance of German theory for literary studies in three elements: (a) the grappling with issues of reality, bodily integrity, and identity (1995:547); (b) ‘the concern

itself with 'distinct uses of language and mind' which are central to literary preoccupations (199b: 545) and (c) the acceptance of the new ethical theory 'tries to break down the reproductive tyranny of the education system' (199b: 540).

III

I would like to suggest that these testimonies can both be read as sites of conflicting cultural values. #Kabbo's narratives centre his narrative around a contested juxtaposition of 'there' in the Breck household where he is forced to do 'women's work' (Bleck & Lloyd 1911: 201) and where the others (servants as well as Bleck family members) do not speak his language, and 'there' where he wants to 'sit among my fellow men' and listen to stories. Out of this juxtaposition comes his sense of alienation and yearning to end his last days among his own people. In Roozack's story his incomprehension of the alien local system and religious ideas suggests the missionary zeal of Nachtigal as an ongoing imposition of one culture upon another.

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

#Kabbo's *Intendant's Letter: Theme* (Bleck & Lloyd 1911: 209-317) can be read as quintessentially a text expressing the typical psychological characteristics of the exile. He waits for time to pass so that he may go home 'I am waiting for the moon to turn back for me, that I may return to my place' (Bleck & Lloyd 1911: 209). In his narrative he travels to his home, so that I may sit and listen to the stories which you have come' (Bleck 1911: 301) 'then really you'll come back to here' at Mlawburg where he feels alienated, for 'I do not obtain anything because I do not visit, they do not speak my language' (Bleck & Lloyd 1911: 307). This leads him to another fantasy flight to his home and a description of what life is like under his people, the 'Fle-Bulament' (Bleck & Lloyd 1911: 301). They go to each other's tents, they smoke and tell stories. What #Kabbo is describing is a sense of joyful and relaxed community, precisely what he misses most in Cape Town. He states: 'I feel this is the time when I should sit among my fellow men' (Bleck & Lloyd 1911: 307). As an old man, he longs to be with his own people to enjoy communal life before he dies.

Themes of travelling by land, and of movement then take over as he describes the journey which he envisages back up north. The travel piece ends with the marginal arrival. In the final and arrival scene #Kabbo describes himself in the third person, suggesting 'Rr'roondung' of the self:

He will examine the place, he may examine the water, perhaps one of which he drinks. He will work, peeling the old but in order (Bleck & Lloyd 1911: 307)

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

I felt that I was still a young man and that I was free in coming to root myself in my land. For morning, I did and I came in morning and in the evening. Then I used to run (and) catch the bees (Bleck & Lloyd 1911: 309)

After the extended flashback #Kabbo returns back to everyday reality in 'there' at Mlawburg. He expresses intense determination to depart soon: 'I do not again await another moon'. Now he talks about the goats and gun which Bleck promised him, and is again conscious of his old age and past hardships:

anytime was that an account of which I was heard – For a gun is that which it takes care of an old man, and the gun is strong against the wind. It satisfies a man with food in the early middle of the night (Bleck & Lloyd 1911: 317).

#Kabbo's trauma is out of language and time, what he describes in his testimony is the condition of exile, an important theme in South African literature of the apartheid era. The central trope in his narrative (both of the stories – which he narrates, which represent communality and spatiality amongst his kinship. He juxtaposes himself as a first factor, here chasing young men with himself as an old man, faced by starvation unless Bleck can send a gun to help provide for food in his old age. The scenes in the text is the period of announcement of the Breckwater prison. The only reference to this period is the expletive word 'foond!' in the prison. The value was that an account of which I was heard' (Bleck & Lloyd 1911: 317).

IV

Roozack's testimony is even more heavily mediated – first by Nachtigal, and a hundred years later by Delius. Upon the missionary's first visit to assess how the prisoners feel, Roozack formulates his sense of trauma thus:

I am to be executed, and I am filled with horror at the idea of having to die such a degrading death (Delius 1934: 21).

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

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

Their spirits breed or enter their deaths. They are here on earth, but they are prisoners and have to be pleased by a sacrifice (Delius 1984:22).

Nacitigal tries to inculcate in Rorizak some concept of his death as 'a pure gift' (Delius 1984:22) and that God 'is like a king who will forgive' (Delius 1984:22). Rorizak misunderstands the forgiveness and says, 'Then help me, I will gladly do anything to escape hanging' (Delius 1984:22). Soon thereafter he tries to hang himself in his cell. 'The trope of "hanging" thus becomes central to the narrative. But he is discovered and "found a fine one ... he was chained" (Delius 1984:24).

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

I cannot stand this for any longer ... I am forced to lie here alone. My mind deludes me and I talk to myself. Some days I sleep to kill myself but then my wishes are spent in seeking death. Have you they be so much to keep to within a long for my death? (Delius 1984:35).

When next visited by Jones Pothani (Nacitigal is sick to be incapacitated by 'a herd of savage jackals' Delius 1984:29), Rorizak is exceedingly sad because of a vision that he has had: 'I dream that I was taken away to a beautiful land where, feeling weak and strange, I sat on an antlion' (Delius 1984:30). He describes how Jesus appeared to him as a 'shimmering white person' (Delius 1984:31) who greeted him and told him to go back and 'behave well' (Delius 1984:31), suggesting a traumatised psyche obsessed with ideas of guilt. Pothani remarks on the relation between literature and dream that 'in literature especially, shock and bewilderment coalesce. Where there is dream, there is fantasy' (Delius 1984:34).

Not content with the peace that has descended over the Swazi prison, both Pothani and Nacitigal proceed to badger him so as to test whether his newly professed Christian faith is true. This proceeding in the name of Christianity seems particularly cruel and suggests further more than anything else:

Upon confirmation of his death penalty we read that

Rorizak was given gladiolus to eat as a shock. He became drunk and started to dance as best his circumstances would allow in the corridors of his cell (Delius 1984:40).

Later he 'wished death in all whites'. When Nacitigal arrives the next morning Rorizak consciously introduced race discrimination into the discussion: 'Is it my job to con-

tend to death in my absence? I am treated like this because I am black' (Delius 1984:40). The last vestige of resistance is that comes to the fore in the haunting question 'why is God's word not observed when a white kills a black?' (Delius 1984:41). Then after he succumbs to the missionaries' ministrations and is baptised on dawn on the morning of 22 April. Following one of the preliminaries Rorizak stated 'I will now be in paradise' (Delius 1984:45) just before he was killed.

The whole traumatic process lasted seven months, Rorizak's testimony, like *o Kabbe's*, that also entails a long waiting, it entails a journey— for a spiritual journey— from near death through attempted suicide back to life. Through the terrain of solitary confinement and back into the temporary release of a visit, and then back to the painful interrogation by the missionaries, until eventually he finds release in death. In the intense dialogue between the Swazi prisoner and the evangelists nothing is more striking than the conflict between their different cultures, different justice systems, different customs and the absolutely powerlessness of Rorizak. In spite of the heavily mediated nature of this text, it is still one of the most striking South African testimonies of one man's humane and spiritual torture. It also eloquently illustrates internal and external conflict in action.

IV

To attack and during, the memory of a people must not slack its roots, nor its vitality at rest', stated Ferraroli recently (1994:2). No matter how mediated, or how often translated, in the marginalised testimonies of *o Kabbe* and Rorizak, we find preserved memory as part of South Africa's history and conscience.

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popular medical history 'the first woman doctor in the world' (Rose 1973). Burrows (1965:80) medical history introduces the hero as:

one of the most remarkable figures in the annals of medical history, never far from exciting emulation, and would be biographers ... On his death ... Barry was found to be a woman in so ... Barry also states the *Discovery of Natural Biography*. Taylor's *Medical Jurisprudence* refers to Dr Barry's case as one of the most extraordinary cases of concealed sex on record, and *The Lancet* of 1865 contains letters bearing the testimony of at least half a dozen high-ranking army officers (some medical) who had known personally that he was a woman. One had shared a room with him on duty, another had actually examined him and been so sure to convey to the staff where Barry had a bout of fever ... a third had saved him in Malé and yet a fourth as a student in Edinburgh, where Barry was also ... always referred to her as a man, and quite unaware of her secret and behaviour was in a long career.

Since his death in 1865, popular anecdotes have appeared in the news delighting in the irony that this exemplary nineteenth-century 'medical man' was a woman. These accounts tend to emphasise female equality, demeanour, which seems to obscure a constructed male life. This anecdote, which appeared in *Personality* magazine almost a hundred years after his death, implicitly treats his doctor's profession with a 'personality'.

It was not before dawn, the morning in May, for the south-east flow strongly through the gulf, but the small cast of people on the lower deck noticed it, for they were withering & cold.

Back to back the two principals stood. One was good-looking, tall and brown-skinned, the other short and a little built, the rather offensive face characterised by a large nose. Ill-matched physically, the clutching finger was the pistol each carried in his right hand.

The cause of the encounter was an incident a few days before. A pretty, husky lady called on the governor on pretence to buy a dress, and was seated down with him Dr Barry, who was to be married, was a privileged person, and as friend of the Governor, he was also rewarded for military work and a long tongue. After the interview had lasted for some considerable time, Barry observed from a long time, they were, that a fine Dutch, fifty the governor and his lady.

Advancing on the contrary, he (Cleese) pulled Barry's long nose, saying: 'Reckon your wife expression you (friend) the end ...' (Hume 1962:25).

* One relatively recent article describes Barry as 'the most original Woman's Libber ... [1861] was a Cape Surgeon who beat a distinguished lot of their own gender, and, best of all, shut up about it.' 'South King's as fiercest warrior' *The Cape Monthly*, November 17, 1974).

Darry's opponent was Captain Josias Cleese, aide de camp to governor Lord Charles Somerset, at the Cape. Rumour has it that Cleese, because a life-long friend of Barry's, and was heard to boast after his death that he was the only man in the British service to have fought a duel with a woman. Mr. McCord reports that Barry himself claimed he had killed a man in a duel, thus breaching his 'familyish reputation'. The story may reflect the absurdity of his duelling bravado, given his feeble physique. The mark of his masculinity is not his bodily stature, but rather the pistols and 'his sexual undertone'. But his 'male expression' of male sublimation reveals itself to be a feminine, palatal puppet once we discover that it was a woman who fought the duel. The action implicitly resolves this offensive, petulant and absurd caricature of a 'man' and a 'woman' into a woman fully self-styled woman, preserving her integrity through expropriation of 'masculinity'.

It seems that Barry was seen as deviant by his peers. A physician friend in Draper's corner in Longmarket Street, instructed in his status 'homosexual' in friendship with the governor, referring to Somerset as 'Barry's little wife' (Gel and de Lander 1971:161). Commentaries frequently reflect the unworldly influence that Barry had with Somerset as 'mystical', especially as that of a 'George' considerably on matters of public interest. Barry had a good effect about the subject of hygiene.

* Hobbs, Rae (1958:1) comments that when Barry was in London in 1860 'he told his friend Mr. Macmillan of a duel in which she had killed her opponent'.

* Barry states that he spent this time in England and Canada. One correspondent claims his aversion to St. Helena island in these terms: 'He does not wish to submit to any more of the petty annoyances of the grand admiral's office, the rules of the service of the staff, the leather boots, the order of the little admiral's room, and the making use of the horse to the world. However, the time is not yet that he would not give up his sword to a good but the Governor himself, and they were actually enough to get more and more up to Longwood'. Dr Barry's sword being broken, he is said to be 'impulsively as possible'. (The *South African Advertiser and Mail*, 21/12/1865, p. 2, Col. 3).

* And an anecdote typically emphasises his intolerance of fools. The next entry in the *Advertiser* recounts Barry's treatment of a vulgar man who had requested the doctor to dress his tooth. He apparently sent a messenger to the man who reported to the governor that he had been instructed by the doctor to 'save the teeth of a monkey'. (The *South African Advertiser and Mail*, 30/12/1865, col. 3).

* A cynical modern Barry's 'mystical' devotion to the Governor apparently sprung up in the 1820s. 'With contrasts revealed, perhaps, Barry came to be marked as pure of But quickly turned sour and refused. When his hand for the Lord was not there, Cleese, *The South African Advertiser and Mail*, 21/12/1865, p. 2, Col. 3.

and good diet and the misuse of the treadmill and beatings in the prison.⁸ Viebrand and Laidler present him as relentless in exposing corrupt administrators, and his consequent commitment to a free press, leading the Governor to reverse his order to suppress the *South African Commercial Advertiser*. Paradoxically, however, his 'woman' influence makes sense if he is actually a woman. His mysteriously took leave in Mauritius in 1839, and as this is the only recorded period of his life, June Rose (1977:40) speculates that he may have left the Cape to have Somerset's child. This suggestion would make their relationship with Somerset sexually 'natural', if taboo.

Accounts that name Barry as a 'woman' try to liber her motives from her biology and to more fully trace her record of colonial service. Olga Rasmussen and Jessica Grove (1983), for example, create a fictional coming-of-age narrative for the young, female doctor who flees to the colonies to escape an abusive husband. I have heard rumors that a Hollywood film is currently being produced that presents Barry as a liberatory and unapologetic female cross-dresser, taking on a male world. These accounts explain away his alleged machismo and 'manlike' hyper-masculinity as a defensive feminine facade. More than this, however, is my posture towards the unknown histories, the feminine memories and experiences, the stories uncovered by solving, through gender, for psychological death within the external codes of the public identity.

I have suggested that as a model subject of the developing administrative and classificatory order produced for and magnified by colonial administration, Barry regulated the professional and the physical body by producing quantities of official documents, letters, lists and letters. But the mysteries surrounding his own body, the symptomatic of the unsettling vacuities of the document. Both June Rose and Isabel Rae cannot definitely establish her parentage, birth-date or familial relations. Rose suggests that Barry was the 'daughter' of Mrs. Holbeck, the sister of the artist, the elder James Barry (1877:18), who is in turn described as the child's mother by Kirby (1963). Parentage becomes a key to the mystery of his sex. Rose (1977:20) implies

⁸ Cf. Viebrand & Laidler (1971:900). The actions describe the thirst, disease and injury that prevailed in the prison where Barry imprisoned in 1824, and Barry's mortification upon realizing his responsibility for them. He is to insist that he did not lie put on the treadmill with other people as they did to improve. The female prisoners without help, with untended broken bones and fractured limbs.

⁹ Like the term 'gender' here, because commentators on Barry square sex with gender, assigning the nominational purposes that female anatomy would make Barry a 'woman'. However, following Bar, in Foucault gender as a performance, separate from biology. Accordingly I have named the procedures of Barry that are appropriate to the particular discourse under discussion.

¹⁰ Paula Gunning (1982:1) points out, 'to the 19th-century colonial administrator and the late 19th-century anthropologist, such as the fingerprint, which was pioneered in Bengal in 1890'.

that the elder Barry's patron, the well known feminist Lord Raglan, Earl of Torrington, may have brought us his own illegitimate daughter as a boy in order to educate her. Rae (1983) found letters of introduction from the Earl of Buchan to the younger Barry in 1819/1820, which may find support to this theory. Rose (1977:18) speculates whether that the child was the offspring of the artist himself, or of her mother, the South American revolutionary, General de Miranda. Both men were known as womenisers and may have shared a moment of incest. Also to these speculations, related to the doctor's unknown origins is made to serve the 'mystery' of her sexual anatomy. The question of his birth date plays a similarly instrumental role. Rae (1982) cites Barry's birth to 1797, which would mean that she registered at Edinburgh University at the age of thirteen. The handwriting on her grave gives her as 71, making her birth date 1794. Rose holds view that Barry was born in 1799. She makes the supportive observation that, in Barry's own statement of his date of birth in army records, the words are smudged, as if she chose to be known only by her public persona⁹ (Rose 1977:17).

Both the record of Barry's life, and the subsequent interest in his biological sex, can be seen in the context of the disciplinary nature of modern society, described by Michel Foucault in *The History of Sexuality* (1978). Foucault suggests that the rising documentation of populations is part of an increasing control and regulation of human bodies, effected by the obsessive interest in sexuality. Barry, born in a period where birth records mattered (Rose 1978:18), and in another episode, where death was not only recorded, but required details about the individual corpse – not least of which is sex. The documentary and institutional regulation of populations in an eighteenth century generates an obsession to record individuality, but obscures the subjectivity signified by the marks of identity. As I hope to show in later discussion, it is the claim that Barry may be a hermaphrodite – the simultaneously gesturing towards his uniqueness, and contains his otherness in a category that is, finally, not a medium between the binaries of masculine and feminine, but a curious variation or masquerade of it.¹⁰

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

¹¹ Margaret Garber suggests that, in transvestite and increasingly among homosexuals, the conversion from a man to a woman does not threaten the qualification of the penis as a male, but confirms its power to resist the punitive threat. It is similar to the biological form of intersexuality, hermaphroditism, serves the same purpose for some contemporary doctors (c.1993).

article 'Dr Barry: A Mystery Still', in Charles Dickens's magazine, *All the Year Round* (fragments in the *South African Mail and Advertiser* and the *Kaffrarian Wanderer* derive from this account, the rhetorical play of obfuscation and revelation):

His Excellency – who, him – he became a kind of tame imp, encouraged as amusing and harmless enough, but, like such imps, he took advantage one day of his position and was impertinent. He had the entire of the governor's private cabinet. One morning, sauntering in, he had the assurance to make several idle remarks, on a confidential document lying on a table. Finally he walked behind him, with an offensive patting his back, and resolved to go with him, so, snatching the little fellow up by the collar of his uniform, he swung him over the window sill – a few feet above the grassy garden – and, shuffling him, turned round and stood peevish. He was forgiven and never offended there in the same way again. Still, every one was persuaded that such consequences followed as he explained were very to be meted by reason of his own selfness and that *was the mystery in this case* (1867, 104).

These 'mysterious influences' that the writer refers to seem to be the same partially identifiable figures that provided the letters of introduction for Barry whenever he went. These letters, possibly those of Lord Brechen, or from a connection with the Somerset family, seem to have bought him the privacy that allowed him to keep his 'secrets', 'bypass[ing] ordinary medical examinations and gaining the governor's cordoned support'. What is interesting in this article, however, is that, despite the headline, the primary 'mystery' is resolved. The author explains that

was reached the very strangeness of the discovery, that the body is female, and the statement is not a report from the proper authority. The report was that after a post-mortem examination, it was found that Doctor James, or her Majesty's surgeon, was not only a woman, but that in a very early period of the present month. (1867, 104)

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

On the 25 July 1868, Barry, at this point Inspector General of Hospitals, died in London of cholera, caused by sewage problems in the city. The following day his death was recorded and his age noted as 70 years, his sex as 'male'. Sophia Riches, the clerkwoman who laid him out, put her mark next to this record. She also informed Barry's cousin, McKinnon, that the body she had laid out was that of a 'perfect female'. That that year, Doctor McKinnon wrote to George Graham, the Registrar General, to give an account of his conversation with Sophia Riches:

She then said that she had examined the body and that it was that of a perfect female and further there were marks of her having had a child when very young. I then enquired how long you found that condition. The woman pointing to the lower part of her stomach, and from thence into the same generally very fair and delicate woman, in the manner of a fine child, and I ought to know.

The woman seemed to think that she had become pregnant of herself, and asked and wished to be paid for keeping it. I informed her that all Dr Barry's relatives were dead, and that it was not a subject of crime and that my own impression was that Dr Barry was a hermaphrodite.

But whether Dr Barry was a male, female or hermaphrodite I do not know, nor had any purpose in making the discovery, as I could positively swear to the identity of the body as being that of a person whom I had been acquainted with as Inspector General of Hospitals for a period of 8 or 9 years. (in Graham to Doctor, 1907, 136)

In McKinnon's account 'fidelity' refers to the doctor's official title of 'Inspector General of Hospitals'. Surprisingly for Barrow, the question of Barry's sex is unimportant, apart from providing human interest (1958:87). U.R. Kirby suggests that the *Wife of Walsley* told the same attitude. That it never officially denied that Barry was a woman is hardly surprising, since the matter must have been regarded there as quite unimportant (Kirby 1985:225). Yet Kirby himself, and the medical historians, investigate the question in some detail, drawing upon a good deal of energy proving that Barry was a hermaphrodite. Kirby concludes, paradoxically, that he was male. However, he was

not only female in a guaranteed, thus foreclosed male identity, but he was male and yet he managed to become a distinguished medical man' (Kirby 1985:227).

This persona to be, at once his peevishness, high value, vegetarianism, white powder and fondness for umbrellas, suggest his unique and individual 'sexual' status, yet he remains essentially masculine. Kirby's conclusion demonstrates the desire to both name 'undefined' gender and to disavow its significance as a question of physical 'sexuality'.

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

the space for simply existing as a gay person ... is in fact negotiated through and through, from both sides, by the vectors of a discursive science that is very and yet hidden (Archiver 1999:47).

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

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

In her own narrative, Herault, or Alexina, is raised in several convents as a young woman, and is educated to be a school mistress. During her adolescent years, she has strong, unnamed feelings for her fellow students, later having an extended sexual relationship with her female colleague, Sarah. However, after an illness, a doctor discovers her genital anomalies, and she returns to her home town to be examined in more detail by her doctor, Clement. Clement decides that 'Alexina is a man, her masculinism is no doubt, but with an obvious predominance of masculine sexual characteristics' (Foucault 1980:128). It is the presence of ovary bodies and spermatic cords in the divided scrotum that are the 'real proofs of sex'. Alexina, or Herault, is then reclassified male at the age of 32. This ends her arguably lesbian relationship and sends her on a search for a man's work in Paris. After six lonely years of being unable to return a job, or to master the codes of male existence, she commits suicide in a tiny room in Paris. As Auguste Tardieu describes the tragedy, this 'heroin' in civil society led Barbin to live for twenty years 'in the clothing of a sex that was not his own, at the mercy of a passion that was unconscious of itself' (Foucault 1980:132).

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

The formation of the external genital organs of this individual permitted him, at least, he was manifestly a male, to play either the masculine or the feminine role fully and, without distinction. (Foucault 1980:131; italics)

¹ Monique Wittig makes an analogous argument that the female subject is forced to speak in gendered language, whilst gender in language is rendered natural and invisible. As an outgrowth of a concept that deals with the act of being, along with a whole network of other primitive concepts belonging to the same line of thought, gender seems to belong primarily to philosophy, and is no longer questioned in philosophy, though, because it belongs to that body of self-evident concepts within which philosophers believe that they cannot develop a line of reasoning, and which, for them go without saying, for they exist prior to any thought, any social order, in nature (Wittig 1986:335).

Moreover, the very identification of genitals becomes a problem, as male and female paths dissolve into metaphorical equivalents for one another. Both Gougou and Clement feel that the 'organ' could be an enlarged clitoris, as well as a penis. Gougou's account makes an even more intriguing unintentional parallel. He argues that her 'vaginal orifice' is nothing other than the canal of the urethra.¹ Later, however, he describes the urethra as a 'vaginovulva' and 'adapted to urinate' (Foucault 1980:131).

The need to escape this self-referential descriptive world forces the doctors to reason differently, to discover one sex. As Gougou states, 'the truth, for hermaphrodites does not exist in man and the higher animals' (Foucault 1980:129, italics)—there are only malformations. As Foucault notes, hermaphroditism and the concept of a 'true sex' becomes the arena in which the body is forced to yield its meaning:

... the logical theories of sexuality, which of course concern the individual, attempt an exhaustive control in modern times, not least by trying to regulate the nature of the two sexes in a single body, and consequently to asserting the truth about it, about individual individuals. ... from the medical point of view, this meant that when confronted with a hermaphrodite, the doctor was no longer concerned with interpreting the presence of the two sexes, juxtaposed or transcribed, or with knowing which of the two prevailed over the other, but rather with determining the truth as to what was hidden beneath ambiguous appearances. He had to try to strip the body of its accidental deformations and discover the one and the other organs that might have put on the form of the opposite sex (Foucault 1980:vi, italics).

Perhaps the difference in the treatment of these bodies by their respective medical establishments can be traced to the different discourses that these two figures inhabit in their histories. Darbin's story comes to light in her biographical account written by her lover as a suicide note. This tale can be read as a domestic novel, which combines aspects of gothic and sentimental fiction with a modern presentation of the mysteries surrounding sexuality and feminine desire. As Darbin herself comments, Barbin's 'struggles and disturbances' are 'not surpassed in interest by any romantic novel' (Foucault 1980:122). In Darbin's case, the sexual charge of her cloistered upbringing with young educated and pious women acquired a new dimension. Her passionate, but infertile ways feminise sexual responses already once othered and erotic. This ambiguity is heightened in the clinical question of whether she has an 'interforce period' or

² Monique Delorme also notes how 'A natural and eroding model of sexual difference, modelled most powerfully and resonantly by Galen in the second century AD, had succeeded in the ambiguous nature of natural female reproductive organs, two men were said to have the same genitals as men, only inside natural and inside ... In the eighteenth century, this model gave birth to anatomy based on absolute differences of kind' (Delorme 1992:251).

an enlarged uterus, the impossibility of feminine desire, and especially desire for other women, is resolved by reclassifying her a man. Scientific discourse tries to resolve the confusion of the nation's deeply conflicting (but entirely 'normal' sounding) struggle with her own sexuality and its narrative herself turns to scientific discourse to explain and contain the ambiguous story of multiple desire and complex biology.¹⁶

In the eighteenth century, such an and-stage performers provoked general anxieties around gender instability. Jill Campbell observes:

The signposts of the and-stroke minstrel . . . had used cross dressing as a paradigm for the model changes of the theatre, making gender the ultimate preserve of natural identity to be reached, in its most scandalous extremity, by theatrical impersonation, and serving up the dueller as the form in which the boundaries of gender might be tested. (Campbell in Newman et al. 1987, 63).

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

In a regime of sexually barren and a compulsory performance of sex, then it may be only *drag kings and queens* that the changing sign of gender and the binary system of sex come to have intelligibility and (Bauer 1993: 314, n. 1).

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

¹⁶ The narrator here clearly finds herself physically and emotionally moved by the presence of the woman doctor in her first professional work. Her first such moment takes place in her current school, where, terrified by a thunder storm, she jumps into the bed of her teacher: 'When my first moment of terror had been allayed, Sister Made [sic] was gently and led to my attention the fact that I happened to be moved. Indeed, I was not. Allowing of it, but I understood her welling feeling for me. An irresistible emotion dominated me completely and overwhelmed me with union. My profoundest centre was expressed. . . . A full control for myself in my thought. My imagination was consciously troubled by the intensity of the sensations that had been awakened to me, and I came to the point of blushing myself for them like a novice.' (149n, 335).

What is interesting is that her afflictions, whether in her school students and teachers are interested and enjoyed, they seem to be simply an exaggerated version of how the diseased girls wrestle another emotionally and physically. Yet for Natalie, her students only make sense with the hindsight about the cause of her unspeakable passion.

Deviously used, too, sex / With a persistence that borders on stubbornness, modern Western countries have answered in the affirmative. They have obstinately brought into play the question of a 'true sex' in an order of things where one might have imagined that all that counted was the nature of the body and the liberty of its pleasures (Foucault 1980, vii).

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

generate the belief that there was such a thing as the middle class well before we existed. It was a fiction (Armstrong & Hutchinson 1987, 12).

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to interrogate the philosophical and ideological significance of gender divergence, this link between the household and both modern government and the modern idea of the subject suggests a sense of what may be at stake in defining a 'true sex', and with it supporting both an epistemology and a bureaucracy generated within and productive of the public-private divide.¹⁷

In the stories of James Barry and 'Joseph' Rabin, I interpreted one can be regarded as a trope that figures and resolves the anxiety around the threat to a stable, 'true' sex. It offers some (if not substance to the hollowess of a gender discourse that cannot account for the contradiction between the doctor's masculine identity and his feminine body, or Barbie's complex subjectivity in which his woman's body experiences masculinized desire. The 'mystery' surrounding James Barry seems to stem from his gender but permeates his biographical record. His body itself could not resolve this mystery (Kirby 1976: 280). In an era when medicine is enthralled by the biological possibilities of sexual ambiguity, the medical establishment refused to examine his body, perhaps knowing it would be futile to interrogate a body belonging to the im-

¹⁷ Cf. also Kapo Slevian (1993), who argues that modern western medicine is founded on the 'dominant fiction' that the 'phantom' the transcendental subject, which can be interrogated through the threat (risk) of castration, is continuous with the person.

penetrable, masculine world of examiners and classifiers. Perhaps the true mystery here, figured as sexual anomaly, is the indeed malleable "between public rule, and the private self," the classified body and its lived intensities. Thus as Kirby (1976:186) put it:

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

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Cetshwayo kaMpande in Zulu Literature

N.N. Canonici & T.T. Cele

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

According to Harold Scheath (1985:195), modern Zulu literature has developed along two main directions, reflecting two great concerns: the glories of the historical past and the problems caused by the infiltration of western religion, education and ways of life.

These two broad areas of early literary activity seem to converge in the 1990s in the negative historical history producing the racial conflicts which have profoundly concerned white and African writers for decades. The debate, Christian, westernised, often versus the traditional African past.

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

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

out of the way. His resistance gave rise to the tragedies that unfolded in own separate, but linked, wars: the 1836 battle of Ndondakus ka where he furiously fought for the affirmation of his right of succession and decimated the Zulu army in the process thus fatally weakening the nation, and the 1879 Anglo-Zulu war which, after alternate fortunes, saw the complete demise of the kingdom.

Cetshwayo's life

He was born in 1827 in Mpande near Ngqumbazi, alleged to be a child of king Shaka and a girl of the Zulu nation, therefore Mpande's *uMkhosakheya-ye-ye* (chief's wife). He is supposed to be the heir to Mpande's claim and to his kingdom once Mpande becomes king in 1840 with British support.

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

After 1851 Mpande begins to fall under the amoxic spell of Monasa, a wife given him by Shaka, who was believed to be pregnant with Shaka's child. Monasa, Mpande favours Mbuyazi, for the kingship, against the advice of his own illers who uphold the traditions regarding succession, and begins to slander Cetshwayo's character. He lays several traps to put Cetshwayo in disfavour with the people. Eventually there is open war between the two princes, that culminates in the bloody 1856 battle of Ndondakuska, where the whole army of Mbuyazi is destroyed and Mbuyazi with five of his brothers is killed.

Mpande begins to regard Cetshwayo as his heir, and the prince begins to attract loyalty to the kingdom because Mpande can no longer move about.

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

1878: Theophilus Shepstone (coloniser) crowns Cetshwayo king of the Zulu and imposes the so-called "colonisation laws", according to which Cetshwayo must respect the borders with Natal and must avoid bloodshed.

The main events of Cetshwayo's reign:

The disbanding of the gila from the iNguni regiment, when they are forced to marry the men from the Ntundu regiment who are about 15 years older. Several gila are murdered.

The British occupation of the Zululand on the northern border without the king's permission. Cetshwayo must accept this. Shepstone promises to intervene on his behalf with the Natal government, and then changes sides when it begins to expel him to appease the Boers after the annexation of the Transvaal republics. Mbuyazi

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

The murder of the adulterous Sibayo's wives on Natal soil, by Sibayo's son, Mkhosazulu.

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

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

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

On 22 January 1879 The Zulu *impi* surprises the British army at the Sandhewana Hill and totally destroys it. This is perceived as one of the most glorious moments in Zulu history. Some Zulu regiments, however, pursue the fleeing British, against Cetshwayo's orders, and are annihilated at Rorke's Drift. Another Zulu army defeats 9,000 British at Hlongwe. The British obtain reinforcements from overseas and defeat the Zulu at Gingindlovu and then finally, in the capital, Ulundi. Cetshwayo is taken prisoner and sent to Cape Town in exile. The colonial government takes control of Zululand and divides it into 13 chiefdoms warring among themselves. Cetshwayo obtains permission to visit Queen Victoria in London in 1883 and is returned to a divided and subjugated Zululand soon afterwards. He cannot accept the substantial restrictions on his movements and power, as he is now a Dutch vassal. He dies quite mysteriously in 1884, under suspicion that he might have been poisoned by the British.

There are seven major works in modern Zulu literature that portray events that happened during Cetshwayo's time. Two major historical dramas, *Idagaba Lushwana* (The creature has proved itself, by B.R. Ndeli, 1962) and *Indle Khuduma eSandhewana* (The storm that thundered at Sandhewana, by C.T. Msimang 1976) are not considered here as they deserve a much deeper analysis. They should be the object of separate papers. The works to be considered here are those of B.W. Vilakazi's poems, *Kulani kuZulu* (Weep, son Zulu) in *Isibonelo kaZulu* (1935) and *NgoMkhezi eNobusankaba* (Concerning Mbulazi at Nobusankaba) in *Isizwe kaZulu* (1945); the work of the two Ubukomo historians, i.e. B.L.D. Phiso's 'English drama Cetshwayo' (1937) and R.R.R. Phiso's 'historical novel Cetshwayo' (1952); a novel by Bhebe & Nkomo, *Indle*

ephambile (Stripped trees, 1958), and a drama by M.A.T. Blose, *Uqiniso Mhaka* (By weeping me you was the grave 1961). Muntu Kulu's 1969 novel, *USampato*, deals only marginally with fictional events that took place during Cetshwayo's reign and the king's figure is not named at all. It is therefore excluded from this analysis.

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

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

Vilakazi is considered the father of modern Zulu poetry. His poems were written during the 1930s, a critical phase for the black people of South Africa, characterised by racial atrocities and widespread misery. While a number of black leaders vigorously tried to oppose the oppressive segregationist laws, the general population, stirred and incited by constant mistreatment and by the seemingly hopeless situation in which they found themselves, Vilakazi, who glorified the triumph of national heroism by his poetic inspiration, reflected at a distance on the nation's lot in his people's 'songs'. He looked at historical events with the benefit of historical hindsight, and judged the national tragedy as either beneficial or damaging to the process of national progress. Rather than in celebrating success to the oppressors, he saw national salvation in the preservation of traditional values and in modern education. Any loss of life is therefore condemned as pointless and cruel. The poet sees the great battle of Nongakakama and Sandhewana as unmitigated national tragedy, in spite of the fact that, for Zulu, it was a great victory. In the two poems, *Khahlanzi uZulu* and *NgoMkhezi eNobusankaba*, Vilakazi form a balanced, sharply felt judgements on those battles and their protagonists. They destroyed the Zulu nation, which also means the brave young men who perished there. Vilakazi's poems may be considered as a romantic externalisation of the despondent popular feelings which possibly prevailed at the time of writing.

A call for national reconciliation

Vilakazi's poem *Khahlanzi uZulu* can be considered a call for national reconciliation. It was composed on the death of Solomon kaChumane (1937), the king who had tried to re-establish unity among the Zulu chiefdoms, had created the Nongoma school for black chiefs' children in the ways of peace and progress through education, and had

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

Vilakazi is, to some extent, a poet in the tradition of the *isithongi*. The subject of his poems is 'praised', or more 'appreciated', in terms of his ancestry and of his actions. This gives the poem historical depth and resonance. The poet offers a multifaceted portrayal of the good and bad characteristics of his subject. In terms of his ancestors, Solomon is praised for continuing and developing the positive plan of peace and harmony set out by his father Dimuzulu when he signed a peace treaty with Pretoria. The great Chief Cetshwayo, however, is especially remembered for the fateful battle of Ndondakusuka, and for the hurried venture of the Anglo-Zulu war.

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

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

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

*Uthungu, uNtshanda bezaDangane,
U-ntshungu! Uthungu! Uthungu! Uthungu! Uthungu!
U-ntshungu! Uthungu! Uthungu! Uthungu!
Uthungu! Uthungu! Uthungu!
Esengemanyanga! Uthungu!
(Cloke 1968, 219 from 71-72).*

Brave descended from Senka and Danga,
Thou, and thou, keep on this side [of the Orange], son of Ndaka.
Accompanied are the white people,
Be fearful of our weapons and bridges,
Caused by the actions of your forefathers.

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

*Uthungu! Uthungu! Uthungu!
Uthungu! Uthungu! Uthungu!
Uthungu! Uthungu! Uthungu!
Uthungu! Uthungu! Uthungu!
Uthungu! Uthungu! Uthungu!
Uthungu! Uthungu! Uthungu! (Vilakazi 1955:21).*

Can't you see that the valves
Of the conspicuous white man's race
Are cracking, dry the mill-stones
Which were designed
For Setshwayo's children?

Vilakazi scold's the opposing factions for causing irreparable harm to the nation. They should have united against the national enemies rather than destroying each other, thus losing the flower of the Zulu youth, the hope for the future.

*Uthungu! Uthungu! Uthungu!
Uthungu! Uthungu! Uthungu!
Uthungu! Uthungu! Uthungu!
Uthungu! Uthungu! Uthungu!
Uthungu! Uthungu! Uthungu!
(Vilakazi 1955:22).*

Have you truly forgotten
How you destroyed one another,
If only wasting each other
Ndondakusuka.
Losing death from skin a barren land?

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

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

Yael of houses Cetswago for thoughtlessly taking Sibayo's side and thus melting into the Anglo-Zulu war, which proved the last straw that finally destroyed the Zulu nation.

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

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

*Awaf' igqol' emakha,
kwaZikhuphi' emqond' uMakhaDube
(Vukani 1975: 219)*

*When the great one died, even the
eyes of the Queen nation became sober*

igqol' emakha, the great mother bird, is Cetswago, *emqond' uMakhaDube* are the eggs, the seed of future generations, *igqol' emakha* refers to the Zulu nation, since Zulu and Qwabe were brothers. Once the great mother bird that brooded over and protected the Zulu nation has gone, it is the end of the future: the eggs remain unproductive, they are out of all hope as destroyed.

Mourning for Mbuyazi's disappearance

In the poem *weMbuyazi emkhokhozulu* Vilakazi joins a number of Zulu writers in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s in presenting the evil effects of *ubuthakathu*, or witchcraft.

The poet Vilakazi again the legends of Zolondakusuka, where so many young Zulu lost their lives together with Mbuyazi, a prince that constituted a link between the Zulu nation and its thudaka, King Shaka. Mbuyazi is presented, however, as the victim of Mkwandwe's black magic rather than of Cetswago's heroism. The poet accuses Mkwandwe, Cetswago's in-law, for betraying Mbuyazi and his village through his powers of *ubuthakathu* (witchcraft), when he was able to steal Mbuyazi's shield for Cetswago to kneel on and thus bring utter defeat on his kingdom.

The first verses are in quotation marks, as if they were Mbuyazi's words. The prince speaks to his *ukhuphi* in spite of the horrendous opposition they are facing, namely, Cetswago's 1000 soldiers, the many Thakalani men and Mkwandwe's sin-

ister power. This is both human and superhuman power fighting on Cetswago's side.

Witches, such as Mkwandwe, do not simply kill a person, but destroy also his life-chain. His essence, as corpses are used for evil magic rites. Normal burial allows a person's life to continue in the world of the *amadlozi* (ancestor spirits), but witches do make this impossible, and the deceased is condemned to wander about for ever. He cannot, therefore, become an *alofu*, he has no life, hence the poet's desperate search for Mbuyazi's bones and those of his companions. The Thakalani, whose writers are supposed to be life-givers, knows nothing about these bones as witnessed by the river animals questioned by the poet. The prince has not been resumed into the world of the *amadlozi*, in spirit, either, as the poet accuses his search for the bones, the stars and the planets. Nothing and no-one can be forced due to point in this villain, prince and his recruits. Their death was, therefore, a complete loss, a complete waste of young lives. This image powerfully stresses the tragedy of Mbuyazi's life and that of his comrades in arms, and of the evil battle that put an end to it. The witchcraft of Mkwandwe has obtained its purpose: to evade the nation and to destroy a prince's soul. Vilakazi regards the death of Mbuyazi as a historical catastrophe for which Cetswago and Mkwandwe should be called to account.

D.L.E. Didomo's Drama *Cetswago*

Although this drama is written in English, it can be considered as Zulu literature in a wide sense. It is Didomo's Zulu by his writing about Zulu historical events and projecting the Zulu point of view, in a language (Tshivenda) that is Zulu idiom in its expressions and in a style that reflects the majesty inherent in traditional Zulu literature. The writer intends to reach a large audience and to present the reasons for the present plight of the Zulu and of all the Africans in this country. The drama was written in 1937 and circulated in manuscript form. It only appeared in print in the collected works of D.L.E. Didomo, edited by Nick Vukani and Tim Coetzens in 1985. *Cetswago* is regarded by some critics as the most important and the most interesting of Didomo's plays, as he demonstrates the ability to use the western dramatic techniques.

The drama is divided between two tragic events: the report of the death of Mbuyazi at Ntondakusuka and Cetswago's own downfall at the hand of John Dunn, the British patriot who comes to represent the so-called forces of the colonial system against which Cetswago was forced to fight in order to preserve his kingdom.

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

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

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

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

The great opponents that delineate the terms of the conflict are the British. Cetshwayo is determined to fight for the independence of his territory and for the preservation of Zulu customs and traditions. The British (Shepstone and John Durn) intend to subjugate the Zulu kingdom under the guise of the civilising mission of the British Empire, but, ironically because they intend to extend the Empire, Cetshwayo's war victims become hollow, but he still persists, until he is killed, while making a final challenge to the whites, reflecting the powerful image in Cetshwayo's *izibongo* quoted above.

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

It is interesting to note Dhlomo's portrait of Cetshwayo in relation to women, who play a major role in this play. His mother, for whom he shows great respect in *Magogo Laziwama* (1962), does not appear at all. The harsh attitude towards the girls of the (Nguni) regiment, here shown in the play *Uqonjisa nina ye ngwenkwekhulu* (1968), is hinted at here, when Cetshwayo forces a number of women to marry Durn so as to strengthen the Union's ties with the Zulu kingdom.

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

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

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

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

The moment of final recognition of the forces aimed against him comes at the following battle of Ulundi, where Cetshwayo is utterly defeated by the British. He feels betrayed by people very close to him. When BaDule sees him in a desperate state, she cries endlessly, thus reinforcing the theme that it is the women who are left to mourn over the dead heroes. The white imperialist overrings. During an audience with John Durn, who is accompanied by Zibhebhu and another friend from the King, the King is fatally shot by the Briton. *Khobisi* has been eradicated, the whites' power assumed, and his kingdom has been brought to completion. Although the Durn's shooting incident is not traceable in history, Dhlomo dramatically portrays the Zulu suspicion that Cetshwayo was murdered by the British, probably by poisoning, since they had plotted his downfall all along. With his last breath, Cetshwayo heroically, and defiantly tells Durn: *Uggidi!* 'You have mislead'. Cetshwayo's word means that, in spite of their apparent victory, the British have failed to crush the spirit of the Zulu kingdom.

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

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

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

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

R.R.R. Dholone's *Life Achievement* (1972)

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

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

From the very beginning, Dlamini (1982a) highlights the reasons of the conflicting views about Coshwayo – we should not be surprised that he suffered the way he did because he was once repent in 1897 when Mpondi was unable to move as he had grown too fat, and then ascended the throne after his father's death (1912) during a civil war historical time. The problems were the result of Mpondi's policies, as he had given the whites large land tracts as a form of compensation for their support in getting the kingdom. Coshwayo not only disagreed with his father's policies, but he is also faced with the problem of unlawful occupation of land by whites. Dlamini also believes that Mpondi's onset might have contributed to Coshwayo's illness, as

though he maintains that Mpondo was completely irrational in this. The only fault that the author attributes to Gushwayo is the appointment of Mpondo during a former lover's funeral of Mbonazi, as a chief, who died unseasonably during the Anglo-Zulu war (1879).

Dikoro is however adamant that many of the criticisms thrown at Cessakayo are completely unfair and irrational since they are just sweeping and unsubstantiated accusations.

[illegible]

But not all that we do get hear any sense or action done by Gouthwain which shows his ignorance and cowardice.

Dharmā (1952:11) also points out that Cishawara succeeded the throne while Afrade, who had been his opponent, was still alive, and that his father's hostility was caused by the jealousy of a father who feared that his son would demonstrate greater leadership qualities than himself.

Dhlomo fights the perception that Cetshwayo is a cruel killer. Whites have maintained that he Zulu king ever killed on legal grounds, and they have used minor incidents to discredit Cetshwayo. On the sensitive point of the 'Xongole girls' incident, our author argues that Cetshwayo was simply putting a trend set by his father when he gave the Nalondlo permission to marry the INGqozo regiment. Before Xhama's death, many regiments had been given permission to marry, and Cetshwayo was simply continuing the tradition. Dhlomo denies the allegations that Cetshwayo killed a large number of INGqozo girls for defying his directive. He states that, according to eyewitnesses, not more than ten girls died during the operation. What shocked the nation was not the number of girls who died, but the young women's defiance of the king's order, because they thought he would not be able to take strong action against them as a result of the coronation laws laid down by Sonjewan.

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

The British Embassy in Ottawa is a far more complex. There are concerns of the "trans-Canada" in fear that Celsoway may have ambitions over it. Once they have ensured the "Globe's" loyalty to the British-led confederation, they fear that they could be in danger of being destroyed by Celsoway. Ottawa however portrays Celsoway as a peaceful king who needs to negotiate before venturing into a fight. For instance Celsoway

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

The whites further regarded Cetshwayo as a warmonger who encouraged other black populations to rebel against the Boers' sovereignty. According to Dhlomo (1952:77) Somsewe complains that Sikubhuku has come to blows with the British because he has been belittled by Cetshwayo. The king is also held responsible for the endless fights between the British and the Xhosa, which were, however, endemic.

Cetshwayo is compared neither with Mpondo nor with Dingane, but with the founder of the Zulu nation, King Shaka. He is a great experimenter who tries to repair and cross the damage to the Zulu culture that had occurred during the reign of Dingane and Mpondo. As a prince living during a time which is completely different to that of Shaka, he does his best for the nation, at least in comparison to Mpondo. In Dingane's eyes Somsewe, in 1873, during the coronation ceremony, stated that Cetshwayo was the best among all African leaders with whom he had had dealings.

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

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

The Zulusans suffered a large number of deaths at Renke's Drift and Hlobane. According to Mafikizulu (Dhlomo 1952:77), Cetshwayo had warned his army not to cross the Thukela to Renke's Drift. Again at Hlobane, he warned his generals, Mayamata, not to allow his army to attack the British in their camp, but the opposite happened.

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

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

He lived in exile when he was in the Cape. When he was visited by Sobantu (Colenso) and his daughter, he asked about many people in Zululand, both friends and enemies, such as Ithanga, Zibhebhu and John Durr. In England, Cetshwayo explained that he would not be able to live with John Durr as a neighbour since he had destroyed him in all respects. Cetshwayo sustained both physical and spiritual wounds after the destruction of the people of uLundi by Zibhebhu in 1883.

Dhlomo tells the story of how Cetshwayo's *inyanga*, Mbulenze, through his powerful magic and enchanted by Cetshwayo's victory at Indumakwaka, by stealing Mbulenze's shield for Cetshwayo to kneel on. Later, Cetshwayo and Mbulenze quarrelled because of Mbulenze's son's death while serving at the king's palace. Mbulenze accused Cetshwayo of acting dishonourably. The king should have informed him, and he would have tried all means to heal his son. He then boasted that while Cetshwayo had won the Nongakwaka battle through his magic, he had let his son die. Shockingly the king's advisers called for Mbulenze's death, fearing that he would try to kill Cetshwayo through his magic. A group of people was sent to kill Mbulenze. Before he died, he cursed Cetshwayo that his wife would not bear him any more and he would not have any more children. Dhlomo argues that although Mbulenze's accusations angered the king, it was the people around him who thought the king in error and deposed of Mbulenze.

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

Cetshwayo in two 1968 fictional works

The year 1968 sees the death of King Cyprian kaBhekani zulu, and the rise of chief Gqasha Mngosathu kaNbele to the leadership of the KwaZulu homeland. One of his first actions is to try to revitalize the cultural movement *Isokwaka kaZulu*, which will later be transformed into a liberation movement to oppose the ANC and eventually into a political party.

Two fictional works of Cetshwayo are published in 1968, the novel *Imibini Eyibandakanya* (Stuffed with Hips and Noses) and the drama *Isokwaka kaZulu* (The courting of you may call the grave by M.A.J. Blose). Both works present a rather negative view of Cetshwayo's reign, in spite of the rehabilitating work of R.R.R. Dhlomo.

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

including 'building military bases, planning, reaping and mazing gardens for the king' (Webb & Wright 1978:80).

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

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

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

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

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

Blame makes Cetshwayo responsible for the death of the iNgcwage girls. Dhomo had explained how this incident had been blown out of all proportion by the Natalians in order to disgrace Cetshwayo in the eyes of everyone's people, and to reinforce the

assumptions that the kingdom who did he brought under the 'civilizing rule' of the British empire. In the play, Cetshwayo does not order the girls' massacre. He only expresses his anger at the iNgcwage's disobedience. His elders interpreted this as a sign that he wants them to take revenge on the girls.

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

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

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

Apart from Julius Dhloane's historical narrative, which should be considered more a popular history than a novel, the other works are all fiction, and they reflect on only a limited number of events. What they say about Cetshwayo must not be taken as history but as fiction, a re-creation for artistic purposes. The selected Dhloane's drama emphasises the conflict between Cetshwayo and the white colonists, to the point that John Dunn is made responsible for the king's death. Ndlovu reflects on the weaknesses of the Africans of his time and places the responsibility of it at Cetshwayo's door, especially due to Ndebeleisation. Biko considers the plight of rural women who are still subjected to parents' arranged marriages and makes the village of the Ngoni regiment an extreme example of the practice.

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

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

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To a criticism concerned with mapping the expansion and affirmations of a imperial literature whose legacy has not been spent, this century's work can be a site to reveal such imperialism's pliant and self-protection and these narratives, like dramas, misperceptions, and negotiations concerned in its landscape (Pauk 1990:238).

To a postcolonial landscape understanding is the historical dimension of a new landscape, not that, is imaginarily connected with imperialism (Mortimer, 1994:9).

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

... the novel, as a cultural artefact, of bourgeois society, and imperialism, are not to be taken without each other... imperialism and the novel fulfilled each other to such a degree that it is impossible to read either apart, to read the without the other way dealing with the other (Said 1994:37).

What is interesting for the post-colonial critic in making a study of a world of Empire and how she imagines his or her world both familiar and foreign, is to study the silences, the omissions and cracks that underlie the seemingly seamless surface of imperialist discourse.

What a fiction can recover, therefore, is unravelling the political discourses and reconstructing the displacement and erasures in the official historical context and an over-sensationalised version of the angrier and the compelling imagination, both necessarily repressed by the exigencies of ideological representation (Barry 1991: 224).

It is in the repeated activities that the dynamics of power can be traced, in the repeated used to reassert dominance over the Other in narratives of the time, to proclaim a gross over function peoples and lands, to achieve one's goals – material or psychological – as a return home.

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

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

All his life, Haggard, the son of a Norfolk farmer and subsequently a farmer himself, placed his faith in the land and it was the land in South Africa that left an indelible mark on the impressionable youth, Higgins (1981: 19) writes at this point, 'the scenery so impressed him that he always believed Natal was the most beautiful country [sic] in the world', though in his autobiography Haggard (1926: 158) described the allure for him of Africa's landscapes more accurately: 'There is nothing of what we admire in views in England, but Nature in her wild and rugged grandeur'. It was the wildness of African terrain as opposed to the domesticity of English demand that captivated him. He elaborated on this contrast through his alter ego, Allan Quatermain:

... I longed more to know myself into the arms of Nature. Not the Nature which you know, the Nature of well-tended woods and meadows and corn-fields, but

Nature as she was in the age when creation was complete, undisturbed as yet by any human shirk of smothering humanity. I would go to a plain where the wild game was, back to the land, where none knew the history, back to the savages, whom I loved... (Haggard 1992: 126).

Haggard had first-hand experience of South Africa on three occasions, most notably the first lengthiest stay as a youthful member of Sir Henry Bulwer's staff in Natal, and then as an attaché for a time from Newcastle, from 1875–1881. His encounter with the African landscape was of the sort to enthrall, such exhilaration as expressed above: he went riding and hunting, and accompanied Sir Henry Bulwer on his official tours of Natal. He kept copious notes of all he saw including details of Zulu customs and language for he was deeply impressed by the Zulu people whom he found to be dignified and hospitable, 'the Romans of Africa', led by Goshwago, whose 'manners, as is common among Zulus of high rank, are those of a gentleman' (Pocock 1991: 21). Haggard's belief that all people are some part savage, with 'barbarism' acting as a more or less successful veneer, helped him escape the worst excesses of racism. Haggard's admiration for the Zulus and love of African land are all of a piece for he saw the further into the heart of the land, the further the Tswana, who he took back to the flock, after the shock British defeat by the Zulus at Mafeking in 1877, Haggard wrote himself:

The natives are the normal race in the soil, and they should have protection and civilisation. 'We have killed' them over without a word to the 'civilised' races of men, whose natives are concerned, of the most barbaric races in the world (Pocock 1993: 216).

In 1879 Haggard left Shepstone's administration, having risen to the position of Master and Registrar of the High Court, to go on rich farming with his wife of a few months and a friend, Arthur Goddard. His farmhouse, Hildrop, was Haggard's first domestic, familial place in the wider, unnamed African space. It appears as Modfontein in *King*:

It was a delightful spot. At the back of the stand was a long boulder, on top of the flat-topped hill that curved around on each side, encompassing a great slope of grass, in the top of which the house was placed. All along its front ran a wide veranda, on the outside of which green vines and flowering creepers trailed pleasantly, and beyond was the broad carriage-drive of red soil, bordered with hedges of *Portulaca* laden with numerous flowers of red and golden pink (Haggard 1900: 22).

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

both familiar and unknown, set on a vantage point overlooking limitless lands open to the gaze's eye. The 'lay' of the slope in which the farmhouse is sited, and the 'looming' hill are also characteristic of Haggard's vision of Africa: landscapes which will be discussed more fully later in this paper.

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

It is impossible to overestimate the effect of South Africa on Haggard and his writing. Witnessing the confrontation between British colonialism and the Zulu nation caused him to reevaluate and define his thinking about the fundamental issues of race, religion, and religion with which he would struggle in his future novels. The physical environment supplied the raw material for a thousand varied landscapes of the imagination (Channing, 1991:24).

It was Haggard (1951:173) said of his motherland, 'Africa he was always homesick' where was a telling phrase for a man who, on a psychological or spiritual level, Haggard felt a desired renewal on African soil where he lived for only 6 or so years out of a lifetime based in England, his physical, hereditary home.

A major concern, once of his stay in South Africa was the summaries set in Africa which he subsequently started to write. Published in 1885, his third novel, *King Solomon's Mines*, struck gold and was reprinted four times by December. In its first year it sold 31,000 copies which made it one of the biggest sellers of that year, and it has never been out of print since (Lob 1987, 1001; Cohen 1980:95). Similar spectacular sales figures were reaped by his next few novels. *Allan Quatermain* written in the summer of 1885, *Jess* written in the autumn of the same year, and *She* written between January and March 1886. Haggard's outstanding fame as a writer rose on these African romances, together with those written up to *Heads the Little* in 1892 (*Maintain's Reviews* 1888; *Allan's* 1892, 1889). Thereafter it seems as if Haggard's spell of almost compulsive writing is broken. Although he wrote at least ten more African romances, his does not rival the romances set in other parts of the world, none has the power of the first 1888 ones. The sales figures of the early African romances indicate that Haggard had struck a deep chord in the late-Victorian reading public. Late-Victorian fears and desires, both sexual and imperial, found expression in their pages, partially projected onto the landscape:

Through the vision of Haggard's work and popular success and the new vision of African settings in Africa, the hearts which Victorianism found to open interior landscapes could be contemplated at a safe distance (Channing 1997:106).

It is of importance that Haggard chose the romance as a vehicle to convey his vision, as certainly, the romance with its grand dreams of wealth, power, its deeds of heroism and its binary opposites, the East or future, of black men from without suited the late nineteenth century British mind well. Africa, in particular the last unknown space on the map to be colonized provided a suitable site for the man's dreaming for a home nation undergoing quite considerable domestic changes. F. R. Leavis (1975:158) asks the romance to convey 'in transition:

Romance as a form that expresses a transitional moment in the development of a nation, that their society and between past and future in such a way that the alternatives are grasped as both, and somehow unified worlds... The real movement of the categories of romance (magic, good and evil, romance) is to reject, but this genre expresses a nostalgia for a social order in the process of being undermined and destroyed by modern capitalism, yet still for the moment existing side by side with the future.

Frequently in his African romances, Haggard sounds a nostalgic, yet conservative note. There is nostalgia for an Africa unnamed and unknown yet rich with promise, and of this nostalgia contradicts Herodotus the imperialist who encouraged the settlement of the colonies by Englishmen, who stressed the mother country's claim to 'civilize' the land. The following passage taken from *Allan's Mines* is a nodatory dedication to Arthur Cochrane, Haggard's friend and business partner in South Africa, evokes this note:

Perhaps they [the pages] will bring back to you some of the happy memories of days that are now to us. The country of which Allan Quatermain tells him is now, for the most part, well known and explored as are the fields of Norfolk. Where we stood and tramped and yelped, scarcely caring the loss of a wild and new world, the golden age has been discovered. The shadow of the old world has been cast, to fall upon the Transvaal plains. The game has gone, the mighty clouds of the lion are no longer the glare of day. All is changed (Haggard, 1911:9).

Published in 1889, following the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand and also after the mining of the Transvaal, including the precious goldfields, back to the shores. Haggard's tone is increasingly somber. What Haggard regrets is the loss of England to roam the land, a free and fertile domain now claimed by the power of mining capitalism.

This construction lies at the heart of the imperialist's desire to imagine Empire's margins: on the one hand, Empire was about information gathering, laying secrets bare by mapping, naming, classifying, and yet on the other the attraction of the colonies lay in their ultimate unknowability, their secrecy. The imperial romance set in Empire's far-flung contrivances depended on this duality of the knowable and therefore predictable and yet unknowable and uncertain. Haggard realised this in a rhetorical question he once posed: "...where were the romance writers of future generations find a safe and secret place ... in which to lay their plots?" (Lingington 1986:66). Haggard's coupling of 'safe' and 'secret' highlights the romance's survival only whilst genres of secrecy persist. It is a short step from references to secrecy and secret selves to Frye's (1957, 1993) statement:

[I]magined into the romance, the quest romance is the search of the hero or heroine self for a fulfilment that will deliver it from the anxieties of reality, but self will, outside that reality.

This, in a nutshell, defines the desire of imperial romance: to view the hero triumph absent over land and people but without eliminating the thrill of risk and danger, the great unknown. This is perhaps the reason for Frye's (1976:37, 198) labelling Haggard's adventure tales 'disrupted romances' for 'they represent the disruption and integration of the conventions of romance into the culture of imperialist ideology' (How 1993: 197). To destroy the source of anxiety is to remove the impetus for the romance in which the hero has to have an Other (land, people, animal etc) to prove himself against.

A paradoxical tension between gain and control remains at the heart of adventure. Without risk, there can be no adventure, but since both gain and loss are pain, pursuit of optimum, excessive risk may cause the experience of excitement to give way to anxiety. Adventure in the modern sense is balanced between anxiety and desire (Dawson 1999:13).

Because desire and anxiety are so finely balanced in the quest romance, the happy ending often embraces a denial of fulfilment, a 'happy pessimism' whereby though 'Man seeks a dream, passionately desired ideal; often, he is happiest when he fails to find it' (Fisher 1923:63). Haggard frequently uses it in writing as in, inter alia, *She* (1887) where a truly happy ending is impossible in *Shanty Bay* (1889) which ends with a bitter sweet vision of the dead Stella, and *The People of the Mist* which ends with what could be Haggard's (1973:313) motto: 'To few is it allowed to be completely miserable, to none to be completely happy'.

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

Quatermain. Structurally, the imperial romance required a masculine, virile hero to put his strength against many odds. The masculinity of the romance is a result of the 'gendering' of genres' (How 1993:196) whereby the imperial romance became an almost exclusively male preserve, not only is Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1902) dedicated to 'all the big and small boys who read it' but Quatermain assures his male readers that there is 'not a petticoat' to be found between its covers (Haggard 1982:6). Despite this masculinity, however, Quatermain is not a typical romantic hero in Frye's terms. Frye (1957, 198) associated the romance hero with spring, dawn, order, fertility, vigour and youth whereas Quatermain is an odd mixture of these. His first appearance in *King Solomon's Mines* shows him as a hunter, 'older of fifty-three or, if you like, he is vigorous as his nation's proverb, though modestly self-deprecating. Quatermain represented for Haggard an 'honour-bred, free, adventurer spirit' linking him to an African landscape in which he found his most compelling inspiration.

In Frye's seminal work on the romance, *The Anatomy of Romance* (1976), he describes the romantic hero moving within a 'dream landscape' (1976:51) – and part of this chapter will begin an exploration of what we can call Haggard's 'African topography' using this structure. Frye's dream landscape is arranged in a vertical perspective on four levels, at top is heaven, below that an earthly paradise, then the world of earthly experience and at the lowest level hell or the denunciate world, usually below ground. The two levels above that of earthly experience represent an 'idyllic world' which has associated with happiness, peace, sunshine; whereas the level below that of earthly experience is termed 'the denunciate or night world' characterised by 'exciting adventures, but adventures which involve separation, loneliness, disillusion and the threat of inner pain' (Frye 1976:53). There are many features of this hierarchical landscape that seem to be illustrated in Haggard's African romances. The most useful for my purposes is the linking of moral states with physical spaces and features—the 'night world', for example, is

often a dark and evil primitive world of caves and savannah where the forest has thinned substantially, and where we are surrounded by the shapes of animals (Frye 1976:11).

At the opposite extreme to this night world is the elevation of the 'point of epiphany' of which the most common setting is the mountain top, 'the symbolic presentation of the point at which the midnight apocalyptic world and the cyclical world of nature came into alignment' (Frye 1987:203). This elevated position has close links with 'the preferred imperial explorer's position as "marginal" of all I survey', described by Pratt in her work *Imperial Eyes* (1992), which imparts power and position over landscape and, by inference, its peoples. It is also a vantage position frequently used by Haggard to view the borders of the open landscape that lies before the viewer. The

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

Richard and I were no longer Sheba's snowy breast, and above some two thousand feet (about) where we stood, lay leagues on leagues of the most lovely champagne country. There were large patches of leafy forest, there a great river wound in a silvery way, to the left stretched a vast expanse of rich undulating wheat or grass land, on which we could just make out countless herds of game or cattle. At that distance we could not tell which. This expanse appeared to be ringed in by a wall of distant mountains. To the right the country was more or less mountainous, that is, solitary mounds rising from its level, with stretches of cultivated lands between, amongst which we could distinctly see groups of dome-shaped huts. The landscape lay before us like a map, in which rivers flowed like silver snakes, and Atlas-like peaks crowned with white snow stretched the rose in solemn grandeur, whilst over all was the garlanded and tree-wreathed roof of Nature's happy life (Haggard 1992, 106f).

Such a vintage point implies that the viewer attempts 'the elevation of [her/his] (Noyes 1992:163) with all its danger – a telling comparison for the conflict within forests between desire and fear as the stuff of legend. Noyes (1992, 167) elaborates on the tension implied in this 'point of epiphany' contextualised within the imperial gaze:

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

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

Desire, too, in an erotic sense is also part of the 'mental landscape' of Frye's romance world, as evidenced in Haggard's reference to 'Sheba's snowy breast' in the passage from *King Solomon's Mines* (1992) just quoted. Frye (1981:205) suggests that the point of epiphany

may be perceived in erotic terms as a place of sexual fulfillment, where there is no specific symbolic action but simply a sense of arriving at the summit of experience in the moment.

Haggard's frequent references to the 'laps' of mountains which offer the masculine eye a point of uterine coupled with pleasure and not (and yet, also doubtless)

peculiarly sexist, seem to illustrate this idea. This is most evident in the descriptions of Mount Mord in *Nada the Lily* (1892) which offer extended examples of such satisfaction combined with fear. In the following passage, Conzolepogana and Galaz, in turn describe the mountain:

So Conzolepogana rose and crept through the narrow gulch on the east. There, above him, a great grey peak towered high into the air, shaped like a seated woman, her chin resting upon her breast, the place where the cave was opening, as it were, on the face of the woman. Below this place the rock sloped sharply, and was clothed with little bushes. Lower down yet was a forest, great and dense, that stretched to the top of a cliff, and at the foot of the cliff, beyond the waters of the river, lay the wide plains of Zululand. ... In this distance between the tops of trees I saw the figure of the grey stone woman who sits on the top of Chon Mord again, and shaped my soul's dreams her knees. My heart beat as I saw her through the forest in dark and light, from the rise of the night, and even I saw red clouds coming for the eyes of the *Zulu songs* – great spotted snakes crept from before my feet, and above high above my head the wild eagles in the great night with a sound like the sighing of women (1892, 131–134).

Linked to this sexualising of the African landscape, in terms of Frye's (1981:153) 'lily-like world' is the 'idealisation of the mistress' body with its 'ruined and garden'. For Haggard writing within the masculine imperial romance form, the sexual quest is partially transformed onto the landscape, there being 'not a *palladium*' (that is, no where to turn) available in the genre of his time, as previously mentioned. He achieves a far more powerful love affair between his protagonist and the landscape, with any woman, with whom love affairs are shown to be inevitably negotiatory, unlike that with the land which is constant. Desire is projected onto the landscape which frequently assumes a female form, alluring yet dangerous as in the paralysed myth. The intensely sexualised landscape of *King Solomon's Mines* (1992) offers us a view of one part of the mountains named Sheba's Breasts 'mysteriously veiled in deep shadows wreaths of mist'. After seeing this, Quatermain declares 'th a new land was little less than an earthly paradise' (Haggard 1992, 115ff). Both *Howe* (1900) and *The Queen Kings* (1908) also offer similar references to the 'Garden of Eden':

It is like the Garden of Eden isn't it, with the sea thrown in. There are, if the sun is out, and the green sea with an ark on it might be the Tree of Life, ... I can't say how fond I am of Adam' (Haggard 1908:48).

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

Kilimanjaro and has been read by some critics as a graphically sexualised map of a woman's body, leading the male gaze/imperialist to a kind of Promised Land. The treasure seeker is led in the map between Sheba's Breasts towards the Diamond mines located beneath a 'negative triangle of hairs'.

Haggard's map assembles, in miniature, the three narrative themes which govern his novel's map-making: as a form of military appropriation, the transgression of white male power through control of the black female, and the phantasm of the land's riches. What sets Haggard's map apart from the scores of ones and maps that sought out colonial adventure narratives is that this is explicitly sexualised fiction (Hobbes, 1999: 134).

More than he knew, Haggard had invested his treasure map with literal international function with sub-conscious codes. Furthermore in Haggard's treasure map, as in many maps of eighteenth and nineteenth century exploration, the myth of the 'empty' land scene is perpetuated. Though it could be argued that Haggard's map is a 'body map' of Africa as woman, the map is in effect empty of people, the way to the treasure unimpeded by any other claimants to the Promised Land.

Perhaps as much as Haggard's African narratives are known for their pastoral landscapes, so are they for the night world of caves (as previously mentioned), labyrinth and underground rivers that act as a counter balance to the sunlit world above. She is probably the best known example of this 'night world', but there are also night world caves in *King Solomon's Mines* (1902), *Montez's Revenge* (1898), *Atlan's Wife* (1889), *Under the Lake* (1902), *How Heu or The Nokster* (1923) and others. The character's state of the protagonist in this other world is the dream/nightmare as seen here in *She*: 'No nightmare dreamed by man, no wild invention of the romance, ever equal the living horror of that place' (Haggard 1991: 200). That powerful interior world of dreams, Freud, recognised the importance of the dreamy underworld of *She* recommending it to a patient as 'A strange book, but full of hidden meaning' and finding his landscape even intruding into his dream where it had to cross a stream on narrow planks, after which he woke in a 'terrific fright' (Charlton 1978: 73). Haggard (1887: 176), prior to Freud, had recognised that:

Sexual passion is the most powerful force with which to catch the mind of man, for it is the most of all things human and it is impossible to move a man to the danger that could be worked by a single English or American writer of romance. The great world will

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

present in his African landscapes.

One obvious tension in Haggard's work is the absence of evidence of ancient white civilisations in Africa. For example, in *King Solomon's Mines* (1902) by attributing the ruins and statues found to the work of an ancient white civilisation, probably of Phoenician origin, Haggard contributed to a powerful part of the myth about Africa in the nineteenth century. This myth was central to many theories of the nineteenth century which held that African cultures were inevitably less sophisticated than European ones. The discovery of ancient stone-walled sites and gold mines in Africa posed a problem for these were unknown in contemporary European history. Hence the theory that other [European] races must have been there in some far distant age. Popular theory also held that the southern African region was the site of the fabled Ophir, a belief that goes back to sixteenth century Portuguese explorers. Thus when Major Gordon Chase Zimbalowe in 1879, his uniquely and singularly led him to claim it as the site of King Solomon's Ophir, back for the Queen of Sheba, with a Phoenician substratum. Though there was some collective resistance to his theory, for example, Hartmann, who had seen Africans building in stone, such views did prevail at the time.

Haggard specifically links Southern Africa with Ophir in *King Solomon's Mines* (1902), the mines being reached by a route leading between Queen Sheba's Breasts) and its cultural artefacts with an ancient Phoenician civilisation. 'African Queen' also speculates looking at three stone idols 'which guard the diamond mine entrance. "Perhaps these colossi were designed by the same Phoenician official who reigned the mines" (Haggard 1902: 258). See (1991) also has frequent references to ancient white civilisations and their influence in Africa – 'Abyssinians still a link to remain' of that ancient period. 'Hence Hully permits on coming across an ancient civilization of the white woman, ring in the swamps

A country like Africa is said to be full of the relics of a long dead and forgotten civilisation. Nobles grew tall as the Egyptian civilisation, and very likely it had offshoots. Then there were the Chyloans, the Phoenicians, and the Persians, and all manner of people, all more or less civilized ... It is possible that there may one of them, may have had colonies or trading stations about here. Remember those buried Persians often had the bones showed in at Kilauea (Haggard 1991: 45).

Haggard, like some other writers on Africa of his day, through such means tried to construct an Africa which he could understand and interpret, and yet which defied his attempts. The popularity of Haggard's works, however, made his contribution to the myth of ancient white civilisation in Africa potentially far reaching. Engrin (1980: 253)

It might not be too cynical to perceive in the work of Haggard a profound influence on later white lay opinion in southern Africa, already receptive to claims about Upland and foreign colonists after centuries of speculation. Certainly ... the basic idea ... is perpetuated and is found in all early reports on Great Zimbabwe which advocate it as one origin for the site.

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

With *Lesangwe* De Villiers (the film maker) was able to establish the sexual activities of white South Africans while reinforcing the home and politically convenient belief that a new white civilisation rather than black civilised the walls of the spectacular buildings of Zimbabwe (Edinburgh in Haggard 1991: xxviii).

All the foregoing points on the imperial romance, its form and Haggard's opinions on the matter, lead to the centrality of landscape in the romance form, and to Haggard with his powerful landscapes as one of the imperial romance's most influential and popular practitioners. African landscape in Haggard's romances, I have tried to show, can therefore act as a text to be read, not unproblematically, however, as it is inevitably ideologically encoded, but with caution. Thus I return to the point with which I began – the centrality of fiction to the understanding of a culture and, more specifically, the centrality of landscape with a fiction of Empire, especially the imperial romance set on Empire's margins, to an understanding of world's real world, as translated within Haggard's African romances. Haggard creates an ideological yet also sympathetic African space which through repeated patterns he turns into what he Carron calls (1981: 17) 'a practised place, a space turned place permeated with desire, nostalgia, yet already beset by doubts and anxieties characteristic of his age'.

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

Graham Stewart

Gibbon's preferred medium was the short story. As a close friend of Joseph Conrad, Gibbon is often referred to by Conrad's biographers as 'Perceval Gibbon, the short story writer', and until the republication of his 1911 novel *Margaret Harding* in 1987 it was only in anthologies of short stories that his prose remained in print.

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

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

'The other has time well hanging', replied Mr. Samson, solemnly. 'You might as well talk of passing down the line between iron and aerolite.'

J.M. Coetzee (1988:174) describes the upper Social Darwinism had for colonial expansionists:

With freighting it is easy to see how biological terms Social Darwinism grew on to the advanced countries of the West. At home it explained how the rich got rich; abroad it explained why certain peoples were destined to be civilized.

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

Gibbon devotes the first few pages of *Souls in Bondage* to describing Depfontein as a microcosm of South African society. The town can be seen almost as a representation of the Social Darwinist schema, its geography reflecting the social context in which the action is to take place. In choosing Depfontein, the fictitious town, as the town of his earlier collection of short stories, *The House of Gribelant's Landing Case* (1905) and of his later, most successful novel, *Margaret Harding*, Gibbon reflects contemporary demographic changes by orienting the water away from the Boer-dominated rural periphery of the 1840s. *Gribelant's Landing* stories set an urban setting. Gibbon's *set-a-scene* is a typically racially divided South African town made up of white Depfontein on the higher ground above the Spang, (literally 'low-lying', and figuratively at the top of the Social Darwinist racial structure), the black 'Kaffir' town half a mile away on the other side, and the 'coloured' (mixed race) town on the 'bare earth' in between. Thus Gibbon establishes at the outset his social order as perceived by the white colonial, and as manifested in the racial segregation of his town: a pattern since etched in to the South African landscape. Gibbon (1904) presents the white town as orderly and quiet, the African location similarly arranged in regular rows: 'our mostly alien to white society' while the coloured town 'crawled with the feverish activity of hell, and all the time and business was to be seen'.

The narrative centres on Martin Phwates, an unsuccessful, white, middle-aged lawyer whose Depfontein practice consists mainly of minor legal services to members of the black and 'coloured' communities. Amongst his acquaintances is Cecilia de Plessers, a well-educated coloured girl who is suffering as a result of her unequal education and the abuse of her drunken mother. Phwates tries to dissuade her from accepting a marriage proposal from Bantam, a handsome but violently-disposed stable hand, and even proposes to her himself, in an attempt to prevent the wedding, in spite of the social disgrace such a union would bring him. Bantam eventually manages to undermine Phwates's opposition to the marriage by insisting that Cecilia's pregnant, in a parallel plot, George Joyce, a transport rider, even offers an attractive young woman as a term he is passing, and is introduced to her father, a man with liberal beliefs in racial equality, and a drunkard. Mr. Graham's behaviour exploits the weakness of rejecting him and his daughter, Joyce is later promised to manager of the transport company and soon thereafter rescues Peggy from the farm where her father has been impris-

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

Meanwhile, Cronin and Bantam have also married and moved to nearby Port Elizabeth. Bantam drinks to excess, openly sleeps with other women and abuses Cronin alternately with brutal beatings and with cruel indifference. Acting once more as a witness, Thwaites journeys to Port Elizabeth where he finds Cronin dying in a pool of blood after a violent assault by Bantam. However, 'the foundation of his life [Cronin's] and dies soon after'.

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

[Gibson's work shows a] keen insight into the half-race world which exists near the centre of civilisation in South Africa (anon., 1907: 517).

Imagined Identity reviewer clearly accepts as axiomatic that Gibson and his readership share the view that white settlements represent the 'civilisation' from which other races (the 'native world') are excluded.

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

However, I would argue that Gibson's reactionary point of view should not be taken at face value, given the account on inter-racial encounters to be seen in the *The Brown Girl's Own Leading Cases* stories, and the evidence provided by his reviewers that he may have been 'playing in the gallery'. Taken as a whole, Gibson's work shows a development away from the widely accepted colonial myth – in which the white man was expected to remain socially aloof from the exotic native population over which he held sway, and where the wages of dehumanisation were ruin and corrup-

tion – towards an acceptance of a future society which would depend on a resolution of racial conflict. Cronin, shown to be a tragic victim of miscegenation in *Seeds in Bondage* is yet another step in Gibson's progress towards that memorable image in *Margaret Harding*, the statue to be built in the future to commemorate the first miscegenator, with the inscription: 'She felt the future in her bones' (Gibson 1911: 83).

The Social Darwinist backdrop to *Seeds in Bondage* seems to be a necessary station in Gibson's progress towards the acceptance of individual equality evident in *Margaret Harding*. By the time he writes the latter novel, he has reached a point where he is able to present a woman who has married a black person, and Margaret Harding herself as heroic figures or partners, rather than victims. I would suggest that Gibson's vision elevates his writing above Cullen Goudesbury's *Tree of Roman Cross* (1910) which takes for granted the dissonant results of integrating a black person educated in Europe back into his native society, and Sarah Gertrude Miller's *God's Negotiations* (1924) which traces the travails of a day of deprecation and ruin to the descendants of mixed unions.

Gareth Gwynne (1983: 17) in a study of Puopatone's 'The Outsider' offers an explanation of the apparent ambivalence towards the issue of race in some colonial fiction:

Such vacillations are symptomatic of the dissonance between the racist ideology of Empire and the liberal humanist tradition of the descriptive mode in which that ideology achieves literary expression.

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

... the main psychological logic which propels the narrative is at odds with the plot of racial dehumanisation, which in part, to provide coherence and justification ... writers of this period may attempt to place 'the source of understanding of action and history' outside the individual (though necessarily subject) [but] the nature of 'the dehumanising' mode in which they are working simply does not permit it. (Gwynne 1983: 77)

To *Seeds in Bondage* Martin Gwynne applies Vronne Grebelian as narrative focus. However, his lack of avatars and his studiously neutral attitude make him both less sympathetic and less successful than Vronne Grebelian. Gibson deliberately places this slow, reluctant and only reluctantly impartial lawyer at the centre of his novel as a pivot between the two main women (the illegitimate Vronne and the Grahams/Bantams) and as a centre of Gibson's own debate over racial attitudes. Gibson's depiction of the characters of Thwaites and his egregiously cruel, Charlie Bantam,

over a great deal to Dickens. Thwaites is given idiosyncratic catch phrases (like Dickens's Marlow or Uriah Heep) in his characteristic monologues on his profession: "The practice seemses well" (Gibson 1904:91) which is the very phrase that is on his lips as he dies. Bantam operates as a thoroughly villainous foil to Thwaites's polite professionalism, and also as a purveyor of local gossip in, for instance, bringing Thwaites the news of Cecilia and Bantam's impending marriage. Bantam also enlivened the Foot's cynicism of the novel by taking immediate advantage of Thwaites's death when he drinks Thwaites's brandy glass. There is also a Dickensian quality to the vitality of the dialogue and sharp demarcation of secondary characters in Gibson's description of the vibrant room concert (Gibson 1904:175-179), which anticipates the highly-charged gatherings in the bourgeoisie drawing room in *Margaret Hamilton*.

In this novel, violence and brutality triumph over the kindness and unfilialness of Thwaites and Cecilia, and a form of institutionalised violence is criminalised as a result of the success of George Joynt, who employs his brutality in establishing his business. Thwaites, as witness to all of "Dolphinston" communities, is conventionally placed to link Gibson's parallel plots, located in the white and the coloured sections of the town respectively. But more important to our examination of Gibson's development as writer is his presentation of the moral debate centred in the person of Martin Thwaites. In order to save Cecilia from an incestuous marriage with the violent Bantam, Thwaites of a man marry her himself, so accepting what Gibson refers to as the white South African's view of ultimate degradation, a union across the colour line.

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

A part of that large [coloured] community that he was, or rather among them and an exile from his own people, so much of aggressive individualism involved in him, would make him unconsciously applied anything in a yellow man or woman that came to his eyes as based and approximate to white standards. After all, tolerance is really a measure of fear, and old Thwaites, walking demurely between the contempt of his own race and the familiarity of that which had granted him hospitality, was not the personality to evolve a tolerance that should demand reciprocity. "The best-strengthened people are those whom the stakes of the stake have staked" (Gibson 1904:164).

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

Thwaites, who has lived a closed, protected life) are most likely to display the (implied) nobility of tolerance. (The distinction drawn here between Thwaites's "individualism" (a sense of white superiority) and the morally indefensible acceptance of equality by those "whom the lines of the stake have staked" is a clearer indication of Gibson's ideological position than can be detected at any point in *The House of the Living Stones*). The choice for Thwaites is presented as a tragic dilemma: on the one hand, marriage to Cecilia would destroy his status and the "topical ambition" that he has nurtured all his life; on the other, abandoning her to Bantam's murderous violence removes the "foundation of [his] life" (Gibson 1904:179) and eventually kills him. In making his choice, Thwaites is shown to balance his own humanity with racial rectitude against the typical racial attitudes of the day:

So, but a half-a-dozen office hours, a yellow girl, with a curl of hair in bush, a creature to whom the fact that he was killing an invading, despised, with the status of a white dog meant, (Gibson 1904:162)

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

...but there was the debate, the debate of the white man's fall to the corruption of the Kafre - the ultimate disgrace of a South African man's fall to (Gibson 1904:201).

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

Nonetheless, there is still ample evidence of recognition in Gibson's grasp of the debate on race, especially when we consider his treatment of Mr. Graham, the discoloured colonist. Mr. Graham is shown to have a racial attitude towards blacks, and in response to Joynt's suggestion that he reject his labourers into accepting his nationality, he remarks:

I don't believe in trading a man belongs the negro. A Kaffir isn't a brute, you know, Mr. Joynt (Gibson 1904:156).

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

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

Gibbon's ambivalence is most evident in his presentation of Joyce, who enjoys a authorial approval yet, paradoxically, is shown to be unacceptably brutal in his treatment of black people. There is a major inconsistency in implying that Joyce's violence is immoral, while at the same time precluding the reader from an identification with Graham's tolerant views. This inner contradiction, central to Gibbon's failure in *Fields of Bondage*, is resolved successfully in the later *Margaret Harding*. A more accurate measure of Gibbon's progress in *Fields of Bondage* is the ideology discernible in Thwaite's inner dialogue and in Gibbon's apparently confused story observation that Mr Graham has 'a distinction that might have been greatness' (Gibbon 1904:273). However, Gibbon's (1904:273) depiction of Mr Graham as a 'short-pated drunkard whose essential quality of character' is given to be his 'drinking in his labourers' 'kneels together as to regard him as an example of white man's incontinence' (Gibbon 1904:273) is an attribute that tends to sway across the colour line, and has created the 'damned' colour of our morality.

The ambivalence in Gibbon's attitude provides the grounds for Henry de Ruick's (1984:14) assertion that '...

...precludes the reader in the most appearance of the narrator's use of categories when evaluating morality and identification between characters.

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

De Ruick goes on to accuse Gibbon of a failure in the rendering of character especially in the case of George Joyce in whom there is an 'uneasy alliance of civility and violence' (Gibbon 1904:16). She finds a 'radical (but alarming) inconsistency' in Gibbon's hammering together Joyce's 'wholesome hero' image with his brutality towards the black labourers on Graham's farm. However, there is some evidence that Gibbon intends the reader to see a direct parallel between the violence of Joyce and of Bartam. If we accept Thwaite as a central pivot, then Joyce and Bartam are clearly

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

The novel operates adequately in the level of melodrama and in this sense Bartam the villain and Joyce the conquering hero are consistently and clearly delineated. Gibbon (1904:255) castigates Bartam's evil qualities and implicitly lists Joyce's good ones: 'an excellent fellow and a charming person'. At this level, his demonstration of Bartam as too foolish, while his ironic treatment of Joyce is too resistant to be immediately and effectively discernible.

Cecilia's personality is presented via the different perspectives of several characters. Thwaite sees her as a fragile innocent, a view that is shared by Joyce who, we are told, has knocked her down for insulting her by calling her 'pretty ginger'. The public view of Cecilia is stated by the magistrate who regards her as a 'good' and amongst a 'cat-bunch', while the coloured community regards her as a 'good' and 'innocent' only self-ignorant, producing either active hostility (as in Bartam and Miss de Pleale) or empty attempts at friendship, which Cecilia inconspicuously rebuffs (as in Samson's overtures to her in Herringshall). We are told that:

...her mission-scheduled mother-in-law looked on her almost with hopelessly from her own colour and class, with a feeling no longer in their place (Gibbon 1904:200).

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

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

'There was no end on your farm', she said now. 'It is all well'.
He put his hand in his pocket, but could not speak.

There I should say you were both, she went on. (Thwaite's Echo 1904:212).

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

... Their teams made record journeys, and their waggons carried bigger loads to the town's profit of the firm (Gibbon 1901:251).

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

Joyce stood in the middle of the street, his right fist pressed above the open palm of his left hand. Gibbon observed the sight to himself, "only 'Ouch, by Jove!" and he dropped his fist with a smack of emphasis (Gibbon 1901:200).

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

Human Resources
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Dutch South African Literature

Siegfried Huigen

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

*Kindert is de kroonbetrof
in school, in de schoolkamer.*

The mother tongue is now recognised
in council, official and classroom.

The inauguration of the statue took place in 1893 on a grand scale for this sparsely populated region. There was a cavalcade of five hundred mounted farmers under the leadership of Oorn Dierdrie van den Heever, one of the initiators. The two leaders of the Afrikaner Nationalist Movement, 'Onze Jan' Hofmeyr and the reverend S. J. du Toit, came all the way from the Western Cape to give festival addresses. 'Onze Jan', leader of the Afrikaner Bond, toasted 'Onze Taal', under which he understood the 'language of Heoff and Woudel, Helmers and Tollens, Belderdijne and De Gouw ... Van der Bijl and Oosterzee' and 'Afrikaners Dutch', the special variety spoken in South Africa. He concluded his speech with 'Long live the language!' (Hofmeyr 1973:92).

¹ Heoff and Woudel are well-known Dutch poets from the seventeenth century, the others are popular Dutch writers of the nineteenth century.

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

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

The history of this statue occurred during what might be called the end of the reign of Dutch in South Africa. This reign commenced in 1652 and was soon confined to the church, education, correspondence, civil service, and police communication. On the farmwork and in the field, a creole version of Afrikaans was presumably already spoken at the end of the seventeenth century.

Although the importance of Dutch as a spoken language was soon limited, its meaning as a written language remained significant until the twentieth century. In the 17th century, when Dutch was used as a written language in South Africa, a vast collection of written material, mostly in forms not usually regarded as literature, came into being: diaries, travel journals, letters, articles in newspapers and magazines, historical treatises, as well as novels, drama and poetry.

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

Dutch South African literature has not always evoked so little interest. Especially in the thirties, the situation was different. Then, the first Afrikaans literary historians were being confronted with the question of where, from a nationalist point of view, the boundaries between the indigenous local should be drawn. Which old Afrikaans literature, and consequently the work of the Afrikaner literary historians, begin? At the start of the written Dutch literature, or in 1652? Or in 1795? (Jordens and van der

² The information on the history of the language monument was taken from De Wetshoff, C. (1982), *Dryas* 1:915.

Sweetendamed on diverse ander helden', written in Dutch with an Afrikaans touch, is about 1830 when Afrikaans was being used for comic relief in some newspaper articles and plays, or again in 1875 when the Genootschap van Kegele Afrikaners (Association of Real Afrikaners) was founded and the struggle for the recognition of Afrikaans began.² The proper beginning of the historical narrative is subject to discussion for the Afrikaans literary historian; it is not a given, as it is for the Dutch literary historian who can start with the fragment of a poem from 1190, 'Hofdian oltre vogels ...', because nothing else has been handed down.

The main topic under discussion is in truth: it uses the corpus of Dutch writings which originated in South Africa. Its status is, after all, dubious, to a nationalist like oriented Afrikaans literary historian. The texts were written by 'ancestors' sharing the same territory as the Indians and in many cases already using Afrikaans as a spoken language. The historian is being directly confronted with the question whether this was indigenous, whether these Dutch writings belonged to the cultural heritage of the Afrikaners, and thus to their history (Kloppers 1994: 27). The *consensus opinion* was eventually that Dutch writings of South Africa could only be regarded as belonging to Afrikaans literature if an Afrikaans national spirit could be discovered in them. The methods used to divine this national spirit were perfectly obvious. When the historian found something in the Dutch text that agreed with his own concept of Afrikaans thinking or feeling, the text in question received a stamp of approval and was labelled 'Afrikaans'. In other cases, for example when he either revealed himself a 'negrophile', his texts were labelled as being 'Dutch'. In most cases it boiled down to the projection of a Dutch conception of selfhood upon texts that originated within an entirely other historical context (Huigen 1996a: 113).

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

² For the attempt of periodizing, the information has to be culled from studies of which some are already obsolete: Garmann (1973); Christakis (1980); Antonissen et al.; Besseler (1964); Nieuwen and Nieuwen (1941); Mollema (1923); Lottz (1910); (1963); Maréchal (1900); De Vries (1926); Pluigen (1952); Scholte (1983); Steyn (1988); Neller (1990); Pienis (1993); Zwaan (1952); Du Toit and Gienius (1982); Du Toit (1985).

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

1. the period from approximately 1595 to 1652,
2. from 1652 to 1800, and
3. from 1800 to 1975.

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

1596-1652

The oldest Dutch publication in which attention is paid to South Africa—not specifically South Africa—is that of Jan Huygen van Linschoten (his *Itinerario* was published in Amsterdam in 1596) (Klein 1985). Jan Huygen wanted specifically to inform the home front about the route to the treasures of the East. But on the occasion of a visit to the Portuguese colony on the island of Mozambique (now Maputo), he included some observations on the 'mineral' of Moromotapa, rich in gold, in the interior of South Africa. This had consequences. Jan Huygen's name was used by the VOC (the Dutch East India Company) to emphasise the interest of the Cape colony. Despite the years following 1652.

The limited attention to South Africa in the *Itinerario* is typical of the majority of representations in this period. Any mention was usually incidental. People were not aware of the East Indies or home, and even aware of South Africa only for the first water in the desert literature. This led to some remarks on the country and its inhabitants. Whereas Jan Huygen established the image of a rich, civilised interior of southern Africa, other short visits to the coastal regions of South Africa accounted for the stereotypical image of the dirty, stinking, ugly Homeric-like on the coast, 'vloeden glijck als Galkensche blanen' (glistening like turkeys), that remained current even after 1652.⁴

1652-1800

The Dutch interest in South Africa often made a qualitative and quantitative leap

³ The earliest visit to the Cape was the expedition under the leadership of Cornelis de Waalman (Bois 1910, Aug 31 1599, as described by Willem Lodowijkus in *De Waalman's Boek* (Amsterdam 1599) (G.P. Roubaud and Huetman 1962, 1979).

⁴ *De reis van Joris van Spilberg, naar Spilberg, naar Cayen, Africa en Bantam 1651-1694*, 13.

after the establishment of a settlement station in 1682. The consequences, however, extended further still. This beginning of the Dutch colonial government in the Cape was an event of great importance for modern South African history. In 1682 the (forced) migration of South Africa and its inhabitants into Western European culture – initially its Dutch colonial variant – began, and the country was opened into the world economy.

This also had important consequences for the production of texts. The colonial settlement led to the opening up of the interior. In addition to the continuing usual references to South Africa in itineraries, locally produced descriptions of land and travel, with more often than the old primary stereotypical descriptions of 'Hottentotten' began to emerge. The Dutch language and written Dutch culture were established at the Cape. The foundations were laid for a South African literary current.¹

Initially, the extent of the local South African circuit, founded in 1683, was limited and strongly oriented towards the Netherlands. By far the majority of texts created during this period in South Africa was produced by the VOC-literary society for information. These texts were mainly intended to keep the overseas readers informed. What was produced outside the sphere of the VOC policies was insignificant compared to these texts. Since there was no printing press at the Cape during the time of the VOC, and no literary societies,² it was difficult for anything written at the Cape to be disseminated outside the circles of family and friends. A regional literary culture comparable to those which then existed in Europe was impossible. Poetry about South Africa published during this period, for example, was written exclusively by visitors, authors who had stopped at the Cape in the employ of the VOC and were published in the Netherlands. All the printed matter in South Africa had to be imported.

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

1800-1825

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

¹ The literary circuit of the VOC was a network which texts were produced (written) and read. Before 1683, no literary circuit existed in South Africa. There were, however, oral circuits. These (the tradition), I discussed in the following.

erned by the Dutch again for a short period (1803-1806). Additionally, a printing press was installed in Cape Town sometime before 1798. With this, the conditions for the realisation of a local literary circuit were fulfilled.

The end of Dutch government led to the Cape colonists' gradual estrangement from Dutch culture. So it seems that during the nineteenth century, people at the Cape lost their loyalty towards the Netherlands. Although the slaves still called on 'their go *voedschutters*' upon seeing a 'Dutchman', according to the Dutch East Indian official Leenstra in 1823, in South African glossaries toward the end of the nineteenth century the word 'vaderlands' in the meaning of 'something from Holland' was labelled obsolete (cf. Van der Merwe 1971).

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

So like mine was generally attached to the study of Dutch that, among others, the first class, while I was handling out the other pupils' books, one of the eldest pupils, a son of a Dutch Afrikaner, murmured to me, 'Dit is, wat beteken 'n goetse, 'n essay' which I then motioned to be corrected (Mansvelt 1901:179).

Although the rising Afrikaner nationalism and the Zuid-Afrikaansche Taalbond, founded in 1890 to further the Dutch language in South Africa, did succeed in putting the constitutional position of Dutch in the Cape Colony, it did not accomplish an effective equalisation with English. English remained dominant in education and in public discourse. The amount of Dutch published in South Africa (cf. However, in the age, and with the rise of Afrikaner nationalism after 1889, the desire to have a proper command of Dutch also flared up. To have a good command of Dutch appears to have become a sign of Afrikaner ethnicity by the end of the nineteenth century.

In the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (the Transvaal), the more important of the two Boer Republics, the constitutional position of Dutch had always been better than in the Cape Colony. Dutch was the only official language, and due to Mansvelt, who filled the post of superintendent of education, a Dutch public education apparatus for white children was created in the 1890's (Mansvelt 1961). Developments in the Orange Free State were less favourable for the Dutch language. Although Dutch was the official language, English predominated in various official functions.

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

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

The loss of the Cape did not mean that after 1806 publications concerning South Africa ceased in the Netherlands. Initially there weren't that many. This changed shortly after the successful Transvaal rebellion against the British government in 1851. Titles about the Boer successes became a way of bolstering the national self-respect campaign during the nineteenth century. Many of these publications must have reached South Africa via the book trade or by book shipments from the Netherlands. Of great importance for South Africa were Dutch books on South African history. The reception of these works of history also illustrates the difficulty to differentiate the Dutch from the Dutch South African literature of this period. The Dutch histories, published in the Netherlands, are even now considered by historians as specimens of Afrikaner historiography (Huisgen 1996a: 117). Something further took place regarding Dutch literature. Thus 'Onze Jaz' Hofmeyr celebrated the great Dutch writers at the inauguration of the statue for 'onze taal' in 'Burgerdorp'. The Dutch literary circuit overlapped the South African circuit. It is only for the South African Dutch texts that a separate circuit may be identified during this period. These texts were published and read only in South Africa. From this originally Dutch circuit the Afrikaans one eventually evolved. Publishers, magazines, newspapers and authors who initially published Dutch literature, gradually changed over to the production of Afrikaans texts in the twentieth century. The circuit as such did not change, though.

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

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

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

Before the founding of a colony in 1652, there already existed an image of the South African interior, going back to Portuguese sources via Jan Huygen van Linschoten's *Itinerario*. According to that image, Southern Africa was divided into a civilised interior with the 'emperor' Monomotapa at its head, and an uncivilised coastal region inhabited by wild 'Hottentots'. The civilised interior was, moreover, economically important. There was a lot of gold in Monomotapa, wrote Jan Huygen van Linschoten. Therefore, quite soon after the founding of the refreshment station, expeditions were sent out to establish trade contacts with Monomotapa. Between 1660 and 1664, seven expeditions were sent out, but none of them succeeded in making any contact with Monomotapa. When news reached the Cape that copper was to be found in the North-West, four more expeditions were sent, northwards between 1682 and 1686. Copper was in fact found in the vicinity of today's Springbok, but the means of exploring these reserves were lacking (Huisgen 1996a: 21).

The expeditions were always required to keep travel journals. In one or another useful information was recorded, the expeditions were loaded with lists of questions about the economy, forms of government and the appearance of the alien peoples. This method of use of travel in the seventeenth century was not unique to the Cape. From the sixteenth century onward, the educational travels in Europe were 'scientifically' founded as the *itineraria*, the 'art of travel' (Stahl 1979). The VOC also made use of these relatively recent as well as old information was gathered in foreign regions (Huisgen 1996a).

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

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

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

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

Toward the evening a fire was lit on the mountain. W.S. Wier, i.e. I, Pieter van Meerhoff, took with me two Cape Hottentots and went toward it. Halfway there, Dorienman [one of the Khoi guides] started calling: 'Mr. Pieter! Namaqua!'. Looking up and counting 21 of them standing on the rocks and looking toward us, went somewhat farther, and the Hottentots became so distraught, ... they took it all about for their feet and wanted to run back, saying: 'Namaqua boem! Namaqua!' I took my glass to see whether this was my case. I saw that they were armed with iron skins and were carrying furs over their left arms, bows and arrows on their shoulders and in their hands. In a cagot I was, surely, Hottentots and said: 'they should not be afraid, the Namaquas would take us alive' (Boesman & Thom 1955:196/1934).

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

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

At last one of them took a small musket shot from us, the others remained sitting at the bush. Then the Hottentots went and asked them: the Namaquas sat down on one side of the mountain and the Hottentots on the other side. They called at one another for a long time before they dared to approach us. At last they came over. So I, Pieter van Meerhoff, took a pipe of tobacco from them and 'knew and apprehended' them, to see whether they too had knowledge of tobacco. Having read of them, one of them hurriedly came, who took the pipe from my mouth and started to smoke; they had been here from time to time with the Cape Hottentots (Boesman & Thom 1955:195/1933).

During this first encounter, Van Meerhoff was impressed by the imposing presence of the king of the Namaquas and his three sons. They were larger than Unibon, the largest slave of the Company. In later reports about the Namaquas, this remark was extended to the Namaquas in general. This happens already in our Cape journal where they are described as 'very strong folk, half giants' (Boesman & Thom 1955:195/1933).

As an appendix to the journal text, Van Meerhoff gave a description of the Namaquas: 'As Memorandum of their occasions and manner of living etc.' In this, he says that the Namaquas resemble the Hottentots of the Cape in their forms of settlement and their hair styles (Boesman & Thom 1955:195/1937). The first point was repeated in the Cape journal in an afterword to the expedition (Boesman & Thom 1955:195/1934). All of this made it problematic to retain the association of the Namaquas with the civilised interior. As yet, however, this idea endured unchanged.

After Van Riebeeck's time, however, the Namaquas seem to be shown in an ill light. Apparently because of a changed policy toward the Dutch, the sixth and seventh expeditions encountered resistance from the Namaquas. The sixth expedition was confronted with open hostility from the Namaquas: 'they said that unless we moved around, they would fight against us' (Gisèle Molshagen 1916:191-93). Commander Vogetaar, in a letter to the Lords Seventeen, interpreted this as the Namaquas' distrust of the Dutch (Gisèle Molshagen 1916:1713).

During the next phase of expeditions northward (1682-1686) the hostile policy of the Namaquas against the Dutch was sustained. The expedition under Oloff Bergl (1682) felt that it was betrayed and mocked, and found itself forced to return. During Vander Stel's journey (1685-6) similar problems cropped up. The Dutch had to listen to recalcitrant tribal leaders telling them that although at the Cape they needed him to say the word, they were now in Namaqualand, and things were different here (Valenyr 1971:281). In the end, this certainly contributed to the disappearance from official papers of the initially favourable image of the Namaquas. Another theme was habit that differed from the Dutch. In the text accompanying a depiction of a Namaqua by Hendrik Claenius (1686), the negative prejudices are emphasised:

... being taught to turn any laws or religion ... seems to fear nothing but the thunder and the lightning, and extremely unskillful and ignorant, eating everything they come across, even rats, dogs, cats, caterpillars, grasshoppers, etc., only in haste as they have occasion and repulsion ... their women they happily have with them, as they become the more lecherous the less. For men are jealous ... (Waterhouse 1979:113-14).

By now the Namaquas have been seen as being from an inverted world, preferring their food (fish) to hotly bared, but then, a delicacy would be a green caterpillar to be either grilled over a wood fire after 'the green skin has been squeezed out' or cooked in 'its own press juice' (Waterhouse 1979:114). In short, the Namaquas were 'wild things', as is remarked in a description of the festivities surrounding the birthday of Commander Van der Stel in Namaqualand. By now, even the fact that the Namaquas were capable of orderly dancing was considered astonishing (Valenyr 1971:292).

There were both empirical and ontological reasons for moving the Namaquas to the 'wild' category in the official documents of the VOC. Since antiquity, a taxonomic distinction between the self and the other has been operative in the European experience of the unknown. The stranger was a savage, a heathen, wild, the opposite of the self-image of the European (Kosofsky 1979). Since the sixteenth century, this self-image has become insinuated in the entire Western European way of life (Van den Boogaard 1982:14). This development is visible also in southern Africa, in confrontations with indigenous populations. The Khoi were considered repulsive because they did not behave themselves according to Dutch and, in general, European standards of civilised behaviour: comprehensible language, acceptable eating habits, neat clothing— the products of the civilizing process that began in the Middle Ages (Piets 1978:180). The Namaquas, on the other hand, behaved just like the Dutch, at least according to Eva Allen¹¹; they did wear neat clothes, lived in nice houses, go to church, and so on. Consequently they were attractive representatives of the civilised interior. Experience, however, provided the insight that the Namaquas did not in fact behave like the Dutch. To this was added their apparent 'skin richness'. The result was that they were assigned a new place in the taxonomy in the journal of the last expedition they became 'wild people' like the Cape Khoi were from the beginning.

The demand of the Namaquas, their textual removal from the civilised interior to the wild peripheral region, necessitated an adjustment in the Dutch discourse of southern Africa. Although the Namaquas were not yet quite as troublesome in the early sixties as they were later to become, they were also not the amiable trading partners with access to Montserrat that they were initially presumed to be. In the imaginary discourse of the interior, this resulted in the removal of the border of civilisation further inland. The role of civilised intermediaries to Montserrat was now assumed by other peoples: the Dringodys ('Bushman'), the Chobos or Chobosias, Tii and Gii ('Griekwa') (Mosseup 1977:120) all began to take over the role of the Namaquas in representation. The border between wild and civilised was also increasingly identified with the imaginary river Vgiti Magna. It was revealed that the Namaquas were wild and that they lived 'a few days' journey from the Vgiti Magna; the Namaquas had assisted the expedition and the intervening region was dry. The civilised agriculturalists were thus to be sought on the banks of the Vgiti Magna. This river therefore became a goal of later expeditions.

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B.W. Vilakazi:
The Poet as Inspired Prophet

Thengani H. Ngunya

An emphasis on structures, works of art, persons, certain homologies with the social and economic structures of their time, and an urgent concern with the manner in which human history, every work of art is, *first*, also, an important social document, and it is foolish to think that it can be something above such things. On the other hand, it can be seen as something quite sacred, and better by its being approached in this, higher critical context, rather of fact something is both (Hegel, 1953).

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

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

In a similar vein, the literary historian Aileen Clément (1993: 54), concludes as the crucial role that literary scholars can play during this time of fundamental social transformation and reconstruction in South Africa:

⁶ Recent books on South African history include Chapman (1996), Ndlovu, Nkomo and Mkhondo (1997) and Smith et al. (1996).

Henry scholars) are committed to an even more arduous task: to dispense the traditional unevenness by making each single human group aware of the scope and magnitude, and of the depth and subtlety in the literary achievements of the other groups. By first fostering mutual understanding and mutual esteem, they will facilitate their proper share to the necessary building up of a cohesive society.

Whether we (as South African literary scholars) regard nations as 'imagined communities' with no empirical existence or as social groups with shared and definitive characteristics, we would be shirking our social responsibility if we ignored the challenge of fostering cultural understanding and tolerance among the various social groups that constitute the emerging South African nation.¹

Phisolet Wolke Vilakazi, the Zulu literary scholar, poetist and poet who is generally regarded as the founder of modern Zulu poetry² belongs to the group of mainly mission-educated white-collar intellectuals most of whom wrote in both their native languages and English. This group includes such writers and critics as J.J.R. Kolbe, S.H.K. Mphahleli, D.T.R. Dhlomo and R.B.R. Dhlomo. Before his premature death at the age of 32 in 1947, Vilakazi had published two volumes of poetry: *Isikandlo kaZulu* (1935) and *Isandiso* (1943). In 1935 Vilakazi's poems were translated into English by Florence Lucia Friedman from the literal translations of the Zulu poems by D. McK. Maclean and J.M. Sikakana.³ Apart from creative writing, Vilakazi also wrote a handful of scholarly critical essays the most frequently cited of which is the one entitled 'The Conception and Development of Poetry in Zulu' which was part of a thesis accepted by the University of the Witwatersrand for the M.A. degree in 1938. Vilakazi's doctoral thesis, accepted by the Department of Bantu Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand in 1943, was entitled *The Oral and Written Literature in Nguni*. As Girard (1993:62) has pointed out, Vilakazi's thesis 'has the distinction of treating literature in two different, although related, languages: Xhosa and Zulu, simultaneously'. Thus in the works of Vilakazi we have a classic example of a scholar-poet who referred to in a sustained and systematic manner on the technical, aesthetic and mythological foundations of imaginative writing in Zulu. However, in spite of his obvious versatility as a writer and critic, it is in the field of poetry that Vilakazi made his most distinctive contribution to Zulu literature.

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

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

Focusing on the role of the poet as a witness and participant in the process of cultural transformation, my analysis of the poems dealing with the subject of the poetic imagination and the poet's social roles will take into account Vilakazi's self-conception as the poet whose task is to preserve the cultural heritage of his people. As D.T.S. Nyembaza (1973:ix) rightly points out:

He [Vilakazi] was greatly egotistical [of the Zulu heritage] because the younger generations in his nation, he refers over and over again to be used for preserving those things which are sacred and precious to the Zulu nation.

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

Iyeyintyente ngakho ayigale,
Ngiyabona ngakho ngakhangeni,
Nangakho ngakho ngakhangeni ngakhangeni.

For a discussion of Zulu traditional poets see Nyembaza (1973); Gurner (1987); Cape (1988); and Rumbh & Nyembaza (1988). In *Zulu Histories* (Durban ed., Nyembaza, 1973:77) comments on the role of the traditional *isweshongi*: 'The Zulu word *isweshongi* has been translated as "poet" but this is inadequate because the *isweshongi*, in addition to being the official poet, was to be the chief's official press-stinger. He must therefore be familiar with heraldry and back-stair and know the thesaurus and personifications of each effect of a king's known and hidden wishes. He *isweshongi* is also expected to have memorized the names of several generations of royal chiefs whose songs would have been sung to him by warriors of royal families by his predecessors.

¹ See Nyembaza (1961:7), Ntoli (1981:1), Mokoelo (1949:58), Rumbh (1981:594) and A.T. Cape (1984:11).

² All quotations in this chapter have been taken from Florence Lucia Friedman's translation of Zulu Poems (1977). Quotations of the original Zulu versions of the poems are from *Isikandlo kaZulu* B.R. Vilakazi (1993) edited by D.T.S. Nkomo and titled as *Isikandlo*.

*Laph'antane: 'the engaging' neighbour,
 El'ho: 'unlike, as well' classmate
 Enkhanga: 'the Zulu people's neighbour,
 Neng'khumbu: 'the neighbour
 Neng'khumbu: 'the neighbour
 Neng'khumbu: 'the neighbour' (Nkomo 1993:74)*

When last I heard our tribal songs
 They seemed to me of little worth.
 But now their message comes in my heart.
 Secrets and timeless passions haunt a fit
 Inspired by Zululand's sons and their women.
 These songs recall a past so swiftly fading
 That now I turn its meaning into rhyme.
 Although I were not longing to measure it (Vilakazi 1973:33)

In examining Vilakazi's above roles as the custodian of cultural values and an intermediary between the dominant Western culture and one 'swiftly fading' Zulu culture, I shall be guided by the central propositions of Jürgen Habermas's theory known as genetic structuralism, the key principles of which are explained by Terry Eagleton (1976:25):

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

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

While Vilakazi did not elaborate a more fully-fledged theory of literature, he would have agreed with the proposition that the poet springs from the bosom of his social group and therefore reflects the historical-social experiences of that group. That his was largely the perception of a poet as 'the voice of his people' is shown by the fact that he sought his position from 'writing out into the unknown of Dukuza'. It was from here that he heard his people saying 'this is my voice'.

What the literary sociologist Jürgen Habermas (1990:112) refers to as the 'world vision' or 'world view' evolves from a social group's attempts to create a meaningful and coherent value system out of its natural and social circumstances:

World views are historical and social facts. They are historical ways of thinking, feeling and acting which in given conditions are imposed on men (and feeling the re-solves in a similar economic and social situation).

As I shall argue, Vilakazi's poetry presents a world vision characterised by both its propandic and interpenetration between African traditions (as in 'Western modernity'). The poet and the social group(s)—defined in terms of ethnicity, race, and class, whose outlook he attempts to articulate in his poetry, have to adapt to the demands of a modern existence while simultaneously endeavouring to retain what they see as the essential features of their indigenous or local identity. Consequently, Vilakazi's poetry reflects the dilemmas and uncertainties of a poet caught between the hegemonic literary practices and ideologies of Western culture and the traditional myths, beliefs and cultural practices of his native culture. This tension is also evident in Vilakazi's attempts to combine traditional forms with Western ones, as well as his constant invocation of the protective and inspirational spirits of the ancestors while showing equal respect for the basic doctrines of the Christian religion. Thus social institutions such as religion, education and tribal traditions and belief systems provide a framework, or, as Habermas would say, the 'encompassing structure' within which Vilakazi's poetry may be interpreted. In line with his self-portrayal as a preserver of culture, the world view which is given prominence in Vilakazi's poetry is that of the traditional Zulu community, the essential features of which are outlined by Absalom Vilakazi (1968:136):

There were certain guiding positions in the culture which were of fundamental importance for the general well-being of everybody, the unity of the lineage and its patterns of continuity and reciprocity, the supremacy of ancestral spirits ... and the certainty that old traditional methods of rearing children or of mediation would make for a rural stability. The consensus, the acceptance of a common world view, a common tribal sentiment, common allegiances and common interests.

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

¹ On the various aspects of the Zulu world view, see also Kugel's (1976) study of traditional Zulu culture.

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

Furthermore, a careful reading of Vilakazi's poetry reveals the various ways in which he consciously resisted the attitudes and values that most commentators have attributed to the class of educated (Westernised and predominantly Christian) blacks during the first part of this century. Gail Gerhart's (1978:34) comment on the values of the emergent black bourgeoisie is typical¹:

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

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

¹ Gerhart (1978:224) comments as follows on the conception of the 'African' in Vilakazi's most anthologised poem, 'Hlabankomo': 'It is clear that although Vilakazi refers specifically to past Zulu victories he uses the references as emblems of a wider, confident African past. In his thoughts for the future, his reference to "rightful Black hands" expresses a longing for a broader African re-possession of the land and an inheritance that is far more than narrowly Zulu. His vision is both regional and national, and in an important way he is able to orientate both rural and urban sensibilities. This is rare among South African writers of any race'.

² See for instance, Commins (1985), Magubane (1979), Marks (1986) and Mundy (1979) for a discussion of class divisions within the black communities during the first part of the twentieth century.

³ Vilakazi's response to what was perceived to be an inherently superior culture and lifestyle is to show, in his poetry, that Zulu cultural practices and traditions have an inherent value and spiritual life. This is a creative way of humanising and redeeming a discredited value system. Although Vilakazi may not have seen it in those terms, this is a political act with far-reaching ideological implications.

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

In most of the poems in which Vilakazi attributes inspiration to some spiritual source he describes the spirit and humbles himself. The egoistic himself is a mere lad through which the spirit can work.

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

As a student at Mthethi, Vilakazi acted as secretary to Father Bernard Hays. It was probably this association with the only other factor that influenced Vilakazi ever more strongly to seek distant, ecclesiastical horizons.

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

In her incisive study of class and nationalism in twentieth-century Natal, Sheila Marks has shown that there were distinct material and ideological differences between the non-converted traditionalists and the Westernised *tshepo* community or the so-called 'amnespukahlali'. However, instead of emphasising the ideological consistency of the newly acquiring world view, Marks highlights what she rightly describes as the 'ambiguities' characteristic of the behaviour patterns and cultural outlook of the *tshepo* community. For instance, it may seem an understatement to plainly self-contradictory, that the educated and Christianised Vilakazi would think of himself as an inspired messenger of the national ancestors. However, the phenomenon of

'deculturation' which Daniel Kameene regards as a feature of the outlook displayed by mission educated African writers who assume, often unconsciously, the perspective of the colonisers, hardly applies to Vilakazi, nor does the following rather reductionist comment made by David Westaby (1979: 9):

For the liberal Zulu of the first half of the twentieth century, Christianity became, paradoxically, the foundation of Zulu identity, of ultimate 'Zulu-ness' or simply human dignity.

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

There is no doubt that the poetry of the West will influence all South poetry because all the new ideas of our age have reached us through European standards. But the only something we must not lose sight of. If we notice the force, the onward thrust of which, despite the charming poetry of our Western masters, has done us more to do that we have incorporated in our poetry as in their spirit. In some Western nations, forms and metrical systems we employ them only as vehicles or accessories for the poetic message. (quoted as we see and conceive) (Vilakazi 1938:127).

Yet Vilakazi attempted to imitate the 'form' of Western poetry in his first collection, and was noticed by the Xhosa poet and critic D.D.C. Tshabe (1943: 11) who commented as follows in his review of *Isibonelo KaZulu*:

When we come to the poetry book *Isibonelo KaZulu* by R. H. Vilakazi we come to the one great book of poetry in Zulu that draws to the aid of a classic form English influence by example, by reason of its outright imitation of English metres, by its long, short and common alliteration of stanzas, by grace, smooth, dignified and by

the heroic couplet reminiscent of Pope and Dryden all painstakingly observed. Even the titles recall those of Keats in disguising their subject, observing that *any word is better* etc.

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

In *Isibonelo KaZulu* Vilakazi dispenses with European poetic techniques such as rhyme and metre and begins to imitate the style of the Zulu *ibongo*. As Copie (1984: 17) observes:

In *Isibonelo KaZulu* Vilakazi leaves behind his early imitations of British Romantic tradition and advances to the full mental and creative independence under the guidance of his personal muse, which he closely realises to be a Zulu muse. He becomes what he had wanted to be and what he had tried to be in his historical poems: the voice of the Zulu people, but now he speaks not from the relatively uncharted specific experience of Sotho, but from the depths of the Zulu experience.

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

*Shadha bangqoma ukuthula nase
Lapho ngitha ngihlele ukuthula nase.
Ngizama Ngakulawula eku kisi
Zulu wena kaMakaboyi*

¹ Daniel Kameene (1989:13) defines deculturation as follows: 'The deculturation is the process whereby a people is persuaded into developing a negative self-image and consequently rejecting its own cultural identity. This opens the way for an aggressive deculturation that undermines the inferiority of the decultured group and the superiority of the acculturating group.'

² Vilakazi became a critical contemporary to regard Vilakazi as a Zulu Romantic Poet. Copie's (1984:16) comment is typical of this view: 'Vilakazi was a romantic by temperament and his first poems were odes to the wind, to birds and flowers, even to a Zulu my pet (Guanar) that, very much in the style of, in fact, an imitation of, the English romantic poets.'

*Kuvutalekanga ukhal' abathongo,
 Yab' abany' bakaka yand' bontal'
 Awel' amakhal' angath' abantu abana* (Ntali 1993:142).

Thus now I can never be silent
 Because in the depths of the night
 My dreamy muses are saying:
 'Arise, O you son of Mzimba!
 Your dreamy folk you awaken
 And sing to us legends of their life.
 This change, I command you, fulfil' (Vlakazi 1973:77).

Combining partly realistic and partly visionary modes, this poem describes the complex process of initiation which the poet had undergone before assuming his place among the national poets. Moreover, it is most significant that the poet does not seek legitimisation from any nameless muse but from King Shaka's court as this implies that his status and authority as a poet have been conferred by the leader and founder of the Zulu nation. Thus instead of presenting himself in the typical Romantic tradition as the individualised voice for whom poetry is a creative response to the feelings of solitude and alienation, Vlakazi portrays the task of writing poetry as a sacred duty which has a national significance. Significantly, the poet's visionary encounter with the representative of the national ancestors (Mkhabazi) takes the form of a dream. As Krige (1936:299-310), Msimang (1973:304) and Berglund (1989:156) have shown, dreams are a very important means by which ancestors communicate with the living, especially with those they have selected for the sacred task of divination (*ukugcoka*). It is also worth noting that Mkhabazi instructs the newly initiated poet to write poems about the historical events of the Zulu nation. 'Sing to us legends of their life'. Therefore, poems such as 'UShaka KaSenzangakhona', 'Khasim' mazulu', 'Nqomhuyazi eMondamsuka' and other historical poems may be seen as the poet's response to this ancestral injunction.

The role of the spirits in Vlakazi's inspirational poems is not confined to the recovery of the heroic past. Vlakazi envisions his own role as an educator who will return in the form of dreams to inspire the younger generation of the artistically inclined. As he puts it in 'In Celebration of Fifty Years' (*Imembele eminyakani emagantshani mahloni*):

*Senzake ngingamisa
 Umethomsi namandla,
 Mibekani iimbini
 Ngaphandle ngama hahlo*

*Umay' amabiz' ikhanya,
 Ophakisi emasaka
 Yebu kabe kwithini,
 Sikuphaphi' amaphephu
 Amamabhebi' ingane*

*Rosakama injan' iroko
 Uluhli' uhl' abantu
 Umazango nezakala
 Uthokukh' amu,
 Sathel' emakhangweni
 Awol' esi ndagonye
 Kuvutalek' elayo
 Engamakhosi' amabiz' (Ntali 1993:126).*

Then soul, we a lot with roko
 And, like our own ancestral spirits,
 Become the guardian angels of the college.
 Therefore, young readers, hear my voice
 In calling winds that stir the leaves
 And whisper in the night around the house.
 For thus do we come back again
 And bring to you the blessed dreams
 That quest at that's smile.

Therefore, young reader, wake and rise!
 Take up your pen that you may write
 The thoughts with which we now refine you,
 Inspired in us by noble spirits
 Of race like Francis and Ngunyi,
 That children yet unborn may read them
 Fifty years from now (Vlakazi 1973:136).

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

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

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

*Ngobu' amagqam' etim' amba,
Amad' amad' amad' amad'
Amad' amad' amad' amad'
Amad' amad' amad' amad'
Amad' amad' amad' amad'
Amad' amad' amad' amad'*

*Ngobu' amad' amad' amad'
Amad' amad' amad' amad'
Amad' amad' amad' amad'
Amad' amad' amad' amad'
Amad' amad' amad' amad'
Amad' amad' amad' amad'
Amad' amad' amad' amad'
Amad' amad' amad' amad'* (Nkomo 1993:148)

I think of bones of my nation,
I see faces and eyes remind me
And you to put aside their shields
As from bones of earth, they speak
To tell me I shall stand that bone-
For never shall I be forgotten

As I have agreed, I wrote my books,
That other children of Zuluhood
May not one day my truth of knowledge,
Study, debate and help each other
While learning from my negated writings.
There, never inspired by mere ambition,
Were portrayed by you, races and spirits
Who gave me my thoughts in form of wisdom
But I shall be here no longer (Vilakazi 1971:83).

The themes of creativity and ancestral inspiration are further explored in 'The Poet' (Vilakazi). In this poem the speaker has been appropriately introduced into the commu-

nity of praise-poets and assigned the role of an intermediary between the living and the departed. As he says:

*Kungu ngobu' amad' amad' amad',
Amad' amad' amad' amad'
Amad' amad' amad' amad'
Amad' amad' amad' amad'
Amad' amad' amad' amad'
Amad' amad' amad' amad'
Amad' amad' amad' amad'
Amad' amad' amad' amad'*

O how can I capture thoughts which I contain now?
Are these my words or yours, O deathless Muse?
And do I value the truth or famous name as well?
Before you named my soul, the earth was dark.
Pathless, unthought, then I, inspired by you,
Could open my eyes to things of the past,
And grasping the poet's staff, I passed on life,
O let my songs as well, blaze trails on earth (Vilakazi 1973:78).

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

*Ngobu' amad' amad' amad' amad',
Amad' amad' amad' amad'
Amad' amad' amad' amad'
Amad' amad' amad' amad'*

Nyosabel' banyaka nezinkokoma zikaNdaba
Udaba' inkokoma, banyaka ngokokho udaba
Upho' amantso' i' banyaka, angantso' amantso'
Kugaphikala' u' ngwe, kulama' mapho' bango
Nazimbi' ezulu, zingakushu' mapho' mapho'
Ngamela Thongo' likadaba! (Ntuli 1993:751).

Dear Muse! I part to you today
 Your knowledge of my people's heritage,
 That is endowed with power to renew it.
 May pass it on to Zulus yet unborn!
 No time I cover! – Glory is yours alone.
 For what is Man that he should merit honour!
 So let me drink this nectar from your vessels
 And celebrations never diminish or tarnish.
 O, hear me, I implore you, Muse of Ndaba! (Vilakazi 1975:24).

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

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

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

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

Zongqali' amantso,
Kyibhishumazwe ulomongo,
We, makhondo kaZulu!
Uantso' inkokoma,
Aman' i' inkokoma,
Ezinyaweni' vavandla' vavandla,
Imp'antso' ayibisi' inkokoma
Emphaheni' le m'anjungu' yemama,
Ziband' inkokoma' yezulu' wamapho,
Ngamela' inkokoma' u' Thongo! (Ntuli 1993:144).

O children of Zulu!
 These harmonies arouse my flowing spirit
 And stir my aspiration.
 I pray you I ord. advise my own black people –
 Your children too, nestled in your cradle –
 That they as well may wear the spirit's longings
 And imitate in the flesh;
 That they as well may reach towards the heavens
 No less than Schubert, Beethoven and Chopin (Vilakazi 1975:79).

In '*UMamisa* – an Ode to the Muse' a poem which shares some features in both its title and some aspects of content with Walt Whitman's 'Song of Myself', the inspired and almost hallucinatory poet celebrates the mysterious power of the inspiring spirit who assumes various forms in the poem including that of an enchantingly beautiful yet elusive maiden. This poem which has been variously interpreted as a love poem, a rapture poem, and as an elegy (Ntuli 1984:103), is essentially an ode in which the poet uses a love relationship as a metaphor to describe the creative process. The poem describes, in intensely metaphorical language, the operation of the poet's creative imagination. In analyzing this thematically complex poem, we should be guided by its particularly suggestive title which implies that the poet is talking about his own inner sustaining spirit. Wainwright (1977:30) has referred to '*Mamisa*' as 'the culmination of Vilakazi's search for inspiration'. In our important sense, therefore, '*Mamisa*' represents Vilakazi's creative talent. As Cope (1984:17) has remarked:

In '*UMamisa*' ('the personification of the essence of myself') he finds his muse in the same way that a divine finds inspiration and sustenance through his (her) ancestral spirit, after painful and painful experiences.

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

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

The major Romantic questions, whether we are these as the poets themselves or as the later autobiographical heroes of their poems, are all engaged in the extraordinary enterprise of seeking to re-become their own selves, as though through the imagination again, in order to become his own father, or at least his own heroic predecessor.

In '*Idamanda*' the poet's desire to become part of the community of national poets is even more emphatically expressed than in '*Power of Inspiration*'. As a result of the tireless efforts of the elusive and enchanting spiritual being, known to Vilakazi as *Mandisa*, the poet who apprehensively approached Shaka's palace at Dukuza now 'bravely st[an]ds in unarm'd'!

Ngqonk'ungqik' abandla,
Kamukha angq'haq'ha kwemibungu,
Imvelo ka zingang'el' el'bandla,
Naphakathi kwamas'el' abang'el' el'bandla,
P'okukubandla kw'abandla kwemibungu,
Ungemzi ngibungu kwemibungu kwemibungu,
Ngibandla ngibandla ngibandla (Ntuli 1995: 185).

Harass'd of you, I bravely sit in council,
Deeming my self as one among the poets
Whose hands are crown'd with laurel,
Whose names will live forever on the lips
Of each successive generation.
Temerous of you, my soul is in a ferment!
Because of you I cannot be at ease! (Vilakazi 1973: 113).

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

uninspiring of his creative talent. While his poetic vision could be said to be backward-looking to the often idealised traditional past, it is also forward-looking to the concessions, adaptations and accommodations that must occur on both sides in the encounter between Africa and the West. As Raymond Kuzenev (1963: 213) puts it:

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

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

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

Jahulani Mkhize

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

La Guma's writing of *And A Threefold Cord* (1988) was prompted by a request from Seven Seas Publishers in Berlin, East Germany, who approached him while he was detained in Rosland Street jail in Cape Town, inviting him to write a novel for publication (Abrahams 1983:69). Hitherto, La Guma had written a short story, 'The Wedding' (Abrahams 1991), which, although its plot revolves around the Pauls family, is not overly political, its central issue being the arrangements being made for the marriage of the daughter of the Pauls. However, the knowledge that the novel, *And A Threefold Cord* (1988), was to be published in East Germany must have had an impact. The characters in the short story are, with minor slight changes, the same as those in the novel.

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

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

... it was a matter of recording a study or recording situation. The book is about suburban slums which is a character of the South African scene ... This is just another scene in the life of the community, another facet of the picture. I decided again that the picture of the suburban slums did not appear anywhere in South African writing, so I said well why shouldn't I do it, because it is part of our life, our scene, so it should appear in the picture (Abrahams 1989:79).

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

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

Well, part of the fact is that the weather plays a part in creating the atmosphere and it helps us describe the scenes and so on. There is also the fact that overseas people believe the South African regime's tourist propaganda that it is a country with a perfect weather. I had an idea that rather we could use the weather as a feature of South Africa, but also in terms of its symbolic potential, and thus at the same time to make it genuinely South African. In other words I am contesting official propaganda of South Africa's natural beauty and trying to show the world that the tourist poster world of wonderful beaches and beautiful golf links is not the total picture (Abrahams 1989:71f).

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

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

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

In the north-west the rain had piled up, first in country hills blown away by the high wind, then in streaks of dull cloud, and finally in high circling buttresses, like a rough wall of frontal hull across the horizon, so that the sea had no gleam, not a part of phosphorescence behind the veil of grey. The sea was grey too, too metallic, moving in sluggish swells, like a tanker blown in a thin wind. The autumn had come early last year and then the winter, and now the sky was heavy with the promise of rain.

This detailed description of the weather on 11 June does not just serve the purpose of 'creating atmosphere' as La Guma (1988:2) modestly suggests, but it is significant to the world of the novel in so far as the weather directly affects the lives of the characters:

The people of the shanties and the *posidollic* cabins along the national road and beside the railway tracks and in the suburban sand-slots watched the sea and looked towards the north-west where the clouds weighed with moisture, hung beyond the horizon. When the bang of rain came, knocking on the roofs, working men carried home loads of pulled emigration cardboard cartons, salvaged metal sheets of iron and tin to reinforce the roofs. Heavy stores were heaved onto the lanes or laid patched mats, to keep them down when the wind rose.

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

in La Guma's treatment of weather is at times reminiscent of Gorky's handling of weather in the short story 'One Autumn', or lengthy descriptions of nature in the same author's story 'Idylla'. Here is one example from 'One Autumn': 'The rain drummed relentlessly on the wooden boat, the muffled noise suggesting sea thoughts, and the wind whistled ... The waves of the sea slapped against the bank, they sounded monotonous and hopeless, as though they were telling of something inexhaustively boring and unpleasant ... The sound of the rain became one with their slapping ... The wind raved blindly ... on and on, singing cheerless songs ...' (in d.118-1). La Guma employs personification in a similar way in his description of weather in *And A Threefold Cord*: 'The rain leaped against the house, under the pressure of the wind, hissing and rattling on the corrugated iron sides, scouring the roof. The wind flung the rain against the house in a roar, as if in anger, and turned away, leaving only a steady hissing on the poorly painted, blistered metal' (1988:3). Such descriptions abound in La Guma's novel.

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

And Pauls and Caudine had scavenged, begged and, on dark nights, stolen material for the house. They had dragged for miles sheets of heavy corrugated iron, planks, pieces of cardboard, and all the other stuff necessary that had gone into the building of the house. (La Guma 1988:17).

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

The housing problem is, however, only emblematic of a broader problem of the lack of a proper infrastructure in this settlement. In the descriptive prose that is the cornerstone of La Guma's 'naturalist' style in his early novels the narrator makes this point quite explicitly:

It could hardly be called a street, not even a lane; just a hollowed track that stambled and sprang between and around and through the patchwork of shacks, cubers, ferns and wickiops; a maze of mazes between the ragged pieces of settlement, a writhing battlefield of mud and straggling erumpen mounds of wet and rusty burned wire, sagging roofs of rotting slapping markets, twigs and peeled branches and collapsing odds and ends with edges and points as dangerous as shark's teeth, which made up the rameword around the quagmire of life (La Guma 1988:22).

As in District Six in his *A Walk in the Night* (1967), there are signs of decay in the shanties. This is also described in a catalogue form that had by now become typical of La Guma's documentary style:

Over everything hung the unrelenting of putty mud, rot in sucking, rain, claustrality, sickness and the sticky latrine that leaked crazily in the pools of reid liquid, the drunken men in their own repurgation (La Guma 1988:23).

As Chandrababu (1992:97) correctly observes:

In his descriptions of the location and the people La Guma shows a concern for naturalism, as he had done earlier in *A Walk in the Night*.

To suggest that such descriptive passages are clearly more important than the narra-

tive' (JanMohamed 1983:239), however, seems to (2) be unhelpful towards a naturalistic interpretation of the novel. The reality is that in spite of such descriptions the significance of the narrative is not undermined because these descriptions are organically linked to the plot. Larus Saratevsky (1988:162) puts it more succinctly:

The insertion to the dark and at times loaded details are justified since they are not a goal unto themselves, but a means towards a coherent portrayal of South African reality as the 'holocaust victim' seen a la Guma.

The Myth of the Frontier and Alternative Strategies of Survival

La Guma dismisses any naturalistic reading of the novel by being quite emphatic about the fact that the pondokkie dwellers survive against all odds. He makes this point quite explicitly in his comparison of the solitary life of the garage owner, George Mostert, with that of the pondokkie dwellers. Indeed, his garage Mostert observes

the jumble pattern of shacks and shanties, sprayed like an unplanned design worked with fulcrum on a dingy piece of crumpled muckcloth

and he said to 'a strange country, a foreign people' (La Guma 1988:38). Nevertheless, the narrative continues:

There was there, no matter how shabby, a few yards from George Mostert's Service Station and Garage, but he was trapped in his glass office by his own loneliness and a worn-out pride in a false racial superiority, the cracked embellishments of his world, and he peered out only over the school mumps which grew like purified scars across the concrete no-man's land of the road (La Guma 1988:38).

Mostert's garage stands like a blue blackhorse on a firm ground, although he has money – for which pondokkie dwellers such as Sade Meyer (La Guma 1988:83) and Ronald (La Guma 1988:93) envy him – his

loneliness [hangs] about him like the form of a giant of enforced loneliness, a desire for conversation, a willingness to do a final favour (La Guma 1988:36).

La Guma's rendering of this contrast is curious in so far as it seems to draw on and evoke the myth of the frontier in the depiction of the relationship between blacks and

¹ In this quotation I am indebted to Michael Danner, a graduate student at Northwestern's Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, who has used this article from the *South African* into English.

warms in 170), and 18th century South African historiography. The terminology is telling since it locates the setting of what Dorian Heathcote (1991:51) in his study *The Wild South-West* calls 'the use of a language construct that constitutes...[a] "frontiered"'—words such as 'frontier' and phrases such as 'close guard action' immediately come to mind. Although Mosert's loneliness tempers him to 'open' the frontier by socially interacting with the shanty dwellers, as seen, for example, in his 'desire for a conversation, a willingness to do a favour' (La Guma 1988:37), the frontier remains 'closed' because of his 'wretched pride in a sense of false superiority' (La Guma 1988:37). Later Mosert wonders whether he should 'take the change and accept Charlie's invitation' (La Guma 1988:80) to visit the settlement but 'hesitation had attacked him again' (La Guma 1988:81) and he took refuge in 'his face which is slammed up in one word: solitude' (La Guma 1988:87).

In contrast to Mosert's 'solitude', the life of the shanty dwellers is pervaded by a communal sense of solidarity. For example, when Charlie and his Dad build their shack they get the help of other 'Coloured and African shack dwellers' (La Guma 1988:18). During the period of preparation for Dad Paul's the prevalence of a sense of communal self-consciousness (Carpenter 1997:87) is clearly manifest in Missus Nzuba's generosity and willingness to help. When Miss Nzuba shows her appreciation for Nzuba's offer of water to the family Nzuba responds: 'There is no need to be thankful. We all got to stand by each other' (La Guma 1988:90). There is also a manifestation of solidarity during the funeral proceedings as people converge on the Pauls: 'Relations and neighbours were assembled there, swarthy mulatto faces and very dark African, all looking solemn, for there is unity even in death' (La Guma 1988:73). In the next chapter La Guma again reiterates the vibrancy of life in the pondokies despite all odds: 'But there is time for laughter and for merriment' (La Guma 1988:78), reads the first sentence of this chapter.

Such juxtaposition of Mosert's life of 'solitude' with the vibrancy of the shanty dwellers could easily be misconstrued, leading to the conclusion that La Guma invokes an Afrocentric informed notion of African communalism that is pitted against white individualism. This impression could be intensified when one considers the 'message' of solidarity that dominates the political logic of the novel as articulated in the epigraph which is taken from the Bible in Ecclesiastes iv: 9-12

'The term "frontier" here is used not only as a marker of a physical boundary (like the road that serves as a line of demarcation between Mosert's garage and the shanties) but also in a psychological sense in cases where racial prejudice hampers mutual social interaction. The frontier is "open" when there is social interaction, and it is "closed" when the prejudices are allowed to define the relationship between "race".'

Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falls, for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat, but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him, and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

However, La Guma eschews this notion of monolithic African communalism in his allusion to the class distinctions that exist amongst Africans themselves. In a dramatic re-enactment of how people of the shanties have to beg for water from those who have access to water, the narrative tells us: 'Those who owned the plumbing and taps sold water to those who lacked such amenities' (La Guma 1988:71). The conceptualisation of differences in racial terms is thus subverted by a paradigm of class analysis. Against this background, then, Mosert's alienation should not only be seen in terms of race but also in terms of his class position—it is important in this regard to note that Ronald is of the opinion that Mosert gains Susie Meyer's sexual favour because 'the burg's got a car and a business and cash' and not just because he is white.

Critical or Socialist Realism?

Jews Nkosi (1975:46) has expressed (some reservation about what he calls 'the limitation of canvas' in La Guma's work which, he argues, prevents him from 'exploring further and deepening the relationship between the characters'. He then goes on to argue that 'except for Charlie Paul none of the characters in *And a Threefold Cord* are given enough time and space to develop their individuality' (Nkosi 1975:114). The significance of Nkosi's comments for our purposes is that (without making any direct reference to Lukács) they seem to capture very poignantly the notion of typicality as embodied in the portrayal of Charlie in the novel and thereby confirm the novel's satisfaction of one of the tenets of Lukács's criteria for realism. Typicality, Lukács (1978:151) maintains, is achieved 'not with the loss of individuality in character portrayal but with the universalisation of individuality' and this can only be determined when a character is compared to other characters within a particular fictional world. Finally, according to Lukács (1978:154)

[an] artist achieves significance and typicality in characterization only when he successfully exposes the multifarious interrelationships between the character he's of his heroes and the objective general problems of the age and when he shows his characters directly grappling with the most abstract issues of the time as their own vital and personal problems.

There is no doubt that La Guma's portrayal of Charlie Pan's meets these criteria — La Guma goes to great lengths in an attempt to demonstrate Charlie's endeavour to grapple with the problems of the people of the townships. He not only tries to identify their problems but he also tries to come to terms with what could be done to alleviate the situation. There is, however, a danger of conflating 'typicality' with 'ideality' here (Lukács 1967:123) especially in readings of the novel that, however indirectly, unproblematically regard Charlie as a mouthpiece of the author's ideology and, by implication, take the novel as 'illustrating literature' (Lukács 1969:12). I have in mind here readings such as that of Lukács (1966:31) who argues that '... La Guma's message seems to be thrust upon his novel, instead of springing from it' and Gerald Martin (1980:112) who contends that the introduction of the 'recollections' of Charlie in which he reiterates the attitudes of the 'worker' is 'forced and self-conscious'. I shall return to these arguments later.

Vladimir Klier (1976:173) correctly observes that the realism of *And a Thousandfold Cord* (1988) is 'remarkable since the author wrote under difficult conditions' of repression and police surveillance. Indeed *And a Thousandfold Cord* (1988) rejects the 'realism' that is associated with an unproblematic or 'inert' characterization but also with symbolism. This is embodied in both the birth of Caroline's child indicating 'renewal of life' (La Guma 1988:88) and in the symbolism of 'one carnation' (La Guma 1988:100) which grows on the daisy in which young children such as Charlie's youngest brother Jimmy play. As the mother of a '... like flower starts to open, gleaming, wonderfully bright, red as blood and ... like hope blooming in an English field' (La Guma 1988:100) This blooming hope is finally captured in the accident 'dart[ing] out a bud from among the patchwork mat of the shambles [ending] straight into the sky' (La Guma 1988:112). In this way humans are 'associated with freedom' in the same way as they are in Croky's 'self-portrait' tales, 'Song of Stormy Petrels' and 'Song of the Falcon' (Schoen 1988:28). This leads to the next issue, the categorisation of La Guma's realism in this novel.

Indeterminacies on the tendentiousness of the novel have justifiably been challenged by both Bantjesky and Cornwell who provide ample examples to demonstrate how 'La Guma's "message" emerges organically from the political logic of his novel.' Cornwell's (1995:12,6) argument is much more relevant for our purposes because although he identifies in the novel 'an analysis of South African society in terms of the fundamentalist Marxist ideology which La Guma brings to the world' (La Guma 1988:6) and, with some reservations, also reads the novel as 'socialist realist', he acknowledges that the novel is not 'simply a vehicle for propaganda'. Yet Cornwell's reliance on the prescriptive Stalinist/Adams version of socialist realism in his analysis threatens to call into question, if not undermine, his contention that the novel

is not simply a vehicle for propaganda. While I endorse the latter argument my categorisation of La Guma's realism in this novel is slightly different from Cornwell's. Since it is inevitable that any categorisation of La Guma's realism in *And a Thousandfold Cord* (1988) will primarily revolve around the consciousness of the protagonist Charlie Pan's and the impact that the 'worker' has on him, it is to this that I will now turn.

In Charlie's conversation (over a bottle of wine) with Uncle Ben, which starts from concerns with the uncle's excessive drinking habits to the fragile health of Dad Pan's and the poverty of the township dwellers, the narrative provides a clear picture of Charlie's attempt to grapple with the issues that affect his community. Uncle Ben, obviously in reference to Dad Pan's, stupidity attributes to him 'white make[up] a poor old man shiver and shake himself to death in a freezing *panedek* without no warm soup and medicine' (La Guma 1988:8), but Charlie questions his moral explanation. He argues 'Ma read the Bible every night. It don't make the poor old man any better' (La Guma 1988:49). Using the sayings of 'a burg' who used to work with him 'flying plane in California, Charlie attempts to provide what seems to him to be a more convincing explanation of the social realities:

There was a burg working with us on the plane ... Know what he say? A wavy looking newspaper and things. He said to us the poor men's have to be poor ... This burg say at the poor people all got together and took everything in the world. There would not be people more. Funny kind of talk but it sort ofed alright ... Father has never say all the stuff in the world was stolen out among everybody, all would have enough to live on. He reckon people go to stick large hocks to this stuff (La Guma 1988:50).

Initially, Uncle Ben's response is couched in religious terms. 'Sound almost like a sin, ... He say you an sin to cov' other people's things' (La Guma 1988:50). When Charlie insists that, in his opinion, 'this worker did know what he was talking [about]' (La Guma 1988:50), this elicits a response that is reminiscent of Mr. Greene's to the 'black' assertion that the 'colour bar is because of the capitalist system' (La Guma 1988:17) in *A Walk in the Night*. 'I heard people talking like that ... That a communist thing. Talking against the government' (La Guma 1988:50). This does not deter Charlie from justifying his argument:

'Listen', Charlie said ... 'Last night Uncle Ben one time I was up to see Frieda up to see people who work for cleaning and washing ... Well, that people were a lot of men, a big the cutting city bell almost, and there is a old bird with purple hair and fat neckides and her husband jump off a table a mile long, with Percy can also and *ding* ... And a girl like me can't even touch the hand on the front door. You got to go round the back. Eating off rice skin, a bowl, plenty of meat and stuff ...' (La Guma 1988:50).

² See Bantjesky (1996:42-50) and Cornwell (1990:11-18).

This analogy is further developed as Charlie ponders over Alf and Caroline's failure to secure a house from council:

Is there there not to be a lot of people like us, worrying about the roof every time it rains, and there's other people that have to worry a damn lot. Living in wake-up houses like the house Freds work by, like I was telling Uncle Ben, or even just up the road here ... Some people got no money, some people got a little money, some people got a helluva lot. Rooker I was working with laying that pipe, he reckon poor people ought to form a union, likely (La Guana 1983:540).

Charlie's awareness of inequality is crude. What is one to make of Charlie's assertions in the novel?

Charlie's argument has elicited divergent responses from critics. According to Maughan-Brown (1991:21), Charlie's 'political insights are always second-hand, and generally consist of little more than digested reflections of the "rooker"'. Gerald Moore (1980:112) also shares this view, adding that '[Charlie's] rather adventitious appeals to the rooker and his opinions' weaken La Guana's attempt 'to show in [him] the workings of an ideological consciousness'. Joe Corwell (1999:15), however,

conceives of class as not second-hand, although influenced by the politically informed labourer. They do not solely derive from him. On the contrary, they arise spontaneously and logically from Charlie's personal observation of enormous discrepancies in standards of living, an observation which has raised certain political questions to which Charlie demands political answers.

While I share the view that Charlie's pronouncements are second-hand, showing a heavy reliance on the 'rooker's sayings', I doubt that they are 'always' so (as Maughan-Brown suggests), nor do I share Moore's (1980:112) claim that this weakens La Guana's rendering of 'the workings of political consciousness in Charlie'. It could well be that La Guana felt that these 'adventitious appeals to the rooker' (Moore 1980:112) would minimise the danger of the influence of the hero's concreteness and strengthen the status of his work as an artistic production rather than propaganda. It is thus in keeping with La Guana's aesthetic considerations that the 'political attitudes' should be 'implied' and 'never expressed "unobtrusively"' (La Guana 1984:77). Charlie's utterances are, to a certain extent, second-hand – not only does Charlie acknowledge the influence of the 'rooker's' views on him and consistently appeal to his authority but he also uses phrases that are clearly meant to privilege the discourse of the rooker. The rooker's authority derives from his 'reading of newspapers' hence 'he did know what he was talking' because he is 'a slim burn', a clever fellow with a 'lot of things in his head' (La Guana 1988:496, 111). Despite his heavy reliance on the authority of the rooker, Charlie's

political insights are not solely second-hand – from what the rooker told him, he is able to make appropriate extrapolations, for example, his apt use of analogy about Ford's employers (La Guana 1988:50). But, does the fact that Charlie 'speaks like' (and 'reads like') a 'poor people's union' and the 'realist' notion of wealth' (Jabloni 1983:242) warrant the categorisation of the novel as socialist realist? A Gorkian model of realism would commend La Guana for having moved beyond the confines of critical realism which, according to Gorky (1982:143), 'characterizes everything without identifying anything'. For one thing, by advocating a 'socialist humanism', via the sayings of the rooker, La Guana's protagonist establishes a status for himself as a 'positive hero' (especially when compared to Michael Adams in *A Walk in the Night* 1967b). In a word, through the sayings of the rooker, as articulated by Charlie, La Guana invests his protagonist with an

active romanticism which strives to strengthen man's will to live and come to grips with the world around him, so that the world would respond to him (Gorky 1982:35).

The problem with this interpretation, however, is that Charlie's 'consciousness' is not profound enough to provide the novel with a socialist perspective¹. It would seem, then, that a Lukácsian model offers a more useful explanation to deal with this problem in the realism of the novel. In *On the Theory of the Novel* (1986), Lukács emphasizes the contradictions of capitalism rather than 'the forces working towards reconciliation' (Lukács 1963:114), it may be seen as employing the 'indirect method' (Lukács 1963:99) of analysis that Lukács identifies in the realism of Thomas Mann. La Guana's realism differs from that of Mann, however, in that the class struggle in this novel is not seen 'from a bourgeois point of view' (Lukács 1963:99). Nonetheless, the novel's sanction of one of the most crucial of Lukács's criteria for critical realism, namely, 'a negative attitude' towards capitalism and 'a readiness to respect the perspective of socialism' (Lukács 1963:93), pins this work firmly within this tradition.

'Spontaneity/Consciousness Dialectic'

Further of critics interested in tracing the progressive development in La Guana's oeuvre have noted a remarkable feature in La Guana's characterization of his heroes. This is best summed up by Christie (1992:346) in the passage below:

The theme of La Guana's oeuvre, classed itself, is the growth of resistance from the aimless revolt of men and girls without a clear ideology to the day of revolution in *A Walk in the Night* to the paternal revolt of men who understand and mother oppression, psychological and physical, in *And the Winner Takes All* to the dawn of man's conquest of himself in a political arena in *The Bone Cowboy*, the final work in the

emotive, defensive and victimisation of the oppressed appeared and affiliates began to spread. In the *End of the Season's End* presents both the political corruption of men's relations, the fraternal alienation accomplished facts.

In a similar vein, Pimel Shava (1989:17), whose discussion of La Guma's work (mainly) forms *And A Throglord Cloud* (1988), confirms this development:

La Guma would like to depict, write that the acquisition of class consciousness is a slow and difficult process. From *End of the Season's End* through *The Stone Country* to *In the Bag of the Season's End* ... he shows how the political consciousness of his heroes develops in stages.

Taking them from both Coetzee and Shava I want to take this point further and argue that at the heart of the shift in each of La Guma's novels is Lenin's thesis on the

consciousness born 'spontaneously' (spontaneous) in the workers' protest movement to political awareness ... from such an awareness (consciousness) to revolutionary determination of their dissatisfaction (Coetzee 1982:15).

Katherine Clarke (1981:15) explains how the 'spontaneous/consciousness dialectic' as a centralised account of the Marxist-Leninist idea of historical progress' which constituted the 'master plan of the Soviet novel' became integral in socialist, realist texts. Clarke (1981:15) also provides an 'illuminating explanation of the theoretical framework of the application of 'spontaneous/consciousness dialectic' in fiction:

In terms of traditional socialist realist consciousness is taken to mean actions or political activities that are controlled, disciplined and guided by politically aware bodies. Spontaneous means actions that are not guided by complete political awareness and are either sporadic, uncoordinated, even erratic (as tough as warlike strikes, or as acquiescence), or can be attributed to the workings of extra-rational historical forces rather than to deliberate actions ... In the narrow context of the individual human being, as distinct from society at large, 'consciousness' means political awareness and complete self-control that enables the individual to be guided in all his actions by his awareness, whereas 'spontaneity' refers to purely visceral, wilful, emotional or self-controlled action.

This framework is useful in contextualising Charlie's political development in the novel. After a humiliating experience, in which a policeman calls Freda a 'liberal black whore' and questions the respectability of Charlie and Freda (La Guma 1988:87) during the course of the rail to the shacks, Charlie decides to go on. In order to see

what is happening to [his] people' (La Guma 1988:89), his encounter with the brutalised meted out to his people by the police prompts him not only to defy a policeman who is annoyed by the presence of the shack dwellers to watch the spectacle but also to give this policeman a retaliatory blow on his 'exposed jawbone' and take to his heels (La Guma 1988:91). Although Charlie's action is not self-directed nor anarchic, resulting, as it does from his concern with his people, to call it 'revolutionary' as Coetzee (1982:6) does is perhaps to read too much into this unambiguously politically positive gesture of defiance. Charlie is certainly 'losing faith in the permanence of the system that oppresses [his class]' and beginning 'to sense the need for collective re-orientation' (La Guma 1988:91), but his physical response to the policeman in this episode seems to be 'more in the nature of nihilists of destruction and vengeance than that of struggle' (Lazar 1961:114). In a word, his consciousness is, again, in Lenin's terms, in its 'embryonic form' (Clarke 1961:113). Nothing provides more evidence of the 'embryonic form' of Charlie's consciousness than his uncertain and somewhat vague articulation of the 'trucker's' intentions in his attempt to console Freda for losing her child dead.

He said nothing one time, when people most of the time takes trouble for it when they don't. I don't know how it is in men, but I don't understand it really. It you see, but this thing had a lot of good things in his head (La Guma 1988:117).

Unlike Charlie Pains in *And A Throglord Cloud* (1988), George Adams, La Guma's protagonist in *The Stone Country* (1977a), is a fully-fledged political activist who is arrested and sent to prison for distributing 'leaflets of an illegal organisation' in prison, which is seen as a microcosm of South African society. Adams discerns that social interaction, not only between the prisoners and the guards but also amongst prisoners themselves, works according to the law of the jungle. Adams refuses to cater to that level of animal existence. He not only insists on his rights but also attempts to instil a sense of solidarity amongst the prisoners as a way of restoring their human dignity. In the meanwhile other fellow inmates are busy working on a daring bid to escape from prison which is thwarted when two of the prisoners are caught by the warders. The novel ends when a young prisoner, Albert March (alias the Cashed Kid), is being taken downstairs by the guards after being sentenced to death on a murder charge.

The shift from *And A Throglord Cloud* (1988) to *The Stone Country* (1977a) is suggestive of what Clarke has identified as the 'road to consciousness'. Like Charlie Pains, George Adams rejects a naturalist, fatalistic and idealistic explanation of human fate, as the following interaction between him and the Cashed Kid clearly demonstrates:

'We all got to die. Here me, master. I put a knife in a *fibra*. He went dead. Is put out, like. Everybody got his life and death put out, neck on and fork ... 'Put out?' George Adams asked. 'You reckon so? Man, if our life was laid out, for us beforehand, what we would do be for us to work to change things, hey?' 'Right, mih an. You can't change things, *work*'. He showed the outline of a thumb. 'But hear me, country. People's trying to change the things all the time' (La Guana 1967a: 14).

Unlike Charlie, whose political insights are essentially second-hand, Adams's materialist explanation and his unwavering belief in the possibility of change stem from his practice – as an activist he is part of the movement that seeks to effect change. La Guana provides a brief account of the growth of Adams's political commitment:

He had gone to meetings and had listened to speeches, had read a little, and had come to the conclusion that what had been said was right ... There's first as being kicked in the back and ...

Adams's view of his arrest also reflects his conviction regarding the justness of the cause. As the narrator puts it:

George Adams had no regrets about his arrest. You don't get decided was the right thing, and then accept the consequences (La Guana 1967a: 74).

When are Charlie's actions – against the police – indicative of 'centuries of desperation and vengeance' (Lentin 1961: 114), as pointed out earlier, Adams's actions are always suggestive of being acts of 'struggle' (Lentin 1961: 114). Adams stands out amongst the inmates in prison not only because he is aware of his rights but also because he is prepared to insist on them even if this includes defiance of the guards. While the other prisoners have been conditioned to power in submission and accept the authority of the guards without question, Adams challenges them. Yusuf, the Turk, one of Adams's fellow inmates, sums up the attitude of the prisoners in his response to Adams's reference to his rights:

Regret, you reckon you got rights, mih? Listen mate, only the ... warden got rights. They tell you what's rights? (1967a: 51)

Although Adams acknowledges that Yusuf is correct in his suggestion – 'You can do as you bloody well please, only don't get in their way' (La Guana 1967a: 52), this does not deter him from fighting for his rights and earning the wrath of the guards (La Guana 1967a: 51). As Saratovsky (1988: 169) correctly observes:

The political consciousness, internal organization, and the sense of comradeship help Adams to preserve his human dignity, not only in his relations with the prisoners, but also with the wardens.

Adams's attitude and his treatment of his fellow inmates are indeed suggestive of his political consciousness. The prison, we are informed in a distinctly La Guanasque style, is populated by 'a human salad' (La Guana 1967a: 80) of

Ragged street-corner hoodlums, shivering drunks, thugs in cheap Harbourn clothes and know-sidgible looks, murderers, robbers, housebreakers, petty criminals, rapists, thieves and simple paint-bellenders ... (La Guana 1967a: 91).

We look at this world through the eyes of Adams whose point of view serves an important structural function of 'tying the various parts of a rather disjointed story' (Rabkin 1973: 59):

In the last world, bounded in by stone and iron, there was an atmosphere of every man for himself which George Adams did not like. He has grown up in the streets and he knew that there were the toughs and the wily, the cringers and the hoodlums, the violent and the non-violent, the smooth talkers and the savage, the low-down and the high-class, the strong forced on the weak, and the strong and brutal acknowledged a sort of nebulous alliance among themselves for the avoidance of 'hard-dealing' (La Guana 1967a: 37).

But Adams tries to understand and identify with their plight and thereby affirms the words of the novel's epigraph quoted from Eugene Debs: 'While there is a lower class, I am in it; While there is a criminal element, I am of it; While there is a soul in jail, I am free'. This is best exemplified in his guiding philosophy: 'We all in this ... together' (La Guana 1967a: 38) which recurs in the novel. Accordingly, Adams's political mission is to demonstrate his rejection of this atmosphere of every man-for-himself by preaching the need for collective resistance: 'Prisoners ought to object ... Strike the hell out, *mate*' (La Guana 1967a: 74). He even goes further in his demonstration of what Auer (1987: 102) calls his

communitistic outlook ... [which is suggestive of] the Marxist affirmation of which La Guana bases Liebowitz in his novel.

by sharing what he has with his inmates. In this way he may be seen as having embraced the ideal of a 'socialist humanism' which Charlie Paul's nascent ideology espouses in *And a Thousand Cords* (1988).

Maughan-Brown (1991:21) has recently identified Adams's political activism as 'notably low-key'. He goes on in a tone of implicit criticism:

he was respect by the dignity of example, sharing food and cigarettes and insisting on a minimal rather than by political argument, and the reluctance for becoming politically involved presented by the novel is fairly understating. There's time as being looked at the backside ... (Maughan-Brown 1991:21).

Although La Grima does not explicitly elaborate on the rationale for Adams's political involvement he does indicate that Adams decides to be politically involved after listening to the speeches in political meetings and feeling convinced that 'what had been said was right.' (La Grima 1967a:74), but Maughan-Brown does not make reference to this statement which precedes the one he cites because it would undermine his argument referred in above. Yet, as Mazaruni and Tadi (1986:7) point out:

George Adams stands out in the revolutionary flame that brightens the hearts of the oppressed, as a morale booster and a mobilizer.

Perhaps more than in the case of Charlie Pauls in the previous novel, one is tempted to argue that Adams is a 'positive hero' in the same way as in the Soviet socialist realist novel, for there is no doubt that he not only 'exemplify[es] moral and political virtue' (Clarke 1981:46) but he also serves a 'didactic function' (Clarke 1981:47), through his extraordinary dedication and self-deprivation. (Clarke 1981:49) as seen in his willingness to share everything he has with his inmates. This may not have been a conscious intention on the author's part but Adams's relationship with both Yusuf the Turk and the Casbah Kid would seem to reinforce this interpretation. In this regard Adams could be seen as a political 'mentor' who, albeit, to a limited extent, consciences these characters who eventually turn out to be his 'disciples'. 'People like you, we got to look after, *was*' (La Grima 1967a:70), says Yusuf in an attempt to provide a rationale for his enticement of George Adams from Burcherboy. In addition, Adams's political principles gradually earn him the respect of the Casbah Kid whose initial reluctance to interact with him is likened to 'prying open the jammed door of a vault' (La Grima 1967a:12). In spite of these hints though it would be exaggerated to claim that La Grima was making a serious gesture towards socialist realism.

The subjects of *The Stone Country* (1967a), like most of the works discussed earlier, are also drawn from La Grima's 'journalism'. There is in this work still evidence

of La Grima's descriptive prose, but he has now become more economical in his selection of details that count – converting most of his descriptions to the creation of portraits of prison character types which depict their reduction to animal existence. In effect, La Grima's journalistic style is here modified by symbols in which is latent with the allegorical nature that he records this prison. Or is it that as La Grima firmly establishes himself as a fiction writer traces of the documentary style which is drawn from his journalism begin to disappear? Whatever the reason, this transition does not diminish La Grima's aesthetic achievements in this novel.

Carpenter (1991:88) argues that in this novel La Grima 'reaches for a nineteenth-century in which biological and cultural evolution are indistinguishable'. Indeed La Grima's extensive focus on 'the brute in man' (Morton 1991:267), especially in his portrayal of Burcherboy, would link him with the naturalists of the London School. La Grima's choice to animal imagery in this case is understandable since it is consistent with his intention of showing the prevalence of the 'law of the jungle' in this prison. Moreover, George Adams's 'control over his destiny' (JanMalamed 1983:149) and his optimism, which provide the essential ingredients for the novel's critical realist perspective (as embodied in La Grima's allegorical reference to South Africa as a prison), subvert this naturalism and foreground the shift in La Grima's next work, *In the Fog of the Season's End* (1972), as a pointer to revolutionary political action.

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In Turk in the novel, portrayed as journalistic account of the prison conditions in South Africa (Lange Smita, 1991). 'The Prisoner of Apartheid' (1960) which provides factual accounts of the experience of these prisoners. *The Stone Country* (1967) also draws on La Grima's experiences of his time in prisons where he served numerous short spells, as La Grima himself stated in his interview with Cecil Abraham.

² See for example 'Ten Days in Rosamund Street Jail' (1993) and 'Law of the Jungle' (1993). La Grima wrote the short story, 'Tobias Moko and Ntuli' (1967), which is set in the prison and whose protagonists, Ahmed the Turk, seems to be an earlier version of the creation of Yusuf

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Arthur Nortje and the Unhomely¹

Dirk Klopfer

Nortje has occupied literary consciousness in South Africa as an absent presence. His force and significance is recognised in the handful of poems that have circulated among poetry anthologies, but they present a tantalisingly incomplete portrait of the poet. This article attempts to excavate Nortje's significance in terms of a wider selection of poems that is currently available in print. It takes as point of departure Nortje's problematisation of the relationship between self and community. Such problematisation takes the form of an articulation of what Homi Bhabha (1994a:37) calls the 'third space' of difference, a space which, according to Bhabha

constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture become palimpsestic entry or history.

In Nortje's poems identity refuses containment and is in a constant state of change. Although he rarely acknowledges his own identity slippage, the reiteration, both the repeated return to the site of his positioning as subject, is what is finally compelling. A characteristic pose is struck when Nortje avers, 'I am alone here now, here "being" with cheeks of fragrances, a voice hoarse like rubble / shifted by currents' ('Ungasweni'). The image of a voice, an identity, which is like rubble shifted by currents is noteworthy. It aptly describes the tension that inheres in Nortje's poetry between an apprehension of self as a partial and coherence of configuration and the psychic forces that threaten it.

The dominant motif in Nortje's poetry is that of lack or absence. This motif is frequently translated into images of the divided and fragmented body as images of exile. Often the personal and the political perspectives are fused. Berthoud (1984a) draws attention to Nortje's use of figures that are 'simultaneously images of unfulfilled and notations of inner state', swinging in the effect of such incompleteness on of the private and the public is to indicate that 'the community and the self are involved in each other at the deepest level'. He relates Nortje's apprehension of loss to his alienation from his natural community, which has been destroyed by the racial typographies

of apartheid and by the exile of its militants and intellectuals. According to Berthoud (1984:83), the main thrust of Nortje's poetry is 'to make possible a community where a community was not'. But loss in Nortje's poetry goes deeper than this. Although Berthoud draws attention to disappointment in love as an important concern in Nortje's poetry, he does not follow the psychoanalytic path of inquiry into the loss of the primary object of love. Separation from the object of love, and the sense of incompleteness, of division and isolation, to which such separation gives rise, is in fact a dominant theme in Nortje's poetry. Sense of personal loss predates Nortje's actual physical exile. One might say that loss of community and of self are not causally or chronologically related. Nortje's images of alienation articulate what Bhabha (1994b:11) describes as the experience of the unhomely, which cannot be made back to any single determinant but instead 'relates the traumatic ambivalences of a personal, psychic history to the wider disjunctions of political existence'.

An early poem to explore the dialectic between the personal and the political, in respect of the constitution of the subject as the site of division and loss is the poem 'My Vacant Self':

My vacant self drafts in the window
Dyes men slanting wires
of a pathetic dream
Above the tower and huddled houses
unseen were the endless world of clouds
makes the drift and then it is action surrender

Green tickles rain attention
and fresh probes of the glass distort my view
of money trails, hidden pollen, black people,
The wonder, as grapes and ring like distant trees,
and when my hand, it deeper scenes are blurred

My darkest life when rising to the third
blows and again dividing surfaces,
nurturing my love of people vibrant images
near to the cold and vapour of what's real.

Dance's senses and the evening wind
walks along windows clearing the drops,
he just lies on the streetlight corners.

For dusk has intervened, I know the curtain
and still my mouth lingers across the parquet.

Who bears the dark drink least affirms his rhythm?

¹ I am grateful to the N.S.A. for permission to use their archival material on Nortje. All the poems quoted here have been scanned back to their original. Many exist in unfinished form in the notebook 'Nortje kept'.

Nortje's meditative poems characteristically begin with a description of an everyday event (a train journey, watching rain through a window, wife-dieking, smoking in a park); often it is a depiction of the season or the weather. The event or memory of an event is then invested with strong emotion deriving from what turns out to be some sense of dissatisfaction, some apprehension of lack. Nortje reveals his method in the poem 'Teacher's Final' when he states:

What started as
the wide howl, the nesting surge,
a splat of sunlight on the velvet sea,
lapped alive in the blood's lyrics
more hunger thaned to tell
my training face, my young face
to such a more purpose than his narrow world
affords me children.

The speaker's need 'to tell' derives from a 'universal hunger'. Whatever he says derives from this position of lack, is overdetermined by this constant presence of an absence; this permanent loss of that which would satisfy his hunger, the primordial object, the object of love, which because it is lost is relentlessly pursued. This is his 'blood's lyrics', which through 'telling' of this loss, through symbolisation of it in which is absent, invokes the lost object, often as an effect of distance rather than as a positive presence. Although the speaker has 'more purpose' than the quotidian 'narrow world affords its children', the purpose is situated in the realm of the symbolic, the realm of language. Thus there is always a gap between expectation and fulfilment. As Nortje says in the poem 'Pursuing a Madhu Vivandii in February': 'It is in you I come / knowing one cannot ask love for love / demands exceeds supply.'

'My Vacant Self' negotiates with a pervasive sense of loss, which has an apparent cause other than the drabness of the mizzling weather. In the first stanza this vacancy of the self is associated with the 'sad pathetic silence' of the men and the 'endless veil of cloud' above the 'fouled and muffled houses'. The rain and the cloud are seen, respectively, to impose silence and to conceal something, but it is not clear what. In the second and third stanzas attention is drawn to the dividing surface of the glass, which allows 'perception of what lies beyond, but in distorted form and without any actual physical contact. The speaker's gaze is blurred by the vapouring effect of his 'deepest life ... rising to the street', which 'blows hard against dividing surfaces' out 'in a driving mass his / hose of gentle vibrant wings'. The 'deepest life' seeks contact but is denied it. The eager hawk blinds the speaker. In some way, then, the self resists the very intimacy it desires.

What is blurred, distorted, is the speaker's 'view of money traffic, Friday police, black people'. These are the sights outside, in the social world, which are visible through the windows. The three scenes mentioned correspond with the three aspects of social existence that Nortje frequently targets for attack in his poetry. The first aspect comprises the fetishism of commodities and resultant reification and alienation that characterise bourgeois capitalism. It was in Canada, in particular, that Nortje expressed his greatest horror at the 'money to find that impoverishes life'. The second aspect comprises the militarisation of everyday life, the use of armed force to impose laws and to control social behaviour. Nortje regarded such use of force as a strategy employed by the wealthy to maintain their privilege. The third aspect comprises the stigma of racial classification, the blood curse that inflicts culturally determined and domination on certain race groups. In South Africa during the mid-1960s, these three aspects of social power had combined in such a way as to constitute a formidable system for the integration of subjects in the social formation. The speaker seeks to create communication and community with the world outside his window, and by a process of metonymic association, outside himself. Yet there is an ambivalence, a vision lying of this same world, in as much as what he perceives is essentially his 'lie to his desire for contact. He perceives not there a world of division created by force.

In the closing stanza the speaker's response to his having failed to make contact with the social world is to 'shape the curtain on the outside and to shift his / burnt / cramped limbs across the parquet', 'just moving closer into the house and into himself. This inward movement is accompanied by a question with which the poem concludes: 'Who hears the dark drunk heart affirm the rhythm? What is discovered with it may / affirm? some kind of rhythm, but it also disturbs.' The 'dark drunk heart' is an inscrutable god-father, a Dionysus for whom destruction and creation are a theologically related. Does the 'dark drunk heart' not, paradoxically, hear in the rhythm of death? This would account for the generalised tone of melancholic despair evident in the poem as a whole. Perhaps when the rain silences and the cloud veils is precisely this apprehension of death, absence, division, loss or the true ground of being, the negativity in terms of which identity is able to be posited at all.

In the poem, the place of the other, which ensures the very possibility of identity through separation and division, is occupied by the figures of capitalism, the police-state, and the system of apartheid. These are the figures perceived by the self on the far side of the dividing window. Significantly, they are figures of society, indicating that it is within the sphere of the social that identity is determined. What the relation between self and societal others is in crisis is clear from the fact that the figures are viewed only to be repulsed. Identification is sought and then denied. What remains is the sterility of the 'hunched cramped forms' and an uncertain apprehension of the 'dark drunk heart'. Death is imminent and there is no vital link, no affinity with which it

may be revealed. Society has failed the self. Those who might have constituted a community of resistance are in prison or in exile. In the poem "The Long Silence", the speaker mourns their absence, linking it with loss of communication, which is precisely a deprivation of that which defines the human community: "The long silence speaks of deaths and re-novels. / Death is loss, losses have strangled utterance."

Norje frequently uses the image of the window as metaphor of his division between self and society. His use of this image is closely associated with his use of the image of the mirror as metaphor of the entrapment of self. The poem "Discovery", written at more or less the same time as "My Variant Self", similarly uses the rainy weather as point of departure to mope over the self's alienation:

Offered and a half transparent panes
 articulate self-scratching cerebral processes.
 The dry mind with these wet thoughts living
 & peers over the walls of mirror.

The speaker goes on to say that however oppressive it may be, the mirror/prison offers security against the "freedom" of one's "husky and/or intricate world":

Passing from this the secure
 world to the free-standing
 primeless world my life moves
 restless as waves in their urge for freedom.

The speaker seems to be suggesting that the self might not want freedom, however negatively freedom might press upon it, and it might prefer the security of entrapment, the black nullity of death.

In the absence of community, personal love gains in importance as a form of resistance to death. But as in the case of society, community, or any other exclusive identification, love is alarmingly intimate with death. The relation between love and death is the focus of a later poem entitled "Distinction":

What Lullies the flesh leaves for home
 soul's heart's desire, or what? Is it
 loneliness, he never one, despite the attachment
 of my sides, clinging of arms and shoulders

Experience-greedy, I search continually
 (say it is absurd if you have found it yet)
 on the border of silence, the glacially white
 wing-traces bleached in the rock-hollow

visited sometimes by the sea. To die in the air
 is the noble thing, floating weakly to heart's
 earth, and when the fire's put out
 self will soon find the voice no longer
 The eagle's wishbone on the marble-piece
 sits in the federal word and carries
 my oblique posture, my fleshly illumina-
 on the resting a lot of the actual people

lethal air around, or the nerve-stick that bends
 up from the nerve root. The space of the petals
 not to nylon tape for your space will
 you are spilled and likely, out off from the atoms.

The flesh walls, but no more, as the wave,
 will never console, the loss of the human
 never exhibited in the museum of the soul
 whose natural history points the bare bird's nostrils.

Let it be this. The quality of every
 along the gentle dust of time
 has had all, the but poem an embrace to

when love and death, their nerves again,
 But what are the hard times
 upon the land of waiting. The narrow, islands
 in the interior world of self as flower
 grow in the black earth (and fills the silence)

Return, to the beds, the air is also white
 with hunger for your symmetries, with what has been
 the saving and saving of your absence.
 What freedom the flesh leaves the home away

The final stanza states the paradox that the "heart's desire" might be for the "homeless" of home rather than for the "attachment" of flesh. The imagery of home is developed further in subsequent stanzas through references to the bones of an eagle displayed on the marble piece. The eagle bones prompt the speaker to declare that his "experience-greedy" search has been a search, again some what paradoxically, for "silence". He imagines the death of the eagle "as floating as familiar earth", as a "noble thing", and sees that the "wastebowl" of the eagle "involves" his own "fleshly illusion". The

poem then shifts focus, and invokes the experience of extreme physical deprivation occasioned by birth. The speaker uses the image of 'the astronaut who is all joined to his spacecraft with a nylon rope when spacewalking to make the point that the reader, who has been 'spilled umbilically, cut off from the sternal', has no such serenity or birth. For the reader, the flesh 'wails'. Thoughts of separation at birth lead in the final stanza to thoughts of separation from a loved one, a permanent whose absence, like that of the experience of birth, is intensely felt at the level of physical deprivation. The poem concludes with a reiteration of the line, 'What maddens the flesh' leaves the bone sorry'. This line is now informed by the musings on birth, love, and death that have formed the body of the poem. These musings suggest that the images of flesh and bone represent opposing forces of the subject, a life force and a death force, eros and thanatos, and that these forces are dialectically interrelated rather than antithetical.

There are two moments in the poem that are worth exploring in more detail for the way in which they extend the thematic range of the issues under consideration. The first moment occurs as an interlude between recollection of the absent beloved, the 'quality of ivory/along the graduate dent of face/this hand would be lost poor remembrance to', and anticipation of a future reunion: 'in the penultimate stanza it is stated that "violence" characterises the "headlands" of "writing" on the "interval islands" of absence'. During this period of limbo, says the speaker, 'in the interior world of self no flowers grow in the black earth that fills the interval'. The image of an interval filled with black earth in which flowers fail to grow suggests that a natural fecundity of words is wanting. The poem that is dipped into the blackwell does not propagate poetry. A correspondence is suggested, however, between writing and generation.

Absence of the beloved is depicted as a condition of personal sterility. Yet this sterility is belied by the existence of the poem. It is in fact absence, which fills the interval with remembrance, that is the impetus for writing. If remembrance is the very substance of the poem, why does the 'black earth' specifically fail to produce flowers? Perhaps 'black' has racial overtones. A direct racial reference is made when the speaker invokes the 'quality of ivory/along the graduate dent of face' of the absent beloved. Assuming 'black' also has a racial reference, does the fact that the beloved is white induce a sense of guilt, a sense of betrayal of the speaker's blackness, his race, his mother (country)? Nortje answers such questions when he refers to in the poem 'Questions and Answers' as 'White hair/coursing through my blood'. Many poems return to the issue of Nortje's loyalty to his black countrymen and to the cause of African liberation. Increasingly, the poems project a strong sense of guilt and betrayal. The poem 'From the Way I Live Now', written shortly before his death, concludes with the words, 'I cringe in the boiling sun/convict me for my once burning ideals/my brothers'.

Nortje uses the colour black, and the notion of blackness, in interesting ways. The poem 'Sunset Period' states that 'Black resistor remains when the mind clings

slowly against these autumn visions which disturb'. 'Black resistor' may be interpreted as the remainder, in the psychoanalytical sense, between the demand for love and its partial obtainment, the dream of freedom and the reality of repression, the yearning for wholeness and the discovery of lack. The remainder is the memory trace of that which would satisfy the need. As testified by 'Poem South African', the remainder as mark of difference is the black word on the white page:

the word grills me
your correspondence
and these are our sentences
surrender to heaven as the bird despite
the area with the whip who needs my
unmarked world's luck

They die but
at last
get us all together as a vision
behold the visible, take me as evidence

The only way in which the speaker is able to unite with the absent beloved or with the lost community is on the page. The only evidence there is of this altogether as a vision is the evidence of the word, 'the semantic and syntactical coherence of the assertion itself, a coherence that is attenuated by the way in which the sentences are disseminated across the page ("but these broken sentences")'. What holds it together – the vision, the word – is the work of resistance performed by the poem, and the work performed by the poem in evoking resistance. The poem 'Assessments' describes the labour of writing poetry and nocturnal search for 'truths in the dark' through struggle with 'the hardship of rhyme'. It does this: 'the death of the Thebanes "where scribbles are now illegible" and "unmarked'.

One of each have, such loss, the lack of birth
and the fictional must questionably,
strength of word and courage of decision
There is never work without resistance.

Resistance in the psychoanalytical sense is a refusal of castration and a concomitant attachment to imaginary penitence and disavowal of difference. It is the fetishisation of the phallic. This notion brings us to the other moment of history in the poem 'Disfigurement': the allusion to the penis in the middle stanza. The positioning of this allusion suggests that this is the fulcrum around which the poem revolves, the hinge upon

which it is articulated. In as much as allusion is a rhetorical figure of enasure, in that what is alluded to is concealed at the very moment of disclosure, the allusion to the puerus may be said to constitute the poem's absent centre. The speaker has just referred to the way in which the eagle bones on the manaqueço parody his 'fleshily' 'inclusion' in the 'lesser sites of the carnal jungle', when he observes: 'Machila, fresh-wounds on the nerve stalk that oozes / up from the dung court'. What he seems to describe is an oration, seen from the top as a mushrooming of the body's inner vitality, its pitch on a bent nerve stalk. The speaker furthers his gaze of his penis, fetishisation of which occurs in 'the carnal jungle'. Subsequently he will turn his gaze to his navel and see 'himself' as 'spilled umbilically', dis-annated.

Caesivation by the penis under the navel can be likened to castration by the mirror image of the self. This is the perfect symmetry, the exact correspondence, for which the speaker yearns. He seeks himself in the other, or that which would call back his self, recall his self, remember him, has the wound of memory. Such mirror imaging may constitute a necessary initial identification, but the narcissistic circle must be broken. The mythical, narcissist must be cut therefrom for forgetfulness, for he to emerge. As Lacan (1968:26) puts it, 'the realization of perfect narcissism [...] is an inter-subjective accord' improving its bearing on the ego and given nature which supports it'. It can only be intersubjective if it follows the logic of the symbolic, of desire, which acknowledges and operates within difference. This same applies to the world. The imaginary community, the narcissistic community based on self-identifications, must be placed under erasure for the new community to emerge. Bhabha (1994c:160) talks of the 'homogenization of experience' which he sees as a major strategy of 'enchantment and closure in modern bourgeois ideology'. He says this:

being obliged to forget becomes the basis for remembering the nation, people, or a group, imagining the possibility of other overlaid and liberating forms of cultural identification (Bhabha 1994c:161).

The imaginary self-community must die if the new self-community is to emerge. One of the last poems that Nortje wrote, 'All Hungers Pass Away', uses many familiar images. Like other poems, it contains strong intimations of death. In this poem, however, there is little hope of renewal. Sexual hunger leaves the speaker washed, in a better condition than the starving farm workers of the Transvaal, whom he has betrayed with his acquired bourgeois values.

All Hungers pass away,
we lose track of their dates
downy as the like births,
reign for a time like penitents.

The soul listen to the pain
learn before full dawn brings
forever a further day and winter sun
born in a land where mythos fade.

Warily I shake off sleep,
share in the mirror with dream-purged eyes
drag my shirt over copulence
among the ladies of rich libraries.

Fat hardened in the mouth,
furious dreams tread like a
the meetings after a week escape
ended over, hangers and masks.

I gave those dreams up,
I'm sorry about some black girl,
Darkness never has sea had in bloom,
Survival strikes the form of the Transvaal.

What consolation comes
disgrace as blindness
Rites for the past my door
as I recover from the wasted years.

The rain abate, face down
I lie, this arms folded, half-aware
of skin fontigues over pelvis.
Pudetic, last, the dick posture.

Despite the fact that the linkages into Nortje's death remained an open verdict, Nortje is, usually, and according to Holy Ovens (1983) erroneously believed to have committed suicide. The fiction of suicide fits the image of the despairing poet and is likely to persist until further research can bring to light, if at all, the precise details of the 'last' new days of Nortje's life. It would suit my argument to conclude by saying that if Nortje did indeed commit suicide, it may have been a last desperate attempt to free himself from his posturing self, and, that his refusal of the social codes and rules demanded by the European majority left him unhomely, vulnerable to the enormous drives whose allegiance is to death as much as it is to life. But such a nature is denied us.

However one may wish to construe Nortje's death, there is a tale that emerges from it, the living testimony of the poems themselves, which may be the resource of

language: it is an endeavour to find words to establish community, where there is only the condition of homelessness. As Ntjoku says in the poem 'White Xmas', we have to 'choose' which/unreputation it is to be.¹

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The Real Substance of Nightmare: The Struggle of Poetry with History

Michael Gardiner

History has the morbidity of a nightmare, and the granderman
man consists in his making beautiful and living words out of
the real substance of that nightmare, not to put it away, but
to make it more comforting, that nightmare into a vision, in feeling
survives from the shapeless horror of reality – clarity for an
instant – by means of emotion (Poe, 1985:93).

As an illustrative example of a poet's encounter with history, Wessie Jansma's writing offers opportunity for reflection upon concerns and tensions which characterised the 1960s and which emerged in his poetry in the 1970s. During these two decades Jansma was in his twenties and thirties, the time when he produced the graphic and poetic work which gives him his present stature and poet is born at third sight.

As acknowledged by all who have read his work as remarkable for his capacity to demonstrate South African experience from multiple perspectives, Jansma offers an insight into his broad inclusiveness when he suggests in his autobiographical poem, 'Spanner in the Wind' (Wessie's) (of which only the opening lines are quoted), that to be a person in anything like a full sense of that term in South Africa requires multiple births and multiple deaths:

I was born 26 July 1939 in ventersdorp
I found myself in a situation

I was born 26 July 1939 in sophiatown
I found myself in a situation

I was born 26 July 1939 in d'Ardenburg
I found myself in a situation

I was born 26 July 1939 in welkom
I found myself in a situation (Jansma 197:107).

¹ This chapter is an amended version of an article published in *South African Literature* 72, 18, Spring 2007, 1-10.

If one looks at the three collections of Jensema's poetry—which is not easy to do as all are new out of print—one finds a diversity of languages, forms, identities and locations unequalled in South African literature. Reading through the collection of poetry, with go-downs and collages placed among the poems, one is compelled to jump from language to language and from dialect to dialect within a single poem. A further notable feature is that the poems are dramatic presentations of voices which affirm their sense of reality. By this means, the speaker's history is reflected in the speaker's condition, for the people of the poetry are what experience and circumstance have made them. The most common condition is that which has been generated in diverse forms by relationships between those who are oppressed and those who oppress them.

Here in itself says both little and much, but the hideous perversions of such relationships are key experiences of the 1960s for a sensibility such as Jensema's. Whether the voices in the poetry emerge from poverty, complacency, confusion or godliness (for example), those voices reflect the consciousness, humiliations and indignities generated by an excess of power over the lives of others by some, and by the absence of power in others to determine their own lives. Thus the forces which impinge upon the lives of those who speak in the poems are often brutal, crude, inflexible and inseparable with fear and instability.

The diversity of the poetry is more than one of content, such as the race or class position of the speaker or the physical context in which the speaker is located. Jensema's poetry draws on European techniques such as surrealism, dadaism and other twentieth-century resources to dramatise South African experiences. In addition to the attempt at reconciling African experience with European avant-garde, Jensema's poetry reflects pervasive presences of European, American and South African musical forms, especially jazz.

From an historical point of view, Jensema's poetry, in its movements across divisions of race, class, language and culture, is a significant counter-attack upon the barriers and distortions which were built into South African society with savage persistence by political, economic and cultural interests during the 1960s. At a time when repression by systems of gross apartheid were least coherently opposed within the country since the resistance of the 1950s, Jensema began writing in ways that caused uncertainty about his identity and which transcended those categories peculiar to dominant South African practice. But perhaps the most distinctive achievement of the poetry is that it goes beyond identification, in its focus of sympathy, with the oppressed. The speakers in the poems are often both the oppressors and the oppressed, and are victims who share an essentially common situation. Were Jensema's analysis to stop there, he would have gone only as far as a broad humanitarianism, no matter how finely his poems appear to catch such obvious concern. What he traces is the damage done to those who participate willingly and helplessly in brutal manifestations of ra-

cial capital. Nowhere does he hint at structures which might provide the succour that people so desperately need when assailed by that system and, in particular, he posits no hidden refuge (such as refuge in the countryside) by which that damage could be judged and which thereby might offer some *stern* alternative. Jensema is only too familiar with what rural life, especially that upon white-owned farms and in rural towns, has become. Jensema makes it clear that the peasant's dream no longer exists and will never exist for those who grub in the detritus of the city or whose lives disintegrate in rural slums. Perhaps most important of all, neither the sensitivity to the other nor to self, nor the sharp voice of being alive are dependent upon a sense of hope or the promise of a future. The pressing presence of need and circumstance give the immediate a pungency and a poignancy in which the stink of life is essential.

The temptation to applaud such an achievement must be checked by the price which has been paid for it: the process of 'figh-ter-ing' with uncanny accuracy a multitude of South African experiences, Wopke Jensema has lost the ability to write poetry. By extending himself across the barriers which divide racist South African society, he forfeited his coherence as a writer and, in effect, excluded his poetic voice.

The degree to which racial consciousness was forced upon South Africans is evident everywhere in Jensema's poetry. The claims for the benefits of racial identity under apartheid are shown to have no existential validity whatever and instead, the discrimination caused by such a system is profound. In the poem 'I Come', the presence of black and white voices in each other's dreams is dramatized. The dominant voice is white, whispering down the labyrinths of their joint history, tightening the nightmare of their racial juxtaposition with unnerving inevitability. The result, as Peter Horn has pointed out, is that 'the double bind which ensnares us all' is a dream-world in which 'everything is just lies' (Horn 1977:118).

I Come

1	2
I am white and brutal	you lie hidden
I come to you like death	in the garden of my fear and leave you a dripping
deserted	weaving of blood
3	4
a life tendency	I've plucked out your eyes
a life's end	I've smothered in your teeth
only hardens my heart	I've peeled off your skin

a gentle havenet
a brooze of milles
is the wear of my existence
but they don't believe
everything is just here
but they can't believe
did not hear you
you're hidden
I did not hear a thing
you're hidden
in the corridors of my fear
smelling of blood
I am white and brutal
I can no longer hear death
and leave you on uplately deserted (Jensen 1975a: 12).

In this poem, Jensen brings to the surface one perspective upon age-old interdependencies within relations of power. The silent black voice is both confirmatory and revealing. While the white voice proclaims, insists and asserts, the black figure has to endure its vision, exhortation and, most acutely of all, its being used as justification for the white nightmare. The white consciousness now needs the monster it has made of itself and of the other so as to provide itself with identity, validity and reason for existence.

Reduced to abstraction, the poem confirms what is rather obvious. Yet the participation of the poetry presupposes an attentiveness to voices in society by the poet which goes beyond analysis of the relations between these voices. Both figures suffer and that suffering, though different, is recognised and understood. The poetic suggestions in the poem confirm the centrality of the acknowledgements made by the white voice and imply (in a necessarily perverse form) a shared predicament. And a historical dilemma is here painfully evident: to what extent are individuals, as inheritors and bearers of history, responsible for the degree to which their present is so dramatically determined? The reduction of people to 'I am white and brutal' and to 'you're hidden in the corridors of my fear' (smelling of blood) does not happen within a single lifetime.

To the solitary but joint dreaming of 'I Come' must be added the effects of 'resentment' upon the vast numbers of people who had been repressed in the creation of 'homelands' (disintegrating themselves as apartheid's structures decayed) as reflected in the minimalist poem 'Linchville Aftermath':

cos's blood belly
fotly meal a meal

cos's dark stare
his enemies

cos's only fears
in times away

cos's can't shout
we're side to side

cos's left's first
we want to be here 'n now (Jensen 1975b: 18)

Like their language, the human figures blur into chaos, fragments and semi-random clusters, and they mouth contentedly their anguish, which eventually collapses into a demand for a hopeless ideal. Here Jensen presents an instance of what occurs to people when the intermediate is removed. These people had been uprooted from places of generational continuity and were dumped in a location in which the old and the very young died off almost immediately (thus destroying the past and the future) and no one in's way. These people were translated from a community into a decaying collection of spasmodic gestures.

In poems such as 'I Come' (Jensen 1975a: 631) and 'Linchville Aftermath' (Jensen 1975b: 18), it is possible to experience the linked effects of enforced division and collectivity. The deepest and most sustaining elements of community (read in all possible senses) have been destroyed. History has triumphed utterly.

The issue raised earlier about the historical dilemma created by oriented situations is given special point when dependency upon the reality of others becomes a political, personal and psychological absolute, and when escape from such dependency is prevented by the manifold agencies of state repression, as we find in the Bash:

the monster is in more vent, monster in
eye-sockets, galamlogwee, up moko (eyeballs in
my neck)
last one got gone, in the red blood
mouth
not blister moko line of the horse's eye, am up
his eye the vision
pubeet, not, don't put go with long
pubeet, not, don't put go with long
van ter water's pubeet, not, don't put go with long

2
10 december 2010
the kansas van afrika bang, in a trap
bellehup, under a cop's foot
in a van, in a trap
at, from and my, up my, up my, up my

which renders of a projection of old and familiar horrors. There is no irony in the term 'freedom' as it is used here: it is an evocation of something which has 'struck'. The irony exists in a situation in which the notion of 'freedom' is in fact meaningless.

Movement from the past to the future in this poem is a wild lurch from one extreme position to another as suggested by the swings from 'after' to 'before' and to 'after'. The lines of the poem are linked to each other by sporadic association and every line is a tentative and an incomplete probe into what is for the speaker a hostile and staring environment. Since the moral is a condition of Jenama's poetry rather than its purpose, we need to notice the gentleness with which this condition of the speaker is understood. By establishing a connection between the past and the future, the poem accedes to the speaker the worst of all worlds in which guilt, doubt, irrational and rational fears, suspicion and, most corrosive of all, some self-consciousness now inhabit an inexhaustible space in which to ebb and flow. Against the resulting and inevitable confusion, the self attempts mutilated gestures in the direction of coherence.

III

Against the disruptive forces of repression, Jenama, as poet, has one major counterforce, and that is form. Without form all art is impossible. In the case of Jenama, the meaningful form, poetic and graphic, stands between him and utter helplessness. In his poetry, variety of form is closely allied to the necessity to speak with a wide range of voices. In a context which turns essentially upon racial identity and upon resistance, it is an assertion of a counter-kind of coherence; in this instance poetic form is necessary to keep at bay the essential chaos of rigid, mechanical, dichotomous and two-dimensional terms of reality which characterised the apartheid state.

The struggle of form against that chaos is evident in the six-line poem, 'Up-sided Cycle'.

1
we're all underground now, but
conspiracy against the state, you say?
one by one
explosions
go on, then who is it you're by one
2. liberation
bullets, pay for, declare us just a red planet
reformation
better than ever, enough too, what up now? theory
expressions

now, let them
1. blow me up, blow me
one by one
I just crack some jokes, you say
let's go paint heaven, later, later, only
I just crack some jokes, you say
let's go paint heaven, later, later, only

2
today we will be singing a sad song, soon
a song of our language
and we'll defy you, go on, boss
we will, we will, the nearest class
we will all be living ahead
you know, say, say, oh?
we carry the chains of hunger, grow weeds

3
for little the little ones
you freeze from fear, spokes
and

your knees
rocks in air
your walls

4. Oh, you
out, joke
End of 1980
tiding in ma
come on, a

and a fight
then
brandishing
the cost, oh
no, who's a

no lights now
on
drink up of
so, no fear
the jazz license between the

can you say, feel, Portuguese,
1980, 1980, 1980, 1980, 1980

Afrikaans-apartheid communities. That can be bad enough, as those whites who took firm stands against apartheid as persecuted. Isolation from family and community is severe and it needs to be understood that society tends not to remain passive towards those who make such a break. Mere withdrawing in the wilderness by the outcast is often insufficient to it, and society is therefore capable of seeking out such a person and destroying him or her. Assassination takes very many forms. Hence the comment by Gwele, quoted earlier: "His white world was killing him: it's hard to destroy him."

The question must be asked: What one such as Jenson broke with the prevailing attitudes of whites in South Africa of the sixties, where could he take shelter and receive succour and support?

What social formations had the resources to sustain such a person? Jenson tried many jobs inside and outside South Africa but could neither sustain them nor his much-needed marriage. The majority of writers at the time either sought support within institutions established and living groups excluded them, or else left the country. Little space for creativity and nonconformity was to be found outside of the official and the commercial, and repression was alive enough in the late 1960's and early 1970s to seem individually invulnerable.

A review of the means of people active in music, literature, the plastic arts, drama and other cultural activities in Pretoria and Johannesburg (places where Jenson seemed to work best) at that time suggests a relatively rich weave of creativity. But artists, writers and musicians worked either inside or outside township gateways, and opportunities for easy mixing of class and race within a supportive environment were rare. Lionel Abrahams' *The People's Movement* and his writing group, Will Kinzie's art workshops, the poetry magazine *Dokke* edited by Walter Sankar and Peter Dlamini, Karen Lesage's art classes at Dockery House and Barney Simon's drama groups are noteworthy exceptions. The dangers inherent in political involvement combined with a sense of isolation within the country as well as being cut off from the rest of the world led many writers and cultural activists to go into exile.

It would be a gross irony indeed if the act of renouncing upon the achievement of Wopko Jenson in speaking as the other were to imply that his admission of the reality of other beings into the self were an exceptional quality. To do so would be to reduce the notion of identity to quantifiable terms. It is precisely this reducibility which the poetry challenges and through that challenge reveals the horror of that which actively prevents exploration of the possibilities of the self.

Wopko Jenson reached beyond the limits that were his: his race and class felt in those two decades to be almost absolute. In doing so, he sought one of the most intimate associations with the other that is possible. His poetry speaks with voices from seeking worlds that are ordinarily an experience from without. And the radical nature of his poetic act is underscored when it is understood that he did not do so on

behalf of the other but as the other.

Jacques Alvarez-Pereyre (1984:1060) describes Jenson's method as such:

In fact, in order to show a South African subjected by apartheid, Jenson had to go to speak as the first person, as both hero-victim and the hero-narrator. But this always, he says "It is because person who suffers, the man who has been stricken by what he has himself conceived or done in a moment of aberration or darkness. An inner universe takes shape, like the cross-section of a skull, and it reveals the terrible schizophrenia of living all the time by two codes or conduct, one for one's family and official neighbours, the other for the other man, black, or, at least in a role of servant. Thus the hero-victim dies a thousand times over, bleeding from a thousand wounds, while the hero-narrator constantly pretends a brotherhood which is contradicted by the multitude of crimes committed against the flesh and the spirit of these 'other' ones."

There is an implication here that to acknowledge and admit the other under apartheid is to be a schizophrenic. In addition, apartheid generates states of schizophrenia, especially in those drawn from the dominant minority. Seen from this perspective, Jenson's poetic is an analysis of that state in South African society of the 1960s and 1970s. Thus the further autobiographical detail from "Speranza in the What? Works?" ("I suffer from schizophrenia (they tell me)" (Jenson 1977:60), has an important significance to it: both he and his sonie share the same affliction.

Understanding that does not lead to simplistic connections between the experience of South Africa and schizophrenia. Instead, if we accept Barthes's (1959) aphorism: "If the novelist makes history, and the musician defines it, the poet experiences it, that is, makes it real to himself," then it is to poets that we need to look for accounts of experience which are not to be found anywhere else, and which are defined with a complexity peculiar to the nature of poetry itself.

This dictates on hands to go one step further and conclude with a focus upon Wopko Jenson himself as one of us, who opened himself to the effects of South African history. A dimension of his disorientation is nicely caught in this account by Baradlani (1985:152):

If hysteria was the pathology of the exacerbated staging of the subject, a pathology of expression, of the body's theatrical and agonistic conversion, and if paranoia was the pathology of organization, of the structuration of a dignified person's world, then with colonization and Apartheid, with the inhuman overbearing of all these networks, with their continual connections, we are now in a new form of schizophrenia. No more hysteria, no more projective paranoia, in properly speaking, but this state of terror proper to the schizophrenia, the greater proximity of every thing, the increasing proximity of everything which touches, invades and penetrates without our choice, without our knowledge of private protection, not even his own body, to protect him against.

Marginality, Afrikaans Literature and 'The Undefined Work of Freedom'

Philip John

Klein and LeRoy were the first to show that
(Axiom 1) implies (23).

Sometimes there are texts – and even images in texts – which seem curiously predisposed to guiding the attention of readers. For me, as reader of Afrikaans literature, such a text has from my first reading been “And our fathers that begot us” in a collection of short stories by Kees Prinsloo entitled *Die hewel betoery* (1987).¹ In this story a young man returns the day before Christmas to his parental home in Natal for a short visit, during which, as we learn at the end of the story, he “reveals” (Prinsloo 1987:26) something to his father. Within the context formed by the stories in the collection it is probable that this ‘revelation’ concerned his sexuality. More specifically it is probable that he used the visit to tell his father that he was homosexual. This ‘fact’ is however never stated explicitly in the story, the focus rather falling on a narrative reconstruction by the young man of the lives of his ancestors. This reconstruction consists of a number of ‘real’ or documentary texts juxtaposed to one another: a photograph of the young man’s father sitting on an elephant shouly by his grandfather in KwaZulu (Prinsloo 1987:12), an anthropological sketch by the young man’s grandfather (Prinsloo 1987:13–14), photographs of his young man’s father (Prinsloo 1987:17–18), two letters by the young man’s grandparents to his father, signed J.R. and L.G. Prinsloo (Prinsloo 1987:19–20), a newspaper clipping noting the death of the young man’s grandfather, J.R. Prinsloo (Prinsloo 1987:21) and finally a letter to the young man from his father, which he received in Johannesburg ten days after his visit to the parental home in Natal (Prinsloo 1987:28) while he was busy writing part of the story which was to become “And our fathers that begot us”.

One of the functions which the document fulfil in the story is to clarify the relation between the ancestors of the young man mentioned in the story (L.P. and F.C.).

¹ The story first appeared in 1964 on Star 24, an Africanist 'trend' magazine.

Prinsloo, the 'young man' and the writer of the story, Koos Prinsloo. These documents make it possible to think that the 'young man' in the story is actually 'Koos Prinsloo'. Such an interpretation is strengthened by other information: provided a biographical note in the front of the book informs the reader that Koos Prinsloo was born in Helderberg in KwaZulu and came to South Africa in 1962, concerning with information in the story as such (Prinsloo 1987:10), and in the colophon the writer of the book is given as 'J.P. Prinsloo'.

The argument that this story has for me has less to do with these "documents" and with their possible variety as such than with the narrative by which they are linked, and by which the story itself is created. The documents however play an important role in determining the nature of this linking narrative. In this narrative is "remembered" in partially exact detail: the visit of the young man, Xos Prinsloo, to his parental home, from his first sighting of the Ingap and a power station near Keweenaw to where his parents reside, through his arrival at the parental home, his walk through the lounge and a passage to his bedroom, a spartan supper to the Christmas lunch he enjoys with his parents the next day. On this Christmas day he also masturbates, looks at photo albums and talks with his father about the past of the family, specifically about his grandfather's birth on the Maseu Gishu station in Keweenaw.

To illustrate what I mean by this, I take the description of his arrival at the parental home.

[illegible]

It also seems to be more likely that the

Grain:

[illegible]

She, the enclosed female with the blue staining, is a mother standing. Another was born on the 29th June 1954 in Gwelo in Southern Rhodesia - the fifth of nine children. She has a firm foot, probably the result of a mild form of polio which she had as child, and she sometimes suffers from a lumbago. After his marriage, because of the loss of the ear and water closet, the men's already very small house

Heute, so, ab 14 Uhr, hier, hier, immer?

 $\sqrt{N}l_{\infty}$

Let ϕ be a weakly $\mathbb{R}$ -valued 1-form, then the knotting of ϕ is given by

a plastic cover on the veranda and pass the hearth in the lounge where the white master. Cartridges like sands between two cannon barrels and two lions seen mounted in an elephant foot (11; see also citation from *Wolff* in footnote 2).

What is first notable about the description of the young man 'Koon Prinsloo's' actions is the disinterested objectivist tenor thereof, mainly the result of the 'objective' third person narration. More than a form of objectified vision is however discernable in the fragments, namely something which can provisionally be called alienated observation. This alienation is given clear form in the fragment by the parentheses which makes it clear that the voice of the narrator is split internally, and that there are actually two voices, both of which can be related to the author of the story, 'Koon Prinsloo'.

In the parentheses—as is the case in the rest of the parentheses and the letters as well—the narrating voice retains a personalised quality, signalling in itself the presence of others, and of dialogue and filial links to these others. The personalised nature of expression in these sections of the story is further signalled by the references to house experiences, illnesses and emotions such as longing, concern and indignation.

In the 'objective' narrative sequences, the emphasis falls on a neutral detailing of ordinary actions—standing, looking, walking—and on a focus on domestic objects. The nearly atomic tenor of these sequences is clearly manifested in the description of the young man taking a Sunday afternoon nap. He lies down on a bed and starts manufacturing, apparently without much interest. While manufacturing he looks at two prints of paintings by Brekblakk hanging on the wall and then falls asleep without achieving an orgasm (Prinsloo 1987: 16).

This 'split' in the voice of the narrator is further complicated when the impersonal narrator switches to a first-person address, speaking as the young man 'Koon Prinsloo' to his father (Prinsloo 1987: 24). The manner in which the story is constructed thus emphasises the heterogeneity in the narrating voice, making the unholding of the usual boundaries between third-person narrator, first-person narrator and character untenable. At the same time, with the inclusion of 'documentary' fact in the story enabling one to relate the different voices to the same 'real' person (the author 'Koon Prinsloo'), an extremely intense sensation of alienation and estrangement is created.

What makes the 'split' voice of the narrator in this story further remarkable is that by being inserted in a self-reflexive story, it implicates artistic creation in the alienation by which the narrator/author's voice is characterised. In this sense it lends clear form to the process of observation at the basis of artistic creation, showing not only the outer world being taken as object for observation and artistic representation, as is customary, but the 'inner' world of the character/narrator/author as well. The intensity of the alienation that is represented in the story can be seen as an achievement of Afrikaans literature at a specific point in its development, as representing an

important 'marker' in the aesthetic history of this literature—and in the history of the community out of which the text comes and which is reflected therein.

The importance of this 'fragment' is borne out by the fact that a representation of a similar intensely alienated observation is found in another self-reflexive Afrikaans novel published four years later at the other end of the generational spectrum of Afrikaans literature, namely *Wolff* by Anna M. Louw (1991).

Wolff (1991) tells the story of Leonie Obach, a woman in her sixties whose husband, Luk, dies at the age of seventy-five. While going through documents he has behind, she discovers that he cheated on her right from the start of their marriage. The discovery of these infidelities causes her 'marriage pain' to rise so as it seems that Luk purposely left the 'evidence' of his betrayal for her to discover. The novel ironically deals with the process Leonie goes through attempting to deal with the pain caused her by the discovery of her husband's infidelity. After the initial shock, Leonie develops an intense resentment towards Luk and starts feeling that he had deprived her of a large part of her emotional life. 'The resentment soon changes it to a very intense feeling of grievement and simultaneously, anger. It is out of this anger that one will find the energy to accomplish "her" life' (Louw 1991: 21, 117, 140). This healing Leonie eventually finds in an 'upsurge in her spirituality, events narrated in Chapter four: 'Leonie's Spiritual' (Leonie's story) and Chapter five: 'Winter' (Winter).

The novel however opens with Chapter one, 'Op soek na verlore tyd' (Searching for lost time), after Luk's death. In this first section of the novel the reader is provided the reader with a third person report of a journey to Berlin, undertaken by a character identified only as 'die weduwee' (the widow). The purpose of this journey seems to be to trace the tracks of the Obachs, that is of the character Luk who had been married to Leonie. The report of this journey provided in the novel has a curious quality, mainly because of the appearance of a first person narrator next to 'die weduwee' and the third person narrator, as in the following extract:

Die weduwee skrik ligting wakke en luister Sigi. Met die skamme van fustjers onder in die blindehof wat na swart en witloofte vertrek, sy het na voorwaarts die tydelike fustjers sien wat met witgidskettings aan die fustjers onder op is. In luk hant is sy nog en luister dat die wakker in fustjersdroom tennens, ter myn van fustjers bewegings begin.

Die droom is net stelsig begin, die passie en dit ook na niks. Ek staan die portaal in op en witloofte en liggings begin, plekke, liggings en in die portaal in niks. Ek gaan in niks en dit niks, die hant in droom en niks in (Louw 1991: 22).

The widow awakes before sunrise and awakes. Quiet. Only the voices of cyclists in the court and below denoting in early work shifts. The previous evening she had seen the spring of Luk's chain in the cycle rack. For a while she has been in the middle increasing a Babylon Street, while planning her first movements.

This first-person narrator (who appears sporadically in other parts of the novel), apart from being an extension of the third-person narrator, seems to be—like Leonie and 'die weduwe'—an older woman (Louw 1991:163, also 212). This first-person narrator is also on a journey to Berlin—on the banks of the Ohre. Her attention—like that of the third-person narrator—is mainly focused on 'die weduwe'. The first-person narrator and the widow thus appears to be the same person, something which can be inferred definitively from the fact that they share the same intimate spaces.

There is however an important difference between the two personae appearing in the first section, namely the first-person narrator and the widow. The first-person narrator consistently remains neutral and provides an objective report of her journey. In contrast to the description of the widow (by the third-person narrator) consistent reference is made to the emotions she experiences: anger (Louw 1991:113), self-pity (Louw 1991:13), loneliness (Louw 1991:16), depression (Louw 1991:141), hate (Louw 1991:152) and sorrow (Louw 1991:21). The effect created by this kind of narration can be described in two (fundamentally) related ways: on the one hand an extreme form of alienation is created by the juxtaposition of a third-person and first-person description of the same person, the widow (which is at the same time both of them); and on the other hand this kind of narration actually implies the creation of the customary barrier between first- and third-person narration.

The similarity with 'Our fathers that begat us' which is apparent from the above discussion is further borne out by other aspects of the narration in *Wolffed* (1991) which lead to a similar disturbance of the barrier(s) between character or act (Leonie, 'die weduwe', the first-person narrator) and reality ('the writer'/third-person narrator', Anna M. Louw), such that the process which is narrated 'in' the text comes to be seen as 'outside' the text as well.

The first chapter of *Wolffed* (1991) is concluded with a note informing the reader that the 'first-person/third-person narrator/writer' put down her pen and passionately closed her notebook in which she had been making notes of her visit to Germany and to the area where the character took spent her youth. This act is clearly dated 'October 1987'—that is, before the publication of *Wolffed* (1991). One of the implications of this note is that the 'narrator/writer'—also a 'widow' (like Leonie)—had some relation to 'Lark' (or someone 'like' him) and experienced a similar personal trauma. The note also implies that when the notebook was taken up again, its elaboration resulted in the novel, *Wolffed* (1991) (of which the notebook forms the first part). If the note is read in this way it makes a reading of *Wolffed* (1991) possible as not only

the story of Leonie but also as the representation of the process of the creation of the novel, this process taken up into the novel itself.

Most importantly however, such a reading makes possible an association between *Wolffed* (1991) as narrative text and the process narrated on a thematic level in the novel itself, namely Leonie's process of 'healing' through artistic creation. This would make *Wolffed* (1991) a text of 'healing'—representing this process with reference to the author, Anna M. Louw (or at least someone 'like' her), and then (or extrapolated) and closely, with reference to the (African) reader. Read in this manner, *Wolffed* carries the implication that it provides a 'trap'—it advises the reader on how to—or makes it possible for this reader to see how he or she can—sublimate or for self, to a process of transformation through aesthetic expression.

Wolffed (1991) and 'Our fathers that begat us' thus obviously show clear similarities. In both texts the authorial voice is 'split' between a first-person narrator and a character observed by this narrator with a third-person narrative hovering in the background, effectively erasing the boundary between narrator and character and simultaneously creating the impression of an art to term of fiction. Both texts provide the reader with the means whereby he or she can relate the first-person narrators of the stories to the personae of the actual authors. In both cases the apparently extreme form of alienation represented is simultaneously a representation of the process involved in artistic creation, with the personae of the actual writers ('Kees Pridemore', Anna M. Louw) implicated in this process. In both cases the representation is part of a process by which someone tries to deal with a personal trauma and the consequent alienation by gathering material which is to be processed in the form of art.

II.

Part of the answer to the question why I have always found these two texts so striking appeared when I came across a character in which a similarly peculiarly intense observation figures outwards and in which this observation is connected to aesthetic expression and the transformation of the self. In an essay entitled 'What is Enlightenment?' in which Michel Foucault tries to define, amongst other things, what 'modernity' might mean he makes reference to an essay by Charles Baudelaire on 'The artist', Constantin Guye. According to Guye, modernity is defined by Baudelaire firstly with reference to a kind of observation and secondly with reference to a relation orientation towards the self:

Baudelaire refers to a detachable consciousness regarding André P. Briet's novel *Le monde est un théâtre* (1971), using Remy's idea of a 'double' viewing the values according to which he is to be judged (1984: 2).

The novel is stuffed with smoke, ingested wool and smells of nicotine. I fold the cover and discover recent burnt marks. Someone had been smoking in bed. Later going to visit another dancer, it is definitely a girl with men on fat.

...on the attitude of modernity, the high value of the present, is inseparable from a desperate eagerness to imagine it, to imagine it otherwise than it is, and to transform it not by destroying it but by grasping it, what it is. Baudelaire's modernity is an exercise in which culture's obsession to wear a veil is confronted with the primacy of a liberty that cannot readily respect its restrictions and violence.

However, modernity for Baudelaire is not simply a form of relationship to the present; it is also a mode of relationship that has to be established with oneself. The 'liberal attitude' of modernity is tied to an indispensable awareness. To be modern is not to accept one-self as one is in the flux of passing moments; it is to take oneself as *object of a constant and difficult elaboration* (Foucault 1984: 41, orig.).

The same elements are found in those words of Foucault that were referred to in the discussion of the two Afrikaans texts above – an 'extreme attention' to the present and simultaneously a transformative aesthetic relation to the self. In the Afrikaans texts the 'extreme attention' is directed towards the observing and narrating self. This process exemplified in the 'split' voice of the narrator, slipping between and from character, third-person narrator and 'first-person' narrator to the autobiographical persona of the author. The clear resemblance(s) between the Afrikaans texts and the 'aesthetic' Foucault's essay addresses justifies associating Foucault's pronouncements on this 'attitude' with the Afrikaans texts.

Foucault's use and discussion of Baudelaire's views is first of all part of an attempt to define what 'Enlightenment' might mean in the last quarter of the twentieth century. It is however also part of a development in Foucault's thought which has been characterised as a turn towards the problem of ethics.¹ Foucault's attempt to deal with the problems associated with a conventional approach to the heritage of the Enlightenment meant to rediscover ethics which emphasises an 'aesthetics of the self' as the only way of continuing the heritage of the Enlightenment.

In his attempt to provide an alternative definition of the ethical heritage of the Enlightenment in the essay 'What is Enlightenment?' Foucault first of all distances himself from the thesis of 'humanism' (Foucault 1984: 43–45). In the process he disjuncts the conceptual baggage associated with humanism, such as certain ideas about history and progress and the accompanying cultural orientation towards 'higher' gradations with universal values (Foucault 1984: 46). He 'the humanist perspective oriented towards "the Being" of a lives in or according with a projected, "rational" metaphysical goal. Foucault opposes what he calls "the undefined work of freedom" founded on a perspective which treats the world as fundamentally historical:

...This critique will be genealogical in the sense that it will not derive from the idea of what we are with a supposedly firm, or do and to know, but it will separate us from the contingency that made us what we are. The possibility of no longer being

there, or thinking what we are, or think, it is re- seeking to make possible a metaphysics that has finally become a science. It is seeking to give new impetus, to the end with as possible, to the undefined work of freedom (Foucault 1984: 46).

One of the advantages of this approach to the possibility of freedom is that it does not pre-emptively determine what this 'freedom' might be, or what the best approach therein might be, as was the case in 'liberatory' projects undertaken in the Soviet Union, Society, China and elsewhere which resulted in increased repression and oppression. In these cases the 'work of freedom' were subsumed under abstract, systematic schemes. By moving the focus of freedom away from systematic rationality to the aesthetic self Foucault's approach privileges heterogeneity. It is to this purpose that the references to Baudelaire and to an 'aesthetics of the self' or an attitude of 'self-fashioning' is made.

Foucault feels justified in associating the heritage of the Enlightenment with such an 'attitude' of self-fashioning because, he argues, this is actually in line with the way Kant approached the Enlightenment. Foucault argues that Kant's manner of addressing the question is 'in', a 'way out' (Foucault 1984: 36; see also 38). Foucault thus highlights the fact that there is nothing prescriptive or teleological in Kant's perspective on the concept of the Enlightenment. It is this aspect of Kant's concept – and Baudelaire's perspective – that enables Foucault to see an open ended, active, personal engagement with the world implied therein. It is also by linking Kant's motivation on the Enlightenment in this way to an attitude of Foucault (1984: 38–42, 50), to suggest that Foucault can justify speaking about such personal, individualised, ethical engagement with the world, and especially the self, as an ethical imperative, analogous to the ethics according to which the Greek philosophers lived (Foucault 1984: 50).

The argument in this article is that the 'attitude' – an unquantified awareness of the present and the self occupied with an aesthetic transformation thereof – which Foucault associates with the practice of freedom and the continuation of the tradition of the Enlightenment is clearly present in contemporary Afrikaans literature. Following Foucault, it is thus possible to show that the poststructuralist narrative perspective in Afrikaans texts such as in 'And our fathers' that begot us' and *Wolfsdoring* (1991), as discussed above, is a clear indication of the 'modernity' of these texts and of the manner in which an ethical practice is realised by means of 'aesthetic expression'.

In the two texts analysed here can be added a number of other contemporary Afrikaans texts in which the tensions between art and life are problematised. In Prinsloo's novel *Om die hielal help ons* (1987), *Stygging* (1992) or *Stygging* (1997). Recent chronicles include *Verloren in die woud* by Antjie Krog (1996), *Verloren in die woud* (1996), and *Verloren in die woud* (1996), and *Verloren in die woud* (1996), and *Verloren in die woud* (1996).

¹ See for example the following: Theilacker (1988), Raybould (1992) and Jones (1994).

that is narrators speaking from 'behind' death—an extremely marginalised position¹, and texts dealing with life amongst marginalised social groupings even as non-whites.² A significant development in Africanist prose bringing experiences of marginalisation into the centre of the literature has been the publication of novels by coloured and black people such as Abraham Phillips³, A.Z.I.M. Schabas⁴, Karen Benjamin⁵ and E.K.M. Doh⁶.

IV

Any attempt to engage meaningfully with the problematic of marginality will have to take cognisance of the discourse and extended scholarship which has developed around the term⁷. All that is attempted in this article is to try of all indicate the relevance of the problematic for the study of contemporary Africanist literature and secondly, as a humble contribution to the discussion around the term, to bring it into relation with what is usually placed in opposition to it, namely 'elite' aesthetic expression. In essence, the texts used above, 'And our fathers are larger as' and *Wagdy* (1991), which were used to establish the 'modernity' of contemporary Africanist literature are simultaneously used in conjunction with the 'opposite' of elite expression, namely marginal expression or minority literature.

The main objective of this approach is to show that there need not necessarily be an exclusive tension between marginality and universality and that marginality is actually an indispensable precondition for universality. An associated objective will be to forward the argument that attempts to define a literature simplistically in exclusively with reference to marginality as a minor or minority literature, for instance as

¹ In a number of cases formation takes place 'behind' death, such as in *The resurrection of Adamu* by André P. Brink (1988); *Missionary* by Elsa Joubert (1988); *The red sun appears* by Mafé Behr (1985); and *Overland* by André P. Brink (1983).

² Examples include *Belong* by Mariene van Niskerke (1994); and *Dresser* by Louis Rood (1995).

³ *The gentleman's hand* (1992); and *Refugees van die waaier* (1993).

⁴ *Shadows in Lesendagse verhoel van 'n dood van die waaier* (1995); *on Langzaam die land by 'n waaier* (1996).

⁵ *Spies uit die water* (1991); *Karpoel* (1990).

⁶ *Die wonder van Moeras* (1990).

⁷ For representative collections see *The Nature and Context of African Literature* edited by Abdul Jan Mohamed & David Lloyd (1990) and *Our Times: Marginalization and Contemporary Culture* edited by Ferguson et al. (1990).

the expression of a group's identity, might have serious distortions, limiting the possible profundity of expression in the literature.

'Marginality' can and has been approached from a variety of perspectives. The most recent attention given to the term took place within the ambit of a centre-marginalist binary in post-colonial studies (e.g. Nesterenko, 1993). One of the characteristic forces in which the centre-marginalist binary appeared before this time, was however as overlaid with dichotomies associated with colonial discourse theory, such as metropolitan/periphery, coloniser/colonised and oppressor/oppressed. This can be expected as post-colonial studies can be seen as an offshoot or development of colonial discourse theory. The general climate in which colonial discourse theory and post-colonial studies developed was similarly heavily influenced by post-structuralist theory so that the coloniser/colonised dichotomy was in turn overlaid with and sometimes displaced by other frameworks expressive of the concerns of social groupings characteristically formed and conceived on the basis of categories associated with race, gender, sexuality and ethnicity. In these frameworks the notions of agency, subject, identity and subjectivity formed largely. These frameworks characteristically emphasised the silencing, marginalising, working of discourse, especially of Western discourse as seen from the perspective of marginalised subjectivities. Study in this general terrain seems to have two main objectives, namely first of 'the critical exposure and unmasking of the marginalising working of hegemonic discourse and secondly the reparative work of creating opportunities for expression by marginalised 'voices'.

An earlier elaboration of marginality took place within the ambit of 'minority studies' mainly founded on an anthropological or ethnic base (e.g. Kanner & Loh 1990: 11). This part of the terrain was also fundamentally influenced by the fervent theoretical activity of the past decade or so, as first instance evidenced by the currency introduced into the field by the placing of the term 'minor literature' next to the more mainstream 'majority literature'.

A significant part of the discourse on marginality as far as it refers to literature is devoted to exploring the problems associated with the accompanying categories and frameworks, such as 'minority literature', 'women's studies' and 'ethnic studies'. A number of indications indicate that the placement of a literature with reference to such categories is frequently accompanied by a impoverishment thereof. Such impoverishment happens in two main ways, both where the literature is closely associated with the interests of a clearly delimited social group. In the most severe and

⁸ Some of the implications of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's term 'minor' literature are explored in Rumbold (1993).

problematic cases a minority placement limits the literature (and criticism thereof) to the expression of the 'rejection' ('not') or 'being' of a group of people. In its worst form this kind of placement delegates the literature to the parochial, exotic and touristic. In its more positive incarnations, the implications of a minority placement might be less deleterious, such as where the literature is placed next to and against another (main) dominant discourse, the minority or minor literature fulfilling a counter-discursive function. The main problem with such a placement is that the literature is inextricably tied to the more powerful literary discourse, so that it remains dependent and secondary, its semantic horizon set by the dominant discourse. This is arguably the case with most 'counter-discursive' postcolonial approaches.

At the same time discussion has indicated that the placement of literature(s) as minority discourses have unique strengths and can come accompanied by definite privileges. Two of the more positive perspectives on this side of minority discourse emphasise first of all the disruptive potential of such discourse, and secondly its productive potential. The insistence on particularity which is characteristic of (some) minority expression can perform a valuable anti-totalising function, problematising the elaboration of all-inclusive frameworks (see Godard 1995; Wynter 1990:157-162). Minority discourse can also produce new knowledge when it functions as an 'exotic new frontier' (Seshadri-Crooks 1995: 53, 59).

That a number of the frameworks mentioned above can in varied ways be brought into association with the citation of Afrikaans literature, or with facets of this literature, is clear. The point of this article is however not how to specify which of the mentioned frameworks can be applied to contemporary Afrikaans literature, but rather to problematise any such attempt. The question which this article would like to leave the reader with is thus: what does it mean to on the one hand classify Afrikaans literature as 'marginal' or a 'minority literature', and on the other to be aware of the 'modernity' of the literature, of how it fits into an 'injected' aesthetic expressive regime?

I would like to suggest – on the basis of the analysis of the two texts above – that it is possible to see texts (or a literature) – simultaneously affiliated to 'universal', 'exotic', 'modern' aesthetic expression and to a particularised, 'marginal' expressive base. Such an argument has important implications, especially in the – heterogeneous – South African context. Texts such as those analysed in this article, and the literature from which they spring, place a special burden on South African society. They

make clear that any tendency or policy which is knowingly or unknowingly premised on emphasising the 'marginality' of Afrikaans literature at the expense of the aesthetic modernity thereof, is limiting the 'undefined work of fiction' and striking at an important emancipatory resource in the South African context.

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¹ In a analysis of Marlene van Nierkes's *Zwölf Die Globe* (1985) approaches the problem from a slightly different angle, arguing that the 'aesthetic' representation of marginality can fulfil a normalising function.

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Afrikaans Theatre: A Centre Moving?

J.L. Coetser

Critics such as Brydon (1987) have suggested a postcolonial, counter-discursive interpretation of William Shakespeare's play, *The Tempest*. The existence of three types of colonisation is confirmed even by a superficial reading of the text.

During the first stage Sycorax, a witch, is locked on an island with child by passing sailors. Her son, Caliban, '[a] freckled whelp, hag-born -- not honour'd with [a] human shape' (Act 1, Scene 1), is born on the island. An airy spirit of the Ariel, serves her but because he refused to obey her repressive commands she fixed him into a cloven pine. The second phase commences after Sycorax had died and Prospero and Miranda have landed on the island. Prospero is the rightful Duke of Milan when his brother Antonio had replaced and then put on sea to die with his daughter. He reaches the island, releases Ariel from Sycorax's spell and subjugates Caliban as his slave. During a storm a ship with friends and enemies around perishes nearby. Prospero reveals himself as the shipwrecked persons as the true Duke, after which the survivors return to Europe aboard the repaired vessel. Now the third stage commences. Ariel receives his freedom and Caliban probably remains on the island. 'We want Caliban to be left behind in what is, after all, his own piece, but', declares Filmer (1983:6), 'Shakespeare neither fulfils, nor denies our desire'.

Introduction

This interpretation of *The Tempest* reveals patterns relating to the discourse on the marginalisation and postcolonial situation of plays written in Afrikaans. These include the consecutive colonising of the southern tip of Africa, first by settler occupation followed by military invasion. In 1652 a Dutch trading company, the Generale Vereenighde Nederlandsche Goecevoerde Oostindische Compagnie, or V.O.C., founded a halfway station to replenish its ships on route to the East. Britain occupied parts of Southern Africa in 1795, 1806 and in 1902. South Africa officially became the Union of South Africa in 1910 after British victory in the Anglo-Boer War (1898-1902). Several instances of internal cultural colonisation ensued after the National Party came to power in 1948 and the African National Congress in 1994.

According to Gilbert and Tompkins (1996:309–308), internal colonisation of minority cultures with limited access to political power continually occurs. In Malaysia, which is the example Gilbert and Tompkins (1996:265) quote, the ruling elite enshrined the Malay language, culture and values to the disadvantage of other cultures. The relationship between Malaysia and South Africa in 1948 and 1994 are striking. However, the South African situation in 1948 differed from the situation in Malaysia. In 1948 Apartheid caused forms of internal colonisation increasingly preventing or hampering cultural expression by most South Africans. The ruling elite enshrined the Afrikaans language in a fashion similar to the enshrinement of the Malay language. Presently it seems as if a reverse process is taking place. In practice it appears as if the ruling elite is enshrining the English/English language and culture to the disadvantage of most minority cultures, including persons speaking Afrikaans.

Essential to this observation is an acceptance that post-colonialism in South Africa represents a continuous process with diverse consequences. According to Ashcroft *et al.* (1989:2) this process originated in a kind of European imperial aggression:

We use the term 'post-colonial' however, to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonisation to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression.

Postcolonialism therefore refers to the influence of the process of colonisation on plays in Afrikaans after the event has taken place, including events relating to neo-colonialism.

Using a general literary systems approach, it suggests that Afrikaans theatre was at different times subjected to different kinds of cultural subordination. As in instances elsewhere the consequences were severe. 'Colonisation is insidious', explain Gilbert and Tompkins (1996:2),

it reaches far more than political boundaries and extends well beyond independence boundaries. Its effects are on language, education, religion, artistic sensibilities, and, increasingly, popular culture.

Due to its public and often subversive nature, postcolonial theatre is frequently censored. Afrikaans theatre protested against the power exerted by the colonial centre, and by so doing exposed itself to political intervention. Anticipating political intervention *Die verhoor* (1960), *The Mahabud* by Bartho Smit had its premiere in English at the Royal Court Theatre, London. *Die plintheur was ver* (1977), *The Plintheur*

Seed Blues Pop by N.P. van Wyk Louw had its first performance at the Gilt celebration of South Africa becoming a republic. (All translations from Afrikaans are by the author of this article). Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd severely criticised the play because it did not conform to his expectations of an occasional drama. Verwoerd's comments released a barrage of public criticism against the playwright and his play.

The general aim of this article is to explain how Afrikaans theatre was subjected to various processes of postcolonialism. These processes were the result of occupation, invasion and different types of internal colonisation. Concluding, I shall attempt provisionally to characterise the uniqueness of Afrikaans theatre and the marginalization to which it was subjected at times.

Occupation

Various forms of colonialism arose from establishing a Dutch V.O.C. railway station in the Cape in 1652. This occupation led to the spread of Dutch cultural influence to the interior as a consequence of the migration of stock farmers speaking a variant of Dutch. Dutch-Afrikaans influence increased at the cost of the cultural heritage and the marginalisation of the indigenous Khoi-Khoi people, who were mercilessly massacred by the colonists. Wade (1995:xix) therefore appropriately asserts that colonisers have been oppressing South Africans since 1652.

Contrasting with the extinction of the Khoi-Khoi, the colonists contested the autocratic rule of the Dutch governor, Willem Adriaan van der Stel. D.J. Opperman (1978) depicted this event in his play *Vergelees* (1936; meaning, an unattainable ideal, a remote location) as an example of the rising of Afrikaner nationalism. The action in *Vergelees* indirectly suggests the playwright's reaction to the rise of Afrikaner nationalism in his own time. In the play Van der Stel and his followers clash with a group of 'free settlers' (Ashcroft *et al.* 1989:9) led by Adam Tas and Van der Helden. The governor denies the settlers the right to trade their farm produce freely, which inevitably results in the formation of a united group of rebels disowning themselves from colonial Dutch authority. After submitting a petition objecting to Van der Stel's rule, the V.O.C. disbands his followers and calls the governor back to answer for his misdeeds.

Opperman's play presents two perspectives. The first relates to an actual historical event, which he transposed as a 'subtext' to the time of writing the play. According to Jameson (1993:8), the historical event is presented in such a way 'that this "subtext" is not immediately present as such ... but, rather must itself always be (re)constructed after the fact'. This perspective culminates in Van der Helden exclaiming: 'we are no longer Hugenoot or Dutch men but new persons, stronger, more braver than they are ... Yes, I am an Afrikaner' (Opperman 1978:91).

His realisation relates to the second phase of cultural colonisation during which the migrant writes back to the centre giving preference to its own cultural production. Van der Heiden realises that a new identity has grown out of "Buguenot" and "Dutchman", and that the name "Afrikaner" ties him to a new place, which is not Europe. He really expresses what Ashcroft *et al.* (1989:85) call

the special post-colonial moment of identity ... the concern with the development or recovery of an effective, identifying relationship between self and place.

Simultaneously Van der Heiden's words suggest the opposition between the "Afrikaner" and an *other* ("they"). By transposing the historical opposition between the governor ("they") and the free settlers to his own time, Opperman criticised features of society (Krugmeyer 1986:799). Especially relevant is the portrayal of the governor's group as corrupt representatives of government and authority. In addition the playwright criticises the division of society in "blacks, browns and whites" (Opperman 1978:56). "In this country we shall become one great nation from many nations, and take from each the best".

The differences between the playwright's representation of postcolonialism and the importance the historian Davernport accords to the clash between government and citizen, indicate a number of ideological discontinuities. Davernport (1989:37) distinguishes six revolts as

part of the mixed history of South African nation. Some, perhaps, but largely devoid of action, are political ideology and belong in awareness of the Cape as potentially anything other than an outpost of the N.O.C.

Opperman rejects his claim by emphasising the "pre-history" of Afrikaner nationalism and by foregrounding the postcolonial tension between *self* and *other*, *create* and *imagine*. In addition the play criticises the development of the discourse of Apartheid. In the end Van der Stel concedes that his ideas for the colony were unsustainable, including his dream of "one great nation from many nations" (Opperman 1978:56). However, instead of regarding the main ideas of the play as a major subversion of the political power of the developing postcolonial Apartheid state, one may just view them as a mild form of criticism directed at corruption in general.

Invasion

Except Apartheid few events have surpassed the consequences of the Anglo-Boer War on Afrikaner society, such as the attempt by the British colonial authority under Milner to anglicise South Africa. Despite internal divisions Afrikaners reacted negatively to

the colonial centre's display of authority. Milner's endeavours had two consequences. The first was protest in plays against the authority and culture of the coloniser. The second reaction emanated a few years later, after 1920, and was to be less bold, but no less intense.

Examples of playwrights and plays depicting struggle are L.H.J. de Waal (*Die spioen en sy handlangers/The Spy and his hangers*; 1901), A. L. van Rooy (*Suganah Revier*; 1903), M. Jansen (*Afrikaner Hertog/Afrikaner's Mind*; 1914), S.J.S. Hoshoff (*Jaanner, Johannes en duifjins/Jannies, Johnnies and dunties*; 1917), Jan H.B. Coetzers (*Heidiene van die oorlog/Heidiene of War*; 1918) and C.J. Langenhoven (*Die Hoop van Suid-Afrika/Hope of South Africa*; 1918), and D.J. van der Merwe (*Die Vrou van die Afrikaner/Woman of South Africa*; 1918). None of these plays survived the progress of time. However, using history on stage proved to be effective opposition to Milner's anglicisation of Afrikaner culture. These postcolonial plays simultaneously assisted in sharing a historical discourse which gave rise to a unique form of cultural nationalism.

Afrikaner cultural leaders established this materialism by constructing a specific brand of nationalism. Dekker (1964:96) describes its manifestations in literature during the first two decades of the century:

an own national form of art ... [should celebrate] ... our past, our lives, our future as part of the folkland, as an expression and creator of the character of our people ... [the Voortrekker to fall a time, the ox wagon, the *poets* to evoke pain.

In this description Dekker assumed that the notion, the *Afrikaner*, represents an organic unity motivated by a single nationalism. Hofmeyr (1993:96) contested the assumption. She pointed out that Afrikaner nationalism related to economic and social influences predating capitalism. Part of these relations concerned the way in which cultural leaders managed literary production and construction.

An example of a postcolonial play embodying the ideas of Afrikaner nationalism was C.J. Langenhoven's (1957) *Die Hoop van Suid-Afrika* (The Hope of South Africa). The play derives its postcolonialism from the depiction of epicurean freedom before the Anglo-Boer War, as a form of protest against colonial occupation. The present play is therefore inherently propagandistic. In this regard Riquarts (1969:45) points out that "Afrikaners experienced an upsurge of emotional bondage to a people, place, singularity, *volk*, *plaat*" and that Langenhoven's "weakening" is this emotion "linked to the ... political movement resulting in South Africa becoming a Union in 1910".

Die Hoop van Suid-Afrika consists of two acts, each containing three scenes. In the first act every scene depicts a different time and place: 1650 and Table Bay, 1750 and the Western Province, 1856 near Grahamstown. The second act depicts a scene near Chief Dingane's capital city (*Kroon*) in 1818 and 1839. The six scenes in the play

therefore pretend part of South African history from 1650 until 1839, i.e. in particular a presentation of the way in which time, represented by Father Time, treated allegorical characters such as Hope and Cape of Good Hope seen from the perspective of Afrikaner nationalism.

In the play the stereotypical portrayal of characters is obvious. Langenhoven describes Jan van Riebeeck and Dingaan as 'historical', and Boer, Savage, Slave and Woman of South Africa as 'typical'. The playwright depicts Savage as an example of the post-colonial *other*, making no progress in life and without virtue, being unfair and dishonest (Langenhoven 1937:5-8). Savage is bent on revenge because 'the white man took my land' (Langenhoven 1937:15) and he loses after 'the white woman of the white man' (Langenhoven 1937:30). He brutally replies to the Reverend Charles Collins (1937:50): 'Look around you, white man. We shall annihilate all your people. The mountains and valleys are black of my people. Do you see us?'

Langenhoven's emphasis in *Die Hoop van Suid-Afrika* on the role of woman, religion and race was part of the postcolonial discourse on the empowerment of Afrikaners at the beginning of the century. It also provides an indication of the nature of Afrikaner identity then. Towards the end of the century Deon Opperman (1996) reversed the nuances of the discourse in his epic play *Donkerland* (Dark Land). In the play historical events compel the white man, being the alienated subject, to return the land he has appropriated from the indigenous people. Ironically a black woman, Me'djie (a word previously used in Afrikaans to refer to a black servant), becomes the ancestral mother of the family De Wit (meaning *the whites*). In his play Langenhoven had no doubt about the nature of Afrikaner identity. Opperman (1996:157), however, deconstructs Afrikaner identity metaphorically to 'a small heap of broken rubble ... testimony to the existence of a thin line of humanity'.

A similar quest for identity may be found in Herbert Dhlomo's play *The Girl Who Killed to Save* (Nongqwenza the Liberator) (Visser & Couzens 1985). As with Opperman's and Langenhoven's plays, Dhlomo projected an historical event—the cattle slaughter and subsequent starvation among the amaXhosa—onto contemporary issues. *The Girl Who Killed to Save* (First published in 1935) differs in an important aspect from Langenhoven's play. In *Die Hoop van Suid-Afrika* (first performed in 1915; see Visser & Couzens 1985) Langenhoven attempted to legitimise the *status quo* represented by Afrikaner nationalism. Dhlomo does not legitimise but questions the *status quo*. *The Girl Who Killed to Save* (Visser & Couzens 1985) appeals against the portrayal of Savage in Langenhoven's play and against the occupation of land by whites. The text depicts whites as the *other*. The European colonist is a white thief (Visser & Couzens 1985:12) but, as in Opperman's *Donkerland* (1996), he will relinquish the land he has occupied. Compare Chief Krel's words at the conclusion of the second scene (Visser & Couzens 1985:15): 'Krel! will triumph over the Europeans

Krel! will rule over all the country'.

The quest for cultural identity is an important part of post-colonial plays written in South Africa since the turn of the century. In Afrikaans postcolonial plays Afrikaner nationalism contributed to the usurpement of the Afrikaner subsystem from other forms (Jampelreich 1997:9-9) of South African theatre.

Postcolonialism after 1920

I have already referred to Milner's attempts to anglicise South Africa in the period immediately following the Anglo-Boer War. Previously, during the second British occupation from 1800 onwards, Lord Charles Somerset similarly aimed at anglicising the region. Their attempts included the compulsory use of English by the judiciary and in the public service, churches and schools, emphasising the importance of language in the postcolonial process. Because speakers use language to control reality, Somerset and Milner succeeded in disempowering Afrikaners legally, economically and socially. British colonial rule reduced Afrikaners to an *other* by undermining their dignity, perception of belonging and identity. In this process one may distinguish two phases.

During the phase succeeding the Anglo-Boer War, playwrights vehemently named down all forms of British colonial culture. Then followed a phase of appropriation during which dramatists were directly concerned with the ideology informing the process. Consequently the 'crucial function of language', i.e. 'seizing the language of the centre and re-placing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place' (Ashforth and 1989:38), was reversed. Afrikaner leaders realised that an armed struggle against colonial rule could not succeed. They had to adapt their strategy to the requirements of a cultural battle in a new war zone, the colony. Gertus Pretorius, for instance, argued that Afrikaners should reject English influence on the vocabulary or grammar of their language.

Historical and ideological considerations evidently influenced postcolonialism in early Afrikaans plays. These considerations included dominance of the economy and civil service by English-speaking persons, a devastating drought, an economic depression and South Africa's participation in World War I as a member of the British empire. Consequently postcolonialism marginalised the 'mainly agrarian Afrikaner as a collective, urban working class surpassing all cultural boundaries. "Afrikaners were exterminated again"', Kavanagh (1985:13) wrote.

Unskilled and newly proletarianized when they arrived in the town, they found themselves in circumstances remarkably similar to those in which the proletarianized town worker found himself.

The possibility that the Afrikaner as a group could disappear, caused serious concern among their leaders.

Dramatists responded to the situation by writing plays depicting social reality. Realism was, however, ameliorated by compassion. Jan F.F. Celliers described this change in the preface to his play *Reg boereg* (1922; *Harbinger's Right*, quoted by Anrijsse 1973:73):

Thus written until now, concerned drama was mainly with human relations. In our time of early national construction, it is a pity to explain and defend. Similarly we may not act displaying some moral or other involvement ... However, far from influence locally what is should and what is has achieved elsewhere, we should follow a holistic approach, by concerning ourselves primarily with humanity – man, his character, passion, feelings, development, struggle, the amazing and wondrous relations following from differences between persons.

An exception is F.W.S. Schumann's play *Roosie het Juis-son* (1933; *Roosie comes Home*), which depicts the existence of poor whites with great realism. Plays with a similar theme included *Die skedemore* (1938; *The Dividing Wall*) by A.J. Fancome, *Draakmoed* (1933; *Liquor Act*) by C. A. Venter or *Die stad Sodom* (1941; *The City of Sodom*) by F.W. Boeyse. Van Wyk (1995:71–79) points out that Afrikaner plays depicting poor whites serve as an indication of Afrikaner leaders' enterprise to encourage cultural (Afrikaner versus Jews or English-speaking persons) and racial (whites versus blacks) distinctions between Afrikaners and non-Afrikaners. Afrikaner leaders extended the notion of an *other* by including not only the British coloniser but everyone who was not an Afrikaner. The meanings attached to the word 'Afrikaner' increasingly associated skin colour with the language of Afrikaners (Van Wyk 1995:11).

Two playwrights who concerned themselves primarily with humanity (Celliers, quoted by Anrijsse 1973:73) were J. F.W. Grosskopf and H.A. Fagan. In his plays Grosskopf depicts social displacement and poverty (*Die Eensydige Broeder*, 1920; and *Die drie nig slawens* *When the Harshness Chafes*, 1926). Fagan is known for his portrayal of female characters. In *Lenie* (1924) the title character rebels against her father's authority. *Quas* (1934; meaning: the oldest daughter), *Daar eis* (1934; *Crude Oil*) and *Roosie het blare* (1934; *Red-brown Leaves*) depict situations representing the oppression of women in societies dominated by men.

The marginalisation of women in societies controlled by men contrasts the interpretation that postcolonial discourse interrogates all forms of imperial dominance. In plays by Grosskopf and Fagan, the postcolonial processes succeeding British occupation as well as phallocentric authority vested in societal structures, 'colonise' by male characters twice. In *Quas* (Fagan 1986) for example, Mr. Venter manipulates

his daughter by using society's expectation that the eldest daughter should tend to the needs of an elderly parent. His expectations were based not on interpretation of Christian religious values in which the notion of a fatherless God-the father dominated. However, fifty years later the portrayal of the postcolonial situation of women in Afrikaner theatre has not changed substantially. Although female characters such as Anna in Pieter Fourie's play *Ek, Anna van Wyk* (1986; I, Anna van Wyk) defy the patriarchal authority of the centre (governed by Seniors) more openly, only the context of Afrikaner theatre has altered.

Further evidence of postcolonialism appeared in performances of workers' plays between 1930 and 1950. The historical background to these plays related to the vulnerable economic position of Afrikaner workers (O'Meara 1983 *see note*). Leaders and workers linked closely and won the general election in 1924, a feat which the National Party repeated on its own in 1929. Exploitation, meagre wages and poor working conditions weakened the association between worker and politician and it ceased to exist. An additional consideration was that Afrikaner leaders entered the field of grand economics. This compelled the capitalist British colonial centre to not more accommodate towards the economic power the colonial margin had acquired. Due to the founding of economic megacorporations such as SANTAM and SANLAM in 1915, the results of resolutions passed by the Economic Congress of the *Volk* in 1932, and political victory by the National Party in 1948, a noticeable Afrikaner working class ceased to exist. By 1950 workers' plays in Afrikaner were no longer generally performed.

Die nuwe wêreld (1927; *The New World*), a worker's play by H.A. Fagan (1956), shows the class divisions which were prevalent in Afrikaner society then. In addition, it depicts the workers' struggle against the power of capitalism (Van Wyk 1989). *Die stroom wêreld* (1927) relates the story of Gerdard, heir to the owner of Van de Laar Bricklayer Factory, returning after taking part in World War I. Gerdard tries to change the way his father manages the plant, but without success. He implores Mr. Van de Laar to 'reconcile himself with classes and nations', but his father maintains that 'one has to take people as they are' (Fagan 1956:3). A strike turns violent as workers set fire to the building, but still Van de Laar refuses to share management with his employees.

The continuing empowerment of Afrikaner workers during the thirties and forties due to the expansion of Apartheid disadvantaged black workers. Plays creating the position of black workers include *Die Pannaske Meesters* by Ruth and Tea by Boshoff (Orkin 1991:366). *The Pannaske Meesters* involves the relationship between a young wife and a maid, and in this regard it compares with an Afrikaner play by Corla Fourie in *Moeders en dogters* (1985; *Mothers and Daughters*) the crisis evolves around the death of the father. Gerit Celliers-Straal, a politician, craves and the fact that Susie, the

main, loses her child during the riots simultaneously ensuing in Soweto, deepens the family crisis. An important difference between the plays is that Sisto's experience is not part of the main action, which is similar to Kaurine's encounter in Bogart's play. *Quers*. Sisto plays a minor character and Kaurine does not even appear on stage. In *Don Gedeone onder die Boere* (1994, Don Gedeone among the Afrikaners) by Charles Fourie, Charlie plays a black Cinderella.

In summary one may state that postcolonialism in the thirties and forties predicated on the marginalisation of Afrikaner society overall. Specific concerns related to the position of women, poverty, urbanisation and the fate of the worker. However, Afrikaner plays become increasingly 'aes'hetic' in the sense that themes moved away from the depiction of raw realism. Aestheticisation resulted in plays moving ideologically from the margins of postcolonialism to an own, neocolonial centre. Political transformations resulting in victory for the Afrikaner electorate in 1948, re-created these changes. A generation of cultural philosophers extended the cultural involvement of the new political centre by reflecting on the role the arts should play in this new dispensation, including theatre. The emphasis fell on the unbreakable bond between individual and group, between the Afrikaner and his work. In some way Cella's premonition of this development in the preface to his *Reg'he reg* (1932), that the playwright should depict 'man, his character, passions, feelings, developments, struggle, the amusing and sorrowful relations following from differences between persons' (quoted by Antonissen 1973:33).

Neocolonialism

According to Gilhert and Gumpkins (1996:257) the notion neocolonialism is applicable to

situations in which the most significant interest is not (necessarily) one of the fundamental powers) but some other power or cultural group.

In this regard one should bear in mind that the transition to a neocolonial situation in the 1940s was not smooth and did not take place instantly. Because an internal political regeneration, the National Party, initiated neocolonialism, it evolved from inside and therefore exhibited coherence, ruptures (an example being the disappearance of workers' plays) and fractures. An Afrikaner playwright who apparently criticised the National Party government's application of a neocolonial Apartheid ideology, W.A. de Klerk (1971),

In his play *Die jaar van die moord* (1952: The Year of the Killing of the Afrikaner) Ockert appears on three levels, that is in the family of the main character,

ter, called 'the General' (*die Generaal*), with the English-speaking neighbours staying on the farm Soria, and with Ngondela who lives on the General's farm called Okanjenje. Inside his family the actions of 'the General's three sons represent different consequences of postcolonialism. Alexis's actions represent rupture. He becomes part of the brain drain following the change of government, first by challenging the authority of the father and then by emigrating. Representing the 'New Afrikaner', Martin, a medical doctor who has earlier returned after practising in Europe during World War II, embodies the anti basis of Alexis's ideas. The third son, Pieter, is an extremist wishing to perpetuate the old order. The General calls his English neighbour, Dr. Hammond, a 'jingo' (De Klerk 1971:17), implying that Hammond represents the British coloniser. On his part Hammond reminds the General that Britain won the Anglo Boer War. Wanting to reconcile, the General sends Ngondela an ox as a gift (the ox to which the title refers) reminding him of a pledge to his father, that he would remain a friend of Kasiup's people. Ngondela refuses the gesture, kills the messenger, one of his followers accuses Gillian Hammond and in the end Pieter assassinates Ngondela.

This convinces the General that the isolation between persons belonging to different cultural and racial groups would not disappear without such sacrificing, much 'that is nearest and dearest' (De Klerk 1971:89). The play ends with the suggestion that Martin and Gillian would marry. Apart from creating the impression of being manipulated, the end of the play anticipates an optimistic future. The Afrikaner (represented by Martin) and the English (represented by Gillian) sections of the population reconcile with each other, but the orientation towards 'the old Black Nation' (De Klerk 1971:91) remains paternalistic and condescending. In the end De Klerk could not convincingly criticise the policies of the ruling elite.

From 1938 onwards several festivities took place in Afrikaner society which added to the rise of neocolonialism. Typically a playwright wrote an occasional drama to commemorate the event. Examples are *Die dipter reg* (The Higher Law), written to commemorate the Great Trek centenary in 1938, and De Klerk's *Die jaar van die moord* and *Langs die stettel* (Beside the lines) by Gerhard J. Loukes, both written for the bicentenary in 1952 of Dutch colonisation by Van Riebeeck. Due to the nature of the festivities most of the plays reflected on the significance of past events. A common feature was the way in which people's playwrights mythologised events and characters (Grundlingh & Sapiro 1989).

Probably the most conspicuous playwright reacting to the progress of postcolonialism in Afrikaner society, was N.P. van Wyk Louw. It is generally accepted that nationalism informed much of his literary writing. In this regard Van Rensburg (1977:88) declares that he touches on different categories of nationalism in his plays. He (Van Rensburg 1975:16) describes *Die plungetand* and *ver en* as a play portraying 'major communal ideas', which is nationalism and imperialism. The difference

between *Die plemsand woude*, performed for the first time in 1966, and *Die dapper reg*, which premiered in 1938, is that the latter is a response to British colonialism and the former a reaction to Afrikaner neo-colonialism.

Language plays an important role in any critique of Louw's interpretation of nationalism (cf. Olivier 1992; Kammermeyer 1994; Van Rensburg 1996: 125–163; Olivier 1996). To this regard Gilbert and Tompkins (1996: 164) points out that language is 'one of the most basic markers of colonial authority':

intimately associated with language is the speaker's sense of nationality and dignity, both of which are threatened when the coloniser denies the linguistic validity of indigenous languages (Gilbert & Tompkins 1996: 163).

The threat posed by British colonialism – for instance, explains the use of metaphors relating to war in Louw's philosophical essays, and his attempts to justify the existence of Afrikaners as a cultural group in his play *Die dapper reg*. In *Die plemsand woude*, performed five years after South Africa became an independent state under Afrikaner rule, he proposed a broad nationalism recognising the existence of divergent cultural groups. His interpretation of nationalism therefore developed further away from one including other cultures.

Oppeerman (1971: 203) states that by 1934 Louw was a fierce adherent of national socialism. Should we compare prominent traits he made in November 1935: his interest in Nazism was clearly not permanent (Louw 1985: 23):

Not by declaration (persecution, not by flaring the torch of nationalism, poetry is every people's inheritance [volks-eigenskap], but we must encompass reality with as [the artist] never his course.

Due to the propaganda of Henry Degeer (1976: 23) labelled this form 'aesthetic nationalism'.

A second phase relates to an essay dated 19 October 1931, titled 'Rondom begin: "nasionaal"' ('Concerning the notion of "nationalism"') (Louw 1985: 419). No longer would Louw adhere to *aesthetic nationalism*, but from now on the principle of *possible coherence* would be the cornerstone of an interpretation (Degeer (1976: 23) branded 'leftist [or liberal] nationalism'). For Louw this meant that nations and cultural groups or volke could tolerably coexist. Ultimately Louw's aesthetic and ethical nationalisms relate to what Vilhoes (1977: 6) called 'ground questions' on nationalism:

What is a people (*volk*)? What does a *volk* need to exist? How does one justify the continuing existence of a *volk*, especially a small one? What are the relations between one *volk* and another and with other groups with which it is faced to coexist?

Louw (1973) addressed the justification for the continuing existence of Afrikaners as a *volk* in his play *Die dapper reg* (1938; The Higher Law). In the play the *Voortrekkers* (Afrikaners) reach the Hall of Eternal Justice after death to listen to the verdict the Voice of Justice would pronounce on their previous existence. The Voice justifies their decision to leave British colonial rule by linking their need to divine sanction, implicitly justifying the origin and existence of the Afrikaner as a *volk* (Louw 1938: 271):

Go, and know that your righteous deed may stand before God because it was strong and simple because He Himself is simple and unbiassed! Well, so etc. and Deeds attended by change.

The verdict confirms that the Afrikaner's blood inspired the decision to leave British rule, that is by the desire to be free. This desire is common to all of mankind, and it is part of the Law of Nature (Van der Walt 1983). God inspired Afrikaners to be free, but they themselves bore the responsibility for the fashion in which they used their freedom to choose. According to the playwright the Afrikaner's decision to leave was adherence to God's Will, and therefore their deed and the existence as a *volk* will be sustained.

The idea that Afrikaners were God's chosen people and whatever they did received divine sanction, was a fallacy which commonly occurred among Afrikaners. Such an interpretation undoubtedly carries the stamp of an exclusive ethnocentrism. This also applies to *Die dapper reg* because N.P. van Wyk Louw addresses only the plight of Afrikaners, their forefathers and their destiny. From the perspective of nearly sixty years later such a vision is limited because it does not account for the multitude of ethnic and other groups in the country. Therefore one may regard *Die plemsand woude* (Louw 1981; first performance in 1966) as correcting the main ideas in *Die dapper reg* (first performance in 1938). Simultaneously *Die plemsand woude* (1981) represents an ideological transition from an aesthetic to an ethical form of nationalism.

Die plemsand woude or *Die begin* (Louw 1981) (The Plume's Seed Blows Far or Painful Beginning) is an epic drama in which the playwright represents events from the Anglo-Boer War. The double title suggests that the arid experiences of war were part of what was to become the Republic of South Africa. War was not the end, but the painful beginning of accomplishing an enduring Afrikaner dream of independence from (British) colonial domination. The action revolves around a P. van der Merwe, the last president of the Free State Republic. The narrative, an old woman, surveys the problem in the first line (Louw 1981: 9): 'What is a *volk*?'.

She answers her own question: A *volk* does not consist of mythical heroes, it

contacts of inter-racialists (Grandfather Visser), nationalists (Seyn, dictators (General De Wet), traitors (Jan) and persons coming from outside the door-apartheid: Pieter, an Afrikaner who is a British colonial's subject, and two enemies of the Afrikaner, a Jew, the Scots Walschape and Hammy. The inclusion of Walschape and Hammy confirms the postcolonial focus on language and place. Although they were the Afrikaner's enemies, they became part of South African soil and South African society overall by dying in the country. According to the playwright South African society overall also includes persons of colour (cf. Steyn's address to Padiar, *Die vernielers* 1960: 66).

Afrikaner leaders did not receive Louw's vision of an inclusive nationalism favourably. Especially Prime Minister Verwoerd's dismissive response (Pelzer 1986:673) caused a public outrage directed at Louw personally. In this regard the prime minister's response endorsed Chris Barnard's (1974:5) statement that Afrikaners 'have always been part of the opposition' and were 'rebels against the authorities of their time'.

One may best describe the mood among Afrikaners during the sixties as 'defying every contentment'. Yet the manner in which Afrikaners treated other racial and cultural groups caused cracks among Afrikaners themselves becoming increasingly evident. Despite criticism and protest by intellectuals and clerics such as B.H. Kest, D.P. Botha, H.A. Teyateyan, G.D. Schabbe, W.P. Isakheysse or Bayers Naude (Kruimer 1983:223), the National Party government neo-colonially continued to 'occupy' and 'invade' most South Africans' lives. This confirms that neo-colonialism does indeed refer to 'structures in which the most significant coloniser is not British (or one of the former European powers) but some other nation or cultural group' (G.F. Bell & Thompson 1996:257).

Playwrights reacting to this new form of postcolonialism included Barthe Smut (*Die vernielers*; 1960) and Adam Small (*Kom by kô hyster*/Kuma's Coming Home; 1963). One may view *Die vernielers* (1960) as the playwright's reaction to the Mixed Marriages Act (1949) which prohibited marriages between persons from different races. *Die vernielers* (Smit 1976) relates the story of Frans Harmse's involvement with Elize, and the disclosure of Frans's mixed descent. The tale continues on to the devastating consequences of his disclosure. Initially Dan Hertzog's father intended to marry Frans physically, which was to corrupt him. Although he refrains from doing this, the rest implies that being ostracised psychologically in a community in which racial considerations were essentialistic (Ashcroft *et al.* 1989:4) and absolute yardsticks of self. Frans, the society Frans's involvement with Elize implied that the coverage of his skin colour would contaminate her. This convinced Frans to leave. Smit signals his decision in the dialogue. Frans swatches to a variant of Afrikaans (Smit 1976:56): 'Má die mense buel nie sê te wies oor die kastrasie nie – kô why, da' was nou in wêreld froue se haer'. ('Madam need not be saddened about the castration, because for her hair remains the same').

Using a variant of Afrikaans is an example of the post-colonial appropriation of the language of the neocolonialist. In this play the colonized language becomes an appropriated language, Afrikaans (Ashcroft *et al.* 1989:38). A similar process takes place in Adam Small's plays *Kom by kô hyster* (1974) and *Kuma's kom by kô hyster* (Mar Jacobs's Christmas, 1983). Other resemblances between Kuma (in *Kom by kô hyster*; 1974) and Frans (in *Die vernielers*; 1960) are evident. Kuma is an exile possibly returning from abroad, his mother (Makro) is from the working class, and both texts reflect on morality, a culture of poverty, and political and social injustices. Both plays end without hope: Frans becomes a victim of Apartheid and Kuma again leaves the country.

Apart from Small and Small a few other playwrights have responded in reaction to this neo-colonial situation (cf. Smith, Van Gennep & Willemse 1983:88-97). They include Pieter Draf (*As al die die mens Please, Madam*), Pieter Kouch (*Enslaved die slachtoffers*/This Side of the Shooting Range: Fare), Peter Seydels (*Political Joke*) or Melvin Whiteman (*Die al die kere die wêreld*/That will be the Daron Day). Most of these texts remain unpublished. This also applies to Hans du Plessis's play *Stoer*, written in Gediwa-Afrikaans (used with a similar theme as *Die vernielers* and *Kom by kô hyster* (Tagebrecht 1997). In these plays protest against the discourse of an Apartheid state roughly compares with the resistance depicted in English postcolonial texts from the same period (Luchs 1982; Kruimer 1983:31-38). An important difference, however, relates to form.

Neocolonialism after 1960

Contrasting with English post-colonial plays, plays written in Afrikaans after 1960 frequently used literary devices such as allegory combined with satire or irony. The presentations in English plays were mainly direct, realistic and the result of workshop productions. The most important Afrikaans mainstream playwrights from this period were Barthe Smut, André P. Brink, Adam Small, Chris Barnard and P.G. du Preez. Significantly Temple Hoag (Leach 1997: 120) characterises their work as 'postcolonial':

These were writers all working within the Afrikaners' dominant world, when exiled out of the British colonial imagination at the end of the Second World War, and the language struggle to the other ...

During the seventies a few events took place that profoundly influenced Afrikaans theatre. All of them were directly or indirectly related to the neo-colonial politics of the National Party government. Perhaps the most significant events were strikes in Soweto during 1976 and 1977, which were triggered by the compulsory

use of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in schools. By 1990 political and economic pressures from inside and outside the country forced the National Party to relinquish political power to the majority. In 1994 the African National Congress won the general election convincingly, thereby introducing a new era in South African theatre (cf. Hauptfleisch 1997:159-172). Arguably the most prominent Afrikaans mainstream playwrights from this period were Pieter Fourie, Reza de Wet, Deon Opperman and Charles Louw.

The production of plays in Afrikaans main stream theatres declined notably during the seventies. Accordingly the Afrikaanse *Teater en Kultuurvereniging* (Afrikaans Language and Culture Organisation) initiated annual theatrical competitions for university students, called *Kampustoneel*. This resulted in the production of texts such as *Ek, Joon van Byk* (Pieter Fourie; produced 1984), *Diep grond* (Deep Ground; Reza de Wet, produced 1985), *Mors is 'n lang dag* (Lameness will be Long Day; Deon Opperman; produced 1984) and *Don Grubbe onder die Boere* (Charles Louw; produced 1994). *Kampustoneel* ended in 1995. However, Afrikaner leaders were concerned that Afrikaans would disappear as a language of cultural expression after the African National Congress came to power in 1997. This prompted the introduction of the *Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees* (Little Karoo National Arts Festival). It remains to be seen whether this festival will generate as many new Afrikaans plays as did *Kampustoneel*.

Many Afrikaners contend that conceding political power resulted in the marginalisation in practice of Afrikaans as a high level cultural language and of Afrikaans cultural workers. Presently government is setting up a system of centralised control over the arts, marginalising Afrikaner theatre even further (Hauptfleisch 1997:169-171). Placing Afrikaans theatre within the South African theatre system, one should, however, accord to the notion an extended meaning including Standard Afrikaans and its variants. This is an important extension if we recall that the compulsory use of Afrikaans in schools led to the latest in *bowers*. It appears as if gradually, despite the language preceded the acceptance of dramatists may use Afrikaans and its variants in one-act plays written in English. Apart from variants such as plays by Small, Du Pless's, Rieck, Kaleb, Snyder or Whitehead, various also speak in crossover plays (Hauptfleisch 1997:66-81) such as *Sophisticated* (1988) by the Junction Avenue Theatre Company or *Chemooff* (1979) by Dames Simon and cast. These applications are examples of a Creole continuum. According to Ashcroft (1989:67) such a continuum presents a paradigmatic demonstration of the abrogating impact in postcolonial literary theory.

Afrikaans plays from the neocolonial period increasingly display a variety of postcolonial forms. In contrast with English postcolonial plays, Afrikaans texts subverted the neocolonial centre from within by engaging in counter-discursive arguments

with classical texts, using ritual and carnival, rewriting history, or depicting forms of resistance and by examining the position of women in society. (Gilbert and Thompson 1996) have informed these categories and the following discussion.)

A first application of postcolonialism refers to plays engaging intertextually to, or contrasting or, canonised or classical theatrical texts. One may interpret Reza de Wet's deconstruction of the myth of Afrikaner patriarchy and bravery in *Hoë Genoot* (1991), *Guest Night*, General as her reaction to the portrayal of the General in W.A. de Klerk's play *Die jaar van die vrede* or and as commenting on N.C. van Wyk Louw's *Die pluinwiel van ver*. Bartho Smut's *Baardie in die Boland* (1994: Baardie's on Boland) clearly preaches on Corneille's *The Bachelors* as well, for being associated intertextually with (among many examples) Soyuzka's *The Bachelors of Euripides* (1973). As in Soyuzka's play the greatest departure from the classical text appears in the ending. In his text Smut satirises societies in which racial considerations dominate. However, when Baardie tries teaching the farm owner compassion for his fellow men, they throw him from the farm. Within an ethno society, represented by the *laan Boland*, there is only one choice (Smit 1994:65): 'If one may not show compassion towards your fellow-man, the only alternative is becoming a terrorist'.

A second kind of postcolonialism relates to the appropriation of theatrical performances such as ritual and carnival. Presently it seems as if Afrikaans theatre is increasingly borrowing from African theatre, thereby acknowledging that Afrikaans is an African language by virtue of its origin and continuing existence in Africa. A text bearing testimony to this text is Charles Louw's (1994) *Don Grubbe onder die Boere*. In the play the title character consults a sangoma (shaman) trying to find his 'true love' (Houw 1994:86). His quest takes him to a hotel in the north of which the guests and patrons are indifferent to the social and political reforms taking place in the rest of the country. In the end Don finds his true love, Grange, and then they leave the hotel's guests and the town to their chosen destiny: becoming a man's paradise (Houw 1994:127). Appealing to public imagination, Louw uses his play to comment on environmental propensity to political and cultural isolation. As Gilbert and Thompson (1996:83) put it: 'Carnival presupposes the possibility of social reform by activating the communal imagination'.

Should a playwright design a historical drama, by enacting other versions of the one contact, imperial, and post-imperial past on stage? (Gilbert & Thompson 1996:107), a third kind of postcolonialism evolves. In Andre P. Rieck's play *Die jongste* (1997, *The Jagger*) recent history presents a backdrop to the action. The performance includes Eshiswari in which Kilian, previously a colonel in the security forces, has to confront his past. It transpires that he represents an Afrikaner. He states: 'If we were not one step ahead every time, I would have been the end of the Afrikaner' (Rieck 1997:36). In the end he realizes that he is a 'murderer' and begs forgiveness, but

no one would listen (Brink 1997: 54f).

Die jagger (1997) compares with recent plays examining the Afrikaner's history and its relationships with other cultural groups critically. In the nineties these include Raza de Wet's *Nag, Geneshaal* (1991) and Deon Opperman's *Doenderland* (1996). Because these plays end by reaching out to postapartheid South African society, they may preempt the healing of an Afrikaner community scarred by the consequences of colonialism.

A fourth form of postcolonialism in Afrikaners theatre relates to body politics. As Culbert and Tompkins (1996:294) explain:

In parallel the postcolonial body disrupts the constrained space and signification left to it by the colonisers and becomes a site for territorial inscription.

Both *Die vernietigdes* (Smit 1976) and *Die jagger* (Brink 1997) represent 'site[s]' for resistant inscription'. In *Die jagger* (Brink 1997) Vusi's cut out tongue is kept in a bottle on stage, becoming a metaphor for suppressed persons' freedom to present their own cases. In *Die vernietigdes* (Smit 1976) Bas uses skin colour to separate his daughter, Eliza, from Liza.

A related form of postcolonialism appears in plays treating aspects of femininity. Compared with other forms of postcolonialism, depicting femininity is not dominant in Afrikaners theatre history. Most plays touching on femininity consider the role of a chauvinistic, 'beastman' father. Apart from plays by Cornia Boule (Phoedus en moeders 1988 Mothers and Daughters) and Jan Goosen (*Drie vroues* Three One Act Plays 1992), important exponents of femininity in this period were Pieter Fourie and Raza de Wet (*Trie/Three Plays*, 1991). In both *Ek, Anna van Rijk* (1986) and *Die saggeloor* (1988; The Sagger) the main characters are called by the same name, Anna. In *Ek, Anna van Rijk* (1986) her husband and father-in-law abuses her physically and psychologically. Vermeulen convincingly established that such plays may be considered 'the ... theatrical sign[s] of the Afrikaner nationalist's psychic and sociopolitical crisis during the early eighties' (Vermeulen 1990a; cf. also Vermeulen 1990b).

Conclusion

Departing from Ashcroft's notion of *postcolonial* (Ashcroft et al. 1989: 2) the colonial source in Afrikaners theatre has clearly moved on several occasions. Critics such as Kwaamp's (1985:8) conclude that this movement was the result of colonial occupation and invasion:

Historically the structures of modern South Africa derive from the inescapable fact of conquest and colonisation. These facts remain important today. First, there was the

invasion of the area now known as South Africa, the defeat and subjugation of the indigenous peoples by British and Boer forces, and the seizure of the land and its resources. Then there was the prolonged struggle of the Boers or Afrikaners to establish their conquest of the indigenous people in states independent of British rule, their defeat in war and their political struggle to reverse that defeat. Third, there was the struggle of the African nationalists for political rights and total hegemony in the land that had been wrested from their forefathers.

Different forms of postcolonialism in Afrikaners theatre evolved as a result of historical processes. Apart from the degree to which Afrikaners were marginalised, the association between Afrikaners and other groups determined these forms, whether they were part of the political centre or not. An additional consideration was the tie between playwrights and the people (*volk*). Afrikaners playwrights were mirrors in which Afrikaners could view their own images.

Up to 1950 one may best summarise the historical processes as representing a form of *complementary postcolonialism*. Playwrights depicted the social, economic and political marginalisation of Afrikaners in a more (C.J. Langenhoven in *Die Hoop van Suid Afrika*, 1937) or less (D.J. Opperman in *Vergeteged*, 1978) 'outworn' fashion, siding with the *volk*. Following 1958 forms of *contemplative postcolonialism* appeared, which examined Afrikaner power associated with *verreënoudisme* from a position of loyal dissent. Relevant playwrights were N.P. van Wyk Louw (*Die diepting*, 1978), W.A. de Klerk (*Die jaar van 'n vuur seel*, 1971) and D.J. Opperman (*Vergeteged*, 1978). By 1960 Afrikaners playwrights and Afrikaners theatre fully became an opposition to the neo-colonial Apartheid centre (Barnard 1974). The move coincided with the introduction of a form of *subversive postcolonialism* in plays by dramatists as diverse as Balthus Szil (*Die vernietigdes*, 1976) and Adrian Stuur (Xanadu by *Die hysie*, 1974), Raza de Wet (*Drie susters* *and* Three Sisters Two, 1996), Charles Fourie (*Om diebaer* *om die Baer*, 1994) or André P. Brink (*Die jagger*, 1997). As is the case with all postcolonial writings, these plays question the abuse of power.

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Rejecting the Mother Tongue: Afrikaner on the Margins

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Afrikaner Nationalism concentrated power in the hands of white male Afrikaners throughout the entire apartheid period (1948–1994). It might thus seem curious to select a white Afrikaner man's autobiography to illustrate a theme of marginality. But Ntjale Pampas's *The Story of an Afrikaner: Die Beskrywing van die Zonde?* (1980) constructs an autobiographical subject who contests the ideological and political scripts encoded in his mother tongue, choosing rather to marginalise himself by 'contesting his identity element in English'.

The use of English as the medium for testimony against apartheid was common amongst South Africans whose mother tongue was not English. Albert Lutulu (a Zulu), Z.K. Matthews (a Tswana), Mphahlele Retha (a Setswana speaker) and Alfred Qabula (a Xhosa), simply 'instantiated a general trend by writing or publishing their testimonies in English'. In fact, it would seem that most autobiographical texts by South Africans in the apartheid period across the language spectrum are written in English. There are obvious reasons for this: English is the language most accessible to the largest number of readers, both within South Africa and beyond her borders. Thus autobiographies and other writings are more attractive to publishers if they are in English. Moreover, since the aim of most non-English autobiographers was (during the 40 years of apartheid) political—re-visioning of the apartheid scene—the desire to spread the message to the largest number critically affected the choice of language.

For all of these South Africans the employment of English has implications beyond the pragmatic. It is hardly a revelation to state that language is by definition ideological'. Thus the use of English may indeed be construed as greater political efficiency, but it can also be construed as simultaneously shoring up a global hegemonic system. As far back as 1986, when the obvious bogey was A.S. Janus (this was the time of extended national states of emergency, and of increasing militarisation of the conflict between the State and black and brown South Africans), Njabulo Ndebele (1987:219) argued that

the history of the spread of the English language throughout the world is inseparable from the history of the spread of English and American imperialism.

He further points out that when the colonised 'chooses' to communicate in English rather than in an indigenous language—a Hobson's choice, given the economic and technological supremacy of the first world—the language offers him or her subject positions of inferiority, of dischilment, of disorientation, for when he will almost inevitably have to struggle through lack of command, absence of fluency,

[I]f for functional acquisition of English in a capitalist society such as ours in South Africa, one further reinforces the current utilization of people as units of labour... precisely because [English] has been reduced to being a mere working tool. [I]t can actually add to the alienation of the workforce (Ndebele 1987:227).

Every utterance, whether in the mother-tongue or otherwise, involves a dialectical process which simultaneously offers the speaker the position of subject of the utterance while also subjecting the speaker to its ideological power; but the process becomes more brutally one-sided when the speaker is using a second, or, in the case of black South Africans, a third or fourth language. In such cases the empowerment of the speaker through language usage is radically checked. This structural constraint of the speaker's position as subject of the utterance is further compounded when the autobiographer has to speak through the layers of mediation provided by mother-tongue English speakers who act as ghost writers, amanuenses (Albert Lutulu has Charles and Sheila Hooper as his amanuenses), co-writers (Frances Dana's title page reads: *My Spirit is Not Bound: Frances Dana as told to Barrie Seltsinger*), and compilers (Helmut Bozzoli and Charles Chazee as the 'compilers' of the stories of groups of women on the Benjaamim and Mary Densen for Winnie Mandela).

But the title of this paper is 'English as the language of resistance against apartheid', and while we must not overlook the complex problems involved in the use of English by non-mother-tongue speakers as outlined above, we must remember, too, that by and large English was a medium of challenge in the struggle against apartheid. For the indigenous peoples of South Africa, from 1948 onwards (the time of the accession to political power by Afrikaner Nationalists) Afrikaans culture and language came to represent the primary system of oppression. Hertz Witteboer (1987:240), a black South African whose mother tongue is Afrikaans, notes that

Afrikaans is the language of the dot policeman, *grosbakkende* students. It is the language of the unemployed shop attendant. It is the language of a white farmer, owner of police, Jimmy Kruger, and on the death of Black Consciousness activists... Steve

¹ There are, in post-apartheid South Africa, 11 official languages: Zulu, Xhosa, Southern Sotho, Northern Sotho, Venda, Swazi, Ndebele, Tswana, Tsonga, English, and Afrikaans.

Biko: 'Do I not know? [...] I know the world.' Given this proven legacy of callousness, inhumanity and brutality, is it any wonder that black people demonstrated so forcefully their rejection of apartheid and Afrikaners?

It was rejection of the enforced use of Afrikaans as medium of instruction in black schools that led to what came to be known as the Soweto Uprising in 1976. The use of English in testimonies of the oppressed served to undermine the apartheid project by helping to engender a wide readership about the realities of lived victimisation, and by contextualising the statistics of apartheid's horrors which could so easily numb one's sense of living people. These testimonies served, too, to cross the language barriers of the different indigenous South African linguistic groups so as to affirm the importance of the individuals represented (even to those whose experiences might be similar).

But for speakers of the other indigenous South African languages, the Afrikaner autobiographies, the case is somewhat different. There is and was a small, but active, Afrikaner publishing industry in South Africa so the autobiographer was unlikely to turn to English because of difficulty in finding a publisher unless, of course, the work was considered to be so revolutionary that it would be likely to be banned by the South African censors.¹ So when the Afrikaner autobiographer chose to write in English, we have to look beyond practical considerations. In the cases of Theysen, Dreyerbach and Ntseke, the decision to use English arose out of deep identification with the mother-tongue and its cultural and political implications. I say that the alienation is profound because Afrikaner culture is generally hostile to the English and their language. Britain had first begun its colonial enterprises in the southern tip of Africa as early as 1795 (but more than a century after the Dutch), and it was the desire to escape British rule that led to the Great Trek, that migration of Afrikaners into the interior of Southern Africa. The Boer War at the turn of the century left even greater

enmity to the English, for twenty-six thousand Afrikaner women and children died in concentration camps set up by the British,² and the British 'scorched earth' policy left survivors impoverished. So while it is true that one European language carries with it the stigma of colonialism for the peoples of Africa, the case of English for the Afrikaner is much more complexly problematic than it is for other South Africans. English, it must be remembered, was used as an instrument of oppression of the Boers by the British. Thus for the Afrikaner the act of distancing the self from the mother tongue and its cultural and political issues is fraught with implications of collusion with the enemy. As we shall see, this is especially true for Ntseke Ferreira. Writing in English, Ferreira's narrative is distressingly marginalised from the Afrikaner centre, indeed, from his Afrikaner-ness which he believes is central to his identity.

Ntseke Ferreira was (and probably still is) a journalist, who defines himself primarily as an Afrikaner; the autobiography is entitled *The Story of an Afrikaner* (1980). But it is a paradoxical decision to write even that title in English: how can one claim to be an Afrikaner and not declare that in Afrikaans? Does the use of 'English', the language of 'treason', not contradict the self-defining statement and more importantly, frustrate the speaker's desire to identify himself as an Afrikaner? That this sort of struggle is not simply a peripheral issue for Ferreira is indicated unequivocally in the subtitle. This is interrogative, and in Afrikaans: *Die Rewolusie wat die Kinder?* (meaning, the revolution, or rebellion, of the children). This patently refers to the cover illustration which contains a drawing of a man (presumably the author) in the foreground, against a representation of that most famous of photographs from the 1976 Soweto Uprising of the limp and bleeding body of Hector Peterson. He was alleged to be the first of many hundreds of children shot by the South African Security Forces in what has often been called 'The Children's Revolution'.³ But more pertinently, since the Afrikaans version of that name ('The Children's Revolution') has been appended to the title in the form of a question, it serves to suggest that *this* story of an Afrikaner represents a possible rebellion by one of the Afrikaner tribe's children.⁴

¹ Hetta Willems (1987:74) notes, further, moreover, that Afrikaans, in large part of what were the Cape, Transvaal and Orange Free State provinces, is also the language of the impoverished underclass: the farm labourers, the fishermen, the general populace of the barren binneland.

² Afrikaners can justifiably be referred to as an indigenous African language; Hetta Willems (1987:228) argues that the creation of Cape Dutch probably developed out of the contact between European colonisers and the aboriginal Khoikhoi and San people, as well as the influxes of the slaves from Angola, Java, Madagascar and Malaya. The language is thus indigenous, the Afrikaner tribe is not. Afrikaners, literally not created, means from Africa, Afrikan.

³ For instance, according to Hetta Willems (1987:275), for the black Afrikaners whom who wished to articulate a counter-hegemonic position in Afrikaans 'all the major Afrikaner publishing houses [were] shut firms. The political and economic interests of the South African government and these publishers [were] decidedly colonialist'.

⁴ Cameron (1986:114), incidentally, what has recently come to be recognised by historians is the fact that over one hundred thousands of Africans died in British concentration camps, a colleague in the History Department at the University of Durham, Westville says that the current official figure is around eighty thousand black South African deaths in British concentration camps.

⁵ The Hector Peterson there is more than one version of the spelling of his name; was the first to die at the hands of the Security Police in June 1976 is widely acknowledged. See, for instance, Cameron Makhurum (1989:4). Ferreira seems to spell it like the children of Soweto (1987:71).

⁶ Ferreira (1980) alludes to the 'With the children' 'the revolution' (120 and elsewhere).

Can we enter comments on these two titles; he says to his daughter:

Your final choice of title, seeing that I've given you, will depend on your vantage point from the end of this letter, your view of words, of the world, of yourself in the world to come.

Personally, I prefer the second one. The first means being trapped in the dull repetition of measured days, the acceptance of fate, the paralysis of the impossible. The second means the recognition of the possibility of the impossible, which is not a paradox but a refusal to impose any limitations on the limitless (Pereira 1980:18).

So, for him, (at this point, at least) choosing Afrikanerdom as the essential defining characteristic means nihilism, whereas revolution against dominant Afrikaner nationalism is fraught with liberatory potential.

That his text is indeed 'in quest for freedom' (1980:4) from the strictures of Afrikaner Nationalism and its illiberal racism is evident from the outset. Ferreira notes:

I am actually rewriting an Afrikaans text as you know it is impossible to do so at this stage. I hate and suffers me but at least I know that time is on my side.

The poem is our politicians, newspaper editors and Afrikaans publishers who allow us to write (and think and say) only certain things – those things that fit the grand schemes and narrow thoughts of a powerful habit. I know because I've tried to make words from my red and tough. No thing helped.

So I will write in English but always with the hope that one day my people will know that they are not free (1980:10).

The trouble for Ferreira is that rebellion against the politics of Afrikaner nationalism means that this is an admission of failure to be the kind of son his father wanted him to be, it means loss of family, of community, of self. His father wanted him to be a 'boersoon', in the image of the (Afrikaner) father – the strong man; the one who hits first and leaves the questions for later' (1980:9). That his cannot conform had seemed to him as a child to be his failure, not the failure of a failure to recognise his individual needs. 'In that world my father had the same authority as God' (1980:9). Thus the adult confession, which is a coming out for a position outside of Afrikaner paradigms, is also a rebellion against the father and his people: 'My child', he writes to his daughter,

even while I am writing now I sense a shame but nagging feeling that I am writing a long, very false things. And I betraying my father and my people's hopes again (1980:10).

Pereira (1980:11) identifies the forces of evil within Afrikanerdom, and calls

them

living ... a kind of betrayal for all the words of my conditioners, the name of the organization (sometimes called words, they responsible for my pain now) is also a shortened version of *Doedsterf*, the Afrikaans word for 'strangle to death' ... When I wrote that first letter I was fighting living out there ... His ideology, prophecies, policy politics and institutional murders ... I clearly saw the lie in our system of Communist National, Efficiency our System of justice based on human laws, our elaborate System of self-deception and our proud System of belief in God which we use to achieve our selfish aims ... And now? At least I know that living is as inside me (1980:11).

The Story of an Afrikaner (1980) testifies to the struggle to create a self in the vacuum left by rejection of the evils of the system which had spoken him, shaped him:

I am wrapped up in words defined by other people, choked by the flowers of a story ... We are torn by a billion past experiences and fantasies ... I am at the end of an assembly line (1980:10).

But having come to the point of reconstructing the self in narrative, the narrator faces the terror of alienation. He says of his indictment of Afrikaner ideals: 'My tainted sources are the rope around my neck' (1980:11).

Pereira himself answers the question of whether he can construct a self in a language which by his own admission is despised by 'good' Afrikaners (1980:9) when he switches to Afrikaans in the last quarter of the book. Interestingly, even in the English part of the text (the first 131 pages) his denunciation of Afrikanerdom is consistently underwritten by his identification with the subject; he refers to himself and Afrikaners as 'I' and 'we' (e.g. 1980:139), so his rejection and exaltation when he changes to Afrikaans is not unexpected. He says, 'Now, at last, I am using my own language! And I skip weightlessly from word to word like a lonesucker in a tree full of blossoms' (1980:166). He no longer faces the dilemma of constructing an autobiographical self in the language of the Other.

The Story of an Afrikaner (1980) begins with a profoundly ironic frontispiece which reads:

I write the way I think
as I see,
What I am

The echo of a billion ... (1980:iv)

and using the publisher's translation which accompanies the Afrikaans text.

What makes this so heavily ironic is the fact that this *English translation* is taken from the folktale representation of the birth of the Afrikaner language! The narrator recounts that:

Afrikaner consciousness was born when our language was born – when one of the first Afrikanders, in proud self-recognition, declared to the world: 'We wrote the way we talk.'

That was the history of the Afrikaner nation. And that is my heritage. And no one (except a few party men with ink that away from me) will say it again: 'Ek se, ek se ek praat, soek ek is, soek ek is' (1980:4)

But to say this in English, or to say it again in Afrikaans as an isolated line in an English text, is to rob it of its meaning. It is only in the last part of the text (the last 78 pages) that he can declare in his mother-tongue that he is defined by that which he speaks, that he can celebrate the self as actually constructed, that he can honestly say, 'En my gebroeders is! Ek skryf soos ek praat' (And my birthright is: I write as I speak) (1980:135). Ferreira thus finally solves for himself the quandary which faces all autobiographers who write in English as Other-tongue, namely, can one write/construct an autobiographical self in another language? Is a self in another language not another self? By turning back to Afrikaans he demonstrates that for him an autobiographical self in English is not he more than a pained approximation, a betrayal of self.

This linguistic act, the change to Afrikaans, denotes the wresting away of power over the way notion of Afrikanerdom, as well as of his own self construction, from the Afrikaner Nationalists, the racists, the powermongers. Shortly before he shifts to Afrikaans he refers to this mythic birth of Afrikanerdom and argues that the declaration of the *volksrede* that Afrikaners wrote as they talk

mean having the freedom to talk, to talk, write and act as a free individual. To express honestly your deepest beliefs and hopes for yourself and for your people. We are supposed to have freedom to talk openly, to say things the way they are. Why should an Afrikaner have to write in English? Why can't he write the way my people talk? In Afrikaans?

Because the 'voice' of the Afrikaner, his press, and on much TV, were long the voice of my people. It is the voice of the Nationalist Party ...

If only we would learn to walk the way we talk, again. 'Only we would return to the most basic of these principles – *welshoopenis* – which can condemn the respect of the world. When are we going to stand up and say 'through is enough' (1980:136).

Finally, the return to Afrikaans in the text is – in psychoanalytic terms, the murder of the father by the son; it assumes the right of the son to determine his own identity, to redefine genealogy, to invent the very myth. The issue becomes not only personal survival, but 'the survival of the Afrikaner' which is indeed at risk: he warns, 'Afrikaners, history will not give us another chance' (1980:139).

The narrative concludes in a celebration of self and Volk as indivisible, a rejoicing which it seems to me borders on delirium. For instance, he writes to ex-President John Vorster:

My people, we have come a long way and today we need our greatest challenge. May this also be our finest hour, the beginning of a new beginning, freed from the shackles of transitory notions ...

History has placed us here and this is where we belong. I believe we have a destiny to fulfil and the courage to do it.

History has also chosen us to be at the focal point of our particular moment in time when this necessary and, ultimately in the full knowledge of our human potential and world, task of writing 'the Afrikaner caught in the undercurrents of identity' (1980 publisher's translation: 228; author's Afrikaans version: 127).

And how is this adulation made possible after the angst-ridden soul-searching which fills most of the preceding pages? How has he come from an admission that he exists in a universe of pain? (1980:29) to the jubilatory tones of the concluding lines of the text? How has he come from the condition of Afrikanerdom's schizophrenia, its deceptfulness, its drive to conquer, to the point where he can celebrate in the final pages 'the Afrikaner heart and hand ... and the Afrikaner's direct gaze' (1980:224), and can seek to recuperate, and endorse, the Afrikaner myth of 'their status as a chosen people'?

This *volksrede* is made possible by positing an Other against which the self is defined and congratulated. And who is this Other that Ferreira constructs in the final pages of the text? It is not the Other of Afrikanerdom, 'Dewag', which is explored throughout the first 153 pages of the text; in this last Afrikaans part the Other is the rest of the world, perhaps, specifically the English-speaking world since Ferreira addresses them in English, inserting this English section into the Afrikaans part of the text. And this Other, the *buidelander* who reviles Afrikaner racism, is denounced by Afrikaner Nationalists for being blinded by arrogance. Ferreira comes very close to affirming this delusion. Ferreira's direct message 'to the world's political divines (in plain English)' (1980:216) denies that apartheid is an invention of the Afrikaner:

Ferreira uses the Afrikaans term *beïlgas*, which also means 'believe'; obviously, in this context, used ironically.

an our land apartheid drives, divides, belittles both black and white, in your part of the world it exists, for sure, the same thing, but of a different kind. And the results are exactly the same — everywhere (1980:216).

Now while one can follow his line of argument — that apartheid literally translated means separateness, and that the division and oppression of groups of people by others is not unique to South Africa — I contend that, to attempt to dismiss the specificities of apartheid's evil, the particulars of which he has *blatantly* been at pains to expose in the 123-page-long English section, is to engage in (self)deceit.

But the strategy has its uses for Ferreira: he is able to construct the world as being just as polite as an Afrikaner's

We [we are consciously ignoring his point when all Afrikaners here] want to state quite clearly, will not be the slightest form of contradiction, that apartheid is not our exclusive concern, we are guilty we say and share.

Apartheid is just our local word for an addition of the word to the Uwaysah struggle for supremacy of each and every kind.

Our flag has been so called, by its proper name, to enshrine it in our laws, to practise it openly for everyone to see. And how the world is pointing, pointing, saying: 'Shut your eyes, your noses, your ears' (1980:215).

This is just a paler version, it seems to me, of the Afrikaner paranoia of the 'four onslaughts'.¹⁰ And just as this fantasy of an eercharless land, in the original version, righteous people have once to perpetuate the loyalty of Afrikaners to the notion of the *welt*, so this serves to justify Ferreira's (public) return to the tribe, as a doing into the canonisation of his one, which at least avoids what he now argues is the compounding sin of hypocrisy. The text concludes,

Of readings by this ignorant!

[Kye est nomaan joo, leed glorie mond' jou. Hier is so pragtig in. Eersynerlik se sekerlik, in 'n land wat dit is die prys, and Amand.] (1982:221)

¹⁰ This notion conceived of the Afrikaner tribe as the whipping boy of the ignorant, vile glory of all nations who were either of apartheid, seeing their rights in the struggle of South Africans (who were rich to be the dupes of communist states who sought to overthrow the apartheid state). Afrikaners were thus facing a 'four onslaught' even within and without South African borders.

¹¹ His grandfather was Choro, a Portuguese sailor. Ferreira had the authorisation after him (see 50) and that he is addressing here both his great-grand, great-grand-mother (father as well as himself).

The prodigal son has indeed returned.

As we have seen, Ferreira cannot sustain the rejection of the mother-tongue; English has saved him well as a tool to dissect Afrikanerdom's evils but it fails to offer him a position as originary and integrated subject. Norling to crawl back into the archive, Ferreira can only do this by redefining that centre. Ferreira's interpretation of self and culture results finally in the therapeutic conversion of (Afrikaner) self and the reinterpretation of Afrikaner politics for the context of global, oppressive practices. The drive for resolution which propels most narratives can be found in this text to enable the construction of a vantage point which reintegrates a self torn apart by knowledge and shame. It is an observation post which fiercely retrieves advantage.

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Re-placing Dis-placed/missing Persons in Vladislavie's Short Stories

Wonderboy Peters

For Charles Ogozie and John Hefner, who engaged him in the early days of exile, the gaps and holes of narrative can only discover intriguing stories demanding attention.

Tracking Narrative in the Cracks of History

For Vladislavie, in the short story 'Movements' in his first collection of stories, *Missing Persons* (1989/87), draws the reader's attention to the 'prophetic silences between tracks on a train'. Adopting a satiric mode, Private, the ten years old narrator-protagonist in another story, 'The Prime Minister is Dead', narrativises such silenced and requested sites in the old recorded history of apartheid. In this story, history personified turns from itself into spectacle. History, incarnated in the persona of Verwoerd, turns out into parody when its moments of putrefaction, hesitation and fatigue are captured.

These cracks in the story of (apartheid) history become the grotesque fascinations of a re-membering Private. He rummages, imaginatively of course, the detritus, bumps, ruptures and breaches in history's pages. This narrator re-members how in full course of history, the alleged omniscient and infallible protagonists of apartheid, teetered and fell, faltering upon the moments for the ridiculing of power. With remarkable acuity, Ivan Vladislavie renders visible and audible the silenced clattering noises in the pauses of history. History's pauses, contrary to a supposedly forward marching journey of a 'voortrekkers' walk', are vividly enacted in the hope of the jarring track and carries Verwoerd's corpse.

This track, Private re-members, 'suddenly coughed, jolted and came to a halt' (1989:81). Here, history is allowed a momentary break, a relaxation, as it were. Deep in this pause in this theatricalised history, a rebellious and restless impersonator (John deers in this case), who betray a predisposition to overtake history. The track, history's carrier, is jolted. But 'the band and the first soldiers marched on' (1989:83). The gap that emerges between the track and the soldiers is the exciting moment of 'surrender' for Private. He rummages 'between them and the silent track, a fascinating gap began to open' (1989:83).

The purpose of this paper is to display the gaps and ruptures which Vladislavie enacts in his depiction of South African whiteness (page) in his re-membering of apartheid. The second section of the paper develops this theme by focusing on the author's self-conscious deconstructionist mode of presentation which raises crucial questions about the nature of knowledge and its interpretation. The conclusion specifically re-places the agency of Vladislavie's dis-placed persons in their construction of historical reality.

De-authoring Apartheid: Rewriting the Locales of White ethnicities

Missing Persons (1989) creatively disrupts the officialised myth of the grand design called apartheid. The story of apartheid has often been told as the triumphant transcription of a grand plan designed by a group of white conspirators – such representation is revisited in more detail in Deborah Posel's *The Making of Apartheid* (1992: 1–6). Vladislavie's stories, by contrast, question the notion of a monolithic, unchanging, transhistorical whiteness. The story, 'Journal of a White' specifically re-makes internal (dis)crepancy amongst white South Africans. Possible un-reconciled divisions among whites are captured in the widespread erection of monumental walls. In a landscape already dominated white by the Group Areas Act, the Greenwolds are busy constructing 'an extremely thick, high wall of an oval hat is fairly common in the suburb' (1989:26). Finding this particular wall, 'a little high ... a little forbidding' (1989:26), the narrator resolves to 'speak to them before they disappear entirely' (1989:38). His narrator tells Mr. Greenwald, 'Perhaps you have seen me. I live right across from you' (1989:40). But failing to be treated like an unknown intruder by Mr. Greenwald and his wife, the narrator shatters curses, 'They were such a perverse people. What were they doing to do behind those ridiculous walls? Volkspaleis? Nieuw Amsterdam? Standaard Monumental Bonds ...?' (1989:42). It is Vladislavie's focus in such ruptures in whiteness, a political colour (in the Fuchs's term) that serves as a useful strategy of de-authoring whiteness.

David Ruediger, in *Towards The Abolition of Whiteness* (1994) explores the multiple complex ways through which whiteness centres itself in the articulation of a racial supremacist ideology. His discussion on the history of early white immigration in the US, reveals that not every white immigrant automatically qualified to be a 'good white'. Borrowing from John Burt Foster, Ruediger refers to the white immigrants of whiteness as the 'new-old white ethnic'. Citing Posel, Ruediger (1994: 2) forcefully argues that racial identities are not only Black ... they are also white. To ignore white ethnicity is to redouble its hegemony by naturalising it.

In the same vein, *Missing Persons* (1989) raises intriguing questions about the visibility (and possibly the roles) of white ethnic groupings other than the Afrikaners in the story of racism in South Africa. Vladislavie does not, however, leave a simplistic

menting of white ethnics inhabiting South Africa. The specific ethnicity of the neighbour of Canonewald remains anonymous. This anonymity serves to stress the fact that ethnicity itself is not a rigid and static, but capable of infinite and unpredictable variations. This anonymous narrator raises questions about his own agency in the enacting of the creation of divisive walls. He completes the journal, an allegory of the brick wall, by saying, 'I must remember to take a stroll past the wall' some time and see 'if I can spot my brick' (1989:44).

This narrator stresses the need to overcome historically constructed boundaries. He does so by attempting to subvert the meaning of frontiers. He writes, 'We have so much in common. The wall ... I began to see it not so much as a barrier between us, but as a meeting point' (1989:39). This echoes very well Martin Heidegger's conceptualisation of a frontier: 'A boundary is not that at which something stops ... [but] it is that from which something begins its presence' (cited in Brabant 1992:11).

Vladislav does not in any way create a fiction of a white South African society devoid of conflict. His short fictions are ruminously littered with white ethnics whose interests are frequently clashing. In 'Sotho-seeing', the much-miffed white tourist takes pride in the fact that he 'knows that he is not a *voortrekker*' (1989:90). This story also makes visible the presence of a racist German. 'The German made natives here more savage, hardly civilized' (1989:90). In 'When My Hands Burst into Flame' (1989:133), one encounters a woman German Tourist approaching Chelsea Hotel in Hillcrest.

A shawl, bumbag, and white South African identity is further emphasised by the enactment of Italian identity in these stories. In 'Movements', one finds an 'Italian neighbour under battery *verre-ich*' (1989:62). The woman who 'cries in broken English' (1989:64) is probably Italian too. Private's granny shouts in Italian, 'Niente Uno' (1989:4). Private receives 'a pair of Lucky no. 1 slippers given to his grandfather by an Italian prisoner of war' (1989:9). The 'Terminal Bar' was at some stage inhabited by an Italian. Boshoff's sticks of gossip which he uses to torture tourists were a gift from an Italian. Boshoff's sticks of gossip which he uses to torture tourists were a gift from an Italian' (1989:113). The dice clock used in this bar are 'a gift from an American who was passing through' (1989:100). The presence of a Swiss identity in South Africa is inscribed in the business they run like the 'Café Zurich' (1989:38).

Vladislav also retells the chronicle of South African liberation struggle by representing white ethnics as actors in this story. In 'Flashback Hotel', the narrator, who 'went as a missing person' (1989:15) is probably Jewish. He fits the description of a 'terrorist', a category that tended to be synonymous with black freedom fighters during apartheid. The reader is invited to think that this narrator is a terrorist. He blows and kills men and women in the hotel. The suggestion that this 'terrorist' could be Jewish writer rests in the fact that he 'married a Temple David, Moonside' (1989:11). In this act, he walks to the temple, 'sing[ing] the long tunes carried on whistles' (1989:14).

Quentin and his girlfriend who kidnap the Prime Minister in 'The Box' are probably white too. The story begins by suggesting that Quentin was thought to be a close ally of the Prime Minister. But the Prime Minister later suspects that Quentin 'sows the seeds of discord ... of a bloody revolution' (1989:43). After imagining a successful kidnapping of the Prime Minister, Quentin and his girlfriend admit that they 'never actually liked him' (1989:27). Also in 'Tsafendas's Diary', the narrator recounts the assassination of Verwoerd, Amrius Tsafendas, whose ancestry was also Greek.

The depiction of poor white men and women, 'the dislocated detritus' (1989:18) in 'The Terminal Bar' is an assault on the fiction of white supremacy. Ann Stoler (1989:142) argues that the presence of poor whites, and hence the narration thereof, 'undermine[s] the image of a healthy, or powered and "rigorous" race'. The landscape and the minuscule inhabited by 'the dislocated detritus' is disease and decaying. Josephine, who was abandoned by the *Weibergs* is constantly clearing the vomit of the 'drunken and the disorganised' (1989:135). Famine is written over the bodies of these inhabitants. They are captured in the metaphor of 'the broken vein', 'slipping pores, grey lips, scars, age spots, acne' (1989:105). This narrative section of whites raises questions about the actual beneficiaries of the Apartheid wars. By foregrounding this chaotic and diseased ethnic, Vladislav directs the reader's attention to the underrepresented, repressed city scenes in the official apartheid map.

Many of the stories illustrate how South Africa's public memory tends to be controlled through colonial, official maps. In such a map too, Private's father followed so dogmatically from his home to the cemetery, 'Home's Acre' (1989:4). The obsession with maps is further displayed by them in 'Tsafendas's Diary'. 'When you set out to find Tsafendas's diary you shall take the map with you' (1989:92). The diary itself contains 'a map of the world [and] a map of South Africa' (1989:97). In 'Journal of a Wall', the narrative of urbanity is filtered through the rigid contours of a plan. 'The city was spread out below me like a map' (1989:13). It is at such moments when the official contours encoded in colonial maps are transgressed that one discovers the dislocated white (and black) ethnics inhabiting the Terminal Bar.

Ann Stoler (1989) in an essay, 'Rethinking Colonial Categories' has also remarked that the caricaturing of apartheid as a coherent, unproblematic master-plan is analytically limiting. She points out that the literature in this tradition captures 'fractured features of colonial and racialised to homogenise whites. Stoler's criticism has been echoed in a remarkable book, *Apartheid's Genesis* (1993). The editors, Philip Rimmer, Peter Delius and Deborah Posel critique the representation of apartheid as a through-going system. Their focus on popular resistance and conflicting interests between the Afrikaner states and mining capital is a sharp critique of the liberal and idealist narratives of the 1960s and 1970s. This literature 'depicted the evolution of apartheid as a contrived, linear process, originating in the prescription of a grand plan' (Umber 1993:124).

A supposed overwhelming master-narrative of apartheid is introduced by Private in 'The Prime Minister is Dead'. The death of Vorword is displaced to the periphery of Private's consciousness. This historic day allows Private to re-member the most important events in his life. He recalls that during this year his parents moved into a new house. This day evokes the memory of his granny and his deceased grandfather. Gardening is more central to the consciousness of Private. In keeping with the genre of the short story, the narrator takes detours and provides elaborate notes and tips about the spinning of wheels. During the burial, Private and his father were occupied with the planting of an orchard. They later participate in this 'big occasion' after being reminded by Private's mother that, 'you can't go through life taking the great events of history for granted' (1989:5). During the procession, Private and his father depose Vorword of the ritual attention he is accorded by the spectators. The clanking noise of their wheelbarrow transforms the two into a spectacle. It is finally Private and his father who carry the monumentally de-fetted prime in a wheelbarrow, and dump him into a hole. Employing a comic mode of representation, Vladislav rewrites the tragedy of apartheid. Apartheid's intellectuals and architects are re-presented as commoners. In these pages one discovers a 'Prime Minister [who] sank his teeth into Quentin's shoulder, and Quentin gasped and dropped him ... and [the Prime Minister] fell with a soft thud on a hard nap' (1989:46).

The context is apartheid. The content is not always apartheid. The walls inside the townships, for instance, portray various sportsmen. Cinema is part of the material geography, hence a shaper of the intellectual categories of these commoners. The reader is told that the idea that 'black people are like fish' is a quote from Smith, the film director' (1989:109). But Vladislav is also suggesting that sports and cinema were central to the colonising many whites, centering and compensating their ignorance of the political alienation of black people during the apartheid era.

Discursive Sites of Knowledge: (De)Composing the Materiality of Narratives.

In *Beginnings* (1978:82), Edward Said articulates the idea that fictive narratives are the 'casualty objects that fill gaps in an incomplete world'. *Missing Persons* (1989) bears the stamp of the plenitude of narrative that Said refers to. Yet plenitude in Vladislav's stories does not define a fossilised, pre-given reality. Here, reality is always negotiated as radically contingent. He is an author who opens up more gaps by enacting more notes in what he constructs as an already fractured milieu.

South Africa's 'artefactual sciences', to borrow a phrase from Bhabha, are forcefully captured in striking metaphors of emaciation, displacedness and dismemberment. These 'fleshes of pot-holes' (1989:20) are told through such images like, 'my skull cracked open like an egg' (1989:61); 'a bullock with three fingers' (1989:99); 'the pregnant

girl ... presents the hungry foetus' (1989:19); 'there was my house with its paying wound' (1989:25); 'I climb into a hole' and so on.

Disintegration is the principal concern in *Missing Persons* (1989). It is the trope of decomposition that structures these fragmentary narratives. The 'Prime Minister is Dead' serves as a prologue for the recurrent motif of a decaying social body. Vorword's corpse becomes 'a piece of meat that will be rotting in the soil' (1989:4). When he dies, he becomes a 'compost heap on which practically anything would grow' (1989:2). The fallen fish [that] rots into the ground' (1989:4) allegorises the (de)composition of Vorword's body.

The sea itself evokes the disappearance of words. A missing person writes in large letters in 'the margin of the sea' but 'the sea erases his message' (1989:86). Old stories are described as 'the flesh obliterated and corroded' (1989:7). The materiality of stonary, vegetation, bodies and even words is emphasised. Hence their tendency to decompose. All of these items seem to be composed of the granny's decaying 'meat blanket' (1989:98). The narrator indicates that granny 'put the meat blanket up to [his] ears and tucks it in. By morning it will be rotting' (1989:92). The story of all these (im)material artefacts, *Missing Persons* (1989) has been (dis)appearing destined for the inevitable (de)composition in 'the meaty breath at the centre of the earth' (1989:98).

Missing Persons (1989) constitutes numerous instances that bear the journey to the 'intriguing materiality' of language (Bhabha 1989:197). Words move a mass. Notice for instance, 'her bones [are] heavy with words' (1989:87). Words like bricks can inflict a wound. In 'Journal of A.W.H.', the 'words ... like bricks are as hard and heavy and worn as the metaphor itself' (1989:43). One lives in 'a wounded world' (1989:76). In the townships, the liberation fighters are creating freedom by 'hurling bricks into the burning bus' (1989:24). It is this possibility of viewing words/and vice as 'the very material of many practices' (Fisher 1989:112) that enables one to conceive of *Missing Persons* (1989) as Vladislav's own museum of words in which specific identities may be, and indeed are, articulated, performed and naturalised.

Vladislav does not, however, exhaust the possibility of agency of the recipients of official knowledge. The texts illustrate that the audience does not passively absorb the politicised identities official texts circulate. William Cohen (1989:512) describes monuments as 'ways of constructing and communicating a political culture'. He sees the creation of public stonary as a strategy for 'inspiring communities'. Vladislav shows how the meaning of such artefacts is contested. A narrator describes a monument as 'a chronicle, telling the whole story of our people. A story of origins, of pioneers, of battles and massacres, of long journeys marked by arson and steeling' (1989:71). But some people assault these memorials simply by disregarding their finality: 'The people paid no attention. There were no tax buses full of pilgrims. The people knew that a statue is only a statue' (1989:73).

Ka Shenblatt-Gudniel (1992) compares a 'museum/museum as a "to do with a view", Vladislav's own "copy of a text", his museum of words, is self-consciously deconstructivist. Vladislav disavows the alleged reality of the act of writing. Writing, he shows, may be an important act in the process of displacing, displacing and configuring of identities. The conflagration over words and meaning causes "a wounded silence" (1989:31) in the story 'Box'. The pen is capable of performing both corporeal and psychic violence. The tourist's pen in 'Sightseeing' is both an 'equipment for violence' and an instrument to 'inflict metaphor' (1989:17). In this sense, Vladislav dramatises less overt forms of 'verbal zankos' whose enactment display the capacity to displace and illegitimise oppositional discourse.

It is in this sense that Vladislav (de)constructs the mode during power operates in the (de)composition of texts, museums and monuments. To take a further instance, bricks, hence by extension words, assume infinite, archivable, and contradictory significations. A brick possessing a 'stony silence [and] an impenetrable skin' (1989:33) can suddenly transform into a surrealistic, rioting object. Remember, a brick encapsulates power in its material form. A brick is an end product of fire. The brick in 'Journal of a Wall' began to look like a leaf of bread, but from the inside, starting and fermenting inside' (1989:33). It is these 'bubbling and hissing' bricks that dismember and disfigure the house, leaving it with 'a gaping wound' (1989:25). The bricks are also manifest of the composite 'mixture [that] bulges and strains' (1989:90) in 'Isatendas's Diary'. Bricks too, Sue Marus (1997:33) states, 'are part of the composite mosaic of South African reality'.

Sue Marus's (1992:54) further illumines that Vladislav depicts a white society that is 'pre-occupied with recording its achievements and envy and its desire to perpetuate itself'. One way of achieving this objective is to alter artifacts into chronicles. In search of a 'usable past' the white society of apartheid re-impose the decomposing corpse of Verwoerd into a chronicle which becomes inscribed on the landscape. 'Once the Prime Minister was dead', Private remembers, 'they started renaming streets after him, and stations and schools and even pleasure resorts. They even renamed the suburb after him. They wanted us to live in a monument' (1989:13). Carol Duncan (1991:16) views 'museums and monuments and similar ritual sites as "the means through which the relationship between the individual as citizen and the state is enacted"'.¹

In *Museum and Commemoration* (1997:277), Ivan Karp stresses the need to reconceive museums (and monuments) as 'contested arenas, settings in which different parties dispute both the control of exhibitions and assertions of identity made and experienced through visual display'. Vladislav depicts statements as a mode of communicating and memorialising knowledge. The creation of public history, William Cohen (1989) observes, expresses the desire to inscribe 'a stronger imprint' in an 'already-combated space'. Ivan Karp further shows that the contestations over exhibitions

often result in debarcanisation of the 'ownership of culture and how it is defined' (1989:283). This attempt at proprietying culture is displayed by the grandmother: 'We must have Isatendas's diary ... we are its rightful owners' (1989:91). The statue in 'We Came to the Monument' throws upon the fact that she is gazed upon 'as if she was public property' (1989:72). Vladislav critiques however, the uncritical valorisation of sacrifice and martyrdom, what people elevate as 'the historic bloodstains' (1989:93).

Vladislav's museum, his monument, *Missing Persons* (1989), depicts an ethnised, racialised, divided memory. He shows that apartheid's apparatus of power, its 'symbols of power' like state monuments, attempt to displace and obliterate missing persons from the national psyche. The persons missing from the public memory are 'the homeless, and the hungry, the persecuted, the pursued, the forgotten, those without friends and neighbors' (1989:43). Vladislav's numerous and complex first-person narrators, seeking identification with the missing persons, 'those in transit, dispossessed and faceless, negate "any alleged sense of shared history"' (Sue Marus 1994:54). Vladislav tells stories of the South African rural dispossessed whose experiences remain uncommemorated in a context of apartheid political culture. The white tourist in 'Sightseeing', 'sees some characters desperate to be documented: a toothless old man sucking pichards through a hole ... in the tin, a baby breast fed (he averts his eyes); a child whose face is full of the misfortunes of the world' (1989:21).

Within all cultures, writes David Richards (1992:594), 'various versions of the past exist, simultaneously'. Vladislav shows that the act of remembering privileges particular versions of the past as more significant than others. In 'Science of Pragmatism', he writes that 'there were hundreds of versions of the heroine, herself, emerging slightly from the neck' (1989:67). But on the anniversary of the heroine's death, the heroine's lover recalls only 'two versions of her: a cancer and a sleeper' (1989:90). Sadly, he 'can no longer remember why he chose these two [versions] from among the hundreds' (1989:90).

Vladislav's re-presentation of displaced and disremembered versions of the past forces the reader to journey towards the re-placing and re-remembering of missing persons. His sometimes disorienting mode of narration tracks the tracks of canonical narratives, enabling a shift in focus away from the mundane to the more disturbing accounts. The sightseer in 'Journal of a Wall' describes his self as a 'backler to detail' (1989:165). It is this ability to read closely that makes visible 'for the night-walker' the broken veins, pores, greasy lips, sores, age-spots, and ' (1989:165:1). It is not an ordinary daylight, but 'moon that forces [the sightseer's] attention to finer details' (1989:17).

Contradiction, irony and ambivalence characterise the nature of meaning derived from attempts at sticking to detail. The narrator of 'Journal of a Wall' reaffirms the fiction that, 'it is, very important to catch every detail' (1989:29). Gaps and omissions

begin to emerge, allowing for the de-authorisation of the genre called 'objective reality'. Vladislavie skillfully enacts subjectivity in order to allow the reader to disclaim the assertions of 'the narrator'. This narrator-character thinks that he has developed 'sufficient emotional distance from the incident to put it down objectively as it happened' (1989:58). Feeling insulted by the Greenwolds, this person suddenly rages, 'who the fuck were they anyway? Lunatics, blind people, fat slobs, strong shirtouses' (1989:41). Like many of the narrators in the stories, this journal writer observes reality by viewing it through the corner of his eyes: 'Out of the corner of my eye ... I've watched the wall edge' (1989:42). Even the racist German in 'Sightseeing', 'out of the corner of his eyes he sees the faces of the people' (1989:131).

This is the moment of ambivalence, contradiction and irony. The racist German who 'thinks natives are more savage, hardly civilised' (1989:20) ritors (and pig-grinches) reality through a raciality to mediate. This German is actively engaged in displacing Vladislavie's already disappearing, missing persons. Vladislavie therefore resists the fixing of *Missing Persons* (1989) into a signified, monolingual and hegemonic narrative of the past. The meaning is always provocative, ambiguous and open-ended.

Memory, the final mortal pain in re-membering the past and imagining future identities, is a political act. Memory is always mediated. The nightwatchman in the German Bar narrates, and in particular he puts the emphasis 'if my memory serves me correctly' (1989:115). The narrator in 'Neutral on the Wall' realises that 'already memories are fading' (1989:24) because his vision has been obstructed by the monumental wall, events in the domain of the imaginary narratives about the Greenwolds: 'I imagine that she is there with him, holding a bottle of champagne' (1989:42). During a seminar at the Department of African Literature, Wits University (1997) Vladislavie uses the term 'semi-fictionalized memory'. It is the idea of a 'semi-fictionalized memory' that captures well the notion in *Missing Persons* (1989) of a box 'full of chaos and decay' (1989:85). In this 'box', *Missing Persons* (1989) itself, narrators 'spill out the bits and pieces of a puzzled world' (1989:87).

Even Vladislavie is himself a missing person. In the presence of absence, missing? becomes truthfully intelligible. He is a writer whose authorial over-meaning of his stories tends to be absent. In *Missing Persons* (1989) 'missing a chapter or two' (1989:86) like the heroine's story in 'A Science of Arguments'! Vladislavie's desired authority appears to be the desire to re-place and transfer his unidentified, missing reader into an active creator of meaning. Verna Brown (1990:127) encapsulates this aptly:

The reader is freed from the guiding hand on the elbow anxiously pointing the way. He is allowed to co-create each story, constructing and deconstructing at a modest, a wink from its confident narrator.

Accounts of the past seem to remain incomplete for this author so long as there exist unpublished, repressed stories in people's pockets. In 'Science of Arguments', for instance, the imposed letter becomes, 'a voice speaking softly in his pocket' (1989:84). *Missing Persons* (1989) is destined to remain a story of fragments. Quoting Lionel Abrahams, Vladislavie writes, 'Fragments neither close nor open meaning; they may mean anything except wholeness, except continuity' (1989:84).

Re-membering Agency: Extratextuality and Violence

the opacity of missing persons, those actively marginalised by the dominant groups, may become more visible if one begins to listen to the audible, yet silenced and named 'extratexts' like the unpowed letter. The notion of extratextuality may serve as a useful index for the sites of knowledge familiar to common people, but which could be deemed trivial or unnecessary by officials. These hidden texts may be retrieved from such unfamiliar sites like a brother's turn-up. Notice, for instance, the military iconography readable in Private's father's turn-up: 'My father said he had desert scars on the turn-ups of his khaki pants, left over from the war ... dyed with the blood of the patriots ... if the sand was red' (1989:38). The thinking cap that the granny wears using flesh is also 'shaped like a turnip' (1989:91).

Private's father gives the orchard a chronicle when he gives every of its thirty trees a naming. War and violence is textured over his body which is said to be 'stained with combat' (1989:6). Accordingly, he calls the orchard, 'a planet of trees' (1989:5). Also, the body of Boshoff is a text depicting power and violence. The 'word Boshoff's' for instance, 'is tattooed across his chest, in letters six inches high and dyed around with serpents, the "i" dotted by a hairy nipple' (1989:114).

Missing Persons (1989) re-memories a sensibility of violence and displacement characterising a South Africa of the 1980s. The violent context of the 1980s in which many of the stories are set, is one characterised by massive political arrests in the townships. A cycle of racial violence and the state of emergency engulfed townships or black townships. Violence is one such material that decomposes the society's social fabric. This violence is recycled and re-invented in domestic spaces via the print and electronic media: 'For once was finding the news more depressing - full of death and blood' (1989:28). The journal writer ascribes, 'who would build amid these ruins' (1989:28). These ruins were the very same foundations of apartheid. Private reminds us that, 'When the Prime Minister died he left us a compost heap, on which poetically any plant would grow' (1989:2). The text shows that South Africa's narrative of freedom cannot be separated from a violent struggle against apartheid.

Achille Mbembe's (1992:3) conceptualisation of power in the postcolony as 'disassemblage of the obscene and the grotesque', characterises very well the narrativ-

sation of the vulgarity of power depicted in "The Terminal Bar" Mbembe uses the 'postcolony' in order to capture a specific consciousness of an epoch in history. The postcolony refers to "these societies recently emerging from the experience of colonialisation and the violence which the colonial relationship, par excellence, involves" (1989:3). Mbembe also stresses the need to surrender the old binary categories of ruler and ruled, colluder and resister in order to understand the effectiveness of postcolonial relations of power. Of great significance is Mbembe's illustration that 'ordinary people' are 'not impervious to the charms of majesty'. Mbembe thus speaks of 'the logic of conceivability', that is, 'the dynamics of domesticity and familiarity which inscribe the dominant and the dominated within the same episteme' (1989:30). Below, I seek to illustrate, briefly, how Vladislav employs the modes of the grotesque and the obscene in "The Terminal Bar" to direct our attention to the manifestations of postcolonial relations even during the apartheid era.

Clare Lewis with a story being a fascination with the monstrous and outrageous. It is a stylistic whose logic is akin to the grotesque and the obscene. Vladislav displays such obscurities as 'the dregs go into a bucket for the New Year Punch' (1989:103). Boshoff and his associates are preparing a 'horse-meat' meal (1989:110). The effectiveness of the grotesque as a narrative technique lies in its ability to shock readers about the obscurities of power which have become salient, especially in a socially skewed environment like the 'terminal bar'. The alienating (shocking) effect inherent in the grotesque is better dramatised in the depiction of Boshoff who took his wife and his daughter into 'a duty free shop' and simply 'blow their brains out' (1989:115). Boshoff, whose conduct betrays discernible semblances of military imagery, is probably an ex-war 'run-down' like Private's father. The assertion is plausible, considering the fact that Boshoff is 'familiar with the wide open spaces. Here he's hizz an animal in a cage' (1989:115). It is for this reason that this coupist heap from the army, Boshoff, keeps ripping his shirt 'so that his chest can bear witness to the fact that he's Boshoff' (1989:114). Boshoff also re-plays and re-lives how he tortured 'terrorists' by clamping Wilson's hands in the butcher's jaws of the pliers. Boshoff does not bury the dead bodies of his wife and daughter. Instead, he crams a memorial, as it were, by freezing the corpses in his refrigerator. The grotesque narrative, 'historical bloodbath' as it has been termed in the poem, beginning in the police museum which depicts, 'the bullet took between the barrel of the rifle and the brain of the child' (1989:95). In the 'terminal bar' as in the police museum, the vulgarity of raw power achieves its 'banal' or 'ordinary' status which even ordinary people notice.

Violence has become endemic in the 'terminal bar'. The narrative depicts the bar as a stage where 'major battles, with teeth kicked out' (1989:107) have been fought. Rather than expressing remorse at the death of Mrs Boshoff and her daughter, the 'dishevelled dentures' had 'a great deal of drinking that night' (1989:117). Even when

Boshoff seized the future of Wilson using the pliers, we learn that it remained 'quiet in the terminal bar [and then] the rifle too [was] crushed then blood' (1989:114). As if the Mbembe reads such silence as a marker of 'possible on up idea of the ruled in the postcolony'.

The women 'carrying sticks and stones and pieces of concrete from bomb attacks' (1989:117) attempt to punish Boshoff for murdering the child and her mother. The irony, however, is that the men in the bar, probably experiencing an assault on their masculinity, join Boshoff in chasing these women away. Mbembe describes the postcolony as 'a simultaneous, a hollow pretense' (1989:11). These are the same men who are always giving 'spontaneous applause' (1989:116) when Wilson is buying their drinks. Wilson is the man who advises Boshoff to 'keep [the corpses] in the refrigerator as facts' (1989:116). When Boshoff beats Smith in the bar, we are told that 'Wilson does likewise to Molei out of a sense of loyalty to his friend, he says'. It is also out of a sense of loyalty that the 'ordinary men' in the bar watch Boshoff in dispatching the women. These men, then, enter into a 'large plj forward, carrying Boshoff like a banner' (1989:114). Boshoff is now viewed more as a hero of a feast. Even when Boshoff is asleep, he is captured in the metaphor of slavery: 'The old balanced like a Tleen statue between two bar stools' (1989:119).

Boshoff is not depicted as a protagonist or a victim of apartheid. The Verwoerd. The space he occupies is rendered invisible in the master-narrative of state apartheid. In many ways, Boshoff and the other patrons of the bar are the marginalised, displaced, 'missing persons'. In re-membering Boshoff and his associates in the bar, one is forced to confront their own sense of agency. These particular subaltern subjects may lack individual power, but they also seem to share a certain imagery of what power is. If indeed marginalisation through official discourses and state power does not, against the possibility of a repent, it is possible for us to avoid reducing the complex and contradictory experiences of Vladislav's missing persons into mere victims of externally imposed systems of domination.

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Writing Resistance on the Margins of Power: Rampolokeng's Poetry and the Restoration of Community in South African

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...belong to the shifhouse
but it's on skin that it lives
(Rampolokeng 1990:70).

Recent debates on the state of South African writing have tended to suggest that the theme of apartheid, and by implication the theme of resistance within the context of 'decolonisation', may have become exhausted. Njabulo Ndebele has once again thrown into focus the crisis that South African writers, black and white, are likely to face in the new political dispensation. 'What we are likely to have in our hands', Ndebele writes, 'is a general loss of focus. And there lies the crisis of culture in our country' (Ndebele 1992:25). For Ndebele (1992:25), 'the possibilities for new writings are inseparable from the quest for a new society'. In other words, for Ndebele, the creative agenda is inextricably bound to the challenges that are likely to be thrown up by the new political scenario in the country. As early as 1987, Lewis Nkomo had suggested that apartheid had become a 'sterile source of inspiration' for black South African writers, and he went further to suggest that 'only fresh ways of looking at the apartheid theme can salvage black South African writing from its present state of stagnation'. He wrote:

...only new ways of telling the story of Apartheid and resistance against Apartheid can dislodge the old poems of township removals, self-mutilation and police shootings and make them seem new (Nkomo 1987:30).

Given the quality of South African black writing over the last three decades or so, the anxiety of these two leading South African critics is understandable. In an earlier article, entitled 'Turkish Tales', Ndebele had drawn attention to the superficial way in which black writers probed into the South African experience. 'This superficiality', he wrote, 'comes from the tendency to produce fiction that is built around the illumination of surface symbols of South African reality' (1991:23). Ndebele's argument is now familiar and seems to me to be sufficiently forceful enough to need repeating in this

paper. What interests me in this paper is the possible misunderstanding and this position may create. For example, it is possible to believe that because the apartheid theme and resistance narrative in South Africa has been badly handled by some writers, the past as a theme has also become irrelevant. It is also possible to be led into believing that the bulk of black art was badly crafted simply because they were rooted in the surface symbols of apartheid, and that in order to release new creative energies, there is a need to look beyond apartheid history. But is it true that even in the quest for a new democracy we can easily forget the experience of apartheid? The old adage that those who forget their history are likely to repeat it seems to me to be relevant here and, as Rampolokeng (1990:64) reminds us, 'plastic visions of history' come with dangerous consequences. Apartheid history, just like the Jewish holocaust, continues to haunt the imagination of many South Africans and any attempts to suppress it is unlikely to succeed. At any rate, can we argue that we have adequately disposed of the theme of the apartheid past? Has resistance – the act of decolonisation – become irrelevant in South Africa's emergent nation-state? These and other related issues that I believe Rampolokeng confronts in his poetry.

My aim in this paper is to locate Lesego Rampolokeng's poetry within the tradition of what Edward Said (1993:252f) has called resistance literature, which aims to 'reconstitute a shattered community, to save or restore the sense and fact of continuity against all postures of the colonial system'. The paper aims at showing that Rampolokeng's poetry belongs to a corpus of African literature which not only battles by probing and asserting its functionality within the context of decolonisation, but also becomes 'an instrument that will transform realities into being, that imagines alternative configurations of our "real histories" to either affirm or transcend them' (Chikanda 1991:2). In this act of imagination, the paper argues, Rampolokeng's poetry ascribes the relevance of apartheid past in any meaningful ordering of the present nation state and in the building of a universal humane society. In *Horns of Hondo* (1990), Rampolokeng seems to be convinced that the apartheid past and present is still a relevant theme and, like Achille, he insists that we must dispose of the 'bad things' (1990:23). This concern is so real and urgent in Rampolokeng's imagination that I cannot agree with fellow poets that the re-telling of apartheid has already become a sterile. In an obvious reference to the leading black poets, Willie Kgositsile and Wally Serote, Rampolokeng 'flatly rejects their consensus

bravely faced's beautiful poetry,
in cowardice's defence, reason
where through the ruin in golf, eye
the devil, finger descends
cunning to put ball' (Rampolokeng 1990:27).

Born in Soweto, Rampolokeng grew up under the shadow of political resistance and the cultural renaissance of the 1980ties. It is therefore proper that his poetry should be located within the tradition of struggle against political and cultural repression in South Africa. The effect of apartheid's denial not only of the black people's humanity, but more significantly of their cultural integrity and their capacity to create any culture worthy of names, seems to be at the heart of Rampolokeng's poetry. For Rampolokeng, the history of apartheid South Africa has been a history of struggle over the cultural protocols of imagination, of intellectual and figurative means of seeing and rethinking relations of domination. Like Franz Fanon's native poet, it is the struggle to lay claim to that terrain of creative energy which offers the possibility of willing new realities into being and repossessing/creating, through the power of the word, that which had been fractured by generations of domination – the sense and fact of human community. If nationhood had been appropriated by a powerful 'other group', Rampolokeng seeks to restore the imprisoned nation to itself to 'put true and to psychological examination to combat its extermination' (Rampolokeng 1990:76). But how does one restore an imprisoned community to itself? Alternatively, how does a citizen seeking to recover independence of domination imagine itself? Edward Said (1993:258) has suggested that there are three choices

One choice is to do it as Aeneas does, that is, as willing as a rat of Prospero's Ariel does what he is told. Obligingly, and, when he gains his freedom he returns to his native element, a man of bourgeois native untroubled by his collaboration with Prospero. A second choice is to do it like Caliban, aware of and accepting one's marginal gas, but not disabled for future development. A third choice is to do it like Caliban who sheds his current servitude and physical disfigurements in the process of discovering his universal, pre-colonial self.

Edward Said notices the point that both Calibans nourish and torture each other in order to produce the radical cultural intervention capable of restoring the imprisoned community to itself. In fact, Said (1993:258f) seems to be well convinced that it is difficult to understand the

history of empire through most of the nineteenth century, unless one recognizes that some of the hegemonic imperialism infused with a passion for community that grounds anti-colonial resistance is cultural struggle.

how will he tell us
how does we sing the sorrow
deep night in ear heard? (1990:23)
caught at revealing children
of traditions (Rampolokeng 1990:24).

But Ramphokeng is only a Caliban to the extent that he rebels and asserts an identity far from the centre. His fundamental recognition that Caliban is capable of development and creativity in which only whites had seemed entitled is significant. But this is as far as the Caliban analogy goes: Ramphokeng does not seek to discover his essential, pre-colonial self. Like the Martinique poet, Aimé Césaire in *Return to My Native Land*, Ramphokeng's (1990:77) poetry may evoke vibrant images of change and revolution, but his guiding ideology is rooted in universal humanism:

redemption of humanity is my quest
blessed is the god who grants this quest,
he then who but his merit the wail of the mankind
in the silence that lingers then behind (Ramphokeng 1990:81)

It seems to me that Lesego Ramphokeng's poetry of the last few years, while continuing in the tradition of resistance poetry that has tended to characterise black poetry in South Africa, redefines resistance and seeks to reach out for new aesthetic and political horizons. If Ramphokeng's poetry seeks to restore the imprisoned community to itself, it also attempts to reconfigure resistance into an alternative way of conceiving humanity rather than just as a mere reaction to imperialism – to push humanity towards a more integral view of human community and human liberation. If his poetry is full of obsession with the past and its accumulated injustices¹ as Andries Olliphant (in Ramphokeng 1990:iii) correctly suggests, it is because that past is still too fresh in memory to be forgotten so easily, as many are wont to suggest. But Ramphokeng's poetry also subverts the simplistic binary polarities we tend to associate with oppositional narratives, because his poems seek to transform and humanise those relations of power that have kept his people in servitude, and in this Ramphokeng is unrelenting in his insistence that true humanity can only flower where hate is bathed with love and where 'domination becomes an abomination' (1990:iii,6):

when one seeks another's domination,
he becomes an abomination
when the devil's corruption
erupts of man as an abortion,
I was born and vomited
and abomination was excreted
if man's freedom is a life dream
to give none I'll be content (Ramphokeng 1990:51)

In order to restore the imprisoned community to itself, Ramphokeng starts by rejecting the conditions of marginalization by dedicating himself to the art of praxis. The

first question of resistance that Lesego seeks to dispose of is what constitutes good poetry. Who sets the standards? And why has black writing been received with so much scepticism and disdain? To raise these questions is not only to confront the whole issue about literary canonicity – the process and conditions in which some literary works are accepted and others disregarded – but it is also to contest the literary term in as well as redefining a new literary imagination away from the centre.

For these reasons, Ramphokeng positions himself as the community's prophetic poet and rejects any attempt to channel his creative energies according to some grand literary convention, nor is he prepared to perfect his art for commercial gain:

Dear Lesego
if you want us to give you an ear
let us something we want to hear
make the deed interested the matter
our applause will be explosive
demonstration more than demonstration
is what more often brought
quake our minds drawn
our hand's will give you a crown
nothing for fingers in the mind
is what we look behind
replace your pocket full of change
with a bucketful of dollars soon
if your potential is in this poetry
give our minds solace
look at the way of James Joyce chose (Ramphokeng 1990:21)

'This double edgedness', writes Andries Olliphant, 'constitutes the matrix of Ramphokeng's work' ('Introduction', Ramphokeng 1990:iii). He displays this acute anxiety to protect his freedom as a poet and to subvert new aesthetic codes that are neither compromised by commodification of art nor the naked mimicry of conventions of white or black literary heroes. And on this he is unapologetic:

some say my poetry has a sick soul
it belongs in a deep noise
dread colour of fire and blood
"If I come like flood
my words are wind & noise
a lover's perfume in a progressive noise
my words push back a storm
lacking all poetic form (Ramphokeng 1992:1).

And from an indifferent tone of sarcasm, he asserts:

I'm rather keatsy now
tugging words strutting doing acrobatic feats

I'm no William Shakespeare
I write in the flight of the nation's spirit (Rampolokeng 1993:22).

Rampolokeng's play on the idea of rhythm has been amplified in high art is tongue in cheek. He undermines by appropriating the rules of high art and confining them to his mischief. And yet, whether we agree with Rampolokeng's snobbish references to Keats, Yeats and Shakespeare is besides the point. We are bound to agree with the fact that in spite of the intrinsic qualities in the works of these giants of Western literary tradition, their works have always been used as the ultimate measure of good art and therefore the standard to which the black 'Other' in South Africa and the rest of the empire must aspire. Thus, in the terrain of cultural struggle, the black poet/artist is constantly pushed to the margins and he/she has to rely on the necessity of his/her poetic genius to transcend vilification and the constraints that received literary conventions impose on his or her creativity. For Rampolokeng, his poetic language derives from what Pierre Macherey (1975:43) would call 'self-consolidating power'. The rescuing of what Foucault has called 'subjugated knowledges' (Foucault [1977] 1980: 81).

The significance of Rampolokeng's poetry lies in the fact that he locates his poetry within a rap tradition. Traditionally, rap has remained the art of the underdog and the marginalised. It has been used to open up social space and to reclaim back a lost humanity. As Richard Slotkin (1992:201) reminds us

...rap's cultural roots and prime following belong to the black underclass of American society, and its militant black praxis and thematizing of the ghetto experience represent a liberating story to that society's oppressed and voiceless.

Rampolokeng's poetry disturbs the status quo in a number of ways. Written largely for the oppressed blacks of South Africa and the continent in general, Rampolokeng focuses on the imperative of resistance and its celebration. This he does by locating his poetry within the terrain of struggle and positioning himself as the people's voice. If the common convention in South Africa is to elevate the so-called high art and to denigrate popular art emanating from the voices of the oppressed, Rampolokeng disputes this:

I come to enlighten
the above absolute to brighten
now is the time
for a progressive rhyme (Rampolokeng 1990:17)

By positioning himself within the tradition of rap poetry, Rampolokeng is actually introducing a radical black genre which challenges and revises the nature and conditions of creativity as specified by the mainstream literary canon in South Africa. Far from leaning to some uncritical, naïve Africanity, Rampolokeng's poetry displays dissonant syncretic complexity. By rooting himself in the aesthetics of rap which are premised on what Paul Gilroy has described as the 'dialectic of rescuing, appropriation and recombination' (Gilroy 1994), Rampolokeng's poetry features the norm and in a Brechtian version of the 'canon', creates images appropriate to the extreme historical condition that shape them as in the poem, 'Freedom language'.

(I curse a lot when Isaac rules the storm of flame
come to carry me home where rain is stann
in the treacherous season of emersion)

I move from the pen of laughter to reality
earnings dropping near
making the word make good
in the drop of talent
in the heart of humanity

unhappiness deeper than Bible covers
of human skin colour judgement (Rampolokeng 1993:12).

Or

holocaust is nation, and negro
treated as a country's literary capital station
when he studies in mainwash education
or a nation's ex-education
then is caught in a satanic-spiral web situation
his revolution god's solution (Rampolokeng 1990:13).

The dense and explosive combination of a verse form which clast and contrast, releasing jarring images, can only reflect the instability of lived and profane social horror that remains the nightmare of the new nation. The violent images themselves undermine convention through shock and artistic exorcism, as in the fracturing of

western standard idiom: 'a rose on a piece of shit won't make it smell sweet' (Rampolokeng 1990: 5). The fragmentation and dislocation of society is most evident when he deploys the grotesque images:

I belong in the shitbin
but it's on shift I drive (Rampolokeng 1990:70).

One can safely argue that Rampolokeng's art defies the rigid distinction between the so-called high and popular arts, made purely on aesthetic grounds, just as it puts into question the very notion of such pure grounds. Rampolokeng's poetry is also different in the sense that it is devoid of the polemical lines that we tend to associate with black poetry. If black poetry turned the barrenness of language into weapons of attack against formalism cherished by the custodians of high art, Rampolokeng revels in the poetic qualities of his rap. The poetry reveals features of high art of alliteration and assonance: 'flower fullness' and 'freedom flash' (Rampolokeng 1990:42), alongside appropriation of the occasional styles akin to praise poetry. Included are also the local idioms like 'uk' as soap' and the popular 'James Holiday Chase' (Rampolokeng 1990:4), as well as colloquial Afrikaans 'mossie poetry' and many other vernacular expressions of keen insights, but also forms of subtlety and multiple levels of meaning whose complexity, ambiguity, and intertextuality can easily put to shame those of high art.

an ivory mouth will slipper
that ring to the heart like trumpet
may please your ears
but may your fears
let my fire want your soul
that we may play a fiery role
as we put this life's tragedy on the stage
to show the extent of our rape
out of the sea man come without a harpoon
like the penguin bird that cannot fly
'stepped my mind in a sea of blood
to get me a second mouth' - food
is scarce & we'll have to kill
that made me resort to violence
when labouring by water
I became game
to beat down with guns
to fill greed's horns (Rampolokeng 1990:4)

Rampolokeng works through the inversion of language as an act of resistance against

received convention. The quality of the poems lie in their deliberately measured forms, while simultaneously appropriating some of the qualities that we associate with conventional poetry. An aesthetic stress is laid upon the sheer social and cultural distance which formerly separated the diverse elements now dislocated into never-meaning by their provocative social/visual juxtaposition. The poems are reminiscent of Adorno's (1938/1998: 127) remarks in an earlier, far different context:

They call [it] innovative because [it] suspends their concepts of creating itself. Everything with which it occupies itself is already there ... its exaggerated form, its themes are expurgated once. Nevertheless nothing sounds as it was wont to do. All things are diverted as if by a magnet. What is worn out yields pliantly to the overpowering hand, the used phrase now sounds like a variance.

Rampolokeng also directs his rap again at the colonial heresy that Africans had no history:

from bounded geography
against colonial heresy
I echoed to the notes of Zondolwe
I am ozakalalalele nani
standing for a mountain (Rampolokeng 1990:14).

As the prophetic poet of the community whose role is to intervene against the 'social pretensions' (Rampolokeng 1990:17) within society, he cannot abdicate his responsibility to teach and uphold the truth. These twin duties involve de-remembering and remembering. De-remembering the colonial narrative of moral and spiritual savagery – the narrative that came with colonial conquest. It also entails remembering and retrieving repressed history to restore social and historical agency back to the oppressed blacks. If his detractors insist on art for entertainment, Rampolokeng (1990:15), rejects the easy option, and instead weaves his rap against the oppressor's trap and shows the hero of hondo to unpeel the dawn of freedom. Poetry then is a metaphor for struggle and rap poetry in particular is a vehicle for deconstructing the mind. These (resisting) poems, the poets avers, the profiteers will not render:

poet poets won't publish
my struggles not for sale (Rampolokeng 1990:17).

It is Rampolokeng's refusal to prostitute his art that gives him the cutting edge in a society where 'justice's prophets are prisoners' (Rampolokeng 1990:18) and truth is far from sale. He is like Ngugi's *Mbari* who inhabits a space where truth and justice are outlawed.

If he denides the sick and fragmented community engendered by apartheid as grotesque and revolting, he is equally conscious of the possibility of regeneration:

the sun shall rise out of earth's bowels
light rays shall dry tears like giant towels
crucifying fire bells
shall break oppressive walls
no longer shall god be man
& human life be a man's altar like a shut-throat hen
he land shall be barbed in light
saluting the flag of humanity's flight

Freedom's fire shall bake darkness's tears dry
& there shall be humanity (Rampolokeng 1990:331).

But the nature of resistance and decolonisation that Rampolokeng celebrates in his poetry goes far long after the political establishment of independence. In this he is in agreement with writers like Ivan Vladimirov, who question the much celebrated idea of the post-apartheid state – the rainbow nation – which seeks to conflate class and race differences, and to suggest that the long-awaited kingdom has at last arrived (Vladimirov 1996). Rampolokeng displays serious apprehensions about the new dispensation which, he believes, has been compromised:

we spin in circles or, if not
caught in cycles of a nightmare
of alienation!
where the mirror
of the present
shows the surface of alien
in transition.

we who lay our heads
burying skulls on someone's feet
& from the graveyard
are rose rings in blood-drops
celebrating the murder
of freedom's child
in transition (Rampolokeng 1990:17).

In displaying his apprehensions about the 'post-apartheid' dispensation, Rampolokeng is moving away from the unregimented ideologies of the new nation. He is caught between

the moribund and the post-utopian because he is writing between the margins of the white canon and the celebratory art demanded of black artists in the new dispensation. If the bulk of his poems in *Horas for Mondo* (1990) are written on the margins of the dominant white literary canon, in *Talking Rain* (1993), Rampolokeng could be said to be writing on the margins of the emergent black art which now insists on an uncritical celebration of the rainbow nation.

Whatever the nature and fate of South Africa's ongoing denouement, Rampolokeng seems to be suggesting that a great deal has been lost in the brief transition period. He refuses to celebrate at the shrine of the new dawn that seeks conformity in the form of uniform mediocrity:

Heaven is burning in the pages of the press
I show the constraints
my allegorical confessions & dissonance NO
regeneration!
ORDER COMRADE ORDER (Rampolokeng 1993:27).

Although Rampolokeng's collection of poems in *Talking Rain* (1993) shows a meliorist hope of displaying some utopian to existential angst, he still seeks redemption in poetry. His apparent alienation is the result of a national liberation betrayed and a fragmented society's on which poetry must order and give hope to the present state of dislocation because only the magic of poetry can bring 'a smile on the face of a general east' and 'sunrays beyond our sorry days' (Rampolokeng 1993:38). And in the poem, 'History', he warns:

revolution or evolution
the game is still the same
simulation or repetition
it won't take the bait
it's not like the last
when all we were only mice
wrote the state
you can't make history's date
all stick on the stick
won't turn back
or start (1993:35).

The moment of history will come, but for now the poet's 'indapueric period' (initiated by the likes of Augustine More must continue in the act of excruciation (Rampolokeng 1990:15).

In conclusion, I want to suggest that Ramphokeng's poetry gestures towards that redemptive option of 'a new radical cultural politics' which Fredrick Jameson (1984:85-89) suggests is the result of 'the disintegration of traditional modernist boundaries → a postmodern aesthetic which 'foregrounds the cognitive and pedagogical dimensions of political art and culture'. Ramphokeng's poetry is also special in the sense that it combines the best elements of 'high art and those of popular art, thereby undermining the artificial dichotomy often created between these two forms. And finally, in rejecting unmodification of art, Ramphokeng also creates what Jameson (1984:85-89) has called the 'minimal aesthetic distance' necessary for art to stand 'outside the massive Being of capital' – the radical rupture from the cultural logic of late capitalism.

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Labour and South African Literature in the 1980s

Priya Narisundul

Introduction

The real artist in the world is human labor, its material base which has created the social environment and the cultural environment. All the modern technology and science and the arts are a product of human labor. When the product of this is a human laborer, he is the property of an idle few, and the artist he said to be free... The liberation of human labor is the only condition for the true liberation of the human being, the artist (Benjamin 1935:73).

The class struggle... is a fight for the creation and material things without which no refined and spiritual things could exist (Benjamin 1935:73).

Marxists have argued that the motivation of apartheid was economic exploitation, with racial oppression playing a significant role in the formation of classes. Given South Africa's history of colonialism and white minority domination, there has been a strong correspondence between racial stratification and class, and race has been quite a reliable index of class. Although much has been made of the white working class, its reality in comparison to the black working class (disproportionately so as a result of apartheid). In addition, the income of the white working class under apartheid bore no comparison to the black working class. By contrast white railway workers in the 1970s had wage packages that were better than those of qualified, 'middle class' black teachers. This was besides the other benefits that accrued from racial privileges, such as job reservation, conditions of service, pensions, housing, medical facilities, and so on.

Workers in South Africa have been systematically oppressed. They have had starvation wages and harsh working and living conditions. Many workers risked imprisonment under the influx control and pass laws, and they have faced a range of

dangers of the workplace. The experience of working life finds voice in various workbooks and songs, of which 'Shushuloxa' is the best known. Their singing is often all that a gang of workers has to sustain them through dull and exhausting manual work. Workers have used chants and songs to obviate the boredom induced by repetitive tasks or to keep time.

While poems about the struggles of workers tend to focus on male workers, and while the Black Consciousness Movement treated the subject of the struggle as a generic black man, many workers were women. Few black women found work in the industries (where they received the lowest wages, and the least secure conditions of employment). Most women who sought work could only find jobs as domestic workers. 'One of three African women workers in South Africa does a service job [including domestic work]' (Badsha & Wilson 1986:151). Research by Behrman, Lehoucq and Shaw suggests that 'in general domestic workers, together with women in agriculture,

earn the lowest wages, work the longest hours, suffer the least living and working conditions and have little job security. Furthermore they have low status occupations and are most exposed to hostile positions in relation to their employers' (Badsha & Wilson 1986:151).

It is the absence of alternatives that leave women most vulnerable to exploitation. Unable to organise adequately, domestic workers have subsisted in alienation from their 'kith and kin' and from each other. Research done in the major metropolitan areas of the country suggests that

the wages, in real and fixed, of full-time domestic workers fell in real terms during 1975 as the base year by 16 per cent over the period 1971-80 (Wilson & Ransquale 1986:90).

Employers of domestic workers tend to assume that wages in kind are equivalent to cash. But the accommodation and meals that are given in part-payment are only for employers, who must still make provisions for their families, on a reduced wage. The provision of live-in accommodation that many employers find convenient is particularly damaging to working class families because most black South African homes are headed by women. As Roseline Nango, the poet, former domestic worker, and South African Domestic Workers' Union (SADWU) organiser has argued:

Domestic work is not nice. You live in a room when they go to bed, but you cannot allowed to have visitors, you are not able to live with your husband. You are separated from your family for many months. Your employer expects you to smile every morning when you could smile for days.¹

When the stepmother leaves you with her kids, she expects you to be a good mother to her kids. You must be one hundred per cent devoted to her kids. Meanwhile you feel a pain in your heart that you cannot even say as yet as usual in the morning when you wake up (Ophang 1991:27).

Little tolerance has been shown by most employers for the social needs of domestic workers. Instead they have found it convenient to blame the severity of their conditions of service on the influx control and pass laws. Some employers actively connived with the police in using legislation, such as the 'key law' (which operated in parts of Cape Town), to harass workers. This was done by supplying the police with duplicate keys to enter the rooms of workers at any time, making it impossible for workers to have children or partners with them (Badsha & Wilson 1986:153).

Most of the 'worker women' in South Africa have been black. Subservient to a range of systems of oppression, their burden has been extreme. The National Household Survey found that the person responsible for the health of a household in South Africa is invariably a woman, to the extent of some 92% of the population (Hirschowitz et al. 1995:13). Most women are poorly educated and even very little, yet they have the sole responsibility of keeping a family together with few resources.

Moira Tzoh's 'No Shelter for Cleaners' (1987:164-166) and Nise Mlangeni's 'Nightshift Mother' (Evall & Kumbarg 1989:189) represent women who have no option but to work as night-shift cleaners, at great cost to their family lives and their safety. In Tzoh's story the office cleaner, referred to as Mrs Ulli, tells of how the women finish work at 02h30 and have to find somewhere to sleep because it is unsafe to travel home to the townships. In her working life she slept at Johannesburg Park Station until the police chased people away, then in the garage of the building where she worked, or she would 'travel up and down, to and fro like that ... until it was safe to get off at Mosefield and go home' (Tzoh 1987:167). Mrs Ulli relates that other passengers would caution her:

'You'll get hurt on the trains here; going up and down alone and a woman for that matter' ... Then I would answer: 'What can I do? I've got to try and make my living and work. I have no wife, I have no husband' (Tzoh 1987:167).

The ironic statement in the second stanza of Mlangeni's poem conveys the anger and bitterness of workers who fully realise that they are exploited but have no other power

Laid with a double coat
at home
my children let me read

For additional information see Barmann et al. (198), Lara Moyo (1990).

Anxiety
at work

my boss insists we should
be grateful for the opportunities
he gives women to be exploited
(Gilli & Krumboltz 1989:13)

Makgaba exposes the isolated and alienating nature of the work in images that challenge the reader with the injustice of the dispensation:

And I work wandering on my knees
through those deserted and desolate spaces
the group of us, out in these vast buildings
forgotten and neglected
exploited as you sleep
(Bell & Krumboltz 1989:139)

Service sector jobs generally pay a little more than domestic work, but the money is never adequate, as Mrs Tili rebukes:

We are holding on because . . . What shall we do? We have children and grandchildren. We have to send them to school. How are we to feed them? There's not much we can do with that R36 [per fortnight]. We complain but it does not help . . . The money only pays for the rent and for a few bags of corn. We just go on (Tili 1987:168).

Some workers tried to deal with the precariousness of their situation by coming together in collectives, which have generally taken the form of church groups (the best known of which was the Zionists), but there have been skills and literacy classes (usually run by church or educational groups). The *Thula Bala* collective comprised a group of domestic workers involved in a literacy programme. The workers composed a poem 'Domestic Workers' (1987:11), which addresses the challenges and problems they have faced:

We are called girls. We are called maids.
It is like we are small.
It is like we are children.
We are left with no one.

* The stanza recalls the photograph by Lesley Lawson of an office cleaner working on her knees and knees in the middle of a large boardroom area, to polish it (Tilman & Wilson 1986:12).

We are told what to say
We are told what to think.
We are told what to wear.

We are worn out. We are tired out.
Our bodies are strong from hard work.
Our hearts are big from suffering.

We struggle against hunger.
We struggle against poverty.
We struggle against sickness.
We struggle against suffering.

The workers identify the isolated nature of their work and there is an important challenge

Our problem is that we live alone.
Our problem is that we work alone.
Our problem is that we suffer alone.

But we find strength if we meet together.
And we find answers if we talk together.
And we find strength if we work together.
And we find hope if we stand together.

While such efforts may be characterized as 'provisional, rudimentary, hybrid forms' where people were moved by needs to represent themselves and their experience in the face of silence' (Trotter 1986:36), there is more to the poem than is immediately apparent. Given the nature of their working situation some domestic workers have learnt to count on their collective strength. The optimism and resolve that is expressed in the final stanza is based on an implicit recognition of the significance of solidarity. The (oral) technique of repetition is harnessed to underscore their only source of power. Further repetition imparts momentum to their words, supporting their self-enclosed approach. They use poetry as a resource, and the poem is framed as a struggle against as they anticipate the power of organised worker structures.

Few employers tolerated the rights of workers to organise even when black trade unions were legalized. People in domestic service were particularly vulnerable (because of the isolated nature of their work), but even workers in the commercial and industrial sectors suffered dismissals because employers were suspicious that they were attempting to form unions. Two plays show this very clearly: *A House Divided*

(Mwa, Ngema & Simon 1983) the character Zuluway is dismissed from Coronation Bricks, and in *Zinzwani* (Ngema 1985) Hengeni Elephe tells of how he was dismissed from the Savage and Lovemore company. Both companies are based in the Durban area, and they had poor records of industrial relations in the 1970s and early 1980s.

A poet such as Mafema has not been strictly part of the working class since the 1980s, when she joined the Culture and Working Life Project at the University of Natal. However, owing to apartheid, most black writers have functioned in a largely working class social milieu, and many have come from working class families that continued to remain so even though that particular individual, through education (scholarships in some cases) and work, could be considered as middle class. The handling of black writers who came from families considered middle class in the 1960s or 1970s often made the class transition during the working lives of their parents. As there were virtually no alternatives, such families generally continued to live in working class townships, among their working class neighbours, friends and relatives. As a result, the term 'middle class' does not accurately describe such a nebulous intermediate class, the members of which could just as easily move downwards as upwards in class terms, or the mercy of the vagaries of the apartheid state. The 'class' was not large enough or powerful enough to reproduce itself. There was no established middle class milieu in the 1970s and 1980s, although the Duthie government attempted to develop such a group, particularly in the homelands. But their numbers were tiny and they did not act as a class any more than they did as part of another group.

The term 'middle class' often masked the huge discrepancy that existed between the black and the white middle classes, which Marxists and liberals tended to gloss over. Marxist discourse has tended to essentialise class to the exclusion of other variables. The poet Mafema Gwala (1984: 53) challenges this approach: 'When whites talk of a "middle class" there springs up the immediate question: middle class between what?'. Gwala was justified, for the position of local Marxists was further weakened by the way in which they dealt with the racial categories that privileged themselves. They tended to respond defensively by dismissing various black writers of the 1970s as being petty bourgeois, without unpacking how that correlated with their own subject positions. Their silence regarding their own enormous racial and class-bound privileges was deafening. Writers like Gwala and Sotane were well aware of the contradictions that were obscured under the class rubric. Yet class analyses have immense theoretical and practical value, catalysing the formation of working class organisations and disclosing the hesitations and contradictions in the black intermediate classes' contributions to social change.²

² Among the oppressed nationalities (Coloureds and Indians were the largest groups) class distinctions were far more ascertainable (although most of the middle class people in these groups were

Trade unionism

Yonaal, settle accounts with the oppressor
Yonaal settle accounts with the oppressor
(Qakana & Hlatshway, 1988: 56)

The working class has always been creative (Hlatshway & Qakana 1988: 23).

During the 1970s unions of black workers began to emerge from the repression. Some unions were the spontaneous products of shop-floor activity, some were linked to the activism of racialist white students who participated in 'Warren Commissions and worker benefit groups, while some had support from church or trade union organisations abroad. In 1972 the BICU movement set about establishing a workers' council to serve the needs of black workers, to build solidarity and to create a sense of black development (Mothusi 1984: 175). DAWU, the Black Allied Workers' Union, was established in the same year. However, the worker organisations tended to be divided and vulnerable, and under constant security police surveillance. The material conditions of capitalism, repressive legislation and security force action hindered the development of black working class organisations and consciousness. Nevertheless,

[a]ll the unions were part of a ferment of popular struggle, evidence of the remarkable capacity of oppressed people to evolve ever new forms and instruments of struggle in the face of suppression (Mashum, 1988: 118).

The 1972-1973 strikes which began in Durban and spread across Natal, the Transvaal and the eastern Cape signalled the rebirth of black trade unionism after the silencing of the 1960s. However, the unions' struggle for factory-level recognition met with few successes, and the frequency of strikes signalled growing political frustration. The government and capital were faced with worker militance, which challenged the cheap labour system. Given the close links between itself and local capital, the apartheid state was pressured to undertake reform. Transitional capital (which had traded for a long time on the subordination of the black working class) was under pressure to desist, and was therefore moved to support superficial reform. As a result the government appointed the Wiehahn Commission of Enquiry. Acknowledging the right of African workers to form and belong to trade unions, the Wiehahn Commission (1979)

... [a]mongst them, many have been part of the working class struggle. But these groups were often too busy to be galvanised by the ideology of apartheid to play a significant role in building class solidarity across race.

recognised that the unions were growing rapidly and that to leave African workers outside the official system would weaken the state's chances of controlling them.

The non-racial Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) was formed in 1979, and by the end of 1981 had 95 000 members. The Black Consciousness Council of Unions in South Africa (CUISA) was formed in 1980. By 1982 it had 130 000 members, of whom 100 000 members were from the National Union of Metalworkers (NUM). Other trade union blocs were formed in the 1980s, culminating in the formation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in 1985 with 450 000 workers (NUM had joined in), while the anti-apartheid Black Africanist National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU) was formed in 1986. Ari Sitas (1989b:36-45) conveys the momentum for worker representation in graphic images in 'The Origins of Today's Trade Union':

A multitude of workers
pock-marked with scars

A newspaper of lies
Torn the flood
Factory gates burst
in a tearing of humanity
and poured it into my rooms
then by candle light
and then the machines

Unions emerged
on the track
of a peloping grey sea (Sitas 1989b:41-44).

The launch of the plant trade union federation COSATU in November 1985 inspired workers across the country to organise to improve their conditions of work.

The federation was born in a state of emergency. It was a product not only of worker organisation, but also of a climate of uprising and even assassination (Baskin 1991:89).

COSATU's launch caused great panic among the proponents of black working class power: the state, most employers and reactionary black political organisations.¹ The 'Tears of a Creator' by Alfred Tshaba Qabula and Mzilikaziwayo (1986:49-56) was

¹ In 1986 Tshaba formed the United Workers Unions of South Africa (UWUSA), which started out by launching a series of bitter attacks on COSATU.

performed at the COSATU launch at Kings' Park Stadium, Durban. The poem begins with an address to the worker, one of the most excluded and neglected subjects of society, in terms that elites usually reserve for the divine:

O' maker of all things,

The theology is as pertinent as it is ironic, and it is sustained in the questions that follow, which have Biblical overtones (of Christ's suffering):

Your sin
Can it be your power?
Can it be your blood?
Can it be your sweat? (Qabula, Mzilikaziwayo & Mafenge 1986:51)

The power of COSATU is celebrated through the comparison to the mythical tornado-spirit *inkhanyamba*, which, once liberated, is impervious to its enemies:

Here it is:
The tornado-spirit of change! *Inkhanyamba*!
The antichrist,
Claimed for devils and demons

By a population of slaves,
The tornado-spirit
Poisoned throughout the years
By ethnicity
And tribalism (Qabula, Mzilikaziwayo & Mafenge 1986:54)

COSATU is perceived as being part of the long struggle to establish trade unionism in South Africa:

Where is the UCU of the 1920s to be found?
Where is the FNBPU of the 1920s to be found?
Where is the CNETU of the 1940s to be found?
And the others?

They merged
They were poisoned
Then
They faded

COSATU

Tlouhelewe, Qabula, Mashwayo & Malange (1986:55)

Qabula and Mashwayo perform the praise in Zulu, although it has been published in Zulu and English. COSATU has had a strong tradition of promoting communication through translation, whether in meetings, on the shop-floor or in its documents. The loss of time at meetings is made up in accessibility and increased participation, which is vital to the democratic character of the trade union federation.

COSATU and NACTU played a vital role in preparing their members for the struggles that were necessary to obtain optimum class leverage in the turbulent period that followed.

The trade union movement is a key pillar of the broader working class in our country. In the struggle for a complete transformation of our society, it has secured this position not merely through mass mobilisation and protest action, but through building working class confidence, raising consciousness, developing grassroots leadership and mass education which form part of campaigns that fundamentally question the present organisation of society (Molotjwa 1989:23).

COSATU, with its large membership and highly developed organisational bases, was well positioned to challenge the state, as Peter Horn (1991:123) suggests in 'Cape Town: There is a Writing on my Back':

...a nation together we will win to our history
on the body of the South African star

There were important challenges related to gender inequalities. Nso Malange (1989:23) has pointed out that as more and more women become part of the organised labour force, they were better able to struggle to change patriarchal attitudes, share the double shift, and achieve higher wages and better working conditions.

The harassment and persecution of workers

Before the development of the independent trade union movement, the state's reaction to worker activities was as violent as it had been towards its other black political opponents. Many workers, most of them anarchists, died in detention. Mashwayo Joseph Mdlali died while being detained in Durban in March 1976, and Neil Aggett, an anti-gunner in the COSATU-linked Food and Canning Workers' Union, died after being tortured in detention in February 1982. The state claimed he committed suicide, but this was unconvincing, and in an unprecedented show of solidarity a hundred thou-

sand workers went on a thirty minute work stoppage. Workers continued to die in detention, among them the trade union leader, Flip Loefer, who died in 1987.

In May 1985 Andries Raditsela, who had been a prominent leader from the time of FOSATU and was a senior shopsteward of the Chemical Workers' Industrial Union, died shortly after being released from detention under the Internal Security Act. Raditsela died of a head injury sustained when he fell out of a police Cossack at the time of his arrest some ten days earlier (Cooper 1983:67). There were mass work stoppages and his funeral was attended by thousands of people. Niso Malange composed an elegy 'This poem is dedicated to brother Andries Raditsela' (Qabula, Mashwayo & Malange 1986:63), which begins with striking images that centralise the claim of the first line:

I have a few words to say – my mouth is a
grave without flowers
It is like a river without water
But it has fish in your death.

...I had strength enough, I would go and avenge
your blood

Qabula

The middle section of the elegy issues a defiant challenge to the government:

Comrade, I did not come here to open a wound
nor to mourn
I'm here to challenge the annals of law
and order
I'm here to condemn death in detention
(1982:62).

Malange closes her conclusion with a pledge reminiscent of the Mozambican poet, Boemia da Sousa's 'Poem for João' (Seymour 1975:197-199) which was written during a strike in the capital (Lourenço Marques, now Maputo) four decades earlier:

Your blood, Andries, will not be in vain
Your blood will be a moral lesson for me to punish the oppressors.
Treason, detention and murder
Your blood will give power to your comrades,
To the workers, to your family and to us all (1982:62).

Despite pressure and harassment, and the possibility of dismissal or death, workers

those to continue with the process of unionisation, as Mungosi Mkhize (himself a victim of the war in Johannesburg) argues in *Radio sounds in Johannesburg* (Ndaba 1986: 180):

the gun that wallowed
graham muleba
the gun has harnessed
my people together
the gun has fuelled the struggle (Ndaba 1986: 118).

The polarisation of political interests (the COSATU versus the NP) led to the violence delineated in the following lines, which also show the impact of worker unity:

oppressors are now standing to lose
for those
oppressors
oppression ruling over
at the point of death
once more there is
a war, now together we
solidarity, fraternity
take action
and more, we have started to campaign (Ndaba 1986: 114).

However, the crisis was escalating for the labour movement:

For unions, the 1986 emergency was more compared to the one declared on 12 June 1986. The second emergency was better planned, more heavily implemented, and given virtually a free rein to the army and police. In contrast to the first emergency, it was applied to every region of the country (Ruskin 1991: 34).

Within six weeks of the declaration of the June 1986 emergency 2 700 unionists were detained, of whom 81% were from COSATU. Some 320 elected trade union leaders and officials were detained. (The figures necessarily refer only to the detentions that were known.) Unions' offices were raided, members were intimidated, and the work of the unions was disrupted. It was difficult to run a mass union movement from hiding (Ruskin 1991: 139). In addition to the ban on outdoor meetings, indoor meetings were also prohibited, making organising extremely difficult for workers. Some Eastern Cape factory workers were detained for up to three years. In Northern Natal virtually every COSATU organiser and most key shop stewards were detained. Unions struggled over

job security for detainees, as well as for payment during detention. In Johannesburg 950 dairy workers were detained for two weeks for protesting the detention of two animals. On their release they discovered that they had all been fired (Ruskin 1991: 139). The trade union movement was subject to dirty tricks campaigns, including fake pamphlet campaigns. But the conditions of the second emergency failed to suppress the resistance:

it became simply another hurdle to be overcome, another obstacle to organising the workers. For COSATU it reaffirmed the need to remain strong at the factory level, and not to concentrate around offices (Ruskin 1991: 145).

Most employers were silent about the emergency clampdown, some supported it, and some, such as Premier Milling's Tony Blum complained that 'we are now faced with attempting to run our factories and enterprises by dealing with the mob because the leaders are in custody' (Ruskin 1991: 127).

While some of the harassment of the state was directed at union and shopfloor leadership, the everyday harassment of ordinary workers was unrelenting, as the expression of resistance through song and other genres demonstrates. People have always sung on South African trains, although in the past the songs were mainly of a religious nature. Njabulo Ndebele (1991: 32) recounts having 'listened to countless storytellers on the bus and trains carrying people to and from work' and in the short story 'Tud-tu-tu!' Miliam Tlali (1989) focuses on the struggles of women workers on the packed trains to and from the Johannesburg townships. By the mid-1980s the resistance meetings held on the trains were supplemented with dances and songs. A sacked worker made a play in show on stage, pointing out, 'If we detain people, they are more likely to support our struggle' (Slovo in Cornsall 1990: 60). There was also a train play called *Workers' Lament*. A play performed by women passengers was called *Women stand up for your rights*. The police responded by raiding the trains daily and in three months in 1989 some 460 people were arrested for disturbing the peace on trains (Slovo in Cornsall 1990: 61). In August 1989, when 47 workers (most of them members of COSATU) were charged with 'disturbing the peace' by singing on the trains, some 500 workers took the Johannesburg-to-Kempton Park train to attend the trial. On the way they sang and chanted freedom songs and praises of the unions, the ANC, SWAPO, the Sandinistas and their own struggle. When the workers arrived at Kempton Park they were dispersed with symbols by the police. Some 15 workers were injured. More police harassment was experienced on the road to the court. It seemed that the security forces were determined to stop the singing of political songs. However, the workers were not to be quelled. Eventually the 'engine trip' of the original accused was postponed indefinitely (*Weekly Mail* 11/8/89: 2).

Mining

... we begin to understand that the truly heroic is the ordinary, the everyday of the South African working class (Gibson 1980:19).

The focus of several writers on mining clarifies the nature of the exploitation that occurred in one of the largest and most profitable sectors in the economy in the 1970s and the early 1980s. Mkhazeli Marshaba's story 'To Kill a Man's Pride' (Mudlisa 1990:103-127) addresses some of the problems migrant workers experienced with accommodation in Johannesburg. The play *Spill*, by Masekela Masaka (translator), which was banned in 1979, portrayed the troubled lives of two miners. Aided Temba Qabula addresses the exploitation many migrant labourers experienced in the semi-famous poem 'The Small Gateway to Heaven' (1989:49-51). The poem is based on his own later experience of leaving the impoverished eastern Cape for a coal-pouring 'small gateway' in Carletonville ('heaven'), which he aptly describes as the 'place of gold, dagga, drink and oppression':

When the recruiters needed our names
To get us to work the mines,
They would say:
'Come to the place of the
Hungry-jaw
Where starvation is our friend'.

And we joined the queues through the small
gate to Heaven
And we found the walls of our custody,
And degradation,
And of work, the knees in darkness,
With heavy sleds burdening our feet with worry,
For nothing,
At the place of the Hungry-jaw,
Away from our loved ones.

I have seen this prison of a Heaven,
This kraal where they enslave the slaves.

I saw it as the heart of our oppression,
I saw the walls that separate us
from a life of love (Qabula 1989:51).

¹ Qabula gives two different dates for the playscript, 1978 (1986:203) and 1981 (1986:49).

Qabula's juxtaposition of hope and cynicism, devoid of hero-leads and make-believe, accommodates the oral tradition and an urban idiom, offers a pungent expression of the experience of millions of workers against a formidable system.

Popular art can be seen as a new kind of art, created by a new and genuine, and bold heterogeneous urban mass ... The vocational of their art, drawing as it did on both indigenous (Afrikaner) and imported (metropolitan) elements was therefore an expression and a negotiation of their real social position at the point of collision of two worlds (Barber 1987:14).

Discrimination has been rife on the mines. While the gold mines were very profitable the wages of black miners remained poor and inequitable, as various analysts have indicated:

In early 1987 the lowest monthly wages, according to NUM [the National Union of Mineworkers], were R200.00 on gold mines, and R194.00 on coal mines. While most miners earned more, their wages were still low: in 1986 the average black mine-worker earned a bare R627.00 per month. During that year white industry profits reached a new record of R8.4-billion (Hart 1991:226).

Ben Magubane (1990:142) points out that black gold miners earned an average of R5.127 per annum, while white miners earned an average of R27 579. Goodman Ntswana (1988:9) of the NUM offices in Carletonville wrote the poem 'What have you done to us?' which challenges the lack of transparency on the part of the mine management:

They give you pay with a lot
of deductions.
But they don't give you full
details about them.
They don't show deductions reduced
and put in your pay slips.

However, the discrepancy in the earnings of the black labour force is only part of the picture. In the mid 1980s whites got 35 days paid leave while blacks were given only 14 days. There were safety incentive bonuses for whites but not for blacks, yet it was the white staff who had responsibility for the production quotas of the blacks under them (Magubane 1990:143). This meant that such staff were rewarded for placing productivity above the safety of the black staff. Discrimination also extended to racially segregated lift cabs and inferior canteens (*Weekly Mail* 29/08/89, 6-11).

Mining, and deep-level mining in particular, is a very dangerous activity, as Cyril Ramaphosa pointed out: 'Between 1973 and 1984, more than 8 000 miners were

killed on the mines' (Baskin 1991:149). In 1985 alone, 'over 500 men were killed (a fatality rate of one per one thousand people employed) and 13 000 were disabled for at least 14 days by accidents in the gold mines' (Wilson and Ruzphic 1989:80). The overwhelming majority of the casualties were black miners.

In addition to the high number of fatalities, the lives of hundreds of thousands of miners were ruined by accidents or by occupational illnesses. Compensation for disability or death has been inadequate. A NUM survey concluded that

a mineworker who spends 20 years working underground risks one chance in 30 of being killed and a 50% chance of being permanently disabled. Since 1960 over 68 000 miners have died in mining accidents, while a further one million workers have been permanently disabled (Baskin 1991:152).

As COSATU contended, 'Black miners were paying with their lives for a profit they did not share' (Baskin 1991:149).

In the context of such data stand the last two lines of the first stanza of Jeremy Cronin's (1983:38) poem 'Ia learn how to speak':

The low chant of the mine gang's
A' natural glow of our people's unbreakable resolve.

Cronin's poem celebrates the real wealth of the country: the people, whose wealth he laments has been more durable than the prized mineral. Unionisation offered the only hope of relief for the mineworkers. In the 1980s, the National Union of Mineworkers was the fastest growing union in the world, with a paid up membership of more than 260 000 mineworkers (Baskin 1991:224). The size and the strength of the National Union of Mineworkers attested to the capacity of migrant workers to unite despite the conditions that worked to divide them and to prevent the development of a homogeneous working class culture. A large proportion of workers were employed on contract (even though many stayed for their working lives), while the hostels for migrant labour were segregated on the basis of 'ethnicity'.

Millions of women's lives were affected by the conditions on the mines. In an untitled poem, Buthezi (1972:60) writes of the grim toll of industrial accidents from the point of view of a rural woman:

Here I stand
With no child to grieve
Did I conceive to this way?

My children have gone to the towns
To seek bread
They never returned
They went to the mines
To dig gold
They died in Shift 14 ...
My children
Children of blood, blood of my children.

A similar sense of catastrophe and powerlessness is depicted in Masekela Masekela's play *Lgoli* (n.d.:25), when the character Jole learns that his young son Oupa, whom he thought was still living at home on the farm, has died in the mining accident. For, he himself was lucky to survive.

The worst mining disaster in this period occurred at the Kinness mines in September 1986 when 180 miners died. The disaster highlighted the dangers of secretive, management-controlled safety procedures. It also indicated the necessity for a strong union movement to act as a check. The full extent of the Kinness disaster was uncovered only because NUM, which had been established under the slogan 'organs of the', had challenged the mineworkers on safety issues and racist procedures (see *Mail* 23/9/89:106). As Qobula and Hirschwaye declared in 'The Tears of a Creator' (1986:29-30), which they performed at the COSATU launch a few months earlier:

We
Have dared to fight back
Ever from the bottom of the earth
Where we pull wage in 'nd of gold
Through our blood (Qobula, Hirschwaye & Ntshangane 1986:32)

May Day

The struggle over May Day in South Africa was an index of the power struggles that emerged between organised labour and the state. The government first denounced the demands of workers for the recognition of the day, and then struggled over conceding to the face of national day pressure from organised labour.

Initially commemorated in 1896, the first day of May has long been recognised in many countries as International Labour Day. May Day was first observed in South Africa in 1904. Since 1926 workers have insisted to have the day officially recognised. By 1961 May Day was excluded by law as a paid holiday from all industrial council agreements. Attempts in the 1980s to revive the day met with severe state repression (Baskin 1991:120). In 1993, workers involved in a small group were detained for

² The best's secret has not been supplied, but it is more likely that she is the Uncle Masekela.

use May Day to demonstrate their solidarity, and for three months they used time after work and on weekends to have rehearsals at their union offices (Von Kotze 1988:611).

COSATU tried to transcend the boundaries drawn by the state and business in their conceptualisation of May Day, as is evident in the poem that the trade union called activist Nise Malange read at the 1985 May Day Junction activities Tribunal, 'I, the unemployed' (Qabula, Hlatshwaye & Malange 1986:59):

I'm here
I'm under a Man's cloud
Here, living in trailing light
Here
Freedom is needed to a man
To be
Here I am living in a machine

I am born dying of hunger
And my children are also dying
My children are dying too
Look at them.

The identification with the unemployed shows the larger social mission of the trade union movement represented by COSATU. The *federation* saw itself not only as a representative of workers, but took into account the welfare of those unable to secure work in an economy that was slowing down (as a result of the political pressure on the state). The fact that unemployment has afflicted more than half of the African population (Hlatshwaye et al. 1995:56) clarifies COSATU's concern. Malange's second stanza, in particular, represents the expanded consciousness of organised workers, implicitly challenging the narrow self-interest of the state and its business allies.

By 1986, the conservative liberal press acknowledged that the unions had won the right to May Day: 'If there was ever any doubt about workers' May Day wishes, it was removed yesterday', noted *The Star*, arguing that 'An undeclared holiday is disruptive, bedevils industrial relations, creates anomalies, undermines the authority of law, makes a mockery of statutory holidays' (Baskin 1991:126). Even the more conservative *Sunday Times* recognised that

South Africa's black workers have for all times unilaterally declared May 1 a public holiday. Government recognition of this workers' holiday by public law would not only be wise but gracious (Baskin 1991:126).

Many employers grudgingly conceded the development.

In May 1986 Premier Foods was the first major employer to recognise both May 1 and June 16 as paid holidays for all employees. Recognising that the government had lost the initiative, many companies followed:

The government was unwilling to concede to COSATU's demands, which it had labelled both communist and subversive. Having labelled 1 May a communist day with Marxist links, it had paid led that into a corner (Baskin 1991:127).

Most large employers had a more sophisticated approach than the government: realising that it was not possible to destroy the union movement, they sought to curb the power of the unions. But the government's intransigence was consistent with its programme of repression. Having focused on curbing the power of the 'young comrades' in the emergency declared in June 1986, the security establishment seemed to have decided that it was time to act on the union movement:

In 1987 the state declared that the first Friday of every May would be known as future as Workers' Day. The unions rejected this and stuck to their 1 May demand. However, conflict was avoided during 1987 since 1 May happened to coincide with the first Friday in May that year (Baskin 1991:127).

However, COSATU's Living Wage Campaign, due to be launched on May Day 1987, was declared a communist plot by the state, and the rallies around it were banned. Nevertheless, the May Day rallies went ahead, to the reading of much poetry and the performance of songs and music. The academic and activist Peter Horn's 'Canto Seven: One and Many' (1991:113) was performed on 1 May 1987 at Athlone Stadium in Cape Town:

You were all alone until you understood
that you were not alone. Until you looked and saw.
If there are others alone like me, but together
we can look through. Because we are many.
Because we are many, and we, many, are one,
we can win this war for freedom
we can win this war for a human existence.
Because we are many more than them,
we can win this war for food and housing
and education and knowledge and power (Horn 1991:114).

Celebrating the meaning of solidarity, Horn delineates the material significance of the unity that COSATU workers sought to develop with other workers across the country and the world:

alone we are helpless and victims of power,
together we win the war and we win our life.
Tope her means union, tope her struggle,
together means workers united to win (Horn 1991:114).

The political situation was tense because of the election scheduled for 6 May 1987, when the white electorate was pulled for its support on two issues: the government's reform moves, and security force action to crush 'communist subversion'. COSATU, with other sections of the democratic movement (principally the United Democratic Front and the National Education Crisis Committee), supported the call for a two-day stayaway on 5 and 6 May. Almost 1.5 million workers and 1 million students responded. In regions such as the Eastern Cape almost 100% absenteeism was recorded (Baskin 1991:190).

On 7 May 1987 two explosions, clearly the work of professional saboteurs, destroyed COSATU House. Even weeks before, in the midst of intensified government attacks on the mass movement, police had warned COSATU members during a raid of the premises 'that the building would either be burnt or bashed to the ground' (Baskin 1991:191). COSATU and five unions lost their head offices. The regional, branch and local offices of many affiliated unions were also destroyed. Besides re-constituting the offices of the national and several unions, COSATU House had also been used to co-ordinate the broader labour movement and the mass democratic movement. Some news reports implied that COSATU itself had been responsible for the bombings. During this period there were many attacks on union offices throughout the country. COSATU launched a 'Blacks Out COSATU' campaign.

In 1988, May 1 fell on a Sunday. Organised workers decided that in addition to observing the day, they would also take off the first Friday, 6 May: 'What the government had sown, it should reap, they argued' (Dankia 1991:127). The government, though out-manoeuvred, remained intransigent and declared that in future Workers' Day would be observed on the first Monday in May. Conveniently, this coincided with 1 May 1989 as Baskin (1991:127) commented ironically. Peter Hain (1991:126-128) 'Canto Fifteenth: We demand a living wage!' which was performed on May Day at Auldane Stadium picked up on the Living Wage Campaign that the government had attempted to smother in 1987. This was a more strident call than the one that he made in the May Day poem two years previously:

Comrades,
the cost of living has made a hole in our pockets
and the wealth of the country is not shared.
The rich go on up, and the land our slaves
and the tiny black slaves (Horn 1961:126)

Demonstrating a sense of solidarity that goes beyond the divisions of class and race, the poet challenged the position of the authorities.

When we want to live,
I mean for to live,
day tells us
that living is political
that living is revolutionary
but living is treason in the state
that living is bad for business

But we say (Let me hear you!)
We demand a living wage! (Horn 1991:126f).

The government first (though qualified) recognised May Day as a public day of commemoration on 1 May 1989. On that morning, David Webster, an academic and a human rights activist with strong links to the labour movement, was killed. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (1997) has heard evidence that Webster's killers were part of a security force death squad.

Only in 1990, after the declarations of February 2, did the apartheid government finally accept that 1 May would be observed as Workers' Day. It had taken four years to acknowledge what the majority of the people had proclaimed in 1986 (Dankia 1991:127). The battle for the recognition of a day that is observed internationally characterises the struggle for power in South Africa; enormous effort was required to secure basic rights.

The MAWU strike and *The Long March*

Since the 1950s workers at the B.T.B. multinational in Howick, B.T.B. Sarmcol have struggled to gain union recognition. In April 1985, some 870 workers affiliated to the Mazen and Allied Worker's Union (MAWU) at B.T.B. Sarmcol went on a legal strike over their demands. Two days later the entire workforce was fired. Most workers had an average of 18 to 25 years of service with the company. Such labour was hired with the help of government labour bureaux. MAWU instituted court proceedings on the grounds of unfair labour practices and began solidarity campaigns. Developments arising out of the MAWU strike are of significance because they show that 'land and activism established itself as an organised consolidated form of struggle alongside labour organisation and a strong worker leadership' (Van Kester 1988:16).

Owing to overt government and other ruling class controls, engaging with the social order has never been easy for workers. Working-class people, whose lives are

dictated by the inimitable interests of capital and by various social agencies (e.g. the media), visibly see their interests fairly represented in the public arena. After six months of being on strike, the B.T.R. Sarnool workers established co-operatives to sustain unity, to provide some income, and to establish participatory methods in production and distribution which the strikers hoped to see introduced at B.T.R. Sarnool. One of the co-operatives was the Sarnool Workers' Co-operative (SAWCO). Through the process of a week-long workshop, a group of workers with no experience of acting developed the play *The Long March*, with assistance from the Durban Workers' Cultural Local and the Culture and Working Life Project at the University of Natal. As with its bulk-buying and silk-screening co-operatives, SAWCO made a deliberate effort to engage in democratic production practices.

MAWU workers 'organised themselves around cultural activity because they realised that united action does not just mean political struggle and the fight for union issues' (Von Koeze 1988:14). The plays and they workshoped helped them explore collective ways of reflecting on their experiences and articulating their vision for the future (Mintjies 1989:25). Besides enabling workers to think through their challenges, play-making helped them test their concepts with other workers who shared their experiences and frustrations to establish relations of solidarity across unions, regions, ethnicity and even race, and to explore options and challenges imposed points of view. Organised worker culture has served to counter the helplessness, isolation and alienation that industrial work in particular generates. It allows workers in the audience to learn about the experiences of fellow workers and recognise the bases for solidarity and unity. It also enables exposure to the experiences of workers who have gone before, as well as access to the history of working class struggles. From the point of view of working class people, As Von Koeze (1988:19) explains, the plays give workers the chance to do what is too dangerous to express at work: disagreement, anger, frustration, rejection, or even contempt for managers. Although worker plays often show the exploitation and abuse of workers, they do not show workers being defeated or crushed. 'The notion of a depressed "down-trodden" workforce is as unacceptable to the makers or plays as it would be to the audience' (Von Koeze 1988:13).

The Long March traced the history of the workers, many of whom experienced forced removals twice before being rehired in Mpopoement (where 60% of the strikers lived). Typical of worker plays, *The Long March* was interspersed with many songs that clarified the main messages, such as 'Sopainds sateke' (We shall strike again), and the poem 'It's a long, long march to freedom'. Everyday language was used. The play addressed the exploitation at work (through parodying assembly line mass production) and the long struggle for union recognition that resulted in the strike. Through the creation of characters such as 'Maggo's Barber' (by means of a visit/mask denied by one of the male actors), the play exposed the collusion between neo-imperialist and capitalist in South Africa. It also addressed the resulting poverty and the police

attacks that the Mpopoement community endured, as well as their attempts to defend themselves.

The play was first performed in November 1985, for the Mpopoement community, the shop-stewards and other unionists. In 1986, under the state of emergency, it played to workers across the country. The aims of the tour, according to a worker (identified as 'Peter', the spokesperson for the players), were:

to spread our struggle right through the country so everybody should know what is really happening about the Sarnool strikers. To inform the people was our major objective. For touring was meant to provide the fans lies or comfort with two words (Von Koeze 1988:805).

Besides union newspapers and meetings, workers have not had the means to express themselves publicly over issues that afflict them deeply. By touring, the Mpopoement workers were able to share their struggles with workers across the country.

In December 1986 annual Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) vigil rites and protests dressed in the uniforms of KwaZulu police tortured, murdered and then burnt the bodies of two MAWU shop-stewards and the daughter of a striker. A day later Mpopoement township police attacked, a youth was killed and others were injured. SAWCO decided to dedicate the play to the deceased, who were the township leader and head of the MAWU shop-stewards, Phisoa Sibyan; the actor and the play's narrator Simon Ngubane; the SAWCO activist Phumle Mankuthi, and the youth activist Alpha Nkabinde. 'The killings were characteristic of the struggle in Natal' where a sustained campaign of assassinations against COSATU and the IFP was being waged. The workers responded by strengthening their unity and productivity. In *The Long March* was like the earlier *Lower Worker's Play* which showed the capacity of drama to articulate the feelings of workers under attack, and to mobilise collective power. Later, *The Long March* players were invited, in an expression of international worker solidarity, to play in Britain, so that the unfair labour practices of a British multinational in the 'third world' would be exposed.

At COSATU's second national congress in July 1987, a resolution to the effect that 'culture cannot be left in the hands of the enemy' (Von Koeze 1988:16) resonated with the struggles around the country and particularly in KwaZulu-Natal. Across the country community and worker structures have been involved in making and performing plays about their living conditions and struggles, with the understanding, as Edithwayo explained that the plays 'have the potential of popularising our workers' solutions' (*Weekly Mail* 177:87:38). Drawing on the oral history of the Mpopoement area, SAWCO developed the play *Shobhaka's Children*, which used sophisticated dramatic devices, powerful music and songs to recount the hidden history of these genera-

tion of dispossession?'

Bombetta's Children break new ground in workers' theatre. It not only focuses on a single union issue or struggle but it also attempts to contextualise current repression historically. Plays like these, drawing on the popular memory of resistance born of the past, help to shape and articulate popular resistance in the 1980s (Pillay, *Weekly Mail* 21/10/89:13).

In September 1987 the courts found in favour of BTR Sammel. The judgement suggested that 'collective democracy of the kind practised by unions should not be tolerated in South Africa' (*Weekly Mail* 18/9/87:85). However, on appeal, the Natal Supreme Court ruled, in March 1989, that the Industrial Court had acted incorrectly. The union continued to seek negotiation with the management to resolve the matter.¹

A few months before these judgements the successor to MAWU, the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) was launched. A powerful union with strong socialist leanings, NUMSA was created through a process of unity among unions who managed to overcome deep historical divisions. When NUMSA, the second largest COSATU affiliate, was launched in May 1987 Moses Mayekiso was elected as the general secretary. This was an expression of solidarity and defiance, for Mayekiso and other Alexandra Action Committee activists were detained for a long time before being charged with treason, for attempting to improve the Johannesburg slum in which they lived. It would be two years before Mayekiso was acquitted of treason and could take up his post. Allied Temba Qabula, who had been a member of MAWU/NUMSA, composed the eulistic poem 'Jagel'swe! for Moss Jagel'swe Mayekiso' (1989:135).

Jagel'swe!
free up to your landline mine
and home.

Qabula's poem celebrates Mayekiso's long record of struggle, both in the trade union movement and in Alexandra township, in terms that express reverence for Mayekiso's sacrifices and his ability to teach by example, despite the onslaught of the security forces:

¹ In 1989 the dispossession of African people resulted from the shifika implosion of triple pillage on the old but axes. To try to meet their debts, many people were forced to seek work with white firms and factories. Any resistance, such as Bombetta's, was ruthlessly quelled.

² For developments in the 1990s see Borritt (1995:9-12).

Like Mandela

you pined around the seat of 'fick kingdom
and now you are thrown in Kwanangunguqo [prison],
the sealed box of endless night
trying to stop you in what you saw, up to
trying to erase you from popular memory
they put forward sellers and they prize people to praise them
but you remember and they shout that it is getting lost in Alex
we can't stand all this pressure!
then they charge you
to put you away forever
but you look them in the face
and you speak out the truth
about how the people are crushed and exploited
and how they fight fires to keep us through the darkness
and how to choose stones to meet new widows
to pass over the floods
and how to tear through the thornbush
How to care for each other on the road
with such heavy burdens
with your own life neglected
your own interests in others
you move on and speak the truth

SARUWU workers and Township Fever

Mbongeni Ngema's play *Township Fever* (1989)² stands in stark contrast to plays of the Clover workers and the Sammel workers. Ngema's play, which dealt with the 1987 strike by the South African Railways and Harbour Workers' Union (SARUWU), unwittingly showed the need for the involvement of workers in representations of their struggle.

During the month of SARUWU strike involving 20 000 railway workers, three workers were shot dead and many were injured by police on 22 April 1987. Police had occupied COSATU headquarters for five hours, holding workers at gunpoint, spread eagled and facing the wall.³ A few days later some strikers killed four sob workers and burnt their bodies using the 'necklace' method.⁴ When the bodies were

² The play was staged in 1990. A version of the script appears in Ngema's publication *The Best of Mbongeni Ngema: An Anthology* (1995:127-191).

³ This was captured in a well-known photograph by Eric Miller (*Weekly Mail* 24/4/87:1).

⁴ Paulus Zulu offers the following explanation of the greatest physical violence among the oppressed, in a society with a long history of repressive structural violence: 'As the demands

discovered a day after the killings, the police, claiming to be looking for the killers, did stop to COSATU house again, and kidnapped thousands of workers whom they led on at gunpoint, past masked police informants. 11 were arrested, including a 12-year-old child (Baskin 1991:179). Eventually eighteen people were tried for the murders, eight were found guilty and four were sentenced to death. COSATU and SARTWU condemned the killings, but they denied responsibility for them, stating that the first that they had heard of the murders was after the raid on COSATU House (1991:179).

The local reception of *Township Fever* was in stark contrast to the reception of *Wages of Fear* (1983) and *Absentee* (1985). Ngema's earlier work had demonstrated a thorough grasp of the social and political problems of oppressed South Africans. Ngema defended himself against the outcry by explaining that he had been overseas touring with *Songlowl* when he heard from his lawyer about the SARTWU strike. On his return, he visited the workers who were on death row for the murder of the strike-breakers, and signed as a legal interpreter. Ngema argues that he based *Township Fever* on the stories of the strike-breakers, the court reports and the attorney's reports (1995:12).

Workers, unionists and others who were involved in or familiar with the SARTWU strike were not up and over the play. The workers believed themselves to have been oppressed, twice, twice by the state as an employer and as a repressive force, and then by the playwright, who misrepresented their struggle. As the playwright and director, Ngema was accused of leading the industrial nation in a curiously, evidently because he was more interested in appealing to foreign (possibly United States) audiences, whose remoteness from the context expiated his liberties with complex issues. Ngema was criticised for behaving like the stereotype of an arrogant and misinformed visitor, who was merely interested in framing the question's to fit a reductionist and self-serving theatrical model. It was also charged that he sacrificed the facts of the strike to create an impressive musical and choreographic spectacle, e.g., most of the songs had little to do with the subject. There is no explanation in the play of the contradiction between the actions of management and the police, and the attacks made by a few workers on the said labour.

Some of Ngema's critics argued that he demonstrated a lack of comprehension of the complex forces that had shaped the violence, and of the connection between workers' daily experiences and apartheid. In the play there is the suggestion that the

each change with growing repression, from sheer brutal force such as beating, hanging to tearing and shooting, to more sophisticated forms such as burning and detention, so that the potential for violence from the resistance groups grows. In essence, violence is not on the formal agenda of resistance groupings, but is only a momentary response or rebellion to more organised violence by the State (Meyer 1989:18).

workers became militant, because they were dragged by a 'sangoma' (a traditional healer), an inaccurate and sensationalist misrepresentation of the conditions of labour that gave rise to the national strike. Further, Ngema's critique of the actions of a small group of SARTWU workers failed to contextualise the role of the labour movement in mobilising and mobilising severely oppressed workers to challenge the combined might of the state and capitalist systems of oppression (*The Weekly Mail* 30/3/90; *New Nation* 20/4/90).

COSATU's Living Wage Group claimed that Ngema had misquoted and misrepresented SARTWU and COSATU in the play. The issue of responsible representation was elaborated by Carol Smithberg (1990:73):

Ngema made a play that purports to represent real historical events. Clearly he has a responsibility to depict those events as accurately as possible, that respects before depicting when there is so much at stake in the way the events are interpreted. In this case four people's lives are in the balance. The SARTWU members sitting on death row.

The problem of representation grew more complicated as certain newspapers reported that the COSATU Living Wage Group had attempted to censor the play, which the union denied. Of related concern was the issue that, since the state had placed severe restrictions on the media (under the various states of emergency), South African plays had represented resistance struggles abroad. Therefore inaccurate and damaging dramatic representations were particularly harmful.

The play and its personalities offered artistically incisive insights into the shortcomings of populist literature, particularly in the playwright's manipulation of social, industrial-political themes to give his play taken credibility at the expense of workers' movement. Bhaki Mqadi, who played the most controversial character in *Township Fever* (which he has described as 'a tragic comedy'), unwittingly summed up the contradictions in an interview:

There's nothing wrong in the way the play is done. Sometimes people do not understand stage plays ... If you get on to the stage as simply as you can, in real life, you will not be interesting to the people watching the play (*Weekly Mail* 14/5/90:23).

It is the liberties that are taken with the character of 'the people' that are disturbing, and in stark contrast to the labour movement's struggle to affirm the rights of one of the largest and most exploited sectors of society.

Long before the *Township Fever* debate Mr Mashwayo, the national cultural co-ordinator of COSATU, recognised that 'objectivity without a base, without direction, without the support of a democratic movement, is a badly malfunctioning' (Mashwayo

racist art' (*Weekly Mail* 17/7/87:28). In another remark, which could well apply to the challenges and contradictions facing individual dramatists like the talented Ngema, Hlatshwayo pointed out that

It takes a lot for an artist to deprive himself of money and glory and stick to principles, to say I am not selling my principles, my nation, my class. This is people's culture (1987:28).

Focus on cultural production

The people are the real producers of culture, just as they are the real producers of material wealth. (Machobane, Mafelane & Siegelart 1983:25).

We have been culturally exploited time and time again: we have been singing, performing, eating and writing within a system we did not control. So the black workers have been feeding all their creativity into a culture machine to make profits for others ... from penny whistle bands to ngqongqong musicians, from amateur playlets to talented actors ... they are taken from us, from their communities, to be chewed up in the machine's teeth. Then ... they are spat out ... an empty brick, labour for us to nurse them. This makes us say it is time to begin controlling our own creativity (The Dunlop Workers' Cultural Local, *Weekly Mail* 17/7/87:28).

The *Dunlop Play* was initiated in 1983 to pressurise the Dunlop tyre company to recognise the Metal and Allied Workers' Union (MAWU). The play examined the history of the Dunlop tyre company from the point of view of the workers. Some of the players had been working at Dunlop for 25 years (Van Kester 1988:29).

Through culture, the working class affirms its identity and its interests, and rediscovers its history. It also travels, in a dynamic and life-giving way, the hidden patterns and structures which underpin subjugation of the working class (Mafelane 1989:24).

Recognising the importance of encouraging workers to take control of their creative powers COSATU created structures to focus on cultural production. Through cultural activity workers developed the content and form of worker culture, as has been evident in their posters, graphics, banners, songs, poetry, plays and T-shirts (such as those produced by the unemployed workers' cooperative, *Zamazeni*, in Durban). Articulating their identity as a class, workers clarified their relationships to other groups.

In 1983 the *Dunlop Play* created space for cultural activity within the labour movement, and led to the formation of the Durban Workers' Cultural Local. Van Kester

points out that the workers' cultural local was initiated in 1984 and established in 1985 (1988:54). Following recognition within COSATU that the struggle for cultural transformation was central to the liberation struggle, there was a stage of cultural activity in the labour movement. COSATU established cultural locals, which paralleled shop stewards' structures, in Durban, Howick and Pietermaritzburg. COSATU also established a culture office and created the post of national culture co-ordinator. Workers were able to acquire extensive training at the Culture and Working Life Project in Durban and the Community Arts Project in Cape Town. These initiatives demonstrate the seriousness with which the worker federation attended to the cultural development of workers even as it fought for its existence under the various states of emergency.

Many worker plays deal with the dismissals arising from strikes. During the state of emergency members of the Food and Allied Workers' Union (FAWU) at Clover Dairies went on strike against an alleged conspiracy between management and the Inkatha aligned United Workers Union of South Africa, and 168 workers were dismissed in July 1986. Workers developed *The Clover Workers' Play* to publicise their version of the dispute. The process by which the play was created is explained by Mf Hlatshwayo:

This is the story of things that really happened to these workers. As such one person couldn't really sit down and write it. Shop stewards suggested an outline for the play and the worker-actors then went through each scene, in no particular order, for four weeks. We didn't put people into parts, but had each scene with different actors, and someone got it right. The scenes were then woven together into a whole which, however, keeps getting enriched. Workers from Clover branches and other factories would all come to put other things in (Chapman 1988:28).

The workshop method is an established characteristic of South African resistance drama (Tiebout 1990). In a country based on hierarchical structures of exclusion the co-operative method of producing represented an ideological move towards a society based on the social process of democratic community, although there were many contradictions in practice (Gready 1994:179-185). Working class theatre is not merely an event but a process that involved a huge range of participants. Chapman (1988:28) points out that the worker play has a communicative function for fellow workers that is real rather than merely symbolic. That it also had a developmental function for the strikers and for other workers facing similar conditions. That *The Clover Workers' Play* was effective may be gauged from the strong community support it generated, which resulted in a boycott of Clover products. In October 1987, after a long court hearing Clover agreed to pay the dismissed workers R200 000 in severance pay and to drop charges against FAWU.

Worker literature has been an integral part of organised labour's discourse of resistance.

through organs, from the labour movement is forging a language of resistance that powerfully contests the language of domination and articulates the deepest aspirations of the people (Makgato, 1989:253).

This is not a straightforward process. Many workers were turned into artists by the pressure of events. Recognising that consciousness is not fixed (and that the consciousness of the most oppressed class is vulnerable to manipulation by various interest groups), the trade unions invested in cultural production as a means of consolidating worker consciousness. Hlatshwayo remarks on worker enthusiasm for dramatic performance:

No union gathering passes without poetry, recitation, dancing and singing. There is no way we can begin to criticise the richness of worker poetry which sometimes erupts spontaneously during strike gatherings (Hlatshwayo, 1991:1).

Makgato and Hlatshwayo (1989:5) argue that given the conditions of its production, worker culture represents a greater investment of commitment than the cultural production of any other class.

Workers face the most crippling effects of economic exploitation: long work hours, long travel distances, low wages, poverty and a serious lack of cultural resources in the black townships, settlements, compounds and hostels. These conditions make every cultural work an act of invention as much as an act of creation and imagination.

This is supported by a statement that the Durban FOSATU Local Cultural Group made about their public presentation of plays, music, dance and poetry:

we are involved in this, lower standard in form, rather work, because we believe in our struggle ... not only there to destroy the oppressive powers that oppress us. It is there to also build a new world. Therefore, we can't be serious (Makgato & Hlatshwayo, 1989:225).

Nise Makgato (1989:28), who was a member of the Durban FOSATU Local Cultural Group, has addressed the nature of women's participation in performance culture:

Performance or performances – be it dancing and the performance of poetry – is a playful act of experience and ... If the situation of women in this field is therefore paradoxical, that is so, because in performance culture they have a platform for expressing their

anyway, their perspectives and an opportunity to conscientize their audience ... otherwise, it is important for women to realise their potential and extend their self-confidence as participants in the struggle for cultural transformation.

Makgato (1989:29) further pointed out that the campaigns on women's issues that succeeded 'were pushed by women themselves'. This is evident in the position of Roseline Ntsepe, a South African Domestic Workers' Union organizer and writer who believed that encouraging domestic workers to tell their stories was an integral part of the work of a labour organizer:

I encourage other domestic workers to write their stories ... to be a writer need not mean you have to go to school. You can say what you have seen, what you know, what you write. The next person can write it for you. I regard it as my duty to assist the domestic workers ... [as an organizer for the South African Domestic Workers' Union] (Ongwen, 1991:27).

Ntsepe's statement supports Makgato's (1989:28) argument that 'each person has a story to tell ... you do not need to be well educated or wealthy ... had to tell a story or to write'.

Most worker-artists have been obliged to use the materials near to hand. Fugitive forms of expression have come into existence amidst indifference and hostility from the dominant, and without official protection or authority as Bess (1986), Barber (1987) and Makgato and Sotshok (1988) have pointed out. By adapting traditional forms to suit the demands of the period, the industrial environment and its new political challenges, worker poets have made significant contributions to the development of South African literature through oral poetry:

and poetry, the tightly knitted web of ideas, tradition or the pressure of the belly makes, manifested as a vision of ordinary black workers and their struggles (as in Quthus, Hlatshwayo & Makgato, 1986:22).

When he was a shop steward of Alfred Ntsebe Quthus composed *izibongo* for a Natal and Allied Workers' Union annual general meeting in 1981. Quthus drew upon the poems from a customer's and old set term with his political resonances to raise workers' consciousness of their union and resolve in their backs. His performance acted as a catalyst:

he released an untapped store of poetic energy which, without warning, erupted everywhere ... in the ranks of labour struggles and their mass gatherings.

Ordinary black workers with performing and rhetorical power began coming

their poetry in Zulu, using all the elements they could gather from local cultural traditions to express a new sense of self-identity. Hundreds of workers have been performing them every since 1984 – some offhandedly, some with an influx of assertive noise and defiance, some of it with enthusiasm and the rest, some of it hardly spontaneous (Sitas 1986:57).

Qabula related that when he started performing, 'all the poems came out' for, as Sitas (1986:56) explains:

[f]or them being the product of colonial domination, or a sign of backwardness the poetry of Vilane, Zondi, Qabula and Hlatshwayo, and many more is ... the conscious result of a struggle by people who have a large immediate audience, a clear organisational project, to create a popular poetry that is OF the people, as the people are changing: farmers and the young and them.

Through poems that are innovative while expressing continuity, the worker poets contested the monopoly of the Inkatha Freedom Party over Zulu cultural traditions just as they challenged the IFP's claim to inheriting the mantle of Zulu resistance to colonialism. In their use of the praise form the poets Qabula, Vilane, Zondi, Hlatshwayo and Ntzeni arrived at the

symbols of the Zulu past being traced away from an aggressive ethnic nationalism and put to the service of freedom, more specifically those [which] challenges the notion that oral forms belong to the margins of contemporary life (Gerner 1986:57).

Sitas (1986:52) confirms this view of the progressive politics of the worker *izimbongi* in his reference to the work of Hlatshwayo as a chronicler, who

... is always transforming tradition, percolated by a future belongs to us opposed to the *izimbongi* of KwaZulu who are attempting to preserve social harmony by bringing it to the past.

Gerner (1986:57) went on to argue that the *izimbongi* 'hold the centre stage in the attempt to define contemporary worker consciousness in South Africa', which is supported by Sitas' (1986:56) assessment of the COSATU oral poets: 'They do not have to imagine themselves to be people's heroes, they are that'.

Dikane wa Mogale's written poem 'Ezintwini ngezipe's statement' (1981:46-49) represents the confidence and authority of the oral poets:

I come from a lineage of warriors
and we know martyrs are not born.
I'm tempered like iron in the furnace of struggle.

While the poems as a whole focus on the national liberation struggle, there is reference in these lines to conservative and reactionary forces among the oppressed, who tried to draw their legitimacy from past heroes. Like Qabula and Hlatshwayo, Wa Mogale (who was a COSATU organiser in Petermaritzburg) treats Bhambata and Shaka as an integral part of the history of the liberation of the working class (as the industrial image of the furnace suggests). For Wa Mogale (as for Qabula, Hlatshwayo and Madlivinyoka Ntzeni) the subject in the line 'I come from a lineage of warriors' refers as much to the political activist as to the poet.

Many poems began to appear in worker newspapers, pamphlets and other publications. To (partially) address the problems of access and linguistic diversity, poets like Qabula, Malanqa and Hlatshwayo published Zulu and English versions of their texts (e.g. *Black Mamba Rising* (1986), *Izimbongi* (1989), *A Working Life: Cried beyond Belief* (1989) and *Run to the Ground* (1991)). Because a great deal of worker literature is dual medium with poets 'do not have to worry about "proper" English, they compose in the languages they knew leaving the translation of their work mostly to others' (Sitas 1986:56). However, while the print medium increases access among (literate) workers, the printed poem that is extracted from the context of performance tends to lose much of its oral power, its songs, chants, citations, improvisations and audience participation (Sitas in Qabula, Hlatshwayo & Malanqa 1986:7). Other media, such as video and audio tapes are more effective than print.

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Van Gogh was Really a Punk: The First Afrikaans Graphic Novel

Jaunita van Rensburg

Vincent van Gogh is alive and well and living in Millbrow. The well-known story of the famous painter comes alive in *Hand op Aarde*, the hilariously first Afrikaans graphic novel that does not only have punk credentials, but provides with its visual impact and narrative drive, entertainment on many levels.

In this article I will attempt to explain:

- 1) the progression from comics to the graphic novel,
- 2) the language of comics,
- 3) why *Hand op Aarde* will qualify as a 'punk' library, yet can be enjoyed on various levels,
- 4) why it ultimately fills us as a challenge to the political *status quo*.

A few urgent notes regarding punk and comics:

Punk and comics were, and still are, frowned upon by the establishment. Comics were the main man of the nursery, the hero of the basement, the terror of the house, the curse of the kids and a threat to the future (McFie 1973:29).

Punk Rock has been described by Frank Sinatra as a 'bad scene'. He posed the question: "Why does it have to exist when there is so much in life?" (Green 1987:94).

Dark art forms thrive on the fact that people are, apparently, easily shocked. This 1984 interview appeared in the book *Dark Kingdom*. Senator Katsenbach is questioning William Gaines:

Senator K: Here's your storybook. This seems to be a man with a bloody nose holding a woman's head up which has been severed from its body. Do you think it's in good taste?

Gaines: Yes, sir, I do. Kind a story of a horror novel. A cover like this, for example, might be different, as holding the head a little higher so that the neck could be seen dripping blood from it and running the body over a little further so that the neck of the body could be seen to be bloody.

Senator K: You have blood oozing out of her mouth.

Gaines. A little.

McCue comments that 'as painful as it is, Gaines was condemned by the South ... he quickly discovered that he had been black-balled ... no distributor would handle his books' (McCue 1993:216).

The above mentioned scenario is typical of any new art form. Joseph Witte had this to say about the matter:

Whether the comic book's future will make good its bid for wider cultural acceptance as a self-standing medium remains to be seen, but it is worth remembering that the major modes of expression of this century, the novel and the cinema, were both first scorned as vulgarities until serious critics demonstrated their potential (Witte 1989:5).

Greg McCue writes in *Dark Knight* (1993) that comic books owe their genesis to the New York newspapers of the 1890s. The newspapers of the day were dominated by Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst. Their mutual hatred and their desire to dominate their territory could only be achieved by boosting sales.

The object was to grab public support and attention. The best way to do this for an audience that was mainly lower class, adolescent and semi-literate was to include pictures, and these preferably coarse and funny. The 'funnies' were born because news papers had to sell to the common man (McCue 1993:8).

As soon as comic books appeared, they had their critics. In 1910 the *Chicago Daily News* labeled the comics as 'poisonous mushroom growth' (McCue 1993:28).

Psychotherapist Dr. Frederic Wertham in his book *Seduction of the Innocent* (1955), caricatured comic books with every kind of social and moral pervers or 'imaginal' including sadism, drug abuse, theft, murder and rape (McCue 1993:30).

As a result of this the industry started to regulate itself by adopting the Code of the Comics Magazine Association of America.

A few years of idealising sales, the comic *Deadman* was drawn in starkly realistic tones and written on an adult level. The comic book community woke up to the serious potential of the medium. Comic book specialist shops began to appear.

Martell's first attempt to target this market came with the first new comic book term: the graphic novel. 'Chaplin novel' is a term used by some comic book intellectuals to denote a new designation for comic books of old. McCue (1993) writes on page 61 in *Dark Knight*.

It is not a very specific magazine-sized book with high quality, glossy paper. McCue (1993:77) concludes that comic art is now a literary medium in transition from mass popularity and cultural disdain to a new respectability as a means of expression and communication.

The shadow of the Deconstructionists looms large over this development. Roger Sabin writes that with the growth of cultural studies in tertiary education and the fashionableness of post-modernist theory

... it became increasingly acceptable of 'culture' as including not just the 'high arts' opera, prose literature, fine art—but also areas such as television, video, rock music and 'pop' culture generally (Sabin 1993:92).

McCue writes:

The barrier between 'high' and 'low' culture, it is often, were, is not breaking down, but leaking badly and there was pressure on the arbiters of taste to expand their horizons (Sabin 1993:93).

The fact that *Heavenly Bodies* (1997) is characterised as a 'graphic novel' is a device to mark the book as something new, to distance it from the childish connotations of the word 'comic'. By the same token it, hopefully, elevated the book to the status of a novel (Sabin 1993:93).

The story is very simple. Vince has a hard time in Hellbrow. Nobody buys his paintings and the debt collectors are after his blood. Sometimes he loses head or a part of his ear. But luckily there are the prostitutes, even if they laugh at him and his yuppie brother Theo, even if Theo always preaches before giving him a cheque.

Vince's friend is the narrator and events are seen through his eyes. The Van Gogh-like illustration on the cover suggests that the classic tragic story of Dutch painter Vincent van Gogh will be used to tell a story about the real South Africa. The Hellbrow town can be seen in the background.

The painter Van Gogh was never afraid to go against the grain following his own artistic bliss against considerable odds. Very few of his contemporaries understood his genius. Vince also finds that establishment artists and critics like Trent Reid and Linda Givon are indifferent to his art.

Vince and Van Gogh have brothers who support them through thick and thin. M.P. Calhoun writes in *Vincent van Gogh* (1969:22):

The links that were forged between Vincent and Theo van Gogh were far stronger than any of the ordinary bonds of blood, so that their common aims were inseparable in the history of art.

On page 48 of *Heavenly Bodies* (1997) Vince's yuppie brother Theo is handing out cheques left, right and centre to all the wronged parties Vince attacked when he got out of his 'fits'.

Like his real-life artistic counterpart, Vince feels close to the underdog, likes prostitutes, cuts off a piece of his ear and ends up in a lunatic asylum.

Hezel op Aarde (1997) is a fine example of the graphic novel. There are dramatic irony, character development, Vince exchanges his painting brush for a gun, detailed scene setting and the generation of mood – one can almost feel the resignation with which Vince and his friends turn in a state hospital ward is awarded. In Sabie's words, the graphic novel is to the comic what the novel is to the short story (Horn 1997:336).

Glimpses of the anarchy South Africa has become are witnessed by the two characters. White and black beggars are standing on street corners with pizazz and a notice against a state hospital window reads: 'No emergency procedures undertaken without cash deposit' (Horn & Findlay 1997:4).

Yet it is impossible to really appreciate the power of the graphic novel without knowing how comics work.

The conventional signs which indicate the status of verbal text in comics are well known: words in oblong boxes function as a narrative voice. Words in rounded 'thought' with pointed projections represent direct speech. Cloud-like balloons, with ribbons leading to a human figure indicate unspoken thoughts, blurred and captioned letters denote various degrees of emotion and emphasis, and so forth (Witak 1989:12).

Robert Harvey writes that what makes a comic different are speech balloons and narrative breakdown. Speech balloons breathe into comics their peculiar life. In all other graphic presentations, characters are doomed to wordless posturing and miming. In comics, they speak. Speech balloons are giving the life that we are seeing living, breathing and speaking people (Harvey 1996:198).

Dialogue balloons and caption boxes in comic books are almost always hand lettered for two reasons, one practical and one aesthetic. It is much easier with hand lettering to make the required speed of exactly into the available space in the panels (Harvey 1996:23).

Freehand lettering, no matter how precisely done, always betrays the calligrapher's hand, and this more closely approximates the nuances of the human voice than does mechanically produced type.

According to Harvey, one film's test of good comic art is to ascertain to what extent the sense of words depends upon the pictures and vice versa. But when words and pictures blend in mutual dependence to tell a story and thereby convey a meaning, that neither the verbal nor the visual can achieve alone without the other, then the storyteller is coming to the fullest realization of the medium of Comic Film (Harvey 1996:4).

Example: on page 18 Vince and his friends are attending a party organised by artist Brian Kruger. Kruger is an artist specializing in acquiring and sending up kash art. He owned the 'Kuchen Bey' restaurant in Johannesburg and is well known for the

exotic dishes he served them. Although they dislike Kruger, suggesting that he paints kinsch, they are blissfully unaware of the disapproving looks the brunette on the left (spouting wine from the box) are giving them. She obviously doesn't like the way they are mucking into the free food and drink.

Another example: a critic judging Vince's work advises him that it is high time he puts finishing touches to his art work in a professional manner. Vince's reaction to this advice is vividly illustrated on page 11. In the second frame he is still off guard. He is listening attentively, with an open mind, if only for his brother's sake.

In the third frame he explodes with rage, forcing the critic to physically retreat. A striking illustration of 'the bleeding of word and picture for the greatest dramatic economy in narration' (Harvey 1996:8).

The question of pictures doing anything for the story that prose could not do just as well is answered on page 57 of the novel. The narrator is pondering Vince's heart felt conviction that one day he will be surprised to know how great God's move is. Vince's friend sees in his mind's eye how a benign Jesus Christ welcomes four characters resembling Hitler, Barack Strydom, Robert Mafunde and an APTA soldier in heaven.)

The capacity to vary panel size and position gives the comic book format its most potent means of creating dramatic effect. Large splash panels have a tremendous impact on the course of the story.

Bursting into a packed bar, it is not long before Vince meets the live wire, gesturing and demanding at the top of his lungs that the television set be switched off. His angry defiance is in sharp contrast to the rest of the bar's gofers. They are in a relaxed, half drunk and jovial mood, their only concern being the enjoy making television.

The powerful opening scene sets the tone for the story to follow: a genius constantly misunderstood and an loggerheads with the rest of society. It indicates that although he may sound like one of the 'turdies' – he uses their latter expletives – he certainly is not one of them. He is an outsider living according to his own rules and will rather risk physical injury than conform to society's norms.

The above mentioned is typical of a Punk personality. If the essential spirit of punk is provocation and creativity in a repressive system and is represented by turdies with a sense of vision (Vile 1993:3), then *Hezel op Aarde* (1997) can be seen as an example of the genre.

Vince and his friend's reverence is similar to that in Punk. It challenges and sends up the cosy Johannesburg art establishment. Seeboring is a friend of art collector and dealer Link Goodman. Vince overtimes that Linda Gibson likes his work, but is more interested in black leather coats (Horn & Findlay 1997:36).

Freud Real advises that he uses a 'fridolite line' (Horn & Findlay 1997:6). And their comment on Brian Kruger's work: if he does, as he claims, work on a sand up of kinsch, Picasso must have done a sand up of kinsch (Horn & Findlay

1997:15). It is interesting to note that *Green Head* opens an art gallery in Johannesburg and Braam Kruger a restaurant. These are real, living, breathing characters satirised mercilessly. The unspoken implication is that they too will not recognise art works that are ahead of their time because their only concern is to make money and buy works that are in vogue.

About the godfathers of punk, The Sex Pistols, Jon Savage writes in his book *England's Dreaming*:

The group were caught in an impossible double bind. Intelligent in a working class culture that did not value intelligence, yet unable to leave that class because of lack of opportunity. The result: An appalling frustration. (Savage 1991:1.4)

Johann Rotten, lead singer of The Sex Pistols, had this to say about their predicament: 'We were all rather ugly people. We were outcasts, the unwanted' (Savage 1991:1.4).

Colin Wilson writes in *The Outsider*:

The Outsider's case against society is very clear. All men and women have their conspicuous, marvellous qualities. Yet they keep up a pretence, to themselves, to others, of their respectability, their philosophy, their religion, and all attempts to gloss over, to make look civilized and rational something that is savage, unorganized, irrational. He is an *outsider* because he stands for Truth. (Wilson 1978:23)

For the Outsider, Wilson writes, the world is not rational, not orderly. When he asserts his sense of anomaly in the face of the bourgeois complacent acceptance it is not simply the need to crack a snook at respectability that provokes him; it is a distressing sense that truth *must be told at all costs*, otherwise there can not be an ultimate restoration of order. (Wilson, 1978:25)

Johann van Wyk writes in the literary magazine *Spekko*:

If the Sex Pistols sing 'I am an anti Christ' it is not a metaphysical statement, it is water directed against the church as a social institution that is meant to keep the working class obedient and passive. (Van Wyk 1991:47)

Compare this with Vince's viewpoint on religion: 'The shit began when I told him [his father] that the church knows nothing about love, but everything about hypocrisy' (Horn & Findlay 1997:16). On page 27 he is assaulting his preacher-father, abusing his mother and robbing the church's petty cash.

Punk musicians were regularly involved in fights and street brawls. Some mutilated themselves. Johann's opinion on the subject: 'I won't have people slag me off for

what I do to my own body. Because it's mine. If I want to cut my leg off, I will' (Cohen 1983:55).

It is interesting to note that these words echo Vincent van Gogh's reply when questioned by police after shooting himself in the stomach: 'What I have done is nobody else's business. I am free to do what I like with my own body' (Friedlaet 1969:129).

In *Head up Apple* (1997) Vince explains his cutting off of a piece of his ear: 'At I remember is this knife in my hand. There was a fight. I slashed someone. On the way back I decided to teach myself a lesson. The next thing I wake up in Westkoppen' (Horn & Findlay 1997:35). There were punks who ended up as Vince does, in the lunatic asylum.

The Sex Pistols wanted to make the youth of their day self reliant. Johann van Wyk writes in *Spekko*:

They wanted the youth to be independent of moral corporations and social prescriptions. They wanted to demonstrate to society that humans are free to do nothing to them. They wanted to have their own identities. (Van Wyk 1991:75)

Vince and his friend know exactly what it takes to be successful painters. (They have to paint elephants.) They prefer to be poor rather than to conform to the snobbish and prescriptive Johannesburg art circles. Vince tells his brother:

You really don't understand. I want to sell my paintings to ordinary people, not to museums or Seidman or rich old ladies in Rosebank. But I feel ordinary people deserve better than the shit they pay. (Horn & Findlay 1997:18)

Head up Apple (1997) is not particularly politically correct. When a black beggar asks Vince's friend for money, he declines, remarking: 'So what's the going rate for Bantu mowndays?' (Horn & Findlay 1997:41). When looking for Vince he wonders 'if somebody has knifed him because he is a settler' (Horn & Findlay 1997:29).

Women are seen as nothing more than sex objects or freaks who love being manipulated by their boyfriends. Johann Rotten had this to say about love: 'You can't love anything. Love is what you feel for a dog or a pussyon, it doesn't apply to humans, and if it does it shows just how low you are. It shows your intelligence isn't clicking'. What happens then between people who like each other? 'Lust. That's all' (Cohen 1983:60).

In Europe one can not be more politically incorrect than to wear a swastika. Yet this is exactly what the Sex Pistols did. In their song *Holiday on the sun* they compare the Jewish concentration camp Belsen with a holiday resort.

Jon Savage writes that the basic punk attitude was that a sharp shock was needed

to get a reaction from dulled reflexes. As well as exhibiting their availing incourage-
ment, the New York Dolls occasionally used the sweatuka.

Johnson of the Dolls explains:

You carve a sweatuka in a dress. You don't know what Facelash is, it is not an i Jesus at all. Kids don't care anything about that shit. When you want to make a statement about how BAD you are, that's how you do it (Savage 1991:64).

Howl op Aarde (1997) sends up the cultural establishment in South Africa. We have also seen that it has poems of contact with the punk genre. That's not, however, that a punk sensibility cannot, in any serious manner, challenge the South African political status quo. We do not react to violence and discrimination the same way than do a trendy British adolescent in a relatively safe environment.

Consider the following scene described by a punk in *England's Dreaming*:

The scene was this ready bar called Ape and I got Berlin to wear this dog-e-collar, and I walked in with Berlin following me, and people's jaws just hit the table. I walked in and ordered a bowl of water for him. I got the bowl of water every day. People were scared! (Savage 1991:84).

An average South African will find the above mentioned scene mildly interesting, even charming. Over the years he has been exposed to, among others, public beatings on the news at night.

Who can forget Maki Sisonke being kicked to death and being thrown on seaweed after newsworld. It is doubtful if a person entering a bar with a dog collar on will send anyone here in a flurry.

A member of the punk band The Dills said the following on punk violence:

Compared to real rebel activity, such as twelve-year-old kids fighting cops and burning schools in Soweto, South Africa, or grade school kids organizing strikes in Taiwan, the petty spitting, mashing and throwing is just another fashion initiation (Whe 1995:105).

It is difficult to say if *Howl op Aarde* (1997) points to a new direction in Afrikaans literature. The problem is in this graphic novel might shock Afrikaans speaking people on the homeland, but they will not be the people buying the book. It is only for sale in selected book shops, frequented by urban dwellers, used to everything. It will most probably be read by the converted.

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Hedonism in the Margins: Dolf van Coller's *Die Bietelbafies*

Johan van Wyk

Hedonism and Literature

Hedonistic texts form an important part of literary subculture since time immemorial, and also have a marginal presence in South African literature. This article is focusing on the folk novel *Die Bietelbafies* (1993) as an important contribution in Afrikaans to this subculture. This importance is foregrounded through the links that is established between it and Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque in *Rabelais and his world* (1984) and Nietzsche's understanding of tragedy as integral to chaotic rituals in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1956).

Literary hedonism refers to texts in which excessive pleasure is depicted as the highest purpose of life, as the meaning of life itself. Nietzsche refers to it as 'luxury revealed as truth' (1956:45) and as an expression of the 'transcendent fertility of the universal will' (1956:107). In the polemic text the emphasis is on excessive sex, drinking and eating. This is the material from which Van Coller's *Die Bietelbafies* (1993) is constructed, although transposed to the 'familiar, but hardly explored, Afrikaans context' of boom agencies, small town restaurants and hunting weekends.

Nietzsche

Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (1956) is a profound critique of the theoretical person and that, which also emerged in our time as the dominant institutions and discourses: democracy, scientific optimism and utilitarianism. He writes:

Could it be possible that, in spite of all 'modern ideas' and the prejudices of a democratic society, the tithens of optimism, the gradual prevalence of rationality, practical and theoretical utilitarianism, no less than democracy itself which developed at the same time, might all have been symptoms of a decline of strength, of unproductive stagnation, and of physical and weariness? (1956:22)

Against reason he places wisdom, against optimistic philosophy he places tragedy.

The tragedy, according to Nietzsche, supposes pessimism about human attempts to exert power over nature through reason and the transcendental ego of the individual. In contrast to the logical schematism (1956:91) of reason, expressed through the notion of representation (the depiction of the material through measurement, or in politics where politicians and their parties represent in quantifiable way the aspirations of particular interest groups), tragedy is an expression of wisdom. Wisdom is founded in an acceptance of contradiction as an essential part of nature; it recognizes the irrational, powers, which transcend the human mind, the unknown and the unconscious. Nietzsche states the possibility that 'Perhaps there is a realm of wisdom from which the logician is exiled?' (Nietzsche 1956:93).

Wisdom is a humble acknowledgement of human helplessness in the context of an illusory world. Hamlet personifies this wisdom and it explains why he cannot act, why he cannot come to a decision. Wisdom is marked by pauses in the tragic hero:

reason inhibits action. For their rational inability to change anything in the eternal nature of things, they call the beneficence or humbling that they should be asked to accept upon a word that is out of joint (Nietzsche 1956:60).

Wisdom implies an order that is different from the regime of reason (personified by Socrates and Euripides) with its blue prints for change in the world. 'Socrates conceives it to be his duty to correct existence' (Nietzsche 1956:82) and he refers to Euripides' 'burdensome reasonableness' (Nietzsche 1956:84) and 'rationalistic misjud' (Nietzsche 1956:84).

Despite the 'chaos' at the absence of existence, tragedy is marked by a joy in the 'incomprehensible abundance and fertility of nature. The underlying principle of this abundance, and of life itself, is the mortality of the individual. Death frames individual life as a dream and an illusion.

Reason attempts to reduce the abundant diversity of life to uniformity; the human being as reasonable master over nature becomes the only acceptable image of the human being. This is expressed in petite bourgeois morality plays in which the audience see themselves represented on the stage, a minor image of themselves and their values:

Through Euripides] the everyday man forces his way into the spectators' sanctuary on the stage, the arena in which formerly only great and bold traits were represented; now amidst the painful fidelity that comes from the stage, even the botched imitations of nature (Nietzsche 1956:77).

Oppositions, right and wrong, rather than the acceptance of contradictions form the foundation of petite bourgeois morality. It is therefore a morality of rights. Against

it is a tragedy there is no definite right or wrong. All that exists is just and unjust and equally justified in both" (Nietzsche 1956:72).

Agates, the pale bourgeois companion Nietzsche places the drunken satyr of tragedy. Tragically becomes a product of the dream and of idealisation (Nietzsche 1956:53). Dionysus, the god of wine, is also the god of tragedy.

But under the influence of the narcotic laughter, of which the songs of all primitive peoples speak, as with the potent magic of singing for periods of nature with joy, these Dionysian emotions awake, and as they grow in intensity everything subjective vanishes into complete self-forgetting (Nietzsche 1956:73).

Part of the 'self-forgetting' in an intoxicated state, and also important for *The Birth of Tragedy* (1951), is the bonding that occurs between nature being and human being and between human being and nature (Nietzsche 1956:77). The satyr is an embodiment of this nature being; he is an expression of the joy and abundance of nature.

The metaphysical conflict – in which, I am supposing, every true tragedy moves – is that there is a loss of things, despite all the changes of appearances, in spite of its powerful and pleasurable. This condition appears in language clearly in the choros of actors, a chorus of natural beings who live harmoniously, as it were, behind all civilization and remain eternally the same, despite the changes of generations and of the history of action. (Nietzsche 1956:55)

Van Cella's *The Birth of Tragedy* (1981) is an expression of the inextricable presence of pleasure in existence, in spite of dominant moral discourses and blue prints and in spite of the life-threatening consequences of the excessive behaviour. The character Vastje (meaning wine barrel or tub) is infected with AIDS for instance.

For Nietzsche (1956:51) the satyr is symbol of sexual outrage once in contact with the cultural, civilized person, he represents the limits of logic, embodies the wisdom which man cannot logic, the wisdom which is associated with art and tragedy. Tragedy is an art form, which expresses the synthesis of existence and nature. Tragedy is a civilized perception.

... the mystery due to it of tragedy: the fundamental knowledge of the oneness of everything, without the mediation of individualism as the primal cause of evil, and of all, as the joyous hope that the spell of individualism may be broken in agony of a renewed oneness (Nietzsche 1956:74).

Rousseau places the human being against nature. A want to restrain nature, as a discourse of power, is denied in the transcendental ego of the individual. *The Birth of Tragedy* (1991)

were with the contradiction between the human and nature within the institutions of reason: it portrays the satyr, ironically, in the costume of the small-town lawyer. E. Brütz (1994) describes, from a feminist perspective, *The Birth of Tragedy* (1991) as one of the most chauvinistic, sexist and racist texts in Afrikaans. Feminism, as a political program (like the Christian piety from which it derives) has a particularly repressive attitude against the portrayal of the human body (especially that of women) as nature, as sexual. It further presupposes the neutralisation of variations of society on the basis of equality and uniformity.

Bakhtin

Bakhtin's notions in *Rabelais and his world* (1984) relate closely to that of Nietzsche, although it focuses on a different historical period, namely the early Renaissance. In stead of the satyr of antiquity he refers to the renewing and utopian utopia of folk humour. Like Nietzsche (in his arguments against naturalism and literature in the service of the social sciences) he sets humour against the dogmatic contrast of official ideology.

In all other matters there prevails a readiness toward the stability and completion of being, toward a simple meaning, one single tone of seriousness (Bakhtin 1984:10).

Folk humour, marked by blasphemy, the bodily and the sexual ('travelling in oceans of strong drink, ponds of sausage, and endless conjuring of bodies' – Bakhtin 1984:16) affirms the abundance of nature ('The leading themes ... are fertility, growth, and a brimming over abundance' – Bakhtin 1984:19). The feast, which is a celebration of this abundance, is for Bakhtin central to folk culture and points to social renewal. '... for a time (people) entered the utopian realm of community, freedom, equality, and abundance'. It points to the abolition of dominant dogmas, it plays with the contradictions between ideal and reality and in an existing order, and emphasises the relativity of truths.

All the symbols of the carnival bloom and blossom in [the] pathos of change and renewal, with the sense of the play-relativity of prevailing truths and values (Bakhtin 1984:14).

Folk humour derives from the familiarity of the market square and is dominated by the portrayal of the grotesque body, the body as far from nature, as excessive, as open; the mouth, anus and vagina is essential to life as formative process between inside and outside, human being and human being.

...the grotesque body is not separated from the rest of the world ... the stress is laid on those parts of the body that are open to the outside world ... the parts through which the world enters the body or emerges from it, or through which the body itself goes out to meet the world. This means that the emphasis is on the openings of the conversation, or on various ramifications and affluents: the open mouth, the genital organs, the breasts, the phallus, the penis, the nose. The body discloses its essence as a principle of growth which exceeds its own limits only in copulation, pregnancy, childbirth, the threat of death, eating, drinking or defecation (Bakhtin 1984:25).

What is high is brought down low

To degrade ... means to connect oneself with the lower stratum of the body, the life of the body and the reproductive organs; it therefore relates to acts of defecation and copulation, conception, pregnancy, and birth (Bakhtin 1984:21).

It is the body, as bulge of collective life, against the bourgeois ego of the individual, it is as emphasised!

The crucial bodily principle is contained not in the biological individual, not in the bourgeois ego, but in the people, a people who are eternally growing and renewed (Bakhtin 1984:19).

Van Celler's *Die Rieliebates* story as feast

As Bakhtin points out carnival originated at the market place, in economic activity. In the exactly hundred episodes of Van Celler's *Die Rieliebates* (1993) the economy also plays a central role. The characters are broadly divided in two opposing groups as represented by two economically competing law firms: the law firm of Lookie and the one of Rukel. But there is also the portrayal of countless subgroups, which have only indirect contact with the law firms. The economic rivalry is responsible for the tension and main story line in the text. It regularly alternates, though, with the escapades of other characters that are not, or only indirectly, involved with the two central opposing groups. Van Celler in this way succeeds to make a whole town part of his book as an extended feast. Feast becomes an expression of the characters' lives. Eating, drinking and sex in excess are the main motifs in the text and is present in every episode. Here and again the sexual is determined by economic motivations, as contained in the image of a 'finger in a wet purse' (1993:68). The economic focus though is completely different from a ponderous naturalistic explanation of social impoverishment: the economy is rather part of the whole where characters survive through trickery embodied with fun and

Die Rieliebates as utopian freedom

Within a context where non-sexist and non-racial ideologies (increasingly expressions ironically of extreme racism and sexism) are dominant dogma, *Die Rieliebates* (1993) is one of the most liberating texts in Afrikaans due to its utopian perspective. It is a participatory perspective, a worldly perspective which makes it non-cend sexist, and racist. The narrator as voice of the people does not suffer as an objective omniscient narrator; he does not place himself above that with which he is dealing. Through the use of folk speech (jokes, idiomatic expressions, proverbs and slang) the narrator identifies himself with the folk; he belongs in the amoral, ambivalent laughter of the people: 'The people's ambivalent laughter ... expresses the point of view on the whole world: he who is laughing also belongs to it' (Bakhtin 1984:12).

As expression of the utopian, the texts narrate the highest degree of pleasure possible, the unrestrained freedom that transcends repressive reason. During one of the weekend hunting expeditions the characters reached that stage where their behaviour becomes totally uncontrolled' (Van Celler 1993:61).

Regression

The unrestrained freedom (which is also a regression to the savage, which awakens in the overly civilised, the water that behind all civilization remains an essential part of humanity) is best depicted in episode 40. In this chapter the 'boys' during a hunting expedition surrender themselves completely to drinking until they were 'blut' (Van Celler 1993:99). They feast for the sake of 'fe'. As in primitive rituals they smear themselves with the blood of antelope:

It was as if they dipped [baptised?] their hands in blood and smeared it on their cheeks and necks. Most of them are naked and the blood has no stripes across their chests and legs. They dance rhythmically around the fire and sing a solemn (Van Celler 1993:99).

and:

Joop looks like war. He drank of the warm antelope blood. His mouth, throat and chest glimmers with blood. He cuts the throat of the first antelope with his sharp Bopha Kershaw and then holds his beer glass for the first blood to spatter. Then he adds three double brandies and gulps it away in one draught. Then he raps again and even one had to take a sip (Van Celler 1993:100).

Interesting is the black as distant's commentary on this regression: 'If the white man is like this, then one with a black skin stays far away' (Van Celler 1993:100).

Death and the highest degree of pleasure

Joop is the character, although not as central as Luckie or Van der, who expresses best the central theme of the text: namely the highest degree of pleasure. His thoughts are focalised as follows:

Oh luck, I was given, like boys together. A woman will never know what such a weekend alone with one's pleasures means (Van Collier 1993:105).

Joop also embodies the price that is to be paid for the excessive indulgence, the physical economy of pleasure, but also the unavoidable climax of nature, namely death. Even mortuaries in the weekend, and the pleasure he derives from it, his death rives. The death is a consequence of laughter. The combination of laughter, death and sexuality reminds strongly of Nietzsche's view thereof as origin of tragedy:

He thinks of Gabbat's big white drilling born while he crows, and starts laughing without reason. He laughs and laughs until it changes in a coughing fit. The acute-born pushes up in his throat. He thinks what the fun is for. They had to make every time Wypina planned his wife and he laughs louder. He crows and coughs and starts to gasp for breath.

And then a terrible burning pain came. He grips his chest and heaves. The trachea slides across the sidewalk against a streetlight (Van Collier 1993:105).

The grotesque and the petite bourgeois

Van Collier (1993:109) uses the word grotesque, which is central in Bakhtin's theory of the carnival, to describe the bodies of his caricature characters. In the grotesque realism of the carnival the focus is on the feasting, eating, drinking, discharging and sexual body. Like Nietzsche in his implied critique of nineteenth-century manliness, Bakhtin contrasts the *petite bourgeois* realisation of the nineteenth century with the grotesque realism of earlier centuries. He states that grotesque realism was replaced by

modest, polished, bourgeois, abstract concerns.... The result is a broken grotesque figure, the decort of reality with phallos cut off and body crushed. Hence all these sterile images representing "character": all those professional lawyers, merchants, manufacturers, children, and women, all faceless and affected by degenerate, petty realism (Bakhtin 1984:57).

Van Collier, through the use of lawyers and bank managers (therefore figures from the *petite bourgeois* class) as characters, play with a genius. Without any intent or psycho-

logical characterisation there is no sense of alienation, typical of character description of nineteenth century realism, present in this text. There is no guilt and no consciousness pointing to the individual bourgeois ego in the text.

The exaggerated physicality of the characters makes them into caricatures, with the emphasis on the impulsive, the degrading, and especially on

those parts of the body that are open to the outside world: "...the part through which the world enters the body or emerges from it, or through which the body itself goes out to meet the world" (Bakhtin 1984:26).

The grotesque body is its openness to the outside world, its best part, not in the figure of Joop in the hospital, 'confronted to a diversity of tubes and grabbing apparatuses' (Van Collier 1993:105). This grotesque 'some just will increase, solemn and motion in ability to see death as part of life.

[The opposition between death] is exemplified contrary to the system of grotesque imagery, in which death is not a rejection of life seen as the given body of all the people, but part of life's whole – an indispensable component, the condition of its continuous renewal and regeneration (Bakhtin 1984:59).

Death is therefore not only a negative fact, but is accepted:

Old Joop decided the way to want it. After a few drinks, eight in the month, 32 minutes around him and a woman on each arm. I think he is happy where he is now (Van Collier 1993:115).

For Bakhtin (1984:179) there is a point of contact between the physician and the grotesque body: 'The body that into this life is pregnant, delivers, delivers, is sick, dying and dismembered... It is the body as it appears in diseases, in crises, in falls and generally in all grotesque images'.

Van Collier's characters are marked by typical grotesque ambivalence. Joop for instance is described as big in every way ('Everything about him is big: his head, hands, stomach and estate' – Van Collier 1993:11), except for his small penis. 'His small penis is central in the grotesque portrayal of him having sex with his wife.

He holds Lammie, perching a Vaseline bottle on his middle body he holds it's middle finger to the air. He gives an enormous gasp. She twists the bottle around his finger with a wall. He lies with his back of his hand flat on the bed and the middle finger straight up. He feels how Lammie moves across him. He lets go of it and then he is in. She is practical and knows exactly what to do. Joop thinks of the thing planned for the

next weekend on a farm ... He knows when she is close. He wants to shoot a warning that weekend ... He feels like a jockey (Van Collier 1993:70)

Vaaltjie is the other clearly grotesque character. His name meaning 'wine barrel' evokes associations with wine and fat, and reminds of the character Guss (Gustavus or Fat William) who according to Baskin (1984:297) looked like a wine barrel:

his body resembled a wine barrel ... Thus his figure was the symbol of bread and wine in humble form. This two-legged creature representing the abundance of earthly goods was extremely popular.

Van Collier (1993:15) describes Vaaltjie as follows:

Vaaltjie is a block of a man, five or six feet. When he stands you could balance a glass on his forehead. It looks as if he doesn't have a neck. His chest rests on his chest. His head cannot really turn.

Vaaltjie is especially interesting as the character that has to regulate the orgies and play the pleasure. He is described as someone who is 'in' with everybody who is important. He is the one who organises the hunting trips and is already seen as 'nearly a pimp amongst the whites' (Van Collier 1993:16). At the border he organises 'like a cricket captain sending in his players to bat' (Van Collier 1993:85). In the carnivalesque everything is reversed: a prostitute infects the honourable Vaaltjie with Aids and he changes into a skeleton.

The New South Africa

Vaaltjie's Aids is the consequence of his growth in his sexual escapades. This story within-a-story is narrated in episode 96 to Lookie who is pre-occupied with a threatening strike and the temperamental 'double codes' (Van Collier 1993:127) of the new South Africa. In this story Vaaltjie is chosen by a 'young thing' with the 'most beautiful and soft body and most beautiful blue eyes that you have ever seen' (Van Collier 1993:128) because 'she only kisses special guys like him' (Van Collier 1993:128). Her vagina becomes grotesque: the place of extreme stimulation, regulation and fantasy:

And when I was ready, she climbed on top of me. Ouch, Lookie her cunt was tight. Tight for slippery and inside those little hands you always talk about (Van Collier 1993:130).

The 'little hands' refers to Lookie's fantasy and desire to screw a 'cocksteinnid'

(Van Collier 1993:89) one day, because according to folk tradition they have grotesque vaginas:

They say the Apache women have crumpling like a snail hand in there. Just when you enter with your prick this blue hand grabs it with soft fingers folding around the head. They say it can make you insane (Van Collier 1993:89).

Earlier in the same chapter there is reference to the sixth whore 'a dark little one with patch black flickering eyes' (Van Collier 1993:86). When she introduces herself as Rowillian, Wynand shows his relief with the words 'After all not black' (Van Collier 1993:86). The racist abhorrence, but at the same time attraction to the woman, makes the political part of the grotesque game. Lookie whispers to Vaaltjie 'That race is how a Black should look like' (Van Collier 1993:86).

The text plays with the political habits of the small town Afrikaner man within the context of a changing South Africa. Mostly Blacks are portrayed as servants and workers in a neo-feudal system. It is best illustrated in the ritual joke where a loyal mine worker has to introduce himself at a party as 'I'm that Boer Joop's baaij' (Van Collier 1993:18). Joop, who himself enjoys this ritual the most, is described as a nationalist who believes 'that there should be a place for Blacks' (Van Collier 1993:17). A racist way of life and political pragmatism are mixed to create many situations. The new political situation produces possibilities for interesting inversions. In episode 52 Joop is angered by a white foreman whom he regards as a 'bad, useless fucking white man' (Van Collier 1993:69) and this is followed by the near carnivalesque and feigned appointment of the black Samson.

Representation

Nietzsche referred to the ordinary man who forced his way onto the stage to find there a petite bourgeois image of himself ('heir mediocrity ... was given a voice' — Nietzsche 1956:77). The word 'voice' evokes an image of the petite bourgeois order that became dominant since the French Revolution in the form of modern democracy based on the ideas of representation and individual freedom and rights. Since then representation can be quantified in terms of numbers: majorities and minorities. Government is therefore, at least hypothetically, no longer arbitrary and unreasonable (the question, though, remains as to what degree a politician can represent). Both Apartheid and Anti Apartheid are products of political rationalisation that has its roots in the sciences and its classifying methodologies.

Democracy is underpinned by the disciplinary institutions of reason: education, the law and values such as morality and solidarity.

Die Dikholobes (1995) is described by Etienne Krüger in a radio review as 'the

most influential and politically resonant book that appeared in Afrikaans in many years'. The book can only be considered repulsive if one assumes a representative link between fiction and the social and political reality; the degree of repulsion must be tested against the social reality; the number of readers required. The number of readers of this text will therefore be decisive. Apparently from press reports it was a very popular book.

It is especially with reference to the deviation of women that the book is experienced as repugnant (although it describes mainly repugnant male behaviour). The repugnance is defined mainly from an implied moral order founded in feminism: the woman who is depicted as sexual is dehumanised (sexuality makes the human less human). The woman becomes a victim of a male order.

Charles van Onselen in his historical texts *New Nineveh* (1982) and *New Babylon* (1983) showed how prostitution at the end of the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth century identified Afrikaner women economically from the fold of the traditional patriarchal order. This is the material from which Totius constructed his antifeminist *Trekke swaai* (1932; first published 1913). In *Die Biebelhalles* (1993) it is the economic power accompanying sexuality which are recurrently foregrounded, and which empowers women rather than making them more victims. The linking of the male characters with procedures is economically founded, so is the use of the waitresses and secretaries of their bodies to achieve their purposes, as is the housewife's acceptance of her shadowy role.

Traditional feminism postulated a homogeneous view of women as reductive representation. It did not leave much space for a diversity of women's voices. There is no room for the prostitute reduced to mere victim of the male order, to speak for herself. Sharon Bell (1994) places against these types of arguments for a pluralist, post-modern and carnivalesque sexual ethics based on genuine tolerance for sexual diversity. According to her sexual acts should be evaluated in terms of the absence of harm and the degree of pleasure it gives (Bell 1994:133). The the woman, in the role of the prostitute, pleasure as an experience of power, and can be additive. Charlotte Davis Reed (quoted in Bell 1994:133) writes:

The additive part is the act of getting dressed, putting on make-up, 'looking' about the man, and the moment of 'capturing' 'To know him, you could put out date and they would come running. What power! Men would usually pay for sex'. For women prostitution is a feeling of power, along with the excitement of being on the edge, is seen in the latest films (p.133).

The panting novel (hyg roman)

In a certain sense feminism pleads for the revival of slavery: the new knight is the man who conforms to feminist prescriptions for male behaviour. The panting novel (a

new genre of soft porn in Afrikaans) with its typical idealisation of the sexual situation from a feminine perspective is an expression of this. *Die Biebelhalles* (1993) mocks this genre in the depiction of the character Ben White and his relationship with the attractive widow Ryke. Unlike the other characters White has a 'body like an athlete' (Van Coller 1993:110). He is described as 'conscious' when he drapes a Karakul coat over his shoulders. They eat by candle light, he opens the car door for her, kisses at the end of the night her fingers. In a very civilised way the sexual is continuously postponed. Their relationship becomes grotesque, because via sex it turns from all the other relationships in the book. At the end, though, Louie regularly screws Ryke, newly wed to Ben Waite, in a hotel room.

Conclusion

Die Biebelhalles (1993) is a hedonist text with important philosophical implications. As links to Bakhtin and Nietzsche made it clear, the discourse of males as feminine becomes more dominant, will come increasingly in conflict with the discourse of freedom (especially the freedom of speech). *Die Biebelhalles* (1993) is a celebration of excessive male freedom, but the women are more than just victims in this celebration. They are employed in particular ways. Because literature is not reality, but *ethos* implies an imaginary and imaginative world, the pleasure it gives does not necessarily have gender differences.

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