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Writing b(l)ack: the ab(use) of the English language in texts by two post-94 black South African authors

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Writing B(l)ack: the ab(use) of the English language in texts by two post-94 black South African authors

Chapter One: Introduction

This opening chapter of the dissertation is focused on the aim of this research, the questions that arise, and the inspiration that has motivated and fuelled the investigation. It outlines the relevance of this investigation to current scholarship in South Africa and in postcolonial studies more generally, and explains why I deem it important. It furthermore probes the title of this dissertation, and aims to bring core issues to the foreground. The last section of this chapter offers insight into the texts considered for selection and reasons for the ultimate selected two. The analytical methods used for the texts are also here outlined.

Aims, Questions and Inspirations

The aim of this dissertation is to investigate the way two post-94 South African authors *choose* to use the English language in their writing. The word 'choose' implies that they have consciously elected to use the English language in a particular manner. Part of this investigation looks at how the two authors, Magogodi and Mpe, indigenise the language in order to localise it. Furthermore, I explore the reasons for this appropriation of the English language. This dissertation aims to dissect terms such as appropriation, abrogation, 'englishes' and 'writing back'; terms that have been used by Ashcroft, Tiffins and Griffin to define the use of the English language in African postcolonial writing . A 'forensic report' of the many ways these authors choose to use English and manipulate it to suit their stories will be provided.

Initially the proposed title was an investigation into the use and abuse of the English language by these authors, but after much engaging with these words 'use' and 'abuse', it surfaced that they dichotomise each other; that is, the one makes the other wrong whilst the other automatically makes the first term right. Let me elaborate. In my proposal for this dissertation I attempted to explain, not in so much detail, what I meant by 'use' and 'abuse': 'use' referred to employing Standard English language, as can be found in the novels of Dickens or Austen, or even Ndebele. The English that they 'use' is on par with the expected rules of the language, leaving little space for incoherency or 'humps' in the comprehension of it. In the same proposal, I referred to the 'abuse' of the English language as the nativisation and

bastardisation of this expected Standard English by the authors. In everyday use today in South Africa, where English has become the currency to access economic and social mobility, the ‘abuse’ of this language usually refers to broken, incompetent, disjunctured English, usually associated with non-mother tongue speakers of English. There are two major problems that arise from these definitions of both ‘use’ and ‘abuse’. Let me bring them to the forefront.

To label a regional variation of English as an abuse to that language is to deny the unboundedness and ever-shifting nature of language. Post-structuralism and post-colonialism are defined by the mobility of cultures and languages, which at any rate inhabit different spaces at the same time. So for instance, the English language, even that found in the texts of Dickens and Austen, or even Ndebele, is an English that is a result of mobility, and borrows from many other languages such as German, Latin, and French, to mention but a few. Therefore, the claim of the English language to be a purist language is in itself imperialistic and hegemonic. It is this claim that saw me initially read the two writers’ use of English language against the backdrop of ‘Standard English’, which, in true Manicheanism, saw the other ‘englishes’ (Ashcroft et al., 1989) as inferior and not up to Standard. Furthermore, this raised questions about comparing ‘englishes’ of the colonies to that of the ‘mother country’. This feeds into the notion of ‘writing back’ (Ashcroft et al., 1989) which informs this seminal text. Part of my dissertation’s aim is to explore whether the act of writing in English for an African writer necessarily means they are ‘writing back’.

The second major problem in my original formulation of ‘using’ or ‘abusing’ the English language is that in the definition of ‘abusing’, there are overtones, even unacceptable ones, of immoral, forced and even violent uses of that Standard English language. To use concepts such as nativisation and bastardisation is to automatically, through their moral implications, rob these ‘englishes’ of authenticity, legitimacy or even any position in the global postcolonial discourse. They may be postcolonial terms that imply defiance, however, that does not negate connotations that these words have in everyday language. To use the adjective ‘native’ is similar to using the other adjective ‘primitive’ when referring particularly to art from rural South Africa. In the utterance of these phrases ‘nativised English’ and ‘primitive art’ there is already a diminishing and exoticizing factor; it is already expected that that English and that art cannot be expected to participate on the global arena, and furthermore, that English or art can be expected to be child-like and even instinctual; not informed by ‘civilised’ forms of rendering art/language. The term ‘bastardisation’ in itself is

morally loaded and cannot find any space in this dissertation as it goes against everything that these two authors are doing with language in their texts.

My initial use of these terms 'use' and 'abuse' came from a hunch I had concerning how these authors choose to use language in their texts. My Honours long essay for my Bachelors of Arts (2009) had, as its main focus, the investigation of scatology in Kgafela oa Magogodi's debut anthology *Thy Condom Come*, and in the course of this investigation I came across an undercurrent of figurative violence[1] wrought by the establishment on non-mother tongue speakers of English. In his articulation of the failures of post-independent South Africa and its leaders, Magogodi found that there is a lot of figurative violence that took over from the actual violence of the regime of yesteryear, and in the new dispensation that violence required a literary violence in order to write about it. Violence forms an integral part of this investigation, as does silence. These two have become intertwined in the understanding of the English language in this postcolonial context. In his interview recorded as an essay titled 'The Writer and his Language', which although written in a different era referring to a different discipline, Sartre speaks of his adaptation of German philosophical language in *Being and Nothingness*, and highlights the problems of translation thus, "if we want to be able to say everything ... if at the same time we believe to some extent that languages are entities which condition themselves internally and that one is not necessarily going to find the same things from one language to another, we have to concede that we must be allowed to do a certain amount of violence to language ..." (Sartre, 1973: 113). Although this assertion is written with relation to the politics of translation, it rings true when used to understand what I initially referred to as 'abuse'. I particularly like the undertone of violence in this word. And since violence is a common thread in the two texts, I decided to retain this word in my title.

Therefore, the aim of this dissertation is to look into the English language in these texts and determine which linguistic strategies and phenomena[2] are appropriate for describing—or find out if one needs to even label—these approaches to language. Language will be explored from the meaning-makers' points of view where I am particularly interested in issues of power: how is power achieved, lost or retrieved, and how does positioning place one in relation to power? Position is a very important variant of power, especially if you consider

[1] Here figurative violence refers to the non-physical violence exerted on the emotions, psyche and spirits of the non-black citizens of South Africa – the oppression, suppression and depression.
[2] This research will borrow some terms from the discipline of sociolinguistics. These terms define the hybridity of language in postcolonial states.

the politics of ‘center-periphery’ and ‘writing back’ (Ashcroft et al., 1989). Position also determines context, because where you are or originate in the world places you in a particular society with its own culture and politics. It is this context and positioning that is of outmost importance in the understanding of how these authors choose to use English. In such a multilingual country as South Africa, and in these multilingual texts under discussion, context becomes the very tool with which these texts must be consumed.

The questions that arise in the dissertation derive from the inspirations underlying this research. Originally they are questions I grappled with when I read Nape Motana’s novel *Fana Fourie’s lobola* (Motana, 2007). It is a novel written by a Pedi author who went to extra lengths to use all forms of linguistic strategies to explore and write about the intricate culture-specific tradition of lobola. He relexicalised certain phrases, constantly code-switched, reformulated popular idioms for the particular context in which they were used, and recontexualised language from its previous usage into quite different contexts. When I read the novel, with its variety of strategies, I could not help but wonder about the reasons for these strategies. I also thought about an/other reader who is not Pedi. I kept encountering linguistic situations that appealed to me and made sense to me primarily because I am Pedi. I wondered about an/other reader, and so did I wonder about the writer: did he not care that his novel would not be fully grasped and comprehended by most? How about the readers that are ‘othered’ as a result of this constant code-switching and direct translation of Sepedi proverbs, norms and sayings? These questions that arose made me question the sufficiency of the English language, especially to geographically disparate writers aiming to tell immediate stories.

I read more post-94 texts by black authors and found that most have similar approaches to language. When I then read Mpe’s acclaimed novel, *Welcome To Our Hillbrow,* and Magogodi’s anthologies of poetry, my eyes were prised open to the language they choose to approach the themes and tropes that propelled their narratives. They write about magnanimous issues that range from HIV/Aids, rape, xenophobia, homosexuality, alcoholism, education, freedom, post-94 leaders, the violence of the previous regime, silence, migration, and growing up, just to mention but a few. Furthermore, their texts are meta-fictive and genre-breaking; they have element of fiction and autobiography, Magogodi’s anthology of poetry also has prose, and Mpe’s novel has fragmented narrative voices, spaces and time. When all of this is taken into consideration, one question arises: what happens when context overwhelms text, when one text has to carry the burden of the authors’ chest?

Furthermore, what medium and language can satisfy the concerns of these authors, and what manipulation and reconstruction must these mediums and languages endure in order to carry out the authors' agendas? For this purpose Sartre (1973) suggests that language should then endure some violence, but how much violence can one language take and what will be the outcomes? This dissertation aims to probe these questions, and to study whether the authors batter the English language, and if so, to what effect.

A more general question arises out of Nadine Gordimer's (1988) assertion, during the interregnum period leading to the demise of apartheid. She said that for the black writer the grand subject, that of apartheid, has died. She was concerned with the topic which would inform black writers post-94 – what would they write about? This dissertation, although it looks at the topics, is more focused on *how* they write about them. The dissertation aims to investigate how the writers under discussion use various forms and tools of language to tell their stories of the new dispensation in South Africa, to shape their identity during this time of profound change. It investigates how the newly won national freedom affects their art. To what extent have their pens been freed and how do they use that freedom in their art?

Rationale

Whilst there are a few articles[3] on Phaswane Mpe's novel, there are none written that focus on language choice and usage in his novel. Furthermore, there are no academic papers written on Magogodi. My rationale for undertaking this research is that the previous narratives under the title 'protest' were closed, monitored and censored; hence many of the writers did not write freely but were oppressed by hegemonies that tended to drive their subjects and themes in a particular direction. For instance, as Mark Devenney notes, "in the 1970's many writers/poets consciously aligned themselves with the Black Consciousness Movement...[such as] Mongane Serote, Sipho Sepamla, Mafika Gwala and Oswald Mtshali" (Devenney, 1994: 12) and as Liesel Hibbert has aptly observed, "the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa was relegated almost exclusively to the cultural arena because of its having been barred from official political and public channels" (Hibbert, 2004: 88). From these statements we can see how marginalised writers who were under the risk of censorship found refuge in Black Consciousness and therefore aligned their subjects in literature to those

[3] Clarkson, 2005
Green,
Nuttall, 2004
Swarns, 2002

of that movement. Furthermore, they encapsulated their 'unofficial political' messages in their literary works. This tells us that some of these writers were preoccupied with 'writing back to the centre of power', in this case the Apartheid government, invoking Ndebele's emergency call for the 'ordinary'. This paper, however, aims to shift from the politics of hegemonic oppressive powers of Apartheid, from the English language as part of the oppressive tools that came with colonisers, to how that language was later embraced and used as a medium of creativity for writers (in English colonies like South Africa) seeking to find new idioms, subjects and community.

This research paper is relevant to the times that South Africa finds itself in today because there is a plethora of new contemporary writers who do not consider English their mother tongue and nonetheless use that language to tell their own stories[4]. Their reasons are varied, but those writers who are conscious of the increasing need to restore our indigenous languages, and are at the same time writing in English, find themselves at crossroads where experimentation and improvisation has to take place. This leads to various language-related postcolonial strategies in narration, such as syncretism, hybridity, code-mixing, abrogation, appropriation, dialectic exclusivity and cross-cultural signifiers. This research will be valuable to the reading and understanding of South African post-94 literatures where Standard English is not valorised but subverted by some black writers, primarily because it is not able, exclusively, to carry the experience of the non-mother-tongue speaker/writer. With more than nine indigenous languages in the country (excluding dialects of the nine, and other variations such as S'camto), one can be assured that a plethora of multilingual literatures are on the horizon of South Africa.

The two authors in the study have been selected for various reasons. Firstly, they are relatively new writers who have published for the first time in the wake of democracy, hence they meet my criterion for writers in the new South African landscape. They tend to map, or trace, the 'new' South Africa by viewing it in relation to its political yesteryear. Secondly, the authors are young, being under the age of thirty-five[5] at the time of their texts' publication. This charges their texts with existential questions of self-realisation in the new-found democracy – what it means for them to be black, how their township/rural experience shape them, the complexities of growing up under apartheid (although some experienced it directly whilst others indirectly), their expectations of the new dispensation at the time of its ushering,

[4] A list of these will be provided later in this chapter under 'Selection of texts and analytical method'
[5] This is the government definition of youth in South Africa, 18 to 35 years.

a critical awareness of its promises, failures and hopes of the 'new' South Africa, and the role of memory in forging identities. Furthermore, I leaned towards these texts because of their autobiographical nature. The two authors are men who give us an account of meandering through childhood, at times, and then the townships, or rural areas, and the big metropolitan cities. The texts are pseudo-buildungsromans[6] where we trace the journeys of these young men's lives from apartheid years through the rites of passage that is the transitional period into the 'new'. Thirdly, it is my belief that, because the two authors are scholars in their own right, they have produced texts that are meta-fictive in nature and that offer a holistic approach to creativity, imagination and social responsibility. I eschewed using authors who were published before 1994, during the interregnum years, because they seem to have been occupying a liminal space where, as Gramsci asserts, 'the old is dying and the new cannot be born' (Gramsci, 1971). I do not seek to make a comparative analysis of the old and the new so much as I want to make one between two similar authors, that is young men, writing around the same time.

The texts under scrutiny here have been published over the past ten years, with Magogodi published in 2004 and Mpe in 2001; each one therefore offers a fresh perspective on the national state of post-94. As I will demonstrate in Chapter Two, the area of language is under-researched and threatens to leave a gap in South African literary studies since more and more post-94 writers, such as Kopano Matlwa and Jacob Dlamini, are using 'englishes' to write their narratives, and this trend needs to be critically contextualised. Language in its nature is a vehicle for particular ideologies and practices. What happens when a particular language fails to embody or capture lived experiences? To rephrase, what happens when language, as a signifier, is not cohesive with the signified?

This dissertation focuses on language and language usage in relation to certain key post-colonial themes. These are inclusion, exclusion, centre of power, peripheries of power, mobility, linguistic hybridity, 'othering' as a result of the centre and the transcendence of the centre-periphery model. In *The Empire Writes Back*, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin discuss 'Re-placing language' by noting that when there are untranslated words in a text, it "...is a clear signifier of the fact that the language which actually informs the novel is an/Other language" (1989: 64). Therefore in using an/Other language to tell their stories, the two authors are faced with exciting creative challenges to invigorate the language, either

[6] Various instances of experimentation with style and genre portray some of these texts as fragmented stories instead of typical buildungsromans. I explore this notion at a later stage.

subverting its rules or manipulating its registers and dictions in order to include, exclude and at times hijack the imperialist's position at the centre of power.

I argue that language in literary discourse can facilitates gravitation from the 'peripheries' to the 'centre' of power and give rise to a growing consciousness. The word 'black' in the title of my dissertation does not aim to exclude other writers but seeks to study how languages that were under the threat of being obliterated from existence as a result of over four hundred years of oppression on the basis of the skin colour of their speakers are today, in a democratic context, used by certain authors to write in the grand tradition of English literature, whilst 'othering' the custodians of that tradition. This interesting paradigm shift, and not race, underlies the focus on blackness in my study. These authors fall within a group of people who lived in previously oppressed geographical settings, mainly townships and, in Mpe's case, in an economically and culturally oppressed landscape such as the fictional Tiragalong. These topographical areas were, under apartheid, demarcated for black citizens. The authors are black and, moreover, because of the Black Consciousness Movement's influence, see themselves as black. This is important because, as Biko argues, "...by describing yourself as black you have started on a road towards emancipation, you have committed yourself to fight against all forces that seek to use your blackness as a stamp that marks you out as a subservient being" (Biko, 1978: 48). In the context of this dissertation, this tells us that we can expect 'fight' or defiance against a subservient position inscribed on blackness. Thiongo (1986) has written extensively on the intricate link between language and processes of decolonisation, hence languages that were previously marginalised and denigrated also have to be included in the shifting of power.

The above statement by Biko is still relevant—the road towards emancipation, from a subservient position, that is the 'periphery', to the centre of power, through mastery of writing in the imperialists' language, will be fully analysed. However, as we will soon realise, this language is not entirely the imperialists'. It resembles that of the imperialists but is an/other 'english' that seeks to exclude him, and even frustrate him. That English subverts that of the legacy of colonialism. What must remain emphasized is that even though colonialism and apartheid as grand narratives have collapsed, they have left in their wake smaller narratives of crisis, contradictions and paradoxes[7]. I view these 'smaller' narratives as microcosms for the state, here seen in its double meaning of state of mind and state as the

[7] These contradictions and paradoxes are fully explored at the beginning of Chapter Three

nation[8]. To rephrase, the crisis that shapes post-94 ethos will be explored from the vantage point of the nation and its subject, and language will be put under scrutiny to view a number of ways in which it has been used, through arbitrary slogans and dominant ideologies, to shift the state of South Africa(ns) at large, and similarly how writers have reclaimed language and use it to shift and shape mindsets. As J.M Coetzee proclaimed from the vantage point of the white writer, a language to fit Africa is required –"the quest for an authentic language is pursued within a framework in which language, consciousness and landscape are all related" (1988:7).

Selection of texts and analytical method

My research method is rooted in literary studies, and hence aims to answer my questions with the help of textual analysis. Textual analysis refers to a close reading of both texts and their thematic concerns. The texts in question have been selected from a larger body of post-94 South African texts. The criteria for the would-be chosen texts focused primarily on an interesting approach and use of the English language in the post-94 period. I was interested in how authors choose to use language in the current dispensation that is informed by freedom of expression. The texts that I perused in this search include, but are not limited to, Nape Motana's *Fanie Fourie's Lobola*, Kopano Matlwa's *Coconut*, Sello Duiker's *The Quite Violence of Dreams*, Jacob Dlamini's *Native Nostalgia*, and Zakes Mda's *Cion*. My final selection was Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* and Kgafela oa Magogodi's *Outspoken*, a poetry collection. I will provide an appendix of all the poems discussed at the end of the dissertation.

My reasons for the final selection, from the aforementioned texts are, firstly, that the texts have to be layered and offer me different angles of analysis. In this way I could explore the language use and abuse as a signifier of various conflicting dynamics. Motana and Matlwa's texts fail to offer me this. Secondly, I was looking for authors who published their debut novels post-94, because my aim is also to explore the different ways in which aspiring artists and writers use the new dispensation as a muse to articulate their new-found freedom. Mda could not be used in this instance as he has published before 1994 and as his novel, *Cion*, is set in Ohio, the United States. Thirdly, my passion in research lies in the disillusionments of post-independence, and how writers express this. Although Duiker's novel connects with this passion, I was looking for an overt critique of society and the public spaces more than an

[8] This double meaning is originated by Flora Veit-Wild (2006).

inward struggle sexuality. Duiker's text deals with gender, masculinity and their display and suppression in the new dispensation. His text is more an exploration of the personal than the public, even though the latter informs the former to some extent.

With regards to a passion in thematic concerns of dream-nightmare binary in relation to the fruits of independence, my texts had to be in line with this passion, and furthermore provide some critique of the new dispensation. I had initially listed Dlamini's text as a third text in this dissertation, but later decided to drop it. One of the biggest reasons was that the theme of 'protest' in post-94 literature would be interesting to explore since that 'genre' was associated with the oppressed of yesteryears' regime. When I read Mpe and Magogodi I was overwhelmed by the overtones of protest and riot in their work, even in their most implicit forms. Also, when dealing with the context of post-94, the state as a nation, and the psychological state of the people have to be explored. I then thought that the two texts share these major concerns and should therefore be 'grouped' together—this eliminated Dlamini's text.

My method is that of postcolonial literary analysis, incorporating to some extent, aspects of sociolinguistics. The latter discipline offers insightful ways of approaching how language functions in society and in my selected texts. I realised that some of the tools I could choose to use are active in both disciplines. In the beginning I was interested in the appropriation of language by the two black authors' texts. The terms 'appropriation' and 'abrogation' were revealed to me in detail by Ashcroft et al. (1989). The former is a manipulation of language in new environments, and the latter is the refusal of language by certain individual in former colonies. When I researched further, I realised that there are various ways in which writers can appropriate the English language.

Code-switching is one of the ways that writers can appropriate language. This term will be used in my analytical chapters to refer to a switch from one language to another. The two authors in this dissertation code-switch for various reasons; some of these reasons are relevant in understanding language use in my analytical chapters. They code-switch to localise and indigenise their writing. Localisation is a strategy that allows writers to add immediacy and local specificity to what they are saying through local references or use of the vernacular.

When I refer to abrogation in my analysis, I do not mean complete refusal of English. I mean that they refuse to use it when a situation arises where the only manner to express the

situation is by reverting to the mother tongue. Any instance that sees the author of a text that is written primarily in English switch to another language or linguistic variation, is an instance of abrogation. We will see an example of this very early in Chapter Three on Mpe. Magogodi rejects the English language in his praise poem, or *isibongi*, for various reasons. These reasons will be discussed in Chapter Four.

Other terms, which I refer to as linguistic phenomena, are used in my analysis and position my research within a lineage of linguistic research in both disciplines. I use certain terms and concepts developed by sociolinguistic scholars to describe language use in postcolonial states. These terms include 'metrolingualism', 'glocalisation', 'vernacular cosmopolitanism' and 'nation language'. I use these terms to explore my research question in the analytical chapters, even though I have certain contentions with them, which will be explained later.

Bakhtin's study of the French text *Rabelais and His World* has also provided key tools that are useful for my analytical chapters. He coined the phrase 'carnivalesque', which refers to a medieval orderly society that has been turned topsy-turvy. In this manner, Rabelais uses humour to disrupt social order and behaviour. In a 'carnivalesque' space, characters and objects that are disparate and would never, under normal circumstances, be found sharing spaces, coexist. For example, in a medieval context, Bakhtin would place the queen in the market place, talking slang, the language of the proletariat. In carnivalesque humour, lewdness also plays a huge role. In the previous example, that queen would probably be represented scantily clad. This lewdness has been referred to as scatological representation. These two terms, carnivalesque and scatology, are also key tools for my analytical chapters.

Chapter Two: Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

This chapter of the dissertation will focus on academic writings that bear direct and indirect influence on my research into language in selected texts of post-94 South African literature. I will attempt to place this research within a particular lineage by firstly focusing on works that have been written internationally and nationally on the topic of language in postcolonial literary studies. Though my dissertation is located within a paradigm of literary studies, given its specific focus on language, the discipline of socio-linguistics has much to offer as well, and will hence form part of the conceptual framework, discussed in a later section of the chapter. The two authors chosen for analysis strive to write of social and human conditions using language in particular ways, therefore I will make use of aspects of socio-linguistic theory to explore the intricate relationship between language and the contexts within which it is uttered.

My overview of critical writings on the topic of language in postcolonial literary studies internationally and in South Africa will show the paucity of writing on language in South African literature. I will provide an overview of the dynamics of language in South Africa, a country which has in recent years tasted democracy for the first time, after hundreds of years of colonialism and apartheid. I discuss the language policy of South Africa's post-94 Constitution (1996) to discern how the English language and other indigenous languages are represented in policy. This leads to a discussion of linguistic practice and evaluation, including how the debasement of the mother tongues of the previously oppressed has affected and continues to affect the shaping of identities. This concludes with a discussion on language and its relationship to power, agency and authorship.

After this discussion on how language functions in society, and how the two authors in this research have chosen to 'use' and 'abuse' the English language, I will then focus on critical writing from the 'empires' and how metropolitan postcolonial writers view themselves against the backdrop of English as an international language of the colonial centre. Politics of the periphery will be explored and different debates will be foregrounded.

The Question of Language in Post-94 South Africa

This section of the dissertation starts by looking at the discussions that take place on language in South Africa today. It entails discussions from the media, academics, critics and novelists.

This is done in order to contextualise the South African post-94 linguistic landscape and shifting paradigm. The discussion of the language policy of that country, its concepts and the practice thereof, also help in measuring how far that country has come since the recognition of eleven official languages.

Reflections on language in South Africa

When writing about Hillbrow in his essay entitled 'Our missing store of memories', Mpe attempts to compare the 'new' consciousness found in post-94 Hillbrow to the concept of 'double consciousness' that Du Bois wrote about referring to 'looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity'. Du Bois was writing about this in relation to race relations in the United States at the dawn of the twentieth century. However, the amused contempt and pity informing the gaze of black people spans from the United States to Africa. It is a gaze that can cripple the progress of the black people in the diaspora. Mpe resurrects Du Bois's sentiments and furthermore tells us that "in such a social milieu [Hillbrow], perhaps the notion of double consciousness does not really capture the true sense of the *far more multi-layered consciousness*, with each social group serving as a mirror for itself and the other groups" (Wasserman and Jacobs [ed], 2003: 189, italics my own). This sentiment should be kept in mind when dealing with these two texts that are set in areas with far more multi-layered consciousnesses, such as Soweto, Tiragalong and Hillbrow, themselves microcosms of the multi-tiered new South Africa. Soweto and Hillbrow are melting pots of cultures and one can, at any given rate, find all eleven major cultural groups and other nationals, in those areas. The two authors have lived, and continue to live, in those areas, and as a result find that the areas provide a mirror for the self and other social groups. The language in their texts might be seen to reflect this linguistic hybridity.

Coetzee's vision of a quest for authentic language in the new South Africa, where language, consciousness and landscape are all related (1988: 7) articulates an important goal for the writer in South Africa's fledgling democracy, and was anticipated by Ndebele and Mphahlele, amongst others. This quest for the new and authentic has led to imaginative and innovative ways of narrative construction. In an essay titled "Redefining Relevance", Ndebele also foresees a challenge that will face emerging and already existing writers post-94. He asserts that the writer in that time will have a task to find a new voice, new perception, new language and new ways of thinking about ways to "break down the closed

epistemological structures of South African oppression" (Ndebele, 1991: 65). The task that faces writers is to usher in a new society whilst confronting the hopes and horrors of this newness. Ndebele states that the challenge is to free perceptions, social imagination and ways of seeing self that Apartheid has impressed upon the minds of the oppressed. "[F]or writers this means freeing the creative process itself from those very laws. It means extending the writer's perception of what can be written about, and the means and methods of writing" (ibid: 65).

Therefore the authors in search of the 'new' (Attwell, 2005) must find a new language and a new style in order to re-articulate experience. The discipline of socio-linguistics offers helpful insights into the achievement of this goal. In *Resisting Linguistic Imperialism in English Teaching*, Canagarajah inquires into how a particular society "appropriates English to dynamically negotiate meaning, identity, and status in contextually suitable and socially strategic ways, and in the process modifies the communicative and linguistic rules of English according to local cultural and ideological imperatives" (1999: 76). The two texts under inquiry in this dissertation can be understood to do exactly such, dynamically. The two authors have been faced with a challenge, in their debut (for Mpe) and second (for Magogodi) texts, to rework available language, pre-existing idioms and epistemologies, local cultural and linguistic ideologies in order to write post-94 narratives. Their challenge is to mesh, in their narratives, consciousness (self) and landscape (post-94 social milieu), with language (multi-lingualism).

To highlight this challenge for writers in the new South Africa, Horwitz, whilst being interviewed by Dirk Klopper in 1996, spoke from the heart about 'colonial English'. He spoke of the English language in relation to the new dispensation thus: "English in South Africa is not 'English' English ... [we need to recognise] the reality of our situation and agitate for the acceptance of our own unique forms of English". He furthermore speaks of English as a global language and *lingua franca* in South Africa, but urges us to confront the reality that "in South Africa, we have an original form of English which is very vital but which needs to be further developed and, above all, recognised". Even though these unique forms of English have been constrained by apartheid, he says, "we now have an opportunity to assert this vitality". He pleads with us, especially South African writers of his time, to stop looking to the 'West'; "... the colonials of all classes and colours in our society still consider 'overseas' to be the final arbiter of standards and taste". He challenges writers to find a voice

–"the time has never been more opportune for South African voices to express themselves ... in a self-fulfilling way to insist on our own experience" (Horwitz, 1996: 2).

In the two texts in this dissertation, this challenge is met with much fervour. Following the violent and grotesque history of the state, new stories emerged and, with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission following shortly after, the 'madness'[9] reached its peak. The country was in a state of disarray. This was a state (with its double meaning) of emergency for a new voice, new social imagination and new forms of consciousness to emerge. Furthermore, the disillusionment of the new South Africa was beginning to show itself. Writers, equipped with imagination, memory and language as weapons, occupied their positions and started to map narratives. However, the language at a particular point proved to be inadequate, in its controlled and closed formality, to fully express and communicate these post-94 narratives. That is to say, the signifiers were at a tragic disjuncture with the concepts that lay in his imagination. The writer was faced with a crisis of representation and he remembered his duty, as a creative and imaginative 'teacher', with duties to shape the social imagination, to reinvent a new idiom.

Antjie Krog's *Sunday Times* article, "When it comes to dialogue, we don't have the words" (April, 25, 2010), addresses issues that are prevalent in post-94 South Africa in relation to language. She focuses on the media spectacles of that week where, in one instance, Andre Visagie was being interviewed on the death of AWB leader, Eugene Terre Blanche, and burst into an outrage when he could not communicate efficiently with the interviewer in English. The interviewer was also a non-mother-tongue speaker of English. Krog claims that because English was not Visagie's mother tongue, Visagie felt berated by the fluent interviewer as he struggled to express himself, giving the interviewer ample time to prey on him and his beliefs. According to Krog, this is a national crisis because "we have neither a language to reach one another nor a vocabulary to express caring", and this is because "more than 90% of us have to express ourselves in a language that is NOT our mother tongue". In a fit of rage, Visagie was manhandled the interviewer, and the latter kept shouting the now popular joke "don't touch me on my studio". Krog mourns this joke because it reflects the state of the nation's language problems which eventually dictates that "an Afrikaner and a black man's inability to use correct English has become the laughing stock of the country". In the aforementioned interview on language, Horwitz also brings this to the forefront when he

[9] Madness is Flora Veit-Wild's term to refer to a crisis of representation, which translates into having no proper words or language to signify the state of one's surroundings.

states that “this feeling of being inadequate and marginal ... is the greatest obstacle to the flourishing of our own dynamic cultures” (Horwitz, 1996: 2).

In the same article, Krog focuses on another media spectacle between Julius Malema and a British journalist who attempted to question Malema in a confident, efficient and articulate English accent. This enraged Malema who, in a vengeful tone and manner, targeted his manhood. Krog states that “the obscenities and sexual belittling step out of the works of Fanon and Mbembe”. This invocation of postcolonial theorists places the discourse of language in Krog’s article within a postcolonial paradigm. She deliberately highlights some of the issues that belie the choice and usage of language in South Africa today. This is not to say that Malema, the man who verbally targeted the genital region of the journalist, invoked these postcolonial theorists, but that his offensive response foregrounds the psychological ties that he has, or lacks, with the English language of Britain. The journalist was behaving arrogantly and asserting his linguistic power over Malema. In a Fanonian sense, the journalist’s confidence and command over the English language provoked Malema’s anger invoked by a sense of inferiority complex when faced with this language and its personal history.

Pumla Gqola and Jacob Dlamini, have written newspaper articles on the issues of language in South Africa in relation to English in schools and the workplace, and English in the media. The common message in these articles is that the ruling party in South Africa did not ensure, in practice in the public sphere, that the indigenous languages of the country are afforded the same, if not more, value as English. Gqola wrote an article about the disregard for African languages in schools. She expresses shock at the many schools that teach English and Afrikaans at first language level, and the other African languages at third language level, which will only ensure “tentative understanding” and “elementary small talk” in those languages. Gqola insists that “learning a language at third language level does not teach you how to speak it no matter what your grades say”[10]. Dlamini, being a fervent contributor to the newspaper *Business Day*, where he writes regularly about indigenous languages, stated that “the struggle between the ANC and the media is ultimately a struggle to control language. Sixteen years into democracy English still remains the language of power and whoever controls it, controls the message”[11]. Outside of these newspaper articles and the discussions

[10] http://thinkingafricarhodesuniversity.blogspot.com/2011/06/response-to-simphiwe-dana-on-taking.html
[11] http://jacana.book.co.za/blog/2010/08/26/jacob-dlamini-discusses-the-problematic-relationship-between-language-and-the-media/

that take place on the internet, the topic of language in post-94 literature has not been confronted satisfyingly. In a later section, 'From disinvention to reinvention', I will explore the views of postcolonial writers on the centrality of language in questions of power and control in the centre-periphery model of postcolonial literatures.

South African Language Policy

These discussions inevitably lead to South African language policy and practice. South Africa is a diverse country and is wrought by a past that aimed to suppress and denigrate unity in that diversity. The social engineering of the country by the Apartheid government strove to separate the country into homelands where particular language speakers were to reside. These homelands were referred to as Bantustans, providing disparate and vast settlements for black people of South Africa on the basis of language. Mpe deals with this aspect of language in his text. However, with the demise of Apartheid the boundaries of these homelands have become porous. The new democratic government also developed a new language policy that made the nine 'other' South African languages, which were previously viewed as minor Bantu languages, official. Before this time of drastic and radical social change, Afrikaans and English were prioritized in the economic, political and social landscape of the country. In the new South Africa these languages, especially English, are still associated with social mobility and affluence. Although the new language policy is drafted and declares all languages of South Africa equal, this is not a reality today. That is, there is a huge gap between the theory of the language policy, and the practice of it.

During Apartheid, when multilingualism was not valued, the politics of language and language usage impacted on a number of marginalised citizens. The apartheid government, with its flawed structures that alienated the majority from basic rights whilst paradoxically claiming as their manifesto on the Coat of Arms that 'unity is strength'[12], forced their language of power then, Afrikaans, onto the school system. Following Ngugi wa Thiongo's view of language as a great coloniser of the mind, this was perhaps to be the final weapon to annihilate any form of power that the marginalised majority and their languages would have. In an orgy of violence, the students who were to be affected by this policy of Afrikaans as a new medium of instruction took to the streets, protesting against the imposition of Afrikaans on their daily lives. Many argue that the 1976 student uprisings (together with the Black Consciousness Movement and SASO—South African Student Organisation) in Soweto

[12] http://www.ngw.nl/int/zaf/zaf-nat.htm

marked a new era in the way the new generation of black citizens would see themselves in relation to their country; and played an important role in the liberation of South Africa. This is evident of the role of language in two ways: the students of 1976 emphasised the important link between language and identity, and they did not want their identities to be erased and substituted by someone else's. Secondly, the appreciation of language as a seed 'rooted' one in one's land, culture and heritage, sowed solidarity amongst the people to win liberation for the country. Therefore, with this emphasis on the importance of language, the new language policy had to represent every South African, even in practice. However, implementation of multilingualism proves to be difficult. English is still the language of economy, schools and parliament.

Makoni and Pennycook (2005) tell us that some languages in the new South Africa have been 'disinvented' because the policy was informed by a colonial view that saw indigenous languages as fixed and bounded. Therefore, the fluidity of languages such as isiZulu and isiXhosa was collapsed, pidgeonholing these languages and inscribing ethnic difference as their inherent difference. Hence, "current language policy in South Africa is a legacy of the colonialist misrepresentation of the sociolinguistic reality for most Africans" (Makoni, 2003: 143). This tells us that the current language policy of South Africa is based on arbitrariness, and is therefore compromised. Its practice would require that it be revisited for accuracy and authentic representation of its subjects.

The "compromised multilingual language policy" that we see today in South Africa is seen by Makoni as a "legitimization of a particular view of the past" (1998: 242). The notion of nine indigenous languages added as official languages stems from the genesis of the Bantustans adopted by the Apartheid government and further draws from that history of divide-and-rule to inform how we view ourselves as South Africans today. This is not to say the nine languages are arbitrary; the complexities that inform those nine tend to collapse other factors like dialects which could have been independent and are not, or could have been dialects but have become independent languages. Makoni further tells us that missionaries played "an active role in the invention of African languages" (ibid), and that the "disinvention" has not been reversed in the new South African language policy.

Mpe (1999) and Parmegiani (2006) have observed that English is given more worth than other languages as people who speak it and who strive to speak it believe they can participate on an international platform if equipped with the language. Even though the language policy

encourages the use of indigenous languages across different platforms (for instance the University of the Witwatersrand has a language policy that aims to include Sesotho as a medium of instruction by 2012[13]) English is seen as a key to economic and political access. Parmegiani states that "the mastery of English is often a precondition for employment, academic success and political participation", whilst Mpe tells us that "many [black] parents still prefer their children to be instructed in English...for economic and other privileges" (Mpe, 1999). This is ironic and problematic since according to the national Census 2000, only 9% of South Africans have declared English their mother tongue. These are some of the problems that face South Africa today: the 'disinvention' of black identities and languages, which will be discussed at length in later sections.

South African Language Policy: Politics of representation

This section addresses the politics of representing a country that has, as Mpe wrote, a multi-layered consciousness, in the South African language policy. 'Representation' refers to creating an 'apt' signifier (policy) that satisfies the complexity of the sign (reality of the post-94 linguistic landscape). Therefore, the politics of representation seeks to unravel the problems underlying the language policy of post-94 South Africa; showing its gaps and flaws, and furthermore revealing if the theory, drafted over ten years ago, has been put in practice.

The violence that saturates Mpe's novel and Magogodi's poems is the violence that informs the society which they write about. In the new dispensation physical violence has made way for other forms of violence, including psychological, emotional and symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1991). A good example of symbolic violence can be witnessed in Bheki Peterson's ( ) description of the use of language to relive memories of violence during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (T.R.C) in the mid-nineties. Peterson relives how victims of profound violence had to purge themselves of the hurt and dehumanisation that they and their loved ones suffered under the regime, in the hope of motivating the perpetrators to confess so that forgiveness and closure may be found. However, Petersons' problem with this exercise is that the victims, often those previously declared as black people, had to tell these stories in English, or through a translator, and furthermore hear the perpetrators' confessions through a translator. Peterson perceived this form of 'healing old

[13] http://web.wits.ac.za/NR/rdonlyres/86CE4FF3-9568-4D98-863E-3B278D1613DF/0/languagepolicy.pdf

wounds' as an unsuccessful one because of the language issue, notwithstanding the fact that the victims had to control their overwhelming emotions for the purpose of television.

Language thus became a big hurdle in the process of reconciliation. This shows us that language is an "agent that enables us to communicate with one another in our struggle to find the means for survival" as Thiongo (1993) reminded us, and when that agent is absent there can be no negotiation of moving forward, united and reconciled. The victims and perpetrators lacked a language, that is, shared conceptual maps and the vocabulary to communicate those concepts to each other, to revisit the memory of the past. One of the main themes of Mpe's novel is that "forgiveness and continuation of a relationship are not the same thing", and this relates to what I have just mentioned with regards to the T.R.C. The platform did not find or provide a sufficient language to speak of a past that continues to inhabit the present, but rather provided mediations between experience and the articulation of that experience. Therefore there was a disjuncture between what was being felt and how it was being uttered. There were time constraints on what would be said, and the nation had just come out of carnage, still trying to find solid ground and a functional language policy. All these factors, language being the most important for it was supposed to be an agent of communication, contribute to Peterson's deep indignant critique of the T.R.C.

Having said that, in South Africa today language still continues to function as the one element that speaks of who the person is, or at least comes from, shapes some ideology and facilitates processes of constructing identities. That is why it is important for the South African Language Policy to write and 'speak', to a significant extent, in the language of their people, to capture languages "...which comment on the hard realities of life, drawn from and finding support in personal and social experiences" (Mpe, 2001: 95). That policy should aspire to eschew this disjuncture between language and experience that was witnessed in the T.R.C. The policy, in theory, should reflect what is happening in the realities of many South Africans today. The apartheid government denigrated many indigenous South African languages, and it is therefore the expectation of the new democratic language policy to give those languages a 'voice'.

The policy should align itself with the people. *Tsotsitaal*, for example, should not just evolve to S'camto without this language being given recognition for its role in the struggle for independence. *Tsotsitaal* suffered indignant inscription, seen as a language for thugs and black wretched citizens, meanwhile it was a language whose inception is ingenious and

progressive. This language accepted the hybrid and cosmopolitan nature of Johannesburg, and hence its 'inventors' created a language that would capture this cosmopolitan hybridity. This was approximately fifty years before the first South African democratic elections. In 1994, the popular youth culture of an emerging freedom embraced *Tsotsitaal*, using it to further the discourse of linguistic freedom in their newly found environments. This language was not acknowledged by the new government. They did not free this old form of expression from its associations with thuggery and violence. This is just one example of how the language policy of 1994 failed the reality of the linguistic landscape. Other examples may include the 'disinvention' of Nguni languages: the fluidity of isiZulu into isiXhosa has been butchered by the missionaries. Their legacy still informs the differences between those languages, as discussed in the previous section.

The new language policy did not align itself with the people. It did not bravely confront the languages spoken by the people whom it is servicing. This policy was supposed to rediscover the real languages of the struggle and learn from their great heritage of orature, and above all, learn from their great optimism and faith in the capacity of human agency to remake the country. This pure faith and optimism led to the first democratic elections. Language, as one of the key tools that led to this democracy, should have been carefully considered as it was, had the language policy reflected this inert strength and faith, the key to the remaking and renewing of the country. Furthermore, an appreciation of these indigenous languages' connections to South Africa's oral tradition and its heritage would have led to an advocacy of that 'literary tradition'.

In relation to writing in Magogodi's and Mpe's text, the languages used advocate the authenticity of orality, and furthermore shows that this tradition must be archived. It also shows how the use of this language gives both the author, the speakers of that language, and that language power, where power is productive instead of oppressive. As Michel Foucault puts it, this power "...traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms of knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be thought of as a productive network which runs through the whole social body" (Foucault, 1980: 119). This is discussed in detail in a later section titled '(De)construction of Power'. With particular regard to S'camto, we will see how language and power function in close proximity; as the emergence of S'camto was denigrated and that language was stripped of power by the Apartheid government in South Africa. Therefore the employment of S'camto by these post-94 authors imbues the language and its users, "the whole social body" as Foucault puts it, with a new power; a positive power that allows forms

of knowledge and discourse to be produced. This is in line with Biko's (1979) need to 'fight' and defy a subservient position occupied by blackness and associations of blackness.

The above shows us that the speakers and receivers of language need to be considered in research on language. Bakhtin's seminal essays on dialogism are helpful in this regard. His concept of "multivocality" refers to "the quality of linguistic utterances as 'contested terrains' in which multiple meanings of utterances can be voiced, and where an indefinite number of interpretations are possible" (Bakhtin, 1981). Through his theories on 'multivocality', Bakhtin sought to address Saussure's historical linguistic model, which lacked plurality; he inserted multiple speakers from multiple backgrounds into that model. As far as Bakhtin was concerned, Saussure focused solely on the 'ideal' aspects of *langue*, and did not balance the study with an exploration of the *parole* (Saussure, 1983). I would like to use this as a metaphor for the South African language policy's theory and practice: the writers did not insert an active speaker in the theory, many speakers with multi-layered consciousness; hence the practice of that language policy became problematic. The politics of representation, how the speaker is backgrounded or ignored from the theory of the language policy, hence become clear. The seemingly antagonistic way of representing South Africa in Magogodi's and Mpe's texts is a response to how black people were represented in the past and present; and how they were inscribed and inaptly written into narratives, including the South African language policy. This is discussed fully in the next section.

Black Identities in South Africa

A 'disinvention' of identities through silence and violence

Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin describe the "three important features of all postcolonial writing" thus: "the silencing and marginalizing of the post-colonial voice by the imperial centre; the abrogation of this imperial centre within the text; and the active appropriation of the language and culture of that centre" (1989: 83). They furthermore state that another shared feature is that "the notions of power inherent in the model of centre and margin are appropriated and so dismantled" (Ashcroft et al., 1989: 83). Although at a later stage in this dissertation I contest some of their views on postcolonial writing, they nonetheless make key points and discuss concepts that are central to an understanding of language in postcolonial writing. The notions of silencing, marginalizing, appropriating or abrogating are very central to the critical analysis of the two texts, and to the question of power in those texts. According

to Ashcroft and colleagues, “abrogation is a refusal of the categories of the imperial culture, its aesthetics, its illusory standard of normative or ‘correct’ usage, and its assumption of a traditional and fixed meaning ‘inscribed’ in the words”; and appropriation is “the process of capturing and remoulding the language to new usages” (Ashcroft et al., 1989: 38).

In South Africa, marginalizing and silencing were inextricably connected. The apartheid government silenced the oppressed non-whites in two major ways. The geographical makeup of the country ensured that the peripheries, away from the central metropolis where trade and industry took place, were to be occupied by non-whites; and furthermore divided those peripheries into homelands on the basis of language. As a result, the indigenous languages of South Africa, in their peripheral position, were never associated with the expanding and growing economy. Therefore, as Alexander and Heugh observe, although these indigenous languages have “intrinsic empowering value”, they were subverted and denigrated by the government at large, and this caused a profound inferiority complex (Fanon, 1967). In this way, by placing the majority of the country on the margins of modernity and social change, that majority was silenced. Anthony Giddens states that “modernity ... produces *difference, exclusion* and *marginalisation*. Holding out the possibility of emancipation, modern institutions at the same time create mechanisms of suppression, rather than actualisation, of self” (Giddens, 1991: 6). So the indigenous languages were excluded and marginalised because of difference. This form of silencing is brutal because it functions on a physical and psychological dimension, and for one to notice a need for change and gain agency to make that change, one has to reach self-actualisation. Therefore for over forty years the voices of the masses were silenced and they could not participate in interlocal and international interactions. Those spaces of silence are conspicuous in South Africa now, where the language of the economy is the language of power, and those “who have to engage in economic activities in the country... are empowered to the extent that they know the standard form of the language of power”, and those who do not know this language are excluded from the activities of progress.

The other form of silencing that took place was one prevalent in totalitarian states. Cultural workers were censored, banned or jailed for expressing their views on the increasing injustice in their countries. In the high times of extreme violence, inhumanity and silencing, these artists used various mediums as outlets. As can be seen with the protest and resistance literature of the sixties, the seventies and the interregnum years of the eighties in South Africa, the silenced voice was threatening to break into a roar of protest. However, as

Njabulo Ndebele and Albie Sachs pointed out, in protesting against spectacular injustice the everyday nooks and crannies of life under apartheid were neglected, lending to a narrowing of consciousness. As Magogodi aptly observed in a recent interview, protest literature invoked pity and remained fixed in the present whilst resistance literature looked for alternatives, a way forward (Video interview, 2010). This is not to say that one way was better than the other, but merely to point out the outcomes of literature shaped by silence. The history of black modern literature is still associated with difference, exclusion, marginality and protest, rather than appreciated for its aesthetic qualities.

In the same category of cultural silencing, there is a large, screaming, singing, folk-loring and dancing gap left by lack of archiving of the history of oral tradition of South Africa. It is highly problematic that the history of South African literature, pedagogically and in mainstream consciousness, tends to begin with the likes of *The Story of an African Farm*, and slowly ventures into writers such as Sol Plaatjie in the twentieth century. The oral tradition that shaped the 'national consciousness' of plenty of black citizens and writers alike is almost always on the peripheries or absent. The legacy of oral tradition today is an exoticized version with *isibongis* parading at political rallies and government *imbizos*. Mbembe calls it an appropriation of the "debris" of ancestral ritual genres to "form the edifice of postcolonial dramaturgy" (1992a: 20). The purveyors of oral art did not have the resources available to them to publish and archive that art form since history is always recorded by the victors. The silencing that the oppressed people of South Africa suffered extended to their cultures, psychological processes, identities and socio-politics.

In addition to the features of postcolonial writing that Ashcroft et al. have brought to the foreground, I wish to bring attention to the issue of aesthetics. By 'aesthetics' I mean a set of values and beliefs which evaluate beauty or ugliness, sublime or nonsensical, relevant or worthy. Mbembe (2001) has stated that postcolonial literatures are characterised by "aesthetics of vulgarity", and Gaylard tells us, "beauty in postcolonialism is not confined to the politically and ethically correct; ugliness can have its own attraction; aesthetics are not about prettiness" (Gaylard, 2005: 299). Aesthetics relates to content, genre and style. In texts such as Armah's *The beautyful ones are not yet born*, Marechera's *House of Hunger*, and Magogodi's *Thy Condom Come*, a novel, a novella and an anthology of poetry, respectively, we are faced with these questions of aesthetics. The subjects and concerns of those texts are realistic, as the epigraph in Mpe's novel indicates, "fictional authority through representational accuracy" (Green, : 9), hence the squalor, the grotesque and the hated, but

the style in which these texts are produced are a beauty to be marvelled at. The writers have great command of their means of meaning-making, the language, the narrative strand and the execution; such grandeur in style that we realise that 'aesthetics are not about prettiness'. To borrow from Njabulo Ndebele, telling things as they are feeds into the beauty of the ordinary. The politically and ethically correct subjects that many writers strive for are what Mpe refers to as euphemisms— 'life's realities are concealed by euphemisms' (Mpe, 2001). And indeed in the two texts here under discussion, we see that aesthetics are not one dimensional but have dualities which should be explored. Life's magnificence lies in the contending dualities, light and darkness, good and evil, old and new, and so forth.

As important as aesthetics in post-94 socio-politics and transition is the issue of identity. Coming out of a history that classified citizens arbitrarily according to something as difficult to pin down as race, and furthermore using that arbitrary factor as a determining factor of whether one would be successful in life or not, the demise of that regime has left a big question mark on national and self identity. According to Michael Holquist (1990), because an individual coexists, a person's identity is shaped by a state of reflection, the way others see you, and the way you respond to them. Recognition forms a big part of identity formation. The suppression, injustice and inhumanity suffered by the non-whites of South Africa has caused internalized disorders such as an inferiority complex (Fanon, 1967) and feelings of worthlessness and nihilism. As such, states of reflection, the way the 'other' sees you and the response you give them, has been swallowed up by institutionalized silence, and formed a warped sense of self. That is how in the past psychological resistance to the oppression, as outlined in the Black Consciousness manifesto, was seen by activist such as Steve Biko, as a vital tool to free the self. As he observed, "the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the minds of the oppressed" (Biko, 1979). This reinforces the notion that if the mind is captured, individuals start seeing themselves according to how they are inscribed by the oppressor via certain discursive social codes and ideologies. That is, the identities of these individuals are 'disinvented' (Makoni, 1998). This is pivotal in understanding identity formation under apartheid, and black identity at present.

By denigrating black people's cultures, languages and experience, the apartheid government refuted the fact that all languages of South Africa can offer a specific point of view on the world, and can conceptualize the world in words, have its own world views, each characterised by its own beliefs and values. The indigenous languages of South Africa are still on the margins, and languages of power, English and Afrikaans, automatically imbue the

speakers of those languages with power. Furthermore, language is a social experience and is used to make meaning in the world; and by making meaning we "author the world" (Holland et al, 1998: 170). Therefore no one language should have to suffer subversion because all languages "live a real life, they struggle and evolve in an environment of social heteroglossia" (Bakhtin, 1981: 292) and they are mediums of authoring the world by certain individuals. As a result, by denigrating those languages, you deny the speakers of that language *agency, power, authorship* and a language to define self in relation to the world. And because "language lies on the borderline between oneself and the other" (Bakhtin, 1981: 293), if there is a disjuncture between that self and an/other, or between language and experience, that affects the construction of identities. In this dissertation I shall demonstrate how the post-94 shifting socio-political and cultural landscape pose a creative, cultural and social challenge for the authors under discussion and how they are 'outspoken', through texts informed by their own aesthetics, to construct new identities free of inscription.

(De)construction of Power

This section of the chapter aims to discuss theories that engage with the issues of language and power, and how power functions in society. Although some of these writers, such as Foucault and Althusser, did not publish under the paradigm of postcolonial literary studies, I apply their theories on power and the distribution thereof in my study.

Language, discourse and power

Michel Foucault's discursive approach to language argues that in the process of representation, it is knowledge that is produced, and not just meaning. He proclaims that we are subject to discourse, and that discourses speak us. His theories about language, power, knowledge and discourse have been revered for bringing a 'subject' into representation and the production of meaning/knowledge. He historicizes discourse by arguing that "discourse is a group of statements which provide a language for talking about a particular topic at a particular historical moment" (Hall, 1992: 291). His theory suggests that it is discourse that constructs a language for the production of knowledge during speech/representation/writing or any mode of meaning-making — discourse entails language and practice, the practice being highly influenced by power, and the outcome of this being knowledge.

Furthermore, he argues that power is not necessarily a hierarchical structure where the state, government or institutions have the power. "*Power relations permeate all levels of social*

existence and are therefore to be found operating at every site of social life...” (Hall, 1997: 50, italics my own). In this regard, when we consider language as power, we start to understand that those who have the cognitive tools and the social positions to freely speak language have the power. In the two texts under research, we come across different power relations. It is English that, to borrow from Foucault, provides a language for talking about particular topics at particular historical moments in the texts; that is, post-94 socio-politics in South Africa. This interaction with that language reveals various power relations: whose English is it? Where is it spoken? Who is speaking it? How are they speaking it? Who understands/misunderstands it? In these two texts it is my aim to show that whoever controls the power of language controls the message.

Foucault also tells us that the subject is provided with discourse, a language for talking about a particular topic at a particular time, to produces meaning. He states that since discourse is enmeshed with power, and it is not necessary to find the subject of power, for example the state or government, in order for power or knowledge to operate, it is discourse that informs how we produce meaning. There is a subject, he argues, but it is not at the centre of representation (Foucault, 1980). What implications does this hold for English, as a medium of representation in these black authors’ texts? Are they secondarily imbued with power through writing and making meaning in English; and is English inscribing them in its discourses, hence being at the centre of power? In this case, is English becoming a “prison-house” (Jameson, 1972) for these writers? As we will see, power is restless and is not a tool that can be confined, especially in a progressive constitution and democratic paradigm which is post-94 South Africa.

“Language becomes the medium through which a hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated, and the medium through which conceptions of ‘truth’, ‘order’, and ‘reality’ become established” (Ashcroft et al., 1989: 7). Ashcroft et al. are talking of a hierarchy from the context of imperialism to empire. For instance, the cross-pollination of indigenous languages with those of the colonizers is fairly common and can be expected, as can be seen with trans-cultural languages such as patois, ebonics, creole and S’camto; but these languages are not recorded as national languages because those who have the power to make those decisions do not recognize these languages. Therefore, as stated by Ashcroft et al., the hierarchical structure of power can be perpetuated in this manner. Even though power can be thought of as a “productive network which runs through the whole social body” (Foucault, 1980), we need to keep in mind that in former colonies, such as South Africa, and indeed in

the world, there are “state apparatuses” (Althusser, 1971), bodies that represent a power structure, that have power to make and effect decision that are out of societies’ reach. However writers such as the ones under discussion in this dissertation use, intermittently, cross-cultural code-switching and localisation, understood by only a few, to produce meaning in literary texts, and in genres that are traditionally linked to England and the English language. So Foucault’s proclamation that discourses (such as a long-standing literary discourse), and not subjects (in this case the authors), produce meaning, proves here to be relative. In a section on agency and authorship I discuss how the authors write themselves to the centre of that literary discourse and hence claim power and authenticity; and develop this argument in Chapters Three and Four.

The shift of power to the hands and pens of these writers is significant in postcolonial studies. It is important to acknowledge the position of language, when enmeshed with power to produce knowledge, as a tool that can communicate truths, notions of reality and order. Ashcroft et al. argue the positions of power through language, particularly those of the empires. Although language is enmeshed with power, and power constructs notions of truth, order and reality, they argue, that “...language, with its power, and the writing, with its signification of authority, has been wrested from the dominant European culture” in some forms of postcolonial writing (1989: 8). Therefore, the two authors are on the peripheries of the English Language, but because their texts are in English, this suggests that they are still linked to the dominant European culture. What does this mean? How do the two authors ‘wrest’ power from the centre? In what manner is their use and abuse of language relevant to this question? Chapters Three and Four discuss how the use of S’camto, Sepedi and Setswana, without any glossary in places, exclude and deny the centre of power which is the imperialist language. In such cases, “the site of the shared discourse – the literary text – is not the site of a shared mental experience, and should not be seen as such” (1989: 59). This ‘exclusion’ or radical rejection of power at the centre puts the author at the centre of power, and hence ‘othering’ the existing power; demonstrating “...the dynamic possibilities available to writing within the tension of ‘centre’ and ‘margin’” (ibid). The different strategies of ‘wresting’ language will be explored in full at a later stage.

The following statement demonstrates the inscription that indigenous languages and the appropriated english, with a small ‘e’, of South Africa suffered in postcolonial studies. “In practice the history of this distinction between English and [englishes] has been between the claims of a powerful ‘centre’ and a multitude of intersecting usages designated as

'peripheries'. The language of these 'peripheries' was shaped by an oppressive discourse of power" (Ashcroft et al., 1989: 8). The language that is used or abused in these two authors' texts is seen, from a position of imperial power and history, as part of a multitude of ways in which English was adapted or appropriated, and is thus termed english with a small 'e'. However, when the subject obliterates this power from the centre and places him/herself at this centre of power, the subject can facilitate a process of shifting self and others from 'periphery' to 'centre'. As I will argue later, the localising and immediacy of language in these authors' texts constructs power as "capillary-like", where power "go[es] right down to the depth of society..." (Foucault, 1977: 27) and where the "...local relations of power...should not be seen as a simple projection of the central power" (1980:201). Why, one may ask, do these authors still use English if they have such a profound ambivalence towards it? The process of acquiring and dispensing meaning and knowledge of one's surroundings or environment comes with the benefit of empowering both the author and the audience in the position of receiving that knowledge. This may seem obvious from the previous statements made, but in a country that is in the process of healing from a deep-rooted inferiority complex (Fanon, 1967), as previously discussed, it is necessary to shift the oppressed from the peripheries to the centre. By transposing the 'english', with a small 'e', to the centre, "...the sounds and the textures of the language can be held to have the power and presence of the culture they signify – to be metaphoric in their 'inference of *identity and totality'*" (Ashcroft et al., 1989: 52, italics my own). The analytical chapters will explore how identity and the construction thereof in and through one's own language is vital in the process of decolonising the self.

Agency and authorship

Marxist theorists such as Louis Althusser[14] argue that power is not some sort of a relay match where everybody can access it, and rather see power as oppressive—there are those who occupy it, and they decide how to relay it. In her book, *Literacy and Power*, Hilary Janks sees the validity of both power as oppressive, and as capillary-like when thinking about power in relation to critical literacy. In the workings of power, there is coercion and consent, domination and subjugation. The subjugated can either agree to be instruments of power or they have to be coerced, even if subconsciously. For example, on page 56 to 57 of Mpe's novel, he explores the power relations between the "ideological apparatus" which is the

[14] Althusser, L. *Essays on Ideology*. Verso: 1971

publishing house, and the subjugated subject, which is the woman from Tiragalong, who wrote a short story in Sepedi, which the publishers refused to publish on account of its vulgar language. The Pedi woman is perplexed because she has read genitalia being called by its proper name in English and Afrikaans books, and furthermore these names had "...graphic pictures as escorts—yet in other languages, they criminalized such linguistic honesty" (Mpe, 2001: 56).

The above scenario can be seen as a microcosm of both Foucault and Althusser's arguments about power. We can see power as inclusive, in a sense that this Pedi woman has had the tools to tell a story of her surroundings as she witnesses it on a daily basis, and using her mother tongue to imbue it with this immediacy, therefore taking the power of literacy and literature in her hands. However, from Althusser's Marxist point of view, the publishing house has the power to decide whether this short story will facilitate this process of inclusive power. Will this short story be published to be read by other Pedi readers, or will they refuse it the light of day? Given the political status of the time, as Mpe tells us, the publishers' reviewers of these books "were determined to ensure that such works did not offend the system that they served" (ibid); these publishers can be seen as 'ideological apparatuses' that serve to shape particular ideologies within society. Hilary Janks says "part of the work of critical literacy is to make these workings of power visible, to denaturalise 'common sense' assumptions (Gramsci, 1971) and to reveal them as constructed representations of the social order, serving the interest of some at the expense of others" (Janks, 2010: 36). It is in this light, that of Janks' deconstruction of power, that I will approach the relationship between language and power in the two texts under discussion. By using vernacular languages and hence othering those who are not of those languages, the authors write themselves to the centre of (inclusive) power, distribute that power, as per Foucault, and deconstruct imperialist oppressive power.

Contribution of Sociolinguistics to the Conceptual Framework

> "The price a world language must be prepared to pay is submission to many different kinds of use" (Achebe, 1966: 21)

This section seeks to explore concepts concerning language use in postcolonial linguistic and literary studies. It begins with the work of sociolinguists who have researched the impact of

the English language on already-existing indigenous languages, particularly in former Anglophone colonies.

Sociolinguists' view of language in postcolonial studies

Canagarajah, who belongs to some extent to the tradition of theorists who consider the role of agency as central to human communication, calls for a "linguistics that treats human agency, contextuality, diversity, indeterminacy, and multimodality as the norm" (2007: 98). This quotation is apt and loaded with some of the thematic concerns of this dissertation. Canagarajah encourages us to consider human agency in the development, usage and reception of language. Human agency underlies the fact that humans speak languages; languages do not speak them. This premise invokes early research on language by Saussure who saw language as a system of choices in a network of sign-signifier relations that emphasized *langue*, where the user of the language in question, *parol*e, was not considered (Saussure, 1983). The role of the speaker was backgrounded or ignored. Foucault (1980) and Bakhtin (1981) have inserted an active speaker of language into Saussure's sign-signifier-signified equation. This approach acknowledges human agency in the utterance of language. However, Foucault also tells us that humans are provided with discourse to communicate the world around them. I will focus on this in a later section on agency and power.

Linguist and semiotician Kress has also challenged Saussure's widely accepted notion of the arbitrariness of the sign, arguing instead that "the relation between signifier and signified is always motivated, that is, that the shape of the signifier, its 'form', materially or abstractly considered, is chosen because of its *aptness* for expressing that which is to be signified" (Kress, 2003: 42). I concur with this view which provides agency and motivation to the act of representation. For Kress, although language is to some extent formally structured and constrained by conventions, it is actually fluid, open-ended and constantly being transformed. The language producer or maker, always situated within a particular historical, social, cultural and semiotic context, selects forms of representation that seem 'apt' to represent a particular meaning.

Another factor that is important in Canagarajah's view is the different spaces and time within which speech in being used and received. Context plays a pivotal role in language, and creates dynamics in the signifier-signified process. Context is informed by position—depending on where you are in the world, same words may mean different things; and in other contexts 'nonsensical' words are given meaning. Contexts of diversity add to the

dynamics of language the issues of multilingualism, cross-cultural pollinations and language diversity. With the advent of technological progress and rapid modernity, '*multimodality'* (Kress, 1979) has become central to the study of language because the porous nature of modal borders has made modes of representation fluid.

Sociolinguistics, being a branch of linguistics that focuses on the relationship between language and social behaviour, offers a tight focus on language and its strategies in contemporary society. From a sociolinguistic perspective, diversity, multilingualism and cross-cultural pollination of languages create various forms of approaching research in language. Sociolinguistics offers three ways to examine language usage in post-94 texts: that of languages used; that of linguistic phenomena; and of linguistics strategies. 'Languages' refers to the conventional language groups such as, especially in the texts under discussion, Sepedi, English, Afrikaans and isiZulu. The linguistic phenomena pertinent to my study are phenomena that arise as a result of key social phenomena in the 21st century— mobility, globalisation, porous borders and migration, amongst other transnational and intra-national ones. These phenomena have been variously termed 'nation language' (Brathwaite, 1980), 'glocalisaiton' (Robertson: 1994), 'metrolingualism' (Pennycook: 2007), and 'black vernacular cosmopolitanism' (Gilroy: 1993); and they inform the many ways writers appropriate the English language.

'Nation language' is a term coined by postcolonial critic Edward Brathwaite (1980) who, although not a sociolinguist, provides a term useful in the analysis of language use in this dissertation. He uses that term to refer to a language that came about in the Caribbean as a result of transnationalism and slavery, where people came from vast and disparate countries and were 'forced' to occupy a foreign country/Island. The language that was forged had a great influence from English but was 'other' than English. It still had overtones of the speakers' mother-tongues from their motherlands and is mostly influenced by orality and song. In this dissertation I use the term 'nation language' to refer to a language that borrows greatly from the oral tradition of South Africa, traditional folklore, performance and storytelling.

According to Robertson (1994), "glocalisation is a product of cultural hybridisation. It occurs as a result of the divergent forces which create a conflict between going global and remaining authentic or remaining true to the local" (12). It is derived from the two words 'local' and 'global', and can be seen in both texts. 'Glocal' linguistic strategies are used mostly by both

writers to include the local in the global discourse, and the international in the local. It is a linguistic phenomenon that allows previously silenced and denigrated subjects to participate in global discourses.

'Metrolingualism' is Alastair Pennycook and Emi Otsuji's term to refer to "the ways in which people of different and mixed backgrounds use, play with and negotiate identities through language; it does not assume connections between language, culture, ethnicity, nationality or geography, but rather seeks to explore how such relations are produced, resisted, defied or rearranged; its focus is not on language systems but on languages as emergent from contexts of interaction" (2010: 7). Identity and the negotiation thereof is central to the process of 'metrolingualism' and it mostly through S'camto in the two texts being explored that the authors validate their identity and locality. S'camto also allows the authors to show how relations between different tribes, cultures, and disparate South African languages are forged; and how through this process, the hegemonic influence of English is resisted, defied and rearranged. In this dissertation I will use metrolingualism in the context of postcolonial studies, although in its original context Pennycook writes of it as a global phenomenon enabled by contemporary media of communication. Examples of metrolingualism will be much clearer when I critically analyse the texts in Chapter Three and Four.

The notion of 'cosmopolitanism', or more specifically 'black vernacular cosmopolitanism' (Titlestad: 2007), refers to how the racially oppressed "began to improvise and exchange, among other things, modes of understanding and representation, and, later, tactics to resist the hegemony of colonial authority" (Titlestad, 2007: 73). Titlestad was here referring specifically to transnational jazz between African-Americans and black South Africans, both experiencing socio-politics of subversion and denigration. Amongst some of the things exchanged, were languages for the oppressed blacks in denigrated areas.

I mention the phenomena above to acknowledge tradition of concepts in both areas of postcolonial linguistic and literary studies because concepts in both overlap and may help when used in conjunction with one another, providing a richer understanding of postcolonial language usage in everyday life and in literature. These phenomena highlight the linguistic hybridity that exists in the world today because of cultural mixing. They form a larger part of my literature review. In mentioning them, my intention is not to pigeonhole or constrain the continuous emergence of linguistic phenomena, especially in such a linguistically rich country.

More specifically, writers may use particular linguistic strategies that echo or produce the phenomena mentioned above. In Mpe's and Magogodi's texts, a number of linguistic strategies are used that bypass the laws and formality of Standard English. These include, but are not limited to, relexicalising, code-switching, localising, reformulating popular idioms for the particular contexts in which they are used, and recontexualising language from its previous usage into a quite different context, often for satirical purposes. These strategies will inform my analytical chapters, and examples will therefore be given in Chapter Three and Four.

Pennycook tells us, in *Global Englishes and Transcultural Flows*, that "the notion of world Englishes leaves out all those other englishes which do not fit the paradigm of an emergent national standard, and in doing so, falls in the trap of mapping centre linguists' images of language and the world on the periphery" (2007: 22-23). This statement is relevant to the title of this dissertation in relation to the 'use' and 'abuse' of language. The centre has a closed view of world englishes, as they stand today; they are sometimes limited to American English and Australian English. However, Pennycook has researched linguistic hybridity to map how other languages, in former Anglophone colonies, interact and 'breed' with the 'dominant' language and each other. A good example of this breeding is how Magogodi's text is written in English that makes use of S'camto. Pennycook exposes how the English language is appropriated by speakers in non-central regions to forge trans-cultural and trans-national identities. In Magogodi's texts, S'camto, uniquely black and township-based, is used to bridge the divide that has been caused by geographical disparity in South Africa.

Another researcher of the socio-politics of English as a global language, Higgins (2009), views the long-standing debate between African scholars Thiongo and Achebe in a manner that is informative for the understanding of my research. Their debate interrogates the perception of the English language in post-independent Africa. Higgins's views foreshadow the profound ambivalence that is inherent in Mpe's and Magogodi's attitudes towards the English language. Thiongo (1986, 2000) believes that "the choice of local languages in literature produce counter-narratives which displace the west's grip on the presentation of 'the other'", whilst Achebe (1975) maintains that African writers can use English to express their immediate surroundings and fuse that language with local cultural signifiers that will place those unique and distinct experiences on a global scale. The two writers take the stances of abrogation and appropriation, respectively. Higgins labels these conceptions of language in postcolonial contexts as 'centripetal forces' and 'centrifugal forces' (Higgins, 2009).

In literary studies centripetal forces relate to texts that confront linguistic imperialism and can be seen as counter-narratives to colonialism. In African literature, these texts are often influenced by the writings of Fanon (1961, 1967), and Cesaire's negritude movement; as well as Said's (1979) prominent text *Orientalism*. The aim of these centripetal texts, as Higgins tells us, "is to show how imbalances in power and imperialist attitudes of superiority were discursively constructed and then inscribed onto cultures and languages, producing various forms of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1991)" (2009: 8-9). This notion of a discursively constructed inferiority complex that is inscribed particularly on South African indigenous languages forms a central premise to my research. I will explore the workings of power to construct this ideology later in this chapter in a section titled 'language, discourse and power'.

Centrifugal forces, on the other hand, relate to texts that localize and appropriate the English language. Higgins states that "instead of unravelling the relations between the colonized and the colonizer," texts that employ localization and appropriation as strategies "explore the many ways that users of English index their ownership of the language ... through altering it to fit their local contexts and situated purposes" (2009: 11). Similarly, the centrifugal characteristics of the texts that are under research form a central part of my study, and it is my aim to explore both aspects in order to show how language functions in these texts. The workings of these two forces in the same texts overstate an ambivalence which will be explored later in this chapter. In this dissertation these forces, centrifugal and centripetal, do not work against each other, but provide framework for the critical analysis.

Similar trends in linguistic hybridity

This section aims to demonstrate that linguistic hybridity and phenomena are not unique to South Africa and have taken place elsewhere. My particular focus is instances where power, especially through displacement of people, played a major role in determining the functionality and validity of the resulting languages.

The course of history in South Africa, through colonialism and Apartheid, has defined the 'now' in such a manner that literature cannot be divorced from politics. Authors are seen in relation to their contextual backgrounds, in relations to existing traditions, and in relation to the language in which they express themselves in the context of a continually linguistically mobile country. Creole in the United States of America and patois in the Caribbean are both enshrined in the history of the criminally violent trans-Atlantic slave trade, ebonics in various

colonies around the world are results of acculturalization, and the multilingualism and cross-pollination of languages in South Africa are the visible effects of the divide-and-rule system.

I now attempt to show how, though language is shaped by various socio-political factors, names and labels that already exist cannot be used to define the South African linguistic environment. Creole is an interesting phenomenon of language, especially is post-94 South Africa where, as Wasserman and Jacobs (2003) tell us, "identity construction does not only take place as creolisation or hybridity" (15). Let me firstly define, with the help of Sarah Nuttall (2000), what creole is and then continue to explore whether it exists or not in South Africa. She writes that creolisation is a process "whereby individuals of different cultures, languages, and religions are thrown together and invent a new language, Creole, a new culture, and a new social organisation" (page 6). When we think of the 'new' South African culture in the current dispensation, we might argue that the above definition makes that society creolized, however, because of the multilingual nature of the country, ethnic groups tend to continue speaking their native tongues rather than an 'invented' language. The very definition of this process alludes to concealment or annihilation of previous languages and cultures to adopt the new ones. Examples of creolization are best seen in African-American and Caribbean languages. The processes of the trans-Atlantic slave trade has uprooted individuals of different cultures, languages and religions, amongst other varied heterogeneity, and has thrown them together in a particular geographic space. They therefore had to find a 'new language' to communicate with each other.

In post-94 South Africa, there was a similar uprooting and placement of different, varied and disparate individuals from homelands to the city of Johannesburg. They also came from different cultures, languages and traditions. They were thrown together in the mines, where they worked, and the hostels, where they stayed. They also invented a language that could satisfy cohesive communication. That language was later termed 'fanagalo' and it was a mixture of all those languages, from the major Sotho and Nguni language groups, to form a hybrid communication system. That language expanded into *tsotsitaal* as a result of cultural and political contact with Afrikaans, a hegemonic language at the time. Tsotsitaal was more politically conscious of how the political climate of the time would influence the black man and how he saw himself, so this language was one informed by "the appropriation and manipulation of symbolic and cultural material in assembling alternatives to imposed ideologies" (Titlestad, 2007: 73). *Tsotsitaal* was at the centre of black modernity in the forties and fifties. *Tsotsitaal*, with the advent of democracy, mutated into S'camto, and still carries

some remnants of Afrikaans influence. How does this relate to Creole? It does not because creole cannot possibly be a fit description of the hybridity of languages in South Africa. In the texts under discussion, there are various forms 'throwing' different languages and cultures together. However, these different languages and cultures are known and can be identified because their origins have not been completely annihilated by the previous regime.

From 'disinvention' to reinvention

This section of the dissertation determines the attitude of postcolonial writers and critics towards the phrases such as 'writing back', 'striking back', 'centre-periphery', and the subverted English of the peripheries. It also attempts to capture the crisis that language, or a lack thereof, can present to those that think critically about its role in the formation of identities and the 'disinvention' of inscripted labels.

David Lurie, John Coetzee's protagonist in the critically acclaimed novel *Disgrace*, which puts a mirror on the cultural-politico climate of post-94 South Africa, deduces that Petrus' story should preferably not be told in English because "...English is an unfit medium for the truth of South Africa" (Coetzee, 1999: 117). Lewis Nkosi (1981) writes, in an essay entitled 'The Ideology of Reconciliation', that when it comes to writing of South Africa today, "even at the best of times, language itself is suspect", that language, even at the best of times, does not suffice to capture what really goes on in the world. Another instance of the problems of language is in Edward Brathwaite's Carribean, where the protagonist in his three-part poetry anthology *Arrivants* (1973), comes back to the Carribean after a long sojourn to find a home in Africa, his supposedly 'legitimate' home. Brathwaite here then alludes to the fact that the citizens of the 'new world' need to find a language to name the things around them and hence, by so doing, equip themselves with power and authorship over them; an ownership through language. These three cases of language in relation to space or setting are all underscored by a form of crisis where, in Nkosi's case there is a disjuncture between language and experience; in Coetzee's case, English, which is not Petrus' mother tongue, robs him, and perhaps us, of his story. Brathwaite's case shows a malevolent side of this crisis where having no language is equated to having no power.

Salman Rushdie said, "English, no longer an *English* language, now grows from many roots; and those whom it once colonized are carving out large territories within the language for themselves. The empire is striking back" (Rushdie, 1992). The question here remains, how

does a language for a particular group of people, the English, become spoken in vast and disparate countries and settings around the world? Furthermore, when this language travels beyond the borders of its own people, does it carry the culture of those people with it? What about the politics? What about the economy? What psychological effects does this 'foreign' language bear on its new speakers? The title of my dissertation is informed by a critique of this notion of the 'empire striking back' or the 'empire writing back'. These two phrases, popularly associated with Ashcroft, Griffiths and Triffin, tend to perpetuate the centre and periphery model, where English and England are at the centre of power and discourses of imperialism, and on the peripheries lie the empires, such as South Africa, India, Nigeria and many varying colonies.

Chandra Mohanty proclaimed that "it is not the centre that determines the periphery, but the periphery that, in its boundedness, determines the centre" (Mohanty, 1995). What does this mean? Does it relate to Ndebele's statement that "one other way by which the South African writer can move effectively into the post-protest era is by working towards a *radical* displacement of the white oppressor as an active, dominant player in the imagination of the oppressed" (Ndebele, 1991: 71, italics my own)? Both statements repudiate the position of the centre (white oppressor) as determinant of the periphery (oppressed), and Mohanty suggests that without the periphery, the centre would not be perceived as a centre. Ndebele further suggests that it is imperative that the oppressed stops seeing itself in relation to the oppressor; that the oppressed has to start seeing self as an autonomous self-conscious individual capable of being an agent of change. That is, the project of writing to the centre cannot facilitate change, writing for the self and the immediate community will. This way, by ignoring the centre, the periphery (oppressed) *radically* displaces the centre of power (oppressor) and places self there. That is, the periphery *radically* stops determining the centre. Ndebele further argues that "this tactical absence [of the oppressor at the centre] will mean that the writer can consolidate the sense of a viable, psychologically self-sufficient community among the oppressed" (ibid). One way the two authors do this in their texts is by placing their communities, via language and cultural inferences, at the centre of discourse. They are writing for their people, so to say, and not for the imperialists. Mpe and Magogodi often 'other' the centre, but include their communities by using everyday language in their narrative. Ultimately, both texts radically reject determining the centre by remaining on the periphery, but instead consolidate a sense of a viable, psychological self-sufficiency. David Attwell, after doing a close reading of Ndebele's novella, *Fools and other stories*, and his

collection of essays, concluded that the nexus of the narratives "...insist that revolutionary language must be 'social', that is to say, it must speak to and elicit the consciousness of those who are to be its agents" (Attwell, 2005:187).

The well known postcolonial phrase 'the empire writes back' (Ashcroft et al., 1989), once widely accepted, has problematic innuendos which have been brought to my attention by Rita Barnard. One, the notion of empire automatically shifts power away from the colonised, as the *Reader's Digest Dictionary* implies in the meaning of empire: "an extensive group of states ruled over by a single monarch or ruling authority" (2002). This creates tension and consequentially rejection by those in the 'empires'. Two, the practice of writing in South Africa almost always conjures thoughts around oral culture. Those who did not have the means of literacy seem to be automatically left out of the discourse of literary history. Hence South African literary history tends to omit oral tradition. This is particularly despised by Magogodi. Three, the notion of writing back has many implications. Writing back suggests a preoccupation with the colonised or imperial power, and as we might have learned from Apartheid's demise, those organisations that are more occupied with the 'other' than the self tend to lose the realities facing the self. As a result, this implies that the project of writing back is a continuously failing attempt. Lastly, writing back is a colonial gesture imposed by the imperialists on the empires. From this vantage point we can see Ashcroft et al.'s title as one that extends the colonial mission by using fundamental colonial vocabulary, and the title tends to dictate how those texts from empires will be constructed. This is highly problematic. As Mutloase wrote in the preface to *Forced Landings*, "we are not going to be told how to re-live our feelings, pains and aspirations by anyone who speaks from the platform of his own rickety culture" (1980: Preface). This rickety culture, in this instance represented by the English imperialists, is lambasted in various forms by the two authors under question. I now move on to the analytical chapters where I will demonstrate the various forms of language use and abuse in Mpe's and Magogodi's texts.

Chapter Three: '*Native*' Narration?

This chapter will focus on *Welcome To Our Hillbrow*, a novel in which Mpe tackles social and cultural politics of the new dispensation. The text is a layered narrative written primarily in English. Every now and then the reader feels that this particular English is highly unusual, not easily grasped by the monolingual English speaker. This quality arises from a number of linguistic phenomena and strategies pertaining to the languages used and how they are used. One of the issues is language itself, since Mpe uses Sepedi on certain occasions. His appropriation of the English language is achieved by using code-switching techniques and cross-cultural references to localise it. All these terms will be explained and relevant examples will be identified from the text to illustrate the language use and its effect on Mpe's text. The English that Mpe uses is made to carry all sorts of post-independent concerns. The effect of the language use may be a part-answer to the question, what happens when context overwhelms text? The novel, from as early as the epigraph, is a linguistic feast and embodies what many may term postmodern features. However it is not the postmodern features that I am concerned with. My aim is to investigate the language used in the novel, particularly in relation to the accepted norms and rules of formal Standard English, to show how Mpe transgresses these conventions and why. In this chapter, I will approach the issues of language, firstly by offering a close analytical reading of the text's thematic concerns and, secondly, by showing how the articulation of these is propelled by language choice.

In Chapter Two, on page 36, I briefly discussed Achebe's view on language, particularly that expressed in his collection of essays title *Morning Yet On Creation Day* where he ponders over African literature, the English language and literacy. In an essay called 'The African Writer and the English Language', he advocates the use of English by African authors and believes that these authors can take advantage of the language given to them as well as enjoy international audiences. He argues that, "the African writer should aim to use English in a way that brings out his message best without altering the language to the extent that its value as a medium of international exchange will be lost" (1975: 100). Mpe 'alters' the language to his convenience and is concerned more with the message getting conveyed than the medium or the rules of language used, which automatically casts a conservative view on Achebe's assertion. This assertion is likely to work with first generation writers of African literature in English, whose texts were the ones Achebe was making reference to in his essays published

in 1975. It is important, however, to recognise that Achebe's assertion does not apply to all first generation African writers using the English language.

Examples from Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* and Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* will demonstrate the difference in their literary styles. In Chapter 1 of *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, entitled 'Hillbrow: the map', Cousin and Refentše are walking the spaces of Hillbrow and come across vagabonds:

> They [Cousin and Refentše] simply continue to mind their own business. Then, as you draw level with the last of them, he [the vagabond] shouts:
>
> *Aibo*!
>
> Cousin ignores him. You wave your hand at him.
>
> *Ngiyabonga Baba*, he returns your greetings with a smile. (p. 12)

With walking the streets, comes talking the streets and understanding the streets' unwritten protocols. In this given extract, Refentše is a typical Jim-comes-to-Jo'burg who is used to the rural ways of Tiragalong, where greetings are the norm between neighbours and fellow community members. He has been walking Hillbrow from the previous day when he arrived. Language plays an important role in adapting and placement, that is to say, if you cannot talk the streets you cannot walk the streets. Refentše must have looked displaced and awkward to the vagabond, the latter being the 'resident' of the streets. What he then shouts, and the shouting is not addressed to anyone in particular, is something that Mpe cannot translate. He very often translates some Sepedi words or keeps their origins and writes them in directly translated English, but with this given extract he italizes the word and phrase, leaving them unexplained.

In this instance we have a cunning use of street language inserted into the dialogue. Although it is usual to find greetings and titles such as 'dumelang' and 'papa' untranslated in most texts using English as a non-mother tongue, this case is different. 'Aibo' and 'ngiyabonga baba' are not terms one would ever use to greet a person. 'Aibo' is a word used to express surprise, shock and even to draw attention to or emphasize something. 'Ngiyabonga baba' loosely translates to 'thank you elder', which is lost in translation this way. He could easily use other words to capture this dialogue, but because this is the language of the street, it seems apt. The vagabond was possibly attempting to startle Cousin into some kind of submission, but Cousin

kept walking on. It is precisely because Refentše is not familiar with the language of the swift streets of Hillbrow that he falls for this stunt and waves at the vagabond. When he smiles back at Refentše, those in the know of this exchange may suspect that this smile is full of mockery, as if to foreground Refentše's 'new-comer' status. Mpe cleverly indigenises and localises English, capturing the precise flavour of the streets of Hillbrow in the 1990s.

Ashcroft et al. observe that this form of abrupt abrogation "*forces* the reader into an active engagement with the horizon of the culture in which these terms have meaning ... further understanding will require the reader's own expansion of the cultural situation beyond the text" (1989: 65, italics my own). These untranslated words and phrases signify walking and talking the streets; if you have walked the streets, as a reader, the meaning will not be lost, but if you have not formed part of the street discourse, you are 'othered' and left to find meaning for yourself. And it is the idea of *forcing* the 'othered' reader into this discourse that renders this strategy a valuable one to explore in the South African post-94 paradigm. Forcing goes hand in hand with power. These languages, isiZulu and Sepedi, are imbibed with power even though in the novel/dialogue they exist on the margins of a functional, international linguistic centre. Mpe hijacks power from the centre and spreads it amongst those who are included in the discourses of the streets. This particular example forms part of the issues of placement and displacement explored in the novel. Furthermore, by placing isiZulu and Sepedi on the street, thereby imbuing the street lingo with power, and by inserting them within a literary project, Mpe's agenda with regards to language power is brought to centre stage.

Achebe, in keeping with the 'rules of English' in order to "bring out his message best without altering the language", has provided a glossary for all the italicized Igbo words he uses in the novel, *Things Fall Apart*, and where necessary, has provided the explanation for rituals and proverbs. His view is that as long as English can carry their burdens, African writers should use it – a debate that continues in discussions of African literature. Achebe's English carries his burdens in this manner, to take an example that Ashcroft and colleagues used: "he took him into his obi (hut)". Even though the underlying meaning of an *obi* is more than just a hut, he has provided some sort of translation so that the international readers will not get 'lost' in this discourse. Ashcroft et al. observe that "the simple ostensive matching of '*obi*' and 'hut' reveals the general inadequacy of such an exercise" (1989: 61). An *obi* as a word in the text is a "complex weave of social conditions and experience" (1989: 41), it cannot be wholly satisfied with being defined just as a 'hut'. The other problem with italicizing and defining

terms in a cross-cultural text, as Ashcroft and colleagues continue to tell us, is that "at its worst, it may lead to a considerably stilted movement of plot as the story is forced to drag an explanatory machinery behind it" (1989: 62). This of course is not a problem in *Things Fall Apart*, but is important to note which strategies authors of syncretic texts choose in order to avoid stilted plots and flawed trajectories.

In this dissertation, the authors under discussion do not fall on the Thiongo side of the argument, the 'centripetal', nor do they follow Achebe's 'centrifugal' forces (discussed in Chapter Two on page 36). They use English that exists in the grey area between this debate. They demonstrate that "the crucial function of language as a medium of power demands that post-colonial writing define itself by seizing the language of the centre and re-placing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place" (Ashcroft, 1989: 38). Perhaps this way suited Achebe best, but with time later generations of writers manipulated Standard English more extensively. Many people may think, from what I have been pointing out, that the formal use of English in African literature was something that first generation writers, such as Wole Soyinka, did exclusively, but there are other first generation canonical writers too, who refused to be told how to tell their own stories, such as Ayi Kwei Armah and Amos Tutuola.

Ayi Kwei Armah is a first generation writer who does not follow Achebe's 'rules' of how to use English. In the former's first novel, *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, although he keeps close to the rules of English, Armah uses carnivalesque and scatological language to express his disillusionment with post-independent in Ghana, much to Achebe's disapproval (Achebe: 1975). So the language issue here proves to have no generational or geographical locus, but instead should be viewed under the postcolonial lens. What are Anglophonic postcolonial writers doing with the English language? This postcolonial gaze automatically puts former Anglophonic states on the margins of the discourse of the English language and literatures; it is with this gaze that I examine how Mpe and Magogodi tackle their inscribed positions at the margins in relation to their immediate contexts, particularly when it comes to the use of English. The issue of centre-periphery has been explored in Chapter Two. I will now see how it relates to Mpe's novel, then explore the socio-political agenda that are this novel's preoccupation. This will bring me to the discussion of language use and abuse.

Homi Bhabha, in *Nation and Narration*, suggests that the antagonistic at the margins of nations "disturbs the ideological manoeuvres through which 'imagined communities' are given essentialist identities" (Bhabha, 1990: 300). Essentialism is the view that some

properties inhere necessarily in the individuals to which they belong (Mautner, 2005: 199), which is automatically problematic in South Africa as such a quest for essentialist identities will prove to be futile. Bhabha writes of the porousness of borders, immigration and migrants; all of which "unwrite" nations and national projects. It is precisely because South Africa is defined more by difference than homogeneity that the attempt to pin down an identity of a nation or community is a quixotic task. In his novel *Welcome to our Hillbrow*, Mpe tackles the issues of difference, inscribed essentialist identities, imagined communities, porous borders post-94, migration and immigration, unwriting and rewriting a nation. Even though I have written in the previous chapter that Mpe is not 'writing back', the project of 'writing black' has some elements of antagonism to the grand narrative of apartheid, which include refuting essentialist identities and determinism. The most distinguishing feature of the two is that writing back is a preoccupation with the exterior whilst writing black probes the interstices of the interior. That is to say that writing back is a response, usually defensive, while writing black is a proclamation of agency and authority, not against any grand narrative but for the self and the other who is related to that self; in this case that other would be the community. Mpe and Magogodi are not concerned solely with antagonism but are protagonists in their own rights.

I have just mentioned the notion of 'imagined communities' as one of the issues that Mpe tackles in his novel. The phrase is borrowed from Benedict Anderson's seminal book, *Imagined Communities* (1991), where he states that the community "is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their *communion*" (Anderson, 1991: 6, italics my own). In *Welcome To Our Hillbrow*, I view the imagined community as the black post-94 community of transitional South Africa. It is imagined because the black population of that state have images of a shared history of oppression, images of a communion post-94, and even stronger images of a shared victory over Apartheid. In the novel, Refentše embodies that community's struggles, the decay of Tiragalong and Hillbrow, and the trope of a diseased body as the state, where the state is both the state as a nation and the state of the nation. Anderson further tells us that "it is imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings" (Anderson, 1991: 7).

Anderson's assertions are apt and eerily prophetic to Mpe's novel and his life. The moral fibre that holds or is supposed to hold in place the communities in the novel, be they of Hillbrow, Tiragalong or Oxford, is disintegrating in the face of profound change and transition. The communities cannot be imagined whole. They are liminal entities that barely survived the horrors of apartheid, and their transition into a democratic and constitutional era is threatened by issues such as Aids, xenophobia and malicious gossip. Anderson tells us, "out of this estrangement comes a conception of personhood, *identity* which, because it can not be remembered, must be narrated" (Anderson, 1991: 7). In this case Mpe strives to narrate that identity that cannot, for reasons of diversity and liminality, be pinned down and defined. The author with such a task must find a language that can fit and tackle all these factors.

Lesley Marx puts it aptly in her study of Peake that "it can be seen that the continuum of possible responses from enchantment to disenchantment is an image of the artist's dilemma ... the act of focusing solely on the beautiful and ignoring that which gives pain can lead to disillusionment; on the other hand, the act of confronting pain can lead to mute horror" (Marx, 1983: 11). This mute horror is similar to what Anderson calls "willing to die for limited [national] imaginings". It is a crisis that faced Mpe: his novel has positive themes such as the redeeming qualities of love, but it is the horror in the underbelly that he seeks to uncover. "Silence is no place to hide the tide of violence", as Magogodi (2004) tells us, and as Thepa insists, "a writer must never write his life in a book ... Phaswane Mpe died because he never wore his mask. He wanted to be real in the tinsel world. He did not want to regale us with stories of pomp and conquest. He became reclusive and started to *probe* his life" (Nzimande [ed], 2005: 202). Raditlhalo tells us that such probing in literature that reveals a continuum of responses from 'enchantment' to 'disenchantment' "leads to language used in a specific and probing manner" (Raditlhalo, 2008). Although Raditlhalo wrote this as a commentary on the poetry of post-94, it can also be related to Mpe's novel. *Welcome To Our Hillbrow* also probes the interstices of transitional South Africa in a specific and probing language, challenging a cultural silence of yesteryear, as discussed in Chapter Two. I now examine the various ways in which this happens.

The novel is characterised by paradoxes, which Fanon (1967) says is a feature of the post-independent state. Mpe tells us very early in the novel that "ambiguities, paradoxes, ironies [are] the stuff of our South African lives" (Mpe, 2001: 23). These ironies and contrasts seep

into Mpe's style of writing and use of language. I take an example from an early part of the novel, to explore these contrasts:

> "Heroes of grimy courage and exceptionally vicious greed were followed by the voracious camera lenses of modern technology, and the little boys of Tiragalong emulated their TV heroes, driving their cars made of wire with wheels of tennis balls.
>
> Vum … vum … and beep … beep … their cars went in the streets of Tiragalong." (Mpe, 2000: 5)

In the above extract, the story being told is both distanced and immediate. Mpe is writing of thugs with 'grimy courage' and 'vicious greed' in a high-speed chase, and in the same breath tells us of young boys playing with their home-made wire cars, emulating a key symbol of modernity. He collapses such a spectacular event with an ordinary event. His style is to blend 'highbrow', adjective-rich English with the onomatopoeia of the streets. The 'voracious camera lenses of modern technology', suggest progressive modernity, as opposed to the rural Tiragalong where such technology cannot be found and where boys can only drive cars in their play. There is something humorous and yet poignant in the image of a wire car with wheels of tennis ball. Tennis was also a sport of leisure played by those in the higher classes. The above extract is full of contradiction, and serves an implicit carnivalesque purpose in Mpe's agenda. His wire cars driven by children making the 'vum, vum' and 'beep beep' sound is a cross-cultural reference to games children in township and rural areas play, described with accuracy.

The narrative as a whole is told in the language of 'he-said-she-said'—the language that common folks on the streets of Hillbrow and Tiragalong use to share gossip. Words and phrases such as 'ah', 'do you remember', and the constant mode of address to 'you', being Refentše, all make us, the reader, feel as though we are being orally told the story of the misadventures of Tiragalong, Hillbrow and Oxford. As Barris observes, "writing out of these unstable post-/colonial conditions, [Mpe] splits off some of the narrative burden, sharing it with a fictionalised communal voice. In other words, [he] consciously uses the medium of orature. More particularly, [he] uses orature to position [himself] as an African speaker, as aware of indigenous tradition as [he] is of cosmopolitan literary practice" (Barris, 2009: 39).

The following example demonstrates this, "Ah! This AIDS nonsense! I wish those girls and boys in our villages had more respect for their genitalia and did not leave them to do careless

business in Hillbrow, only so that we can attribute the source of our dirges to Nigeria and Zaire and ... " (p. 20). This dialogue sounds, through phrases such as 'ah! This AIDS nonsense!', with its exclamations that represent those exclaimed in oral speech, as if the narrator is engaging in gossip with us the reader. And by using the collective word 'we', we are brought into active participation of this dialogue. This adds to this sense of a communal voice and furthermore, as Samin suggests, evokes a feeling of a "tribal consciousness; a *native narrative*" (Samin, 2006: abstract. Italics my own). By the phrase 'native narrative' Samin refers to "the voice of South Africa, telling us *her* story for the first time, after so many years of so many stories about apartheid and its evils" (Samin, 2006: 1). In Chapter One (p. 4), I blatantly denied this label and accused it, and its connotations, of a Eurocentric view of Africans and their art. However, in this instance Samin's observation and opinion of *Welcome To Our Hillbrow* can be accepted. It is native because it evokes the oral tradition and the 'fireside storytelling' associated with the land and its people, which essentially forms part of the definition of native. This 'native narration' reminds us of Brathwaite's assertion about 'nation language' and its features of orality, which I have discussed in Chapter Two, and will discuss in more detail in the next section.

By using a hearsay kind of narration, a grapevine style of narration, Mpe feeds into the way rumours spread in this text, from Tiragalong to Hillbrow to Oxford: "it was better, so the word went around, to be ... " (p. 21). This oral mode of address propels the narrative and adds to its mystery, suspense, shock, secrecy and humour; all the things that gossip are made of. On a broader level, Mpe's medium choice of the 'highbrow' tradition of the novel to tell us gossip-like narrative is both funny and subversive. The combination of important issues with this tone and mode of narration renders the narrative carnivalesque-like. It evokes both African and traditional British storytelling. Mpe's use of language at times indicates a vocabulary informed by global higher education; whilst it also indicates the specificities of the local. Mpe is a man of two worlds, worlds defined by contrasts, paradoxes and ironies.

As the main protagonist of the novel, Refentše, is ushered into Hillbrow, essentially a topographical space that promises a better life, great education, excitement, intercultural exchanges, urban life and an aggrandized door into a great future – what the new South Africa promised to its citizens and African immigrants. However we are immediately, in the first chapter, on the first and second page, confronted with paradoxes, ironies and, perhaps most importantly, failures to live up to the expectations that were created. As Michael Green tells us, "by the 1990s Hillbrow was considered either a sophisticated melting pot of culture,

class, and ethnicity or a decaying cityscape of violent crime, drugs, prostitution, and AIDS" (Green, 2006: 5); and Rachel Swarns (2002) writes of a Hillbrow that both dazzles and disorientates. Mpe's descriptions of Hillbow give us access to the psyche of Refentše as he is 'mapping' his way through that neighbourhood, one that is a palimpsest of the previous regime and has residues of its former colonisers and exploiters through street names such as Caroline, Esselen, Goldreich, and reminders of colonial contact and rule such as the Bible Centred Church of Christ and Da Gama court (Mpe, 2001: 6)as well as a dazzling street life with "Highpoint, the biggest shopping centre in Hillbrow", and informal vegetable business—"good looking produce at low prices that rendered the buying of such produce from Spar, Checkers or OK ridiculously wasteful" (Mpe, 2001: 7-8). As Refentše navigates his way through the dazzling and disorientating Hillbrow, the reader is drawn into a carnivalesque romp of post-94 politics, language and language use, identity, society, and notions of memory, community and national identity. I now quote the first and second page of the novel to explore some of the contrasts in the novel.

> If you were still alive, Refentše, child of Tiragalong, you would be glad that Bafana Bafana lost to France in the 1998 Soccer World Cup fiasco. Of course you supported the squad. But at least now, you would experience no hardships walking to your flat through the streets of Hillbrow – that locality of just over one square kilometre, according to official records; and according to its inhabitants, at least twice as big and teeming with countless people. You would remember the last occasion in 1995, when Bafana Bafana won against Ivory Coast and, in their jubilation, people in Hillbow hurled bottles of all sorts from their flat balconies. A few bold souls, boasting a range of driving skills, swung and spun their cars in the streets, making U-turns and circles all over the road. You would recall the child, possibly seven years old or so, who got hit by a car. Her mid-air screams still ring in your memory. When she hit the concrete pavements of Hillbrow, her screams died with her. A young man just behind you shouted:
>
> Kill the bastard!
>
> But the driver was gone. The traffic cops, arriving a few minutes later, found that the season of arrest had already passed. Most people, after the momentary stunned silence of witnessing the sour fruits of soccer victory, resumed their singing. *Shosholoza* ... sounded its melodies from Wolmarans Street, at the fringe of the Johannesburg downtown, to the head of Clarendon Place, at the boundary of the serene Parktown

> suburb. *Shosholoza* ... drowned the choking sobs of the deceased child's mother (Mpe, 2001: 1-2).

The paradoxes are conspicuous: the first line of the novel is addressed by a deceased protagonist. He 'tells' Refentše that he would have been glad that a team he supported, supposedly with the rest of the country, lost in the World Cup. The team he refers to is Bafana Bafana, the country's national soccer team—at the time a symbol of national unity and access to world sport after decades of exclusion. The reason for this unlikely glee, the dead voice tells Refentše, is that the last time that team won there was pandemonium. The 'new' South Africa that was now able to have interactions with other countries such as France and Ivory Coast, saw, in the ensuing celebrations of that match, a violent death, screams of jubilation and sorrow, and looming dystopia amongst the utopian fever. A woman lost her seven year old who got hit by a car whose driver was "boasting a range of driving skills", and when an observer shouts, "kill the bastard", we cannot help but wonder if he is referring, in that carnival showdown, to the seven-year-old or the driver. The chaos of Hillbrow and the serenity of Parktown also add to the riddling contrasts. Very early in the novel we observe that death saturates this narrative. Samin (2006) suggests that death inhabiting life in the novel is due to the Africanist understanding of the life continuum that does not end with death but flows on into an ancestral realm. In these first two pages, Mpe asserts and evokes this communal, Africanist, tribal consciousness, rendering the novel a native narrative.

The place of memory in the novel is also introduced here. The mid-air screams of the seven-year-old child still ring, the dead voice tells us, in Refentše's memory. Refentše experienced this incident with other passers-by and participates in a collective memory of the screams. This is symbolic of the collective memory of the country's history of grotesque and inhumane violence that cannot easily be forgotten or wiped clean from memory. A similar invocation of history and memory is mentioned again when, after the woman's screams have died down, after she has "witnessed the sour fruits of soccer victory" (2001: 2), in a bitter reference to the multi-faceted failures of post-94 on a number of levels, the masses resume singing the song *Shosholoza*. That song embodies, in its original context, the separation caused by the apartheid government, of men from their wives in homelands to go and mine gold in the city of Johannesburg, that city which they could only dwell on the peripheries because of the Groups Area Act. This woman cries the bitter tears of memory to commemorate the

thousands of other women who were left with families, just like this woman—there is no mention of her seven-year-old child's father in sight.

These incidents are loaded with the problems that faced a new generation striving to find a future in the new South Africa, a country that purported to be in transformation from brutality, inequality and vehemence to "better lives for all" (ANC 1994 election campaign slogan). The underlying truth that shaped that democracy was that it was informed by the context from which it came; everything from the past flows into the future. Therefore things did not change overnight as transitions take time. Issues such as how to balance the economy amongst all and "how to come to terms with a legacy of violence in a society based on inequality" (Nuttall, 2004: 732) prevailed. What I am foregrounding here is that the first democratic elections in South Africa brought illusions and raised hopes on a national level. The previously oppressed imagined 'better lives for all' and a great future. These promises came with notions and ideals of a united nation, united in diversity and common history, but as Sarah Nuttall poignantly points out, "intimacy does not necessarily exclude violation. Intimacy is not always a happy process" (2004: 736). And if the opening chapter of Mpe's *Welcome to our Hillbrow* is to be seen as a microcosm of post-94 South Africa, one that supposedly basked in serene rainbow-country intimacy, the reader is 'welcomed to our Hillbrow' in a bitterly sardonic way. The 'our' here perhaps seen from the point of view of the forsaken masses banished to the squalor of Hillbrow—'our' "African Renaissance that threatened the future of the locals" (Mpe, 2001: 26-27).

The first chapter of the novel is 'Hillbrow: The map' which highlights the necessity to map one's way through the 'new'. There are continuities between the apartheid past and the present. This is embodied in the figure of the migrant, a central character in the politics of *Welcome to our Hillbrow*. The migrant figure is rooted in the history of Johannesburg, particularly in relation to the "transnational cultures of the mines" (Nuttall, 2004: 736) and the cross-cultural interaction that led to an invention of an urban vernacular culture. The spatial politics of a city such as Johannesburg are informed by difference, "city form ... is the most conducive space to the remaking of culture and identity, because it is the place of most difference..." (2004: 748). This remaking of identity in a culture defined by difference is witnessed in Mpe's novel, and it is this challenge that propels the narrative forward. Language is intricately connected to identity and culture, and if there is to be a remaking of the latter, then language is automatically influenced.

An example of how culture and identity shifts necessitate language shift can be seen when Cousin initiates matters of sexual behaviour in Hillbrow:

> In Kotze you turn right to face the west. Cousin stops you.
>
> If you want it, he says wryly, you can go into this bulding.
>
> He points out to a building ... called Quirinalle.
>
> Or if you prefer, you can head on to the very end of Kotze, he continues. You see those green, yellow and red lights dancing? That is Chelsea.
>
> One semi-naked soul comes out of Quirinalle and Cousin's point is made. So you do not ask him, as you had meant to, what *it* was. (Mpe, 2000: 11)

The culture of open prostitution is foreign to Refentše and familiar to Hillbrowans. Hillbrow is in fact characterised by its bountiful nightlife full of drugs and prostitution. When Cousin tells Refentše how to fulfil his sexual needs, he uses street language that euphemises sexual intercourse. Mpe uses the vocabulary of townships and the streets, and by referring to intercourse as '*it*', he is borrowing from that discourse. Mpe highlights the attitude of those who speak uncomfortably about sex so that they cannot call it by name. The reference to green, yellow and red may invoke in one images of a traffic light, but the reader familiar with Hillbrow and the streets of Johannesburg also perceives the Rastafarian reference. Pan-African ideologies are also invoked: red is for the blood lost in the struggle for independence, green is for the vegetation and earth that sustains humanity in Africa, and yellow is for the gold that represents African wealth through minerals.

The above also feeds into the carnivalesque 'madness' that is the 'new' South Africa. The name of this establishment, Chelsea, is key. Chelsea is a remote city in the countryside of England and has its own popular soccer team. In a carnivalesque showdown, Chelsea is now a whore house, and the lights that also have strong links with the African struggle, serve only to attract men and women looking for sexual relief and money exchanges. The pomp of the coloniser who named everything after the mother country is diminished and debased.

Another instance of this topsy-turvy setup is a bottle store: "tied into an embrace with Spar was *Sweet Caroline*; not Neil Diamond's piece of music, but a different kind of tune –a bottle store –which soothed the exhaustion and taste buds of Hillbrowans living this part of our world" (p. 8). Here we witness vernacular cosmopolitanism, where there is a transnational dialogue, as discussed in Chapter Two, between the world of Neil Diamond and the 'other' world where Diamond has been superimposed. Hence he talks about 'this part of our world'

and that of Neil Diamonds. Bhabha explains vernacular cosmopolitan in a manner that aptly describes what Mpe has done in the above example, “vernacular cosmopolitanism [translates] between cultures, renegotiating traditions from a position where ‘locality’ insists on its own terms, while entering into larger national and societal conversations” (Dennis et al[ed.], 2000: 139). *Sweet Caroline*, the bottle store, is tied into an embrace with Spar in Hillbrow, it has become one with the Hillbrow streets—it is a different kind of tune to that of Neil Diamond. This locality insists on its own terms through Mpe’s use of language.

If Refentše is seen to represent a reader who is not familiar with the language of the street, who does not appreciate the signifiers of localisation, glocalisation and cosmopolitanism, every now and then Mpe’s reflexive moments clear some of the issues up. Refentše is taken by his cousin through the streets of Hillbrow in 1991, a particularly turbulent time of both political negotiations and tribal wars in South African politics. Through ‘walking the city’ Refentše is forced to come out of his cocoon—“his personal history and memories originate elsewhere: he is new to the place, and the place is new to him” (Clarkson, 2005: 452). His state of being “unable to map (in [his] mind) [his] own positions or the urban totality in which [he] finds [himself]” (Jameson, 1991: 89) is a proper diagnosis for the previously oppressed and marginalised citizen from peripheries who now has to map his identity and find identity in the new South Africa.

What of those who do not have a Cousin to walk them into the new? And does this momentary walk help ease the feeling of dispossession? Refentše, after being fed well, drifts between sleep and Hillbrow anxieties, with memory persistently jogging back to Tiragalong with stronger nostalgia than he had ever imagined possible (Mpe, 2001: 9). In his wakeful state “hard realities came home to roost” (Mpe, 2001: 9). Mpe uses strong symbolism of the past and the future, memory, remembering, and nostalgia. In many ways, Mpe’s Tiragalong, a fictional rural dwelling in Limpopo, is symbolic of the old South Africa. This place is a repository, or supposed to be, of community, homogeneity and unity. However, Mpe does not attempt to portray such a place as one that does not have its follies and cracks. As in Brathwaite’s *Arrivants* and Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, the precolony or the pre-independent state is portrayed with all its problems. Tiragalong is a place where nobody has accountability for the social ills, and witchcraft and *makwerekwere* are “convenient scapegoats” (2001: 118) for everything that goes wrong in that setting. Rumours are a cancer that eats up the community. This is the Tiragalong that shaped Refentše, and if the community that shaped

and continues to shape who he is is fractured, how then shall he construct his identity moving forward?

White (1991) tells us that stories of the past are always discourses of identity, and Clarkson concurs with this notion—identity is largely shaped by community, and communities' memories of their values and belief systems inform the psychological connectedness between physical events and mental maps. Perhaps this is the best way to substantiate the assertion that the past inhabits the present, that Tiragalong was in Hillbrow; it is through the consciousness of the people that there is continuity between the past and the now, and as we witness with Refentše, he 'always took Tiragalong with him whenever he went, to Hillbrow or any other place' (Mpe, 2001: 49). It is here that a profound message about memory is shared. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa strove to relive, through memory, the violence and crimes of apartheid victims, in order to forgive. However, no matter how successful these processes, the stories, pains and sufferings still live in people's memories and form a continuum in their consciousness: "welcome to our Hillbrow of milk and honey and bile, all brewing in the depths of our *collective* consciousness" (Mpe, 2001: 41, italics my own). Even though the collective consciousness is of ultimate importance in the novel, personal accountability and personal identity are of high currency to negotiate the new South Africa.

When we hear of the dizzying escapades of Hillbrow, we can start to understand the context within which they are happening. The xenophobia, AIDS, prejudice and destructiveness are all symbolic of the continuities of the apartheid past and the failures of post-94 promises. Fanon's assertion that the postcolonial state is characterised by paradoxes is confirmed here. The xenophobia that is inherent in the novel and continues to plague South African society today, escalating to inhumane heights, is ironic on a number of levels. Keeping in mind that the history of South Africa has migrant workers from varying and disparate locations, some outside of the country, and thinking of the migrancy in Hillbrow post-94, the hatred and injustice seems insensible. Mpe tells us "there are very few Hillbrowans, if you think about it, who were not originally wanderers from Tiragalong and other rural villages, who have come here as we have, in search of education and work" (Mpe, 2000: 18); *makwerekwere*, a derogatory name for other African nationals, 'are no different to us—sojourners, here in search of greener pastures' (2000: 18). Furthermore, was it not in other African countries that the black liberation struggle and armed resistance against apartheid took refuge, welcomed by other African countries who felt the pain of their counterparts? But as Nuttall tells us, "the

anti-apartheid struggle did not breed a pan-Africanist consciousness, or an instant ethos of international solidarity or respect for diversity" (2004: 744). Therefore the xenophobia that takes place is highly ironic and points out one of the failures of the anti-apartheid struggle, one of the paradoxes of this post-independent state.

An intense paradox lies also in the "ever-widening embrace of the 'welcome'" in the novel's title (Green, : 12). After 1994 South Africa became the greener side of the formerly isolated continent's fence, the great influx of foreigners caused fear amongst impoverished South Africans who were trying to forge a livelihood. The title of the novel welcomes non-South Africans into this rapidly changing and somewhat phantasmagoric country, as much as it welcomes the reader to the novel which captures the spirit of post-94 socio-politics in 124 pages. But how does Mpe use the space of the novel to tell of all this 'madness'?

One way is through 'ranting' (Rampolokeng, 2008), that goes on like "a stream of (black) unconsciousness" (Rampolokeng, 2008), where the writer just disregards the rules of the art form and language, and spews forth all that comes to mind:

> "The streets are overflowing with *Makwerekwere* come to pursue green pastures after hearing that the new president Rolihlahla Mandela welcomes guests and visitors unlike his predecessors who erected deadly electric wire fences around the boundaries of South Africa trying to keep out the barbarians from Mozambique Zaire Nigeria Congo Ivory Coast Zimbabwe Angola Zambia from all over Africa fleeing their war-torn countries populated with starvation like Ethiopia flashing across Cousin's TV screen every now and then and *Makwerekwere* stretching their legs and spreading like pumpkin plants filling every corner of our city and turning each patch into a Hillbrow coming to take our hobs in the new democratic rainbowism of the African Renaissance that threatened the future of the locals Bafana Bafana fans momentarily forgetting xenophobia and investing their hopes in the national team whose entry into the World Cup was its first attempt in such matters the fans also investing in the Moroccan team the Nigerian Super Eagles and singing at least they are African unlike the French the English Danes and all that jazz and xenophobia revisited through images of Philip Troussier the Bafana Bafana coach as a sinister Frenchman come to ensure that his country wins the Cup by crippling the South Africans ... " (Mpe, 2001: 26).

The above rant, in its nature of flowing as a stream, as Magogodi puts it in his poem 'streams' (2004: 38), is a result of a 'mind overload' where the writer has so much to say about the ordinary and spectacle, about disparate themes that cannot be resolved coherently. The rules of writing are rebuked; in the above rant there are some uppercases but no punctuation. The different names of African countries are not separated by commas but flow into each other and create one long name. This is a strategy of subversion because it causes confusion in meaning-making whilst discussing pressing matters: why do the borders that were constructed as a result of the Berlin conference continue to haunt and separate African nationals today? Mpe makes reference to this arbitrary colonial construct of borders by using the language of colonialism, such as 'barbarians'.

The tone of this rant is interesting. Firstly, the idea that Mandela now welcomes guests and visitors alike invokes musings. Semantically speaking, the terms 'guests' and 'visitors' relate to the same thing. However, Mpe brings to our attention, in a mocking tone, that there are, tourists, guests, *Makwerekwere* and foreigners. In the same mocking tone, Mandela welcomes this caste of people whilst his predecessors put up electric fences to keep some out. The tongue-in-cheek humour lies in the fact that the 'deadly electric fences' are still up in the new dispensation. The phrase "coming to take *our* jobs in the new democratic rainbowism of African Renaissance" is a signifier of disillusionment of post-94 fruits of independence. This also resonates in Mpe's writing. It is a critique of the way the new dispensation continues to create 'us' and 'them' polarities between South Africans and other Africans. This is explored by Mpe later in a chapter set in Oxford, where South Africans are not seen as 'Africans'.

By referring to the president as Rolihlahla Mandela, Mpe beckons his humanity. He uses that native name to recall his cultural and language ties to the land. Mpe calls him as he would be called at home. He addresses him in a manner that makes him human first, and then president of a new country. Mpe uses language to break down the walls created by accepted modes of addressing the president. This is also a localising technique; by calling Mandela Rolihlahla and not Nelson, he is dislodged from international discourse to a local one. The language and style of this rant has the effect of placing the reader in a whirlwind of emotion and experience.

Mpe is genuinely concerned with the social ills that face South Africa post-94. AIDS seems to be one of the deadly plagues that will continue to ravage society. The above rant tells us that the previous regime constructed other African countries as impoverished and war-torn,

and this should have been kept in mind when newspaper articles, and the grapevine via migrant into Tiragalong, attributed the genesis of AIDS to a Green Monkey which is apparently eaten by people in some parts of West Africa as meat (Mpe, 2000: 4), continuing the apartheid discourse of Africans as starved barbarians. This discourse, together with the anti-apartheid struggle's failure at forming a pan-Africanist consciousness, is precisely what causes the xenophobia and hate against other foreign nationals. So here AIDS is also symbolically contagious in society, via discourse, and threatens to 'kill' the unity of Africa as a continent. The Hillbrow in this novel and its title refers to the state—state of mind and the nation as a state—and Mpe uses this place of spiritual void, of disease, prejudice and injustice as a microcosm of the new dispensation. Using a deceased narrator reinforces the dystopian representation of the new South Africa.

Ben Okri's bold statement that "for anything new, for something good to come about, for it to reach a level of art, you have to liberate it from old kinds of perception, which is a kind of destruction. An old way of seeing things has to be destroyed for the new to be born" (Okri, as cited by Gaylard, 2005) has particular relevance. It is in line with the call by Mphahlele, Ndebele and Coetzee for a literature that shifts away from the epistemology of apartheid. The authors under discussion in the dissertation carve a new way of telling their stories, they liberate their texts from old kinds of perception. These perceptions may be anything from language to genre, to the subjects that they deal with, to the discourse of history. The authors construct and gain authority over their works, and free it from mainstream discourses instead restoring agency and forging identities. Bakhtin tells us that "the word in language is half someone else's. It becomes 'one's own' only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention" (Bakhtin, 1981: 293). Mpe has populated *Welcome To Our Hillbrow* with his own intention and accent which frees it from old perceptions and someone else's ownership.

On the other hand, if the old has to be destroyed for the new to be born (Gramsci, 1971), this subverts the notion of identity and continuity being rooted in memory, which is arguably, a rejection of Okri's stance. If the old is destroyed, especially in postcolonial literature, then the present is isolated from the past, and as Marcus Garvey tells us, "a person without knowledge of his past is like a tree without roots". The dystopia that is intrinsic in Mpe's novel has become a tenet of postcolonial literatures. This nihilistic stance in this literature is not due to radical pessimism, as Mikael Karistrom (2003) accuses Achille Mbembe; it is the result of

dealing with the heinous old in order to put the new in perspective. It is tragic to try and kill the past; Don Mattera (1987) points this out in the title of his collection of poetry *Memory is a weapon*. By putting a mirror to post-independent South African society and culture, Mpe seeks to show us the legacy of our history in order to urge us to move forward. To forget is to negate one's own sociological, cultural and psychological makeup; or as Liebenberg and Zegeye put it, "total amnesia is tantamount to total loss of identity" (Zegeye, 2001a: 317).

The 'language issue' in Welcome to our Hillbrow

Nation language, localisation, identity and power

> "... language represents culture, recognition, legitimacy and autonomy"
> (Zegeye, 2001: 16)

Carrol Clarkson argues, in her paper 'Locating Identity in Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to our Hillbrow*', that "Mpe's treatment of identity [is] a response to place as a physical and a linguistic inscription" (2005: Abstract) and having thus far pointed out the deep relationship between identity and memory, this part of the dissertation will strive to show how language is also a crucial indicator of identity. This novel is self-reflexive in nature and carries Mpe's deep concern for language and the treatment of indigenous language in South Africa, a topic he discusses at length in his essay 'Language Policy and African Language Publishing in South Africa' (1999). His main premise in relation to language is that, especially in the publishing sector, writers of vernacular languages could not get published easily, because "the legacy of apartheid censors still shackled those who dreamed of writing freely in an African language" (Mpe, 2001: 57). This statement is loaded when considering the role, or subservient role, of indigenous language in South Africa even today. As Mpe points out in his essay, black parents "still prefer their children to be instructed in English", the language of economic power, as opposed to their mother tongue; and considering the Apartheid mission to "[confine] black people to inferior housing, schools, universities, hospital and transport" (Zegeye, 2001a: 4), and how this discrimination insinuated that black cultures were inferior to those of white people, which further perpetuates the colonisation of the mind. This inscription led the native language speaker to self-conscious and strained speech that can lead to unselfconscious discomfort and to a certain extent, silence.

The above issues, those of inferiority complexes invoked by indigenous language use, can be observed in South African society today. Because of the colonisation of the mind by the apartheid regime, or as Mpe says, the "shackles of apartheid censors" (Mpe, 2000), many black people do not have any pride in their indigenous languages and are left self-conscious, uncomfortable and banished to a cultural silence, as discussed in Chapter Two under 'Silence and violence through disinvention'. Because their mother tongues are not associated with economic growth, trade and industry, they are deemed useless. This is the reason why Ngugi wa Thiongo believes that using the mother tongue is one of the ways in which colonized subject may *decolonise the mind*. Mpe, however, can be seen in his novel to provide an alternative. He takes on this issue with much fervour and, in self-reflexive moments, raises the language issues that he has had to deal with when he studied publishing and subsequently worked in that industry. Through choosing English, he is able to write his novel with linguistic freedom and honesty.

One of the epigraphs of his book tells us that "a human being is a beast that when cornered throws away weapons and fights with the tongue". This quotation is initially written in Sepedi, Mpe's mother tongue, and then translated to English. It is a Sepedi quotation by O.K Matsepe, a prolific Sepedi writer who suffered the fate of the marginalisation of indigenous literatures in South Africa. He wrote in Sepedi without concerns of whether he would get published or not. In fact, he did get published but his books were banished to marginalised bookshop shelves, where they collected dust.

The above epigraph cannot be isolated from the rest of the text. it provokes questions such as, what turned the human into a beast, why is he cornered, and why does he throw away weapons and fight with his tongue? Furthermore the juxtaposition of the two epigraphs makes us wonder about the politics of translation. The act of translation here prepares us for Mpe's indigenising of language in the novel. Through inserting indigenous references, proverbs and popular Sepedi expressions in into his English text he introduces this language, and its speakers' self-consciousness[15] into national discourses about language. The use of Sepedi in Mpe's novel is a journey into discovering a love for our indigenous languages, particularly Sepedi, as well as showing that the discourse of knowledge and philosophy can also be found in our mother tongues (Matsepe wrote this assertion in the 70s). There is a need

[15] According to census, there is only 9% of South Africans who have listed Sepedi as their mother tongue. This language still gets scorned by non-Sepedi speakers of other indigenous languages, and some speakers of Sepedi are still not confident to bring this language into the big metropolis, they often mix it with its 'cousin languages' Sesotho and Setswana.

to associate our mother tongues not with uselessness, lack of intrinsic power and lack of beauty, but instead to show them the same reverence we have for the English language, according to Mpe. They are a part of our culture and we need to break away from the apartheid episteme that black cultures are inferior to those of whites, according to Mpe. It is noteworthy that Mpe tackles this issue through the tradition of novel writing that is often, because of the colonial contacts' missionary education, associated with British culture. He shows that we can tell our own stories with authority and in a manner that we please while using Western genres and through appropriating Western languages.

There is a great sense of linguistic freedom in his texts as he navigates swiftly and often undetectably between directly translated Sepedi sayings and dialogue to English in 'correct', standard forms. In "your Cousin, after feeding you well, left you alone to go to bed because you cried of exhaustion" (Mpe, 2000: 9), and "you had thought of these things, child of Tiragalong and Hillbrow, but not with the same conviction ..." (Mpe, 2000: 30) Mpe translates directly from Sepedi to English. Because most of the novella's dialogues and mode of address are informed by oral narration, Sepedi speakers recognise their home language. Going to bed because you "cried of exhaustion" is a direct translation from Sepedi: one can cry of hunger, of suffering, of exhaustion. It signifies the extent of the thing being cried for. "Go lla ka go lapa", as it is said in Sepedi, is a cry for speedy assistance in the matter being 'cried' for. The same translation can be found in "child of home" –"ngwana-ko gae"; it is an endearing term that people from the same area use to refer to each other when in the big cities.

'Orality' is a key feature in Mpe's *Welcome To Our Hillbrow*. It could be argued that the novella is written in 'nation language', to refer to Brathwaite's use of the term (Brathwaite, 1984: 17), as discussed in Chapter Two. Those who understand Sepedi, are aware that Mpe writes as he talks. When he writes, on the second page of the novel, that the season of arrest has passed, it is revealing of the style of storytelling. This phrase is translated, and its full meaning is lost in translation, from the Sepedi version, 'selemo ke ngwaga ola', mostly uttered in storytelling for effect. Another illuminating instance occurs in the dedication of the novella to his former teacher: "May you grow to be as big as an elephant". This phrase is rooted in Sepedi orality, in folklore and storytelling. The wish for someone to grow as big as an elephant comes from what the elephant symbolises in African folklore: big at heart, spirit and emotion, an achievement. The epigraphs and the dedication foreshadow the style of the novella.

Mpe's dialogue captures the accent of the spoken voice: "besides, daughter, she said, how can you leave me in a state of such poor health? Who will take care of me? Yes, you can send me money, but do you think I love money more than I love you? Oh what is wrong with the children of today?" (Mpe, 2000: 96). It is important mention that in the novella utterances are not put in inverted commas to signify speech. The context is when Refilwe has to go to Oxford to further her studies, and her mother cannot let her go. This is how a mother would speak to a child. This mother has anxiety of one who does not know where her child is going, trying to use forms of reverse psychology to convince her to stay. The questions asked one after another convey the sense of uncertainty of the speaker. Moreover, we can hear them being addressed to Refilwe as well because Mpe has roped us in his storytelling. Words such as 'yes' and 'oh' invoke orality.

Michael Green says Mpe's language reads like "an English that bears the marks of having come into being through a process of pre(self)translation" and, "reads at times like an awkward translation..." (Green, 2006: 13). Because Green cannot, presumably, identify direct translated instances such as "cried of exhaustion", he suspects that there are some instances of translation where Mpe fails to ensure that the English form sounds coherent and cohesive. This observation cannot be disputed because indeed you do find direct translation from Sepedi proverbs and phrases to English such as the recurrent 'Bone of my heart', or from the popular Sepedi proverb "a woman holds the sharp edge of the knife" (page 46). 'Bone of my heart' brings the rural into the urban space. The proverb speaks of the Sepedi woman who will rather have the blade of the knife cut her own hand than that of the one she's offering the knife to and signifies selflessness.

However these phrases, a tender endearment and a proverb, as awkwardly sounding as they are, are loaded with important cultural references. Mpe is not willing to find English equivalents. Culture exists, as Brathwaite tells us, "not in a dictionary but in the tradition of the spoken word" (1984: 17). Therefore, although these phrases sound 'awkward' in the written form to readers unfamiliar with the origins of the untranslated versions, when spoken they have a certain poetry and cultural specificity to them.

Funeral songs such as "*we are just passers-by on this earth*" (Mpe, 200: 121) are cultural references that are loaded with macabre and sombre tones when sung in their original language, Sepedi. Further cultural practices such as drinking cattle's urine (Mpe, 2000: 99) when learning how to whistle, which still happens in some rural areas today, is 'uncultural' or

exotic to ‘other’ readers who are not of Sepedi culture. Tactics of code-switching and relexicalisation that are found in phrases such the sole ‘pap-winner’ (page 93) add to the localisation of the English language and culture. In this instance those who left the rural areas to seek greener pastures in the big cities are expected to send at least one big bag of mealie-meal home on a monthly basis. Mpe’s re-invention of the popular term ‘bread-winner’ as ‘pap-winner’ is just one instance of his uncanny ability to write in the style of the Hillbrow streets.

The language of Sepedi occult is employed in the phrase “those-who-had-eyes”, and in the love potion “I-am-the-only-one” (Mpe, 2000: 39). The latter is a potion one gets from the traditional doctor to ensure that once one’s lover ingests it, they will only ‘have eyes for one’. More examples of what Green may call ‘awkward phrasing’ lie in the vulgarity of the patriarchal language and the denigration of women’s enjoyment of sex that is lost in translation when the appropriately named Terror tells everybody of Lerato, that “I have eaten her” (Mpe, 2000: 65). This phrase is loaded, in its original Sepedi context, with misogyny and subconscious self-hate. All these examples illustrate the indigenising of the English language by Mpe through direct translation and recontexualisation. Mpe inserts the language of a minority few (Sepedi speakers constituting 9.2% of the population) in order to claim power back for the languages and cultures that were banished to the peripheries by previous regimes. While writing in English, he imbues the Sepedi language and its speakers with power, in the capillary manner of Foucault, as discussed in Chapter Two.

The language of violence

To return to the epigraph, “a human is a beast that when cornered throws away weapons and fights with the tongue”, I ask again, how is a human being transformed into a beast? Zegeye (2001a: 26) tells us that “the colonial state became, just before its demise, a state without a nation”, and Julia Kristeva asks a profound question, “what happens to people without nations...? Are they human beings if they are not citizens?” (Kristeva, 1993: 26). Zegeye points out, to answer Kristeva, that in the African context, “their humanity was rendered incomplete and ambiguous”, and furthermore, that the oppressive power ambiguously rendered the oppressed subject as a citizen and an ethnic subject. The ethnic subject epitomised the colonized, especially in South Africa, where the black person was seen as a “specimen of a primordial, imperfect homosapiens, barely above beasts...” (Zegeye, 2001a: 62). Put in Fanon’s (1963) words,

> The colonial world is a Manichean world ... At times this Manicheanism goes to its logical conclusion and dehumanizes the native, or to speak plainly, it turns him into an animal ... The native knows all this, and laughs to himself every time he spots an allusion to the animal world in the other's words. For he knows that he is not an animal; and it is precisely at the moment he realizes his humanity that he begins to sharpen the weapons with which he will secure his victory (pages 31-33).

Since the processes of psychological transformation of human beings into animals are deep-rooted, and those hegemonic structures persistent, in the post-94 period, Mpe opts to fight using his tongue, perhaps the only thing that cannot be taken away from him. What kind of weapons can one "sharpen" to confront decades of institutionalised racism and hundreds of years of colonisation of the mind? In the views of Steve Biko, Ngugi wa Thiongo and Franz Fanon, the solution is more in the mind. Mpe suggests that weapons that are implicitly extrinsic cannot even initiate the process of decolonisation.

To draw on Kristeva further, a state without a nation is one that is devoid of functional structures to build a solid and sound nation. This task cannot be left to the new leaders solely. There is a growing need for the citizens themselves to participate in the building of the new society, otherwise they will get written into narratives instead of writing themselves into narratives. Fanon's phrase 'pitfalls of a national consciousness' (1967) comes to mind here, where the pitfalls occur between the cracks that are residual from the absence of agency in the process of national rebuilding. Mpe exercises authority and agency, writing himself into this long narrative of an unfolding democracy that is born out of trauma and victimization. He uses the tongue to fight because the tongue is a synecdoche for his language which represents culture, recognition, legitimacy and autonomy. This epigraph is central to my study and its focus on language: the tongue, language and writing are all connected; they are both tools for experimentation and weapons to fight against discrimination and for recognition.

Mpe's concern with the reintegration of black people into functionality post-94 continues throughout the novel, and he makes intertextual reference to 'coming into being' by mentioning J.M Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* (Mpe, 2000: 53), where *confessions* and *apologies* are foregrounded. This concern is legitimate when one views the unfolding and the ushering of this new democracy from a psychological point of view. The violence and segregation that shaped the country was reaching its demise, but new forms of violence commenced with the negotiations between 1990 and 1994. Amidst this violence there was the

euphoria of a country celebrating the imminent obliteration of institutionalised oppression and a vision of a new, united South Africa. Coetzee's text, albeit set in an unnamed colony, is easily applied to South Africa, and the violence that is imminent and barbaric[16] is mimetic of the institutionalised violence of the prior regime. This violence, confessions and apologies foreshadow the events that are to take place in the individual's lives.

When we muse over how Refentše, child of Tiragalong and Hillbrow, met the Bone of his heart, Lerato, we realise that that relationship was doomed to failure from the start. Refentše confessed his love for Lerato after they had been robbed in Parktown Village (Mpe, 2000: 24) and Mpe tells us that "she was part of the victimised group" and that Refentše thought of their deaths happening before he could open his heart to her. A similar interaction can be seen in *Waiting for the Barbarians* when the magistrate, having witnessed inhumane torture and extreme violence that the general exercises over the 'barbarians', takes in one of the 'barbaric' women and takes care of her—the woman whom, like Lerato, "was part of the victimised group". It is here that we should consider the fact that Refentše is a Sepedi word for 'we have won' and Lerato means 'love'. These ironies are deliberate: Refentše embodies the struggles, hardships, challenges and successes of a black man who migrated from the poor rural areas to the big city where he hopes for greener pastures; allegorically, this migration must be seen as one from the old South Africa into the new—the meaning of his name suggests the triumph of the black man. Refentše is in the end defeated and, just like the magistrate in Coetzee's novel, exposed to public humiliation and dehumanised; Refentše's dehumanisation came in the form of suicide.

A love affair that started after an orgy of violence ends tragically with two suicides. An examination of Refentše's psychological processes shows that, just like South Africa post-94, he had no 'outlets for his bottled-up feelings' (Mpe, 2000: 41), he had no form of therapy and healing, in a similar manner that the new South Africa had to be cleansed and rehabilitated after so many decades of inhumanity. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was about *confessions* and *apologies*, but that did not suffice because, as we see in the novel, there is still an "endless string of South Africans hanging and jumping" from skyscrapers, just like Refentše, as if the old days of apartheid were not over (Mpe, 2000: 19). The truth here is that the past informs the present; in this continuum we see Refentše constantly weaves the past into his present in Hillbrow. Mpe here advocates the importance of constructing your own

[16] Who is the barbarian in the text? This also makes reference to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, which asks, who, between the cononiser and colonised, has a heart of darkness?

narrative instead of being written into one by others. We learn that after Refentše's suicide, his scorned lover from the past wrote his story to the people of Tiragalong, and in other instances we also hear of how Tiragalong constructed all sorts of stories about Hillbrow and their sons and daughters. This enduring connection between Tiragalong, the past, and Hillbrow, the future, also shows us that there are those, like Refentše's mother, who want to hold on to the past and do not want to progress into the future—she hated Hillbrow even though she had never been to it. She had such venom for Hillbrowan women, venom that would put a black mamba's to shame (Mpe, 2000: 39). A mamba is an indigenous African snake, and the use and reference of the colour black, localises experience.

Refentše's mother, and other members of the community, reveal how, in spite of the porous nature of continuum between rural and urban South Africa, between the past and the present, the shift between those two previously cast-in-stone binaries cannot happen that swiftly. This is tragic for the Refentše generation which has one foot in Tiragalong and the other in Hillbrow. They are constantly being condemned for the choices they make because of a disjuncture between past and present. When Refentše went through 'love, betrayal and seduction' (page 38), the next best thing for *relief* was suicide, which seduced him because he found no sanctuary in "love, friendship and motherhood" (Mpe, 2000: 40), sanctuaries for a heavy heart. The fibre which builds those relationships has disintegrated and been ravaged by rumour, betrayal, seduction and lies: there is no nurturing factor. *Confession* and *apology* are mandatory to preserve humanity in this young man's life and in other South Africans that are being eaten alive by the past.

As can be seen in the novel, when these crucial aspects of human lives and human psychology are left unsettled, they set on course a series of unfortunate events. Refentše's mother is burned alive because the village wants to cleanse itself of evil; Lerato is consumed and blackmailed by the past so that she also opts for suicide. The village of Tiragalong, which represents the past in South Africa, has not confronted the horrors of the village's lives in the present, and they hence continue to revel in them. The cleansing is not to happen on such a micro scale but requires a healing of the nation, for both *barbarians*—the perpetrators and the victims. For Refentše's there is no time for life's realities to be concealed by euphemisms. This is Mpe's critique of the new South Africa: things have to be called by their names in order to gain ownership over them. Citizens of the new dispensation have to author their own stories instead of letting the past author their existence.

We see a great need for this authorship when African rituals and beliefs are misrepresented by those who are the purveyors and believers of them. The realm of the ancestors and the question of traditional healing and African medicine are confronted by Mpe. Colonialism and apartheid have deemed African philosophies and traditional beliefs savage and barbaric for over three hundred years, and this prolonged inscription has been internalised and further perpetuated by those subjects. Throughout Mpe's novel we witness gruesome crimes as a result of witchcraft, traditional healers' predictions and supernatural acts. Families are torn apart by esoteric fears and beliefs, in what would seem like fiction, "stuff that would be called surrealism or magic realism or some other strange realism were it simply told or written as a piece of fiction" (Mpe, 2000: 19) or material fit for a movie.

Indeed the happenings between Piet, Lerato's father, and his lover, and the events that lead to his death are truly unbelievable. Molori stabbed his Cousin Piet to death because a medicine man from Malawi, who studied the Tiragalong people with care (Mpe, 2000: 77), identified Piet as a perpetrator who bewitched Molori's mother. Piet is also Tshepo's father, a young man who had been struck by lightning 'sent' by someone from Tiragalong. Tshepo's mother died of grief subsequently. These events selected are so shocking that they seem to be fictional; however, they are happening in real life and there is no outlet or therapy for those who live in this gruesome soapie. The Tiragalong that is, at least is supposed to be, a sanctuary and community that embodies all the values and beliefs of African communal living is hollowed out and plagued by the same infectious and contagious AIDS and rumour-mongering that ravages Hillbrow. Tiragalong is a romanticised pre-colony, the ideas others have of it is not what is actually happening.

Through all of this— the love, betrayal, seduction, euphemisms, xenophobia, prejudice and AIDS— Mpe asks us, to *See the world through the eyes of a child* (Ray Phiri:). We are asked, "have you ever thought about the *words*. Really thought about them" (Mpe, 2000: 86-87, italics my own)? There are at least two things that Mpe would like us to consider in this question. It is important to see the world, and consider the world, from an innocent point of view, and not inscribe our own prejudices and limited experience on it. However, the other things that Mpe deems important and wants us to consider is *words*. Mpe knows the value of words and their ability to potentially build or break down; to construct and deconstruct. Words, tongue, writing and language are all connected in this novel. That is why we must not overlook the many ways in which Mpe chooses to use language. Both the choice of language and the use of language are deliberate.

To return to the song, *See the world through the eyes of a child,* I would like to use Bakhtin's views of birth and death to "really think about the words" of the song. Bakhtin tells us that "where death is, there is also birth, change, renewal. The image of birth...represents the body that is born and at the same time shows a glimpse of the departing one" (1984: 409). When we consider the virus that eats up both Tiragalong and Hillbrow, we have to ask ourselves, where are the children in all this mad carnival? We know of one who is shot up in the air by a car and is now in the lands of the ancestors. But where are the young ones who have to live in the fiction-like existence that is life post-94? Bakhtin suggests that birth is linked with change and renewal. However, the children who exist, silenced and marginalised, in the novel cannot bring any significant change if they are brought up in environments that are defined by violence, prejudice and degeneration. These children, instead of showing minor resemblances to the departing generation, will show magnitudes of similarities because there are no agents of change and renewal in the departing generation. Since the departing generation includes the 'seven years old or so' child (p. 2), it suggests a failure to see the world through the eyes of a child because the adults are preoccupied by a validation of self, such as boasting driving skills (p. 1).

The second epigraph of Mpe's novel, "Reader, be assured this narrative is no fiction", with its Sepedi translation, adds to the poignancy of the narrative. This narrative is not a movie, a dream or a soapie, nor is it surrealism or some strange other form of realism, it is, as Green tells us, Mpe's "claim for fictional authority through representational accuracy" (Green, 2006: 9). The epigraph also reminds us of the biographical aspects of this novel, its self-reflexivity and mimetic nature. Attwell's (2005) assertion that black fiction is encoded with reflexivity and a sense of cultural struggle makes sense. Attwell cites John Noyes' 'reflexive theorising' which is a 'practice concerned both with identity, and with the ways in which its conceptualisation relates to the moment of its performance', that is to say 'how in the act of theorisation, a specific constellation of ideas comes together to define and delimit the individual's position in a particular social and historical order' (Noyes, 2000: 49). If Mpe assures us that this narrative is no fiction, and if we follow the similarities between his life events and those of Refentše and Refilwe, we realise that the novel is reflexive and that the reflexivity was informed by a theorising of self. A specific constellation of ideas came together, specifically in relation to Mpe's identity, to inform the events and trajectory of *Welcome to our Hillbrow*. To put it bluntly, the novel is a performance of Mpe's identity; that is to say there are fabrics of himself in the tapestry of the novel. He lent himself to the

conceptualisation of his characters identities and the settings. This marriage of self with the novel may be witnessed properly in the language of the novel that has been indigenised to suit the needs of the self. This is in line with the fulfilment of a new episteme that breaks away from the apartheid discourse.

Mpe concludes his novel by tying up his thematic concerns. Refilwe has now travelled over the continent and across the sea to London, Oxford. This allows us to view South Africa from the international vantage point. The rest of the world thinks of post-94 South Africa as a 'miracle' because during the transition there was 'no violence' (Mpe, 2000: 100), at least not on a large scale. The rest of the novel does not accord with this international view as we are introduced to all sorts of violence: symbolic violence, physical, psychological and cultural. It is therefore evident one cannot view experience from far. The Londonites see South Africans as non-African, and the rest of the Africans as a homogenous group bringing AIDS to "this centre of human civilisation" (Mpe, 2000: 102). It is ironic that South Africans who are in their country at that time, at least in the novel, do not see themselves as part of this label, Africans. Achebe is aware of the fear of the term 'Africans' by fellow Africans and attributes it to the fact that it "can still call up hideous fears of rejection. Better then to cut all links with this homeland" (Achebe: 1975, 40). This rejection, together with the indigenised language of the novel, are the very fibre that hold up the trajectory of Mpe's novel. Rejection is translated into prejudice and we see the consequences of prejudice, not only on its victims but on both parties. Therefore a rejection of one's mother tongue may, as Mpe shows us, may have hideous consequences.

Refilwe's journey through Oxford is bitter and sobering revelation of the effects of globalisation—they are positive for global integration, as Refilwe could break away from Tiragalong and Hillbrow, but the effects do not automatically transform the mind. There is spatial disjuncture between setting and psychology. Refilwe has managed to advance in life by studying abroad, but because her mind is still plagued by the persistent memory that is intricately woven with her identity, she is unable to meet the challenges that Oxford's socio-cultural life brings. Oxford is in Hillbrow and Hillbrow is in Oxford unless one breaks psychological and innate patterns. It is not about where you are, it is about who you are because, as Mpe tells us, "God, gods and the Devil—that horned, *black* monster holding his large fork in his hideous hands—lived in the skulls and hearts of the people taking their unplanned and haphazard journeys through our world" (Mpe, 2000: 111, italics my own). This statement says much about the internalisation of discourses and the cultural struggle that

the subjects of that internalisation face. Graham Pechey tells us that a culture of struggle "speaks of that struggle's subjects, the birth and growth of its forms of subjectivity, the complex socially *symbolic acts* whereby it makes it makers" (Pechey, 1994: 25, italics my own). Black identity has been denigrated for centuries by certain discursive forms of oppression. This was perpetuated by symbolic acts such as the socially constructed binaries between black and white aesthetics, where black was automatically associated with darkness, evil and indeed the devil. It has furthermore been so psychologically absorbed and internalised by the subjects that people like Refilwe and the rest of the black citizens in post-94 South Africa and postcolonial Africa, as Mpe tends to allude, will take those *symbolic acts* in their hearts haphazardly everywhere they go. To follow Pechey's birth and growth metaphor, the struggles' subjects are now independently nourishing their own struggle, as can be witnessed with the paralyzing prejudice and ultimate self-hate of the people of Tiragalong.

From 'disinvention' to reinvention

To conclude, one can say that Mpe's novel is defined by contradictions, carnivalesque and symbolic violence. The complex states of mind of the characters in *Welcome to our Hillbrow* reflect the pathology of South Africa post-94. The topsy-turvy imaginings of post-94 South Africa can, firstly, be seen in the language used in the novel. There is the language of the streets, experimental language, stream of consciousness and at times recontexualisation of sayings and proverbs. There is also ambivalence to be found in the attitude towards English; this is evident in the epigraph, and the 'self-translation' that happens throughout the novel. That is why the novel cannot be called centripetal or centrifugal, that is, it neither rejects Western hegemony over the English language, nor embrace it. The novel is carnivalesque in nature. The novel's contradictions are a direct reflection of Mpe's view of post-94 South Africa. The novel is a call for a state of emergency; the state needs to be healed as a nation, also the minds of the people living in that state need to be healed. The people and the nation need to prioritize their need to grow out of the cultural silence and violence caused by hundreds of years of oppression. Important for the remediation of this is the question of language; firstly the state of indigenous languages, if they die, then the death of cultures, heritage, and pride will follow. Mpe interrogates language practice in South Africa and advocates the importance of embracing our indigenous languages.

Through consistently and persistently addressing issues of language in his novel, Mpe agrees with Horwitz that writers of the English language have a unique English in South Africa and

their priority is to record it and make it valid and legitimate in their works. Madness only becomes madness when you do not have a language to 'order' it. Through his stream of consciousness at the end of most chapters, Mpe highlights this madness, but also shows how it is controlled in his novel because he has the language, regardless of how that language goes against conventions of writing novels, to control it. The disregard of existing conventions and traditions of writing feed into Horwitz and Ndebele's call for an escape from previous epistemologies, from looking to the West as arbiters of what informs good art, and into Coetzee's call for literature that walks hand with hand with experience and the landscape.

Through code-switching and processes of self-translation, Mpe marries Sepedi, a language that is spoken by a minority few and still suffers ostracisation, with the colonial language of English. When informed readers read and hear the reoccurring phrase, "Bone of my heart", they, depending on their background knowledge of this appropriation from Sepedi to English, appreciate Mpe's cunning choice of English. Mpe is the agent of his own concerns. He consciously chooses to do some 'alterations' to the English he knows and loves—to merge it with the Sepedi he knows and loves. Mpe localizes and indigenizes English; he does not stand on the peripheries, but participates actively at the centre of change in his attitude to language. His strategies of localisation and appropriation enable his novel to address the 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu, 1991) enacted on the psyche of the previously oppressed.

The joys and sorrows, building and dismantling, unity and xenophobia, progress and Aids, past and present, are all binary oppositions reflecting the contradictions in post-94 society at large. However, the opposing dystopia, obviously expressed in the way the narrator of the novel is dead, leads us to believe that he thinks the time for making things right and ushering in a new dispensation of fruitful decolonisation and fearless existence has passed. Fear shall no longer rule: there are no rules that will govern how he resurrects the black voice from the silence and violence previously imposed. He will use the kind of language he finds appropriate in his novel. He will speak to the land in the language relevant and immediate to it. He will put his mother tongue in great traditions of literature. He will not be told how to express his mind. He will not be told how to talk to his people. He will use his art form as a platform to address the failures of the language policy in South Africa. From as early as the epigraph of his novel, he brings the language of his family, his community and his province into the framework of literature and language. By appropriating, localising and indigenising the English language, and at times abrogating it, refusing to translate, he shows us his basic premises: that indigenous languages can function economically, politically and artistically in

society; that they can be enjoyable; that they can still communicate issues close to ‘the bone of your heart’; and that they are vital to tell our immediate stories. Overall the novel, through its use of juxtaposed Sepedi and English epigraphs, through its deliberate localisation and indigenisation of English, through Mpe’s constant use of the communal pronouns ‘our’ and ‘us’, and through the all-inclusive grapevine-style narrative, aims to reconcile post-94 South African fragmented experiences into a collective consciousness. Mpe shows us that this collective consciousness, no matter how real or imagined, is possible, and no matter how disparate, can find a language that can facilitate processes of identity and nation building.

Chapter 4: '*Outspoken*' Against Silence and Violence

My second study of language use and abuse in post-94 writing by black writers moves to the genre of poetry, and focuses on a collection of poetry that may be called 'protest', even though this sub-genre is mostly associated with the seventies and eighties in South Africa. I will focus on Kgafela oa Magogodi's second anthology of poetry *Outspoken*, although some themes and fragments of poems from his first anthology *Thy Condom Come, Untamed Love Lines* will also be used for contextualising. For the purpose of reference, I will include an appendix for the poems mentioned and discussed. In both anthologies Magogodi confronts the failures of post-apartheid South African leaders, and the aloofness of those who vote them into power. He also satirizes the middle class and their conspicuous consumption. In *Outspoken*, Magogodi shares the contextual burden of his concerns with the language used. He uses various linguistic strategies and phenomena cunningly: his text is multilingual and often 'others' readers of monolingual background. The language used in *Outspoken* seems to carry urgency for narration—that language is uncompromising and unapologetic. It is used to carry post-94 socio-political and cultural concerns.

To reiterate Gordimer's statement, I am not interested so much in what Magogodi writes *about* as I am in *how* he writes about it. Following in the tradition of protest poetry, also known as Soweto poetry, his poems employ a hybrid influence of cultures and languages. In terms of style, his writing is experimental and continues to satirise the status quo, similar to the protest poets of yesteryear. '*Outspoken*' as a title of a book suggests this resistance and protest: being outspoken presupposes a repudiation of silence and an eagerness to address that silence. As mentioned in Chapter Two, silence and violence has defined the history of black South Africans, and in this new dispensation, Magogodi is finding new ways to project voice.

Outspoken also invokes the oral tradition in South Africa, a genre of poetry and storytelling that was defined by being outspoken. The voice and performativity was central to this genre, and Magogodi, through performance, DVDs and CDs, relives or gives a voice to this tradition. Oral tradition in South Africa has suffered the fate of the powerless, because that country's history reduced that tradition to null and void. This form of storytelling was not archived and hence has no history in South Africa, as history is recorded by the victors, and they tend to record what is favourable to them. This way, Magogodi's state of being 'outspoken' reveals his concern with social and cultural silence.

For this chapter I intend to use language theories from texts of literary scholars such as Bakhtin's *Rabelais and his world*, and his understanding of the use of scatology to 'speak out' to power; Brathwaite's *History of the Voice*, where he coins the phrase 'nation language' to refer to oral tradition and native Caribbeans' use of the English language; Ashcroft et al.'s *The Empire Writes Back*, where their understanding of appropriation and abrogation will be applied in Magogodi's poetry; and Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*, particularly his chapter titled 'On National Culture' which deals with the role of an artist in a postcolonial state, as a theoretical framework for this chapter. Paul Gilroy's theories on transnationalism and the trans-Atlantic are also useful in understanding the cultural dialogue between Africa, the Caribbean and African-American art production in South Africa.

The above influences are evident in Magogodi's use of a hybrid, urban vernacular language. Such a medley of interactions between various cultures and languages is a major influence on the hybrid language of contemporary urban societies, which Alistair Pennycook and Emi Otsuji have called 'metrolingualism'. Michael Titlestad and Dilip Menon, following Gilroy's hypotheses, have generally named the linguistic phenomenon of contemporary urban postcolonial writing as cosmopolitanism or vernacular globalisation, as has been mentioned in Chapter Two. This linguistic phenomenon, a form of language hybridity and local appropriation, is a worldwide phenomenon. Bakhtin tells us, in his essay 'Discourse in the novel', that hybridity is

> a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor" (Bakhtin, 1981: 358)

What is more, he continues, "an intentional and conscious hybrid is not a mixture of impersonal language consciousnesses ... but rather a mixture of two *individualized* language consciousnesses ... and two individual language-intentions as well: the individual, representing authorial consciousness and will, on the one hand, and the individualized linguistic consciousness and will of the character represented, on the other" (Bakhtin, 1981: 358-9).

This is an apt manner to view Magogodi's language in *Outspoken*. His use of S'camto, an urban vernacular dialect that Muila has called "a township communication fire works lingo" (1996: 3); and intermittent employment of intertextuality are informed by, firstly, the

apartheid epoch out of which came a black cosmopolitan language because of the transnational and transcultural interaction of black people working in the mines and the city. Secondly, it is informed by social differentiation resulting from the geographical segregation of the apartheid regime, and generally a social difference inherent in the topographical disparity between South Africa and England. This language is certainly personal and individualized, and it is used consciously to rouse the consciousness and memory of those who speak it, for through memory and empowerment of those individualized languages, an informed authorship of the new dispensation and a coherent construction of identity may take place. The key idea here is, to borrow from Bakhtin's statement, Magogodi's authorial consciousness and will, and the linguistic consciousness and will of the character represented or addressed.

Language in Outspoken *and* Thy Condom Come

Mogogodi's use of language in both texts derives from his immediate experience in the township both under apartheid and in the new dispensation. When one takes a journey through *Outspoken*, one is invited to peruse the streets of the township, the suburb turned melting-pot-of-African-nationals-cum-rastaworld setting of Yeoville/Hillbrow, and the dingy corners of the city where the stories of our post-94 triumphs and failures lie. The invitation is offered in the form of a South Africanised version of 'nation language', to refer to Brathwaite's idea of the colonised, as pointed out in his book *History of the Voice*. He writes of English, which is the imposed, imperial language; creole English, which is the adapted version, appropriated to suit the new environment; nation language, which is the language of slaves, labourers and servants brought in by the conquistadors (Brathwaite, 1984: 5-6). In a South African context, and especially in the context of Magogogi's anthology, we may look at the notion of 'nation language' through the lens of S'camto, where the oppressed from vast and disparate geographical regions in Southern Africa have come together as migrants in Johannesburg, seeking greener pastures. When we look at the history of S'camto, formerly known as *Tsotsitaal*, we can reconcile that history with Brathwaite's definition of nation language because that language was given birth by conditions of modern day slavery, migrants who were labourers and servants, all forced into those positions by colonialism and Apartheid. And that language, S'camto, has evolved into a national language of the township and urban culture, where words are in continuous formation, taking new forms and names daily, and furthermore these names reaching these vast townships like some sort of a brief.

Brathwaite further tells us that “nation language is the language which is influenced very strongly by the African model ... English it may be in terms of some of its lexical features. But in its contours, its rhythm and timbre, its sound explosions, it is not English, even though the words, as you hear them, might be English to a greater or lesser degree” (1984: 13). Therefore nation language is influenced by local languages, in this case South African indigenous languages, and, as Brathwaite suggests, it has some ‘audio explosions’ which differentiate it from Standard English. These sound explosions derive from the fact that one of the “characteristics of nation language is its orality. It is from ‘the oral tradition’”(1984: 17). This can certainly be seen and heard in Magogodi’s poetry. His poetry embodies the notion of word-sound-power, where the word is infused with power because of its sound, and demonstrates writing that lies in the grey area between writing and performing. For example, lines such as ‘to be like so and so’ (33), ‘the goat of the road’ (51), and ‘ka tempa kaba ka saena’ (63), all derive from a primarily oral system of Setswana communication, and the last one particularly has a song-like rhythm to it when you read it because it is an old folklore song.

To be like ‘so and so’ is also rooted in the respect for other people, as the saying goes, “names are expensive”; you do not mention people’s names in rumours and gossip. This also demonstrates the humanity found in townships, apartheid constructions defined by closely clustered houses that collapsed privacy. So when one is relating a story, they will omit a person’s name, to protect their identity, by calling them ‘so and so’. The same goes for ‘the goat of the road’, which refers to the conversational grapevine. Instead of saying “I heard this from [name of person]”, you may say “I heard it from the goat of the road”. ‘Ka tempa ka ba ka saena’ is a phrase with a socio-political history. It refers to finality; that one’s mind is made up. It is derived from the ‘dompas’ system, where when the document has been signed and stamped, it is final, even if they have misspelt your name. One does not say this phrase, one sings it, and the melody of the song is know in far and disparate regions of South Africa.

Another example of orality in Magogodi’s poems is the phrase ‘mo faya’ – a phrase that in its original English translation will not make much sense until Magogodi utters it in performance. ‘Mo faya’ conjures up notions of steadfast reprimanding and demands more fire from the situation or person addressed. When one says ‘more fire’, depending on the tone and projection, one is asking for more enthusiasm or character. The way Magogodi spells some of his English words is a further extension of this theory. One example that comes to mind is

how he calls himself a ‘rioter’ punning on the word ‘writer’ (in the biography section of the anthology). The effects of this assertion of combat can be seen and heard in the poetry.

What may be seen as the main differentiating factor between *Thy Condom Come* and *Outspoken* concerns the modes of articulation – poetry in print and poetry in performance. ‘Noises’ or sound explosions are prevalent in *Outspoken*; Magogodi has performed most of the poetry from *Outspoken* and recorded a DVD of those performances. The oral qualities of the poems give them multiple forms of existence. I concur with Brathwaite that “the noise that [the poetry] makes is part of the meaning, and if you ignore the noise ... then you lose part of the meaning. When it is written, you lose the sound or the noise, and therefore you lose part of the meaning” (1984: 17). ‘Noise’ here does not refer to cacophony but is a subversion of the conventional pejorative meaning of ‘noise’. I exemplify this later in the chapter in a section that focuses on how Magogodi (mis)spells and appropriates words and puns on them deliberately in order to satisfy a particular sound and to make those words signify particular experiences because “word is not only semantic but [has] *sound* elements” (1984: 33).

Still on this issue of sound and noises, we must keep in mind what Ashcroft et al. call the three features of postcolonial writings. Those are the silencing and marginalizing of the colonized voice by the imperial centre; the abrogation of this imperial centre within the text; and the active appropriation of the language and culture of that centre (1989: 83). The anthology *Outspoken* is a good text to demonstrate these three features. The issue of silence versus speaking is called upon in the title of the anthology. In the title poem, Magogodi tells us, “outspoken / i raise my voice / to break the bone of silence... / silence is not a place / to hide the tide of violence” (Magogodi, 2004: 25, see Appendix). As I have already established in the second chapter, silence was enforced and sustained through various factors such as violence, both symbolic and physical, where the symbolic one takes the form of denigrating the cultures and languages, and therefore the identities of the black people; oral tradition was not given its place in South African literary discourse as a result. Another form of violence was cultural, where artists could not ‘write what they liked’ as Biko suggested, giving rise to the defiance of his poem ‘i mike what i like’. To ‘write as you like’ and to be ‘outspoken’ both presumes a denial to do so, and the repudiation of that censorship. One can understand the cultural silence that Biko was repudiating, however, Magogodi’s struggle tend to suggest that the silence and violence still persist today. Symbolic and physical violence, amongst others, are what Magogodi refers to when he claims to break the ‘bone of silence’ by being

outspoken. Here the word ‘bone’ suggests to us that this silence is deep and has been internalised, it forms the very structure of the fears and existence of the previously marginalised.

The linguistic hybridity in *Outspoken* suggests, as Ashcroft et al. tell us, that the anthology employs the language of An/other (1989: 64). Abrogation is the refusal of the rules, aesthetics and tradition of standard English, the normal and inscribed usage of it, while appropriation involves taking the language and remoulding it to new usage; these may seem like the same technique but as Ashcroft et al. distinguish, abrogation“is a vital moment in the de-colonizing of the language and the writing of ‘english’, but without the process of appropriation the moment of abrogation may not extend beyond a reversal of the assumptions of privilege, the ‘normal’, and correct inscription, all of which can be simply taken over and maintained by the new usage” (1989: 38). Magogodi goes further than reversing the assumption of privilege by English; he hijacks that privilege and imbues it with S’camto. Furthermore he does not care about the number of people who will receive his message written in such an immediate and culturally relevant language, it is the decolonizing and empowering effect that this language will have on its speakers that really matters. The poetry is layered with varieties of language, where almost all the nine indigenous languages of South Africa are hybridized, and this “variance ... is a signifier of a *radical* Otherness, not just as a construct which continually reinserts the gap of silence ...” (Ashcroft et al., 1989: 75, italics my own). The ‘other’ here is the antithesis of the imperial centre of English. We will witness the extent of this radical nature when I discuss scatology at a later stage.

Abrogation, code-switching and appropriation are fundamental principles of Magogodi’s attitude to language. The contents page provides an indication, but perhaps most striking is the abrogation that happens on the level of grammar and punctuation: there is no single upper case letter in any of the poems or its titles. In the poems, Magogodi keeps everything in lower case much that at times the reader does not know where the sentence starts or finishes, especially in his stream-of-consciousness-like flash fiction[17]. On the contents page we see the poem, ‘chu chew train’, a steam train that has been named onomatopoeically, to accommodate his first two lines, ‘there’s a train that chu chu chews / human flesh’ (page 6). He also plays with the word that is a quintessential signifier of the English literary tradition, ‘shake spears’. In the short poem of that title he mixes that tradition with African cultural

[17] Flash fiction is a story in prose, usually only a page long.

signifiers by asking ‘how can he / shake spears / when / he fears / the blade / of a penknife?’ (Magogodi, 2004: 21). In this way he collapses the two cultures and robs the imperial one of any privilege. This play on words brings to mind the title of another poem ‘the second cuming’. He constantly spells everyday words in his own way, such as in the title of the poem ‘chikin murder’. The effect of this is to provide a sense of the speech of everyday street life in the townships. This is a phenomenon that can be seen in the poetry of Mbongeni Khumalo, and even in the early twentieth century in Edward Cummings’ poetry.

An example of this play on words that suit township talk is Magogodi’s use of the word ‘tsafenda’ as a verb in his poetry. To ‘tsafenda’ someone is to stab him, because of the word’s politico-historical origin in South Africa. Tsafendas, as he explains in the glossary, is the man who killed apartheid architect Hendrik Verwoerd. So the word was chosen because of its aptness in telling of a stabbing that took place, and is understood within the context of South African history. This historically loaded word starts to explain the violence that is taking place; it is not an isolated incident but is informed by a tragic history of violence. This example demonstrates one way in which conventional language use is modified through turning a proper noun into a verb. Magogodi also modifies and recontexualise language to insert ‘tsafenda’ and the word’s association in the discourse of historical heroes. This gives a sense of immediacy and action as well as historical context.

The most radical form of ‘othering’ is the complete denial of the English language in his poem ‘mo faya’, written in Setswana with no translation to English. This poem is a reminder of Magogodi’s position in relation to oral tradition and reminds us of another poem, ‘ke magogodi’, in his debut anthology, written in the same fashion. ‘mo faya’ and ‘ke magogodi’ are praise poems and beg to be read out aloud; they are the prototype cultural signifiers in both anthologies and, in their refusal of the English language, rules and inscribed meanings, they serve the purpose of Setswana culture and tradition, without any apology from the poet. Even though the rest of the anthology is written in english, with a small ‘e’, it is an english that “freely participates in a linguistic experiment which is adequate to the task of expressing our lives” (Horwitz, 1996: 2). The poet wants to bring to our attention the cultural difference that some of these experiences and utterances have. In this way, we can view this sort of total abrogation as a counter-hegemonic and counter-cultural assertion that reminds us that the colonial experience does not mean that the colonizer completely annihilated those cultures that they aimed to suppress. Through language, the power is still in the subjects’ hands and they can furthermore use those languages to ‘other’ the imperial power.

On the issue of translation and glossaries, Ivan Vladislavic (2000) once asserted that glossaries only serve to exoticize texts for foreign consumption. Although Magogodi inserts a glossary at the end of the anthology, that glossary is positioned to serve and strengthen his agenda. For instance, in his explanation of 'makgoa', he does not only state that the word refers to white people, he writes, "makgoa: white people – the root word is kgoa (meaning 'greedy bully' in Setswana)", or, he calls Sobukwe a 'legendary Pan-Africanist' whereas he could have said anything such as the leader of Pan-African Congress in the seventies, but because he is himself a Pan-Africanist he holds certain affiliations to and fondness for Robert Sobukwe, celebrating his full name, Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe, in the glossary. So here we realise that even if the writer provides a glossary, it is subjective and can be an extension of his agenda. The glossary is filled with names of revolutionary writers, journalists, musicians and cultural activists from the diaspora. I will later explore the transnational and transcultural dialogues that take place between Africa, the Caribbean and trans-Atlantic in Magogodi's work using the ideas of Paul Gilroy.

It is important to state at this stage that Magogodi's poetry and flash fiction in *Outspoken* is informed by a radical form of satire and social criticism. He critiques the 'ways of living' (Mda, 1995) in post-94 South Africa; he satirizes everyone from the politicians and leaders who were and are supposed to uphold a progressive constitution and new democracy, to the new emerging middle class, and various religions such as Christians and Rastafarians. He relies mainly on scatological humour, a radical and extreme form of satire that employs debasement through grotesque images of various bodies, where the "lower stratum" is targeted in a Rabelaisian manner (Bakhtin, 1984). Magogodi reinforces his satirical intent by telling us that "you don't need a damn rifle to dismantle a lousy sand castle" because "the revolution is a joke causing ripples of chuckles and waves of giggles on Zapiro's pencil", and, clearly, on his pen as well, in this collection (Magogodi, 2004: 47-48, see Appendix). In his poetry he points out a number of ways in which the castle—which could refer to the emerging middle/upper class, the new government, or the ruling party—is "lousy", by collapsing the lower classes with the upper, the rulers and the ruled, and the sacred and profane. These dualities become mingled in one big carnival and infect one another.

In a flash fiction titled 'castles', Magogodi writes, "no need for more muscles than god's uncle to build a castle in the air. it takes the tongue of the oracle …". This notion of the tongue reminds us of Mpe's epigraph on the tongue as a weapon. And this particular tongue in this context is pivotal to being outspoken. This is central to my research as the tongue is in

this instance related to writing and writing is connected to language. It is this interconnectedness and constant reference to processes of writing found in Magogodi's text that make us realise that both these authors are undertaking a conscious mission to express themselves in ways that are unique to them, regardless of the underdog positions they and their chosen languages occupy. In Chapter Two I have quoted Horwitz stating the mission of South African writers writing in English post-94. In the same interview he states that,

> "as long as the intermingling of our languages and images is not taking place at the level of the social elites, we must *look to the streets, shebeens, sports fields and jails* where it is happening. Our rulers live in their security-walled ghettos so as to keep Africa at bay. By Africa I mean the immediately local and particular, out of which will rise the *authentic speech and rhythm of South African culture* which will have universal significance" (Horwitz, 1996: 2, italics my own).

These rulers form part of Magogodi's target of satire in *Outspoken*. In *Rabelais and his World*, Bakhtin explains how scatology, with relation to the abovementioned, functions as a form of satire. Bakhtin applies it to a medieval context, but I shall apply scatology to the post-94 socio-politics of Magogodi's poetry. Bakhtin explains how the medieval era was characterised by a vertical understanding of social positions, that is, a social hierarchy, in which those at the top were closer to God and represented God, and those at the bottom were in the squalor of human existence where their lives lay in the hands of others and were predetermined. These dualities created a Manichean outlook. To define a few of the dichotomies this outlook suggested, all that was at the top represented the best, and the bottom represented the worst. In a similar manner, the top was holy whilst the bottom was sacrilegious; the top was heaven whilst the bottom was hell. The human body itself is also seen, by the medieval era, as vertically structured and hierarchised: the upper body is where the thinking occurs, where rationality lies, the five senses and, perhaps most importantly, the ingesting of food and nutrition through the mouth; whereas the bottom of the body is where 'shameful' things occur, such as defecating, urinating and sex (declared shameful by the Catholic Church's notions of sex before marriage). However it is also where the miracle of birth happens.

This realisation of the medieval age's obsession with social hierarchy was challenged, "a new model was being constructed in which the leading role was transferred to the horizontal lines, to the movement forward in real space and historic time" (Bakhtin, 1984: 403). One of the

tools used to break down the age-old tradition of the "narrow, vertical, extratemporal model of the world" was literature (Bakhtin, 1984: 403). Rabelais borrowed from the medieval tradition in a carnivalesque fashion in order to debase and subvert those beliefs through parody, satire and the use of scatology. "He made the top and the bottom change places, intentionally mixed up the hierarchical levels in order to discover the core of the object's concrete reality, to free it from its shell and to show its material bodily aspect—the real being outside all hierarchical norms and values" (ibid). This carnivalesque way of dismantling power can be seen in both of Magogodi's anthologies. In the above quotation from Bakhtin, we can hear overtones of exposure. Magogodi knows that those who are enshrined in the upper classes and in government positions are protected, and in his poetry he exposes what lies beneath. Magogodi does not use a rifle to dismantle the lousy sand castle, but rather a particular form of language to cause ripples of chuckles aimed at those claiming to lead a revolution and the South African nation.

Magogodi's use of scatology for a critique of post-94 socio-politics, modelled on Rabelaisian language, is symbolic of how the old dies and gives birth to the new. In Rabelaisian satire, when the vertical formation of life is deconstructed and turned horizontal, causing all the previously demarcated strands to exist in a carnival-like medley, birth and death become very close to each other. The beauty and sanctity of birth is acknowledged with no denial of its filthy and primal qualities. Magogodi's poetry is graphic and exposes the underbelly without any apologies. As Mpe tells us, life's truths do not lie in euphemisms, that is, we cannot deny the filth that come with the beauty of birth. It is not entirely pessimistic, "all these images throw down, debase, swallow, condemn, deny, kill, bury ... abuse, curse; and at the same time they all conceive anew, fertilize, sow, rejuvenate, regenerate, praise, and glorify" (Bakhtin, 1984: 435). We will see evidence for these assertions at a later stage in the chapter when I critically analyse the poems in detail. What is important at this stage is to realise the weight that language carries in relaying the 'madness' and carnival. Scatology is one of the key ways in which Magogodi 'abuses' the English language.

Scatology is a literary and linguistic strategy used for the purposes of satire. Scatology is not to be mistaken for Afro-pessimism, the way Achebe read Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* in the former's essay 'Africa and her writers'. Perhaps surprisingly, scatology also calls for rebirth, regeneration and reawakening. There is an in-depth and pedantic look at the running of post-94 South Africa, and this can be a taxing task. As Fanon declares, "the native intellectual who takes up arms to defend his nation's legitimacy and who

wants to bring proofs to bear out that legitimacy, who is willing to strip himself naked to study the history of his body, is obliged to dissect the heart of his people" (Fanon, 1967: 170). The business of dissecting presupposes a clinical observation of both good and ugly. However, ugliness does not necessary mean devoid of art and aesthetics. Bakhtin wants us to know that there is an artistic and ideological meaning of scatology:

> First of all, it is a game of words, current expressions (proverbs and adages), and common sequences of terms deprived of their logic and meaning. It is as if words had been released from the shackles of sense, to enjoy a play period of complete freedom and establish unusual relationships among themselves (1984: 423).

Some words are still shackled, as we have seen in the previous chapter with Mpe's Refilwe having to remove some words from her short stories because they were considered vile. Those words consistently receive disapproval in social circles but they are words that signify daily operations such as sexual activities and body parts. Keeping this in mind, and playing a game of words, Magogodi takes popular expressions and twists them in a new sequence, releasing the words from the shackle of conventional sense, collapsing the sacred with the profane, and 'upper class' language with everyday language. Two clear examples are the name of his first anthology *Thy Condom Come*, and a line from his poem, 'i mike what i like' where he tells us that "the spoken word is my shepherd / i shall not want shit" (Magogodi, 2004: 2, see Appendix). These phrases seek to deflate the pomp usually associated with their original form. Magogodi recontexualizes these popular Biblical phrases for the sake of satire.

In this attempt to critique the failures of post-94 leaders and society alike, Magogodi uses poetry and language to cut to the underbelly of that society in order to reveal that which lies in the colon. Fanon's assertions of the poet having to strip himself naked to study the history of his body, and having to further dissect the heart of his people emphasizes the responsibility that lies in the hands of the writer. This literary and linguistic responsibility calls for a strategy that meets this heavy task. The writer has to stay true to the history of his body, has to carefully dissect the heart of his people, has to use a particular cohesive language, and has to stay current and put a mirror to society. Bakhtin asserts, "thus a peculiar carnivalesque picture of political and historical life is created by the author. Events are conceived outside their traditional *official* interpretation and offer, therefore, new opportunities for interpretation and appreciation" (1984: 425, italics my own). Magogodi calls himself a 'soldier', warrior and a 'rioter' (in biography of *Outspoken*, see Appendix), and calls his

works ‘rebellations’, because in the quest to dissect the heart of the nation’s subjects, he turns himself into an “awakener of the people”; from this comes a “fighting literature, a revolutionary literature, and a national literature” (Fanon, 1967: 179). Magogodi is in this case a ‘combat’ poet and his artillery is his use of language.

I am proposing that Magogodi’s poetry forms part of *national literature*, and that, in Brathwaite’s formulation, the language with which it is being told may be called *nation language*. These labels signify a turn towards literature and stories that the disgruntled majority of South Africa may call their own, firstly because they tell of their everyday lives and experiences, and secondly because they tell these immediate experiences in the people’s own everyday language—the language of the “streets, shebeens, sportsfield and jails” (Horwitz, 1996: 2). This everyday language seeks to put both the elite and the underdog on one horizontal line. This is a vital part of reconstruction after the intense oppression of apartheid ideologies and discourses that sought to annihilate the identities, languages and cultures of the majority of the country. That is how, before its demise, the country was a state without a nation (Zegeye, 2001a: 26), and in the reconstruction of that nation, new national signifiers have to be part of that formation of a nation. Therefore, through *national literature* told through *nation language*, Magogodi puts a mirror to society, so that the community may be able to access their reflection through viewing their own progress, or lack thereof, and they can also reach a level of introspection that is triggered by the author’s agenda. This literature and language seeks to construct a collective national consciousness by engaging with issues that affect the building of a new nationalist state. Fanon sees the writer who takes up this task as a combative one. Magogodi is certainly a combative poet, however, he does not feed into the popular and official form of nation building; his popular theme is self-reliance and reflection. These will lead to a critique of the immediate society, and this way change will be facilitated from a personal vantage point. Fanon sees a combat writer as one who has to ‘take up and clarify themes which are typically nationalist’:

> This [national literature] may be properly called a literature of combat, in the sense that it calls on the whole people to fight for their existence as a nation. It is a literature of combat, because it moulds the national consciousness, giving it form and contours and flinging open before it new and boundless horizons; it is a literature of combat because it assumes responsibility, and because it is the will to liberty expressed in terms of time and space (Fanon, 1967: 193).

Magogodi takes on his task with fervour, and in so doing, criticizes the new leadership and the 'democratic' status quo (typically nationalist themes) where there is conspicuous consumption, a gap between the rich and the poor, and silence and violence through 'disinvention' (an arbitrary inscription of identities), as discussed in Chapter Two. By bringing these issues to the foreground, Magogodi takes on the responsibility to mould his consciousness in this post-94 context, and urges the people, as Fanon writes, to fight for their existence as a nation. Through these processes of collective inward-looking, steps towards agency, authorship and manageable shifts in identity can be taken. These are factors that will build up the will to true liberty; and, to apply Fanon to post-94, this will is expressed at a crucial time where nation-building projects are most needed—in this post-94 paradigm.

I now look at some of Magogodi's thematic concerns and linguistic styles through analytical engagement with some of his poems. I begin by looking and comparing language use in two biographical poems from the first and the second anthology, because this process will illustrate my argument. In his first anthology (Magogodi, 2000), Magogodi provides a detailed biography of his life growing up in Meadowlands, Soweto, where he learned to survive on the blade of a knife. In 'ndofaya', the childhood he describes is loaded with political history; Magogodi reveals how politics mingled with life in Soweto in the seventies. This point is no revelation and has been illustrated by writers such as Ndebele (2006) and Biko (1979) and in the work of a whole generation of South African protest poets such as Serote and Sepamla. What strikes one most about this poem is the depth of violence that is apparent in the poet's childhood; he witnessed 'cut throats, mutilated bodies and panga-slashed skulls, the loud blast and foul stench of teargas', the violence conscientized him, so that he and other children would 'shout out black power in the name of Mashinini[18]' (Magogodi, 2001: 37-38). He survived on the blade of a knife in a 'mad' society, a word that he uses to open his poem, where there was stealing, storytelling, dead bodies covered in newspapers, poetry, rape, church, nightmares, jelly, thokolosi and love—a bludgeoning carnivalesque.

A biographical poem in *Outspoken* is called 'sweet sixteen' and attempts to relive the events of June 16, 1976 from the vantage point of a boy of "seven going for eight" (Magogodi, 2004: 19, see Appendix), and also from the point of view of that same boy as an older poet. The title itself interrogates the applicability of western-conceived phrases such as sweet

[18] Student leader during the 1976 Soweto student uprising

sixteen—can the western experience be shared by Africans or other nations? ‘Sweet sixteen’ presumes an innocence and purity that young adults of that age are supposedly experiencing. In this poem however, the poet it switching, in a bitter irony, the western origins of that phrase to the South African context where, during June 16 1976, there was no innocence or purity to be examined in Soweto. The title is also a tongue-in-cheek pun because 16 June is a day of tragedy rather than the celebration of a birthday. Magogodi tells us that he was not even sixteen on that dreaded day; he was so young, at an age where he was just learning to add and subtract, when teargas broke through school windows. The stink of that teargas was stronger that urine, ‘six-nine’, from hell. The situation can only be described as ‘mad’ when children spilled into streets, into an orgy of grotesque violence that robbed many of their experience of a sweet-sixteen birthday party—innocence and purity were stolen at such a young age, where children are exposed to political violence that formed part of the internal township politics as a result of a denigrated and annihilated humanism or ubuntu. I now look at part of the poem ‘sweet sixteen’ in order to follow Magogodi’s concerns:

> was not even sweet sixteen
> in june seventy-six
> when i saw satan cock his gun
> spraying urine of bullets
> tearing flesh nine-nine
> raining blood multiplied
> but our spirit was not divided
> we sang as one
> or so we thought
> so that everyone wanted to chop
> satan’s four-five
> and make him eat it raw
> it was war
> against the claws of klu klux laws
> sixteen was not sweet at all
> ...
> will they ever tell us why

satan never lost his four-five
the only change
is the colour of his six-nine

This poem paints the harsh realities of the day that ultimately initiated the demise of the apartheid government, the protests that led to the call of state of emergency in the eighties and the first democratic elections in the nineties. The events of this day, to those who were there in the flesh, like Magogodi, were radically different from their portrayal in the media. Magogodi writes about that day in language that beckons the evil and racism inherent in the perpetrators. Both those factors, evil and racism, determined the blood-shed of that day. He uses the image of satan with his penis out spraying urine on young and innocent children. During '*sweet sixteen, seventy six*', his '*four-five*' sprayed '*six-nine*' that tore flesh '*nine-nine*'. This is the ultimate language of the street and borrows from the language of street-corner dice-gambling. What makes this language powerful here is how it functions in the literary paradigm, and this follows Bakhtin's belief that "the poet must assume a complete single-personed hegemony over his own language" (Bakhtin, 1981: 297). This form of localisation strips Standard English of its hegemonic regime in former Anglophone states.

The language of numbers is most prominent in games of dice, where certain numbers hold certain powers over others. This language is adapted here to refer to sexual and excretory activities, in the context of townships. Magogodi also reveals the complexity of language in these contexts; that people are not one-dimensional and simplistic. The numbers reveal a witty approach of township language to numbers and mathematics: two dices are used; the number six is the highest and ultimate number on a dice, therefore numbers divisible by three are achieved in numerous ways; for example, four added to five is nine. This explains Magogodi's attraction to *six*teen, seventy-*six*, *six*-nine, and nine-nine. This play with the language of numbers intensifies the meaning of the poem. Official history is always told by the victor, often in a language that remains inaccessible to those who are the subjects of that history. Here Magogodi tells of the horrors of that day in a language that invokes disgust and nausea, while at the same time employing language loaded with a sense of racial discrimination. Furthermore, the language of the street here serves to hijack this history of his people from an international stage to a local stage. What matters to Magogodi is the enjoyment of this poem by his people. The appropriation of this language of numbers to new

and emancipatory uses makes this poem poignant. Bakhtin tells us, “language may remember only its life in poetic contexts [in such contexts, however, even concrete reminiscences are possible]” (Bakhtin, 1981: 297). Through using the language of everyday, localised to suit its immediate environment, the people who experienced this so close to them are included in the discourse of history, and they can relate to that discourse through the active workings of memory, they can start to take part in the rebuilding of their communities, societies and ultimately, nation.

The language used in this poem further localises this experience by excluding the ‘others’ through processes of meaning-making. In the glossary, the meanings of ‘four-five’ and ‘six-nine’ are defined as penis and urine, respectively, but to the speaker S’camto, those words are loaded with a whole lot more meaning, mostly grotesque. A ‘four-five’ may be seen as the quintessential patriarchal tool that mostly seeks to subordinate. The act of spraying urine at those whom it seeks to subvert is the highest, or lowest, form of degradation. The language and images that are used by Magogodi may therefore be understood as protest against the materialisation of conditions of degradation. There can be no better form, for Magogodi, to describe the events of that day than to use firstly, the language of the streets on which this history was shaped, and secondly, loaded language that can bear the weight of those events whilst at the same time capturing those feelings and images. Magogodi uses this linguistic strategy of playing with number phrases to critique the apartheid government and their actions that day. He deems them evil, equates them to the Ku Klux Klan, and insinuates that they are driven by petty and dying notions of patriarchy. This may evoke laughter in those who could care to laugh at this madness.

It is important to note that the phrase ‘nine-nine’ is not in the glossary. In the poem he writes that ‘... i saw satan cock his gun / spraying urine of bullets / tearing flesh nine-nine’, evoking the acid-like and acerbic effect of the bullets on young flesh. Nine-nine is a term that is used, in S’camto, to refer to something holistic, and this holistic quality of the term often refers to both the intention and the recipient, in this case both the shooter (satan) and the children who are being mutilated by the urine. Magogodi consciously chooses to omit the definition of that word because standard forms of the English language fail to fully embody the experience of something happening ‘nine-nine’. This action may be an extension of Ivan Vladilavic’s belief that glossaries at times serve to exoticize texts for the consumption of an international

market[19] (Vladislavic, 2000). My own attempt at defining what it means robs it of its deeper meaning. However, the urine tearing flesh 'nine-nine' may be seen to be satan's malevolent intention to cause harm, and the urine 'cuts wounds deeper that two-one / in the roll of a dice'—an action that will ensure the demise of the opponent.

However, in this poem, Magogodi also criticizes post-94 society and leadership. He writes that it is "crap how now sixteen is wrapped / in lollipop coats / sold in top-of-the pops poetry slams / butt-naked views and mourning glories / in stadiums / who pays hard cash to make history / a *tits-and-ass story*" (Magogodi, 2004: 20, see Appendix). This is a critique of the way June 16th has been commodified in the new dispensation, wrapped up and sold to anyone who can afford to consume it. June 16th has been deemed a national holiday, youth day, by the new government, and it is common that on that day concerts and celebrations take place in public spaces such as stadiums. Magogodi critiques the way the significance of that day is compromised by performers who are scantily clad or 'butt-naked'; actions that are so laid with paradoxes that he calls them 'mourning glories'. There are also sexual undertones in phrases such as 'mourning glories', 'hard cash', 'tits-and-ass', the first being a word-play on the popular phrase 'morning glory', referring to the need for sexual relief in the morning. The orgy of violence that happened on that sixteenth of June has now become a national orgy that guarantees pleasure for anyone who has hard cash. This is symbolic of the true demise of history because nobody cared to retell that history to the people in language they can understand and appreciate, and Magogodi expresses his indignation at the failures of those entrusted with this task through language that invokes disgust.

Perhaps the most profound and telling lines in this 'combat' poem that seeks to critique failures to deliver dreams of nationalism are the closing lines of the poem: "will they ever tell us why / satan never lost his four-five / the only change / is the colour of his six-nine". These lines are a direct reference to Franz Fanon's book title, *Black Skins, White Masks*, where this phrase alludes to the tragic failures of postcolonial leaders to lead the new state into a new democratic dispensation. The title further alludes to neo-colonialism, where the new leaders take off from where the colonialist left off, in a relay-like marathon; they are black leaders informed by white, colonial ideologies of the slave-master grand narrative. Magogodi here suggests that the new leaders resemble to the old ones, embodying the same patriarchal philosophies; they urinate on those who do not have 'hard cash', they are greedy and seek to

[19] Magogodi glossarises to some extent, however, as mentioned earlier in the chapter, the definitions in his glossary serve a particular agenda.

erase history, commodifying and debasing it for entertainment. The only difference between the old and the new leaders are the ‘colours of their six-nine’. Satan never lost his ‘four-five’, that is, apartheid is not over, the only change is the colour of the new leadership but the philosophies remain the same. This is disheartening to the poor, or the bearers of the scars of ‘sweet-sixteen’, the speakers of S’camto, who all, as Magogodi seem to imply, should take up some form of combat position. Magogodi seeks, through his poetry, to facilitate that gravitation towards the emancipation of his people.

Intertexuality in Outspoken

Intertextual references saturate the language of Magogodi’s poetry. Intertexuality becomes a language of representation because one should have prior knowledge, or conceptual maps, of that which is being represented. That which is being signified is context-dependant. That is, the text or person that is referred to or represented by the intertextual sign may invoke the meaning of that text, the philosophy of that person, and a certain social movement in time and space; the contextual meaning then overlays the message that Magogodi wants to communicate. Intertextual strategies operate according to shared conceptual maps and common sets of rules that govern how those persons, philosophies, or movements must be referred to. Magogodi yokes these signs together to forge his own new meaning. In his persistent invocation of other writers, cultural workers and cultural movements through intertexuality, Magogodi cunningly localises and indigenises these entities to suit his own agenda.

In the poem that has just been discussed, Magogodi tells us that Klu Klux laws perpetuated racial segregation and violence on that day of June the sixteenth. He constructs a transnational dialogue between the experiences of the black South African under apartheid to that of the African-American in the United States under slavery. Soweto, just as the South in North America and the Caribbean, was a contact zone in which different classes and cultures existed, often violently, in an asymmetrical power relationship. This caused cosmopolitan and “transcultural flows” (Pennycook: 2007) where language was improvised from a hybrid of cultures and existence was forged in the relatively new environment. In the American South, languages that came as a result of improvisation are now known as creolised English, as can be read in the dialogues of Toni Morrison’s novels or in most of Langston Hughes’ poems. In the Caribbean, this hybrid language is known as ‘patois’, a Rastafarian improvised English of the Caribbean, used in the poetry of Linton Kwesi Johnson and the music of Bob Marley,

both of whom are Magogodi's muses (Magogodi, 2000). An ample number of Magogodi's poems invoke dub-reggae and writers of the Harlem Renaissance. The struggle of the African Americans and Caribbeans is that of the African because they "suffered under the common enemy" (Madingoane, 1979), and as such African writers such as Ayi Kwei Armah in *Why are we so blest*, and Ingoapele Madingoane in *Black Trial*, have a tendency to relate to that struggle as their own. The imposition of the Ku Klux laws in Soweto may be better understood in the light of vernacular cosmopolitanism. Through intertexuality, Magogodi creates a diasporic dialogue between blacks in the Caribbean, in the United States of America and those in South Africa. All these groups are originally from Africa and have experienced profound violence in their processes of displacement and replacement during the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

Poetry, dub-reggae, hip-hop and ultimately jazz—having provided a mouthpiece for Harlem, Jamaican and Sophiatown politics and aesthetics—insist on different ways of looking at black expression. Titlestad proposes that we use the same lens as the aforementioned genres to view protest black expression of identity in South Africa. Gilroy further suggests that we refrain from looking at Atlantic texts as nationalistic texts, or within boundaries of the nation, but rather see them as transcultural, transnational and hybrid texts that share a common thread of a history of oppression (Gilroy, 1993: 15). He states further that black intellectuals have noted this intercultural position before launching their distinct modes of cultural and political critique. The language of intertexuality in Magogodi's poetry may be seen in the light of a cultural exchange of ideas between continents.

The following is an example of vernacular cosmopolitanism, from his poem 'streams' (Magogodi, 2004: 38, see Appendix). The poem is written in a manner that deludes and abrogates the rules of writing, similar Mpe's stream of (black) unconsciousness. Firstly, the genre itself highlights the problems of labelling in postmodern times. A new term, flash fiction, has been coined to refer to this kind of writing. It is neither a poem nor a short story. It is a very short story in prose. Secondly, the nature of the narrative being told is in itself is neither linear nor cohesive. This signifies the confusion and complexity of the story and its context. The following lines from the flash fiction, 'streams', can be seen as examples of vernacular cosmopolitanism:

> "... these streams scream cos hitler's children in ventersdorp cause chaos train their dogs to bite native butts is that why Felicia goes for liposuction self-mutilation to

> fashion the ironing board butt she borrows make-up from evita to look brighter than oprah you can't miss the joke even if you came to jozi by train in vryburg babeile takes a step out of prison gates to claim back him slate you celebrate while fongkong falcon malcolm axe sounds suicide notes from the top of a skyscraper in braamfontein the crowd shouts jump 'just do it' cos they've never seen a human bird in nike fashions ... "

Vernacular cosmopolitanism, an instance where locality exists in its own terms whilst at the same time entering larger societal and political spheres, may here be seen through the superimposition of Hitler in Ventersdorp and a similar positioning of Malcom X in Braamfontein, Johannesburg. It is furthermore instantiated in the self-fashioning of South Africans against 'other' Africans in the diaspora, such as Felicia Mabuza, a South African talk show host in the dawn of democracy, fashioning herself against Oprah Winfrey, an African-American talk show host. The joke, as Magogodi tells us, is not lost, because even thought Felicia finds herself in a transnational dialogue, she is none the wiser; she also borrows Evita's make-up to make herself brighter. This is a critique of modelling yourself on others uncritically. Issues of black pride and black aesthetics come into play. Felicia has mutilated her butt to look 'white', represented by 'ironing board', as the history of 'disinvention' of identities has deemed Africans' large buttocks ugly and unattractive. She also borrows a white transsexual satirist's make-up. This in itself is a comment on self-hate.

Another modelling of self on African-Americans is here seen through Malcolm 'axe', as Magogodi puns his surname. The South African version was a student at the University of the Witwatersrand where he dabbled in resistance movements in the 90's, and was pushed to suicidal limits. He attempted suicide by threatening to jump from high dizzying heights because of personal problems. Magogodi juxtaposes this stunt with the release of Andrew Babeile from jail, a student who struggled with charges of sexual harassment and stabbing a schoolmate with a pair of scissors. In this way Magogodi diminishes and subverts Malcolm's 'elitist problems'; he even laughs at the Nike gear he was wearing. However, in a similar manner, he calls him 'fongkong', fake, because the real Malcolm X of the United States was fighting a real struggle for black liberation, equality and justice. As Bhabha tells us, "cultural translation is not simply appropriation or adaptation; it is a process through which cultures are required to revise their own systems of reference ... " (Dennis et al [ed], 2000: 141). Therefore calling yourself Malcolm X or the Oprah of South Africa comes with its own responsibilities, because you the 'difference of the other' without knowing them, therefore

creating disjuncture between the signification process. Magogodi, in the given example, points out the contradictions in self-fashioning in the style of an unknown 'other'.

Magogodi's poem 'i mike what i like' (Magogodi, 2004: 1, see Appendix) is strewn with authors whom Magogodi urges us to engage with or read. Furthermore, the poem's title itself is a reworked version of Steven Biko's book, *I Write What I Like*, his manifesto for Black Consciousness—a psychological approach to overcoming oppression that depends on self-determination and self-reliancy—all the factors that Magogodi considers vital in the decolonisation of black South Africans. In 'i mike what i like' the poet invokes the works of Zimbabwean writer, Dambudzo Marechera, South African poet and musician, Lefifi Tladi, and African-American deathrow prisoner and activist Mumia Abu Jamal; he speaks of them in an intertwined manner that brings them into the same space.

> ...
>
> my song grows from the ground
>
> where marechera rose to write
>
> *in the middle of scream*
>
> where papa ramps has
>
> *a dream of war*
>
> where mumia rhymes
>
> against death row
>
> where we die because
>
> we don't know
>
> how to talk the frank talk
>
> i mike what i like
>
> i sink the censorship
>
> i buy no skelm when i drop a poem
>
> never mind

the head of state

or the state of his head

i soak in the word

of the sage who asked

why swim in the

same soup warmed all over

lefifi tladi

i sample sounds of your soul

for azania's children to hear

the troubled coughs of history's echoes

around us

inside us

in the stink of my ink

when i sound check 1 2 3

i'm free

This is the first poem in the anthology, *Outspoken*. The title of this poem emphasizes the need for the voice, the need to be oral and outspoken. The words, 'song', 'mike', 'rap', 'talk', 'scream', and 'coughs', are all references to guttural activities, or 'noises' as Brathwaite calls them (Brathwaite, 1980). Out of the history of cultural and social silence, Magogodi urges the masses, through the first person, to reclaim their voice. He writes, "we die because / we don't know / how to talk the frank talk". These lines invoke Biko, who under censorship wrote under the pseudonym 'Frank' to avoid jail and the death sentence. According to Magogodi, he rhymed against death row. He defied the silence imposed by the oppressive government. There is a play on the phrase 'talk the frank talk'; Magogodi wants to encourage people to speak their minds, to be vocal about injustices. Biko managed to speak under cruel circumstances, hence in the new democracy, people should talk frankly without any fear.

Speaking and being vocal is Magogodi's passion. He is a performance artist who takes his somewhat controversial poetry to the stage. When he 'sound checks' 1, 2, 3, on the stage, he is free. His voice gives him freedom. The spoken word, the stink of his ink, is not enough because the words are still trapped in the 'troubled coughs of history's echoes', still trapped inside him. When he speaks his truth, he frees it, subsequently freeing himself. He continues in the legacy of Marechera, Lesego Rampolokeng ('papa ramps') and Lefifi Tladi. Their spirit, and those of Mumia and Biko, makes him brave. He does not care to offend the head of state; neither does he consider the state of his head, because his truth is an uncompromised priority. He sinks censorship because the new democracy should be devoid of cultural silence. Through intertexual references to Zimbabwean, black American and South African writers Magogodi advocates the rising of Azania's voices. Azania is a new free state in Africa, where Africans abroad have repatriated and settled.

In another poem, 'for you', Magogodi invokes the spirit and cultural works of other diasporic figures —Ugandan Okot p'Bitek, American writer Amiri Baraka, Phaswane Mpe, E'skia Mphahlele, whom he defines as 'South African writer and sage' in the glossary. What is common to these writers is a shared philosophy of human equality and justice. Magogodi authors and fashions himself not only according to his South African and Sowetan roots, but according to the common struggle of his race and people whom, through slavery-orientated routes, are now scattered in the black Atlantic diaspora. This way he focuses not only on the 'roots' of Africans and the African diaspora, but also sheds light on the 'routes' that have led them there (Gilroy: 1993).

Scatology in Outspoken

Scatology is a literary strategy that employs radical satire and often seeks to 'speak out' to power. While satire can be described as "the literary art of diminishing or derogating a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking toward it attitudes of amusement, contempt, scorn, or indignation" (Abrams, 1985: 166), scatology takes ridiculing, amusement, contempt, scorn and indignation to new heights. Under the umbrella of satire one can find high burlesque and low burlesque. The former ridicules those in high positions in society and debases them, whilst the latter does the opposite. Scatology may be seen as high burlesque. This is usefully contexualised in Bakhtin's use of the Rabelaisian model of collapsing the vertical, hierarchical line into a horizontal continuum, where those who occupied high positions, such as the church, religious and political leaders, and the upper classes, are

brought down from their pedestal onto the level of the proletariat and lower classes. High burlesque utilises lampooning and travesty. Scatology, when understood from the perspective of satire by travesty, can start to make sense in any context.

Scatology in postcolonial African writing is best described as a feature of the "aesthetics of vulgarity" (Mbembe, 2001), where the state is equated to the body, and tropes of disease, corruption, decay and rot are attributed to that body. This form of writing about the state comes from the disillusionment that post-independent Africa has brought to those who invested hopes and expectations from their new would-be leaders. Instead of moving the country into a fruitful and self-sufficient state, the corrupt few are feeding self-interest. Mbembe mentions a few reasons for the use of scatology in postcolonial literature, one of them being lecherous living, which leads to conspicuous consumption. Such consumption, in the face of the poor, is seen by the postcolonial writer to be treacherous, hence the use of tropes of the mouth, belly and phallus to characterise the leaders. As Mbembe tells us, these tropes make "active statements about the human condition, and contribute integrally to the making of political culture in the postcolony" (Mbembe, 2001: 109). Magogodi manoeuvres swiftly between the tensions of post-94 South Africa: the order and chaos, beauty and grotesque, pain and pleasure. Scatology allows him to articulate the chaos, grotesque and pain.

The poem, 'second cuming' (Magogodi, 2004: 30, see Appendix), serves as an apt example of carnivalesque and scatological language. The language used in this poem defamiliarizes the expected subject matter by audaciously debasing the sacred. This poem is an example of what Mbembe refers to as "active statements about the human condition" (2001: 109). If one is unaware of the punning that is in the title on the word 'cuming' in the title, then one is in for a big shock when one reads the first three lines of the poem:

you are waiting for whose cum

make your own cum

cos jesus is taking his holy time

In trying to understand why and how a writer would compose such words, Mbembe's assertion about the 'active statements on the human condition' is a useful point of departure. In relation to the poem, the human condition in South Africa can be seen in the light of the saying 'an injustice anywhere is an injustice everywhere'. No matter the shifts in class and

money, the shift in the faces of the rulers, if there are large groups of people who do not have basic needs such as water, shelter, clothing and food, then the country cannot call itself civilised. This poem is primarily about the huge gap that exists in post-94 South Africa between those who have and the have-nots. Those who 'have no shame' and 'skommel in public' refer to the rich and their display of wealth in the face of the poor. The human condition goes back to the fabric of society, and constructive discussions of that condition may succeed in making a political culture in post-94 South Africa (Mbembe: 2001: 109). Magogodi appeals to his readers, or society in general, to view inequalities between the rich and the poor with empathy and, more importantly, with a political eye. Society should question the cause of these injustices and inequalities, in order to arrive at a politicised conclusion that will be integral to change.

The 'skommeling' are the rich who display their wealth conspicuously without any shame while there is someone hungry and homeless in their backyard. They are the leaders who misuse funds meant for the poor by enriching themselves and driving German cars. The 'skommeling' are the neo-colonialists who, instead of breaking the cycle of master-slave grand narrative, continue in the legacy of colonialism. While numerous articles have been written; various television expose shows have been shot; many conversations have been heard on radio about these issues; Magogodi chooses the medium of poetry to tell of these misfortunes that befall the 'wretched of the earth' – the forgotten poor of South Africa. In such extreme tensions between the rich and the poor, he makes use of scatology to express his disgust and disbelief in the country's leaders and to sow disgust in the reader. Shock is expressed and evoked firstly at the sacrilegious reference to the bible, and then also at the trope of ejaculation throughout the poem. Disgust is heightened by phrases such as "they skommel in public / cum in gallons / until they block your throat" (page 31). These feelings are sometimes misdirected by the reader at the poem. Their true target should be the subject of Magogodi's satire.

In the first three lines from the poem, Magogodi is setting up the leaders and neo-colonialists. Scatology here makes concrete their degrading practices. He is addressing also their 'other'. Magogodi is depicting what can happen if the poor social groups of South Africa keep waiting for something, some manna from heaven, some government official or indeed Jesus Christ's second coming to save them from their condition of degradation. He calls for their active participation in identifying and denigrating those who 'skommel' in public. This

‘skommeling’ can only stop if the masses that are being ‘skommeled’ on rise up and protest against these injustices. They must ‘make their own cum’.

Magogodi’s fascination with religious texts, especially the Bible, has been longstanding. The title of his first anthology is *Thy Condom Come*, which plays on this ‘cuming’, linking sexuality and the Bible. Magogodi’s weariness with the Bible stems from the common view that, ‘when the colonisers came the Africans had the land and the missionaries had the bible, then when they left the African had the bible and the colonizers had the land’, an idea expressed in this poem in “shake off unseen shackles / wreck invisible ships / of slave drivers land grabbers and grave robbers” (Magogodi, 2004: 30, see Appendix). Magogodi is informed by the origin of Christianity in Africa through missionaries. Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* depicts the arrival of Christianity as the beginning of the end of African customs and beliefs. The missionaries were bringing the ‘light of God’ to this dark continent of heathens and devilish behaviour. Magogodi refutes this view of history. He debases this ‘civilization’ that was brought to Africa by inscribing sexual innuendos and overtones to its sacred text, the bible. By using something as primal as sexual intercourse, he throws light on the barbarity of the Christian religion in Africa. Furthermore, primal activities such as sexual intercourse, burping, farting and defecating are ultimately what remove humans (particularly those in positions of power) off the pedestals that capitalism, neo-colonialism and institutionalization have managed to forge in society.

The line ‘make your own cum’ also emphasizes humanity’s blind faith in religion and failure to be agents of their own existence. Religious existentialism draws attention to Friedrich Nietzsche’s attack on Christianity, religion and notions of morality as “the legacy of a ‘slave morality’ that prefers safety and security to personal excellence and honour” (Mautner, 1996: 208). Magogodi sees the Bible as a colonial tool. It has been used in the past to oppress and condemn people, and now that society has been released from the jaws of colonialism they have internalised this dependence and continue to look towards the bible for some redemption and progress, whilst Magogodi believes people must be agents of their own destiny. He believes, with Nietzsche, that “religion provides crutches and weapons for the weak” (Mautner, 1996: 208). When the leaders have failed them, this country’s forgotten rely on the ‘the second cuming’ of Jesus to save them. They must release themselves from the crutches and weapons and find strength in self. Magogodi’s stylistic weapon is scatology, a weapon tailored for symbolic violence. This violence proves valid Fanon’s (1967)

controversial assertion that the violence that upheld the hegemony of colonialism needs to be driven out by reciprocal violence.

It is therefore safe to conclude that Magogodi strives to rouse a collective consciousness and imbibe the post-94 ethos with a spirit of resistance, fighting in order to regain and reclaim the land, the languages, the discourses of history and our memories of the past. In *Outspoken* he foregrounds the need to speak out loud without fear, to be outspoken about the injustices and dehumanisation that continue to shape life in the current dispensation. He is adamant that the power that was supposed to be shared in a "capillary-like" manner has just been mobilised within certain elitist groups and that it is up to the masses to reclaim it without fear. This stance makes Magogodi a 'revolutionary writer' (Thiongo: 1993) who contributes to the 'national literature' (Fanon: 1967).

Chapter Five: Conclusion

> "...the African writer now, the one who opts for becoming an integral part of the African revolution, has no choice but that of aligning himself with the people ... In that situation, he will have to confront the languages spoken by the people in whose service he has put his pen. Such a writer will have to *rediscover* the *real* languages of struggle ... learn from their great heritage of orature, and above all, learn their great optimism and faith in the capacity of human beings to remake their world and renew themselves" (Thiongo, 1993: 74).

The English language has been moving, changing and evolving; similarly, so has culture and history (past, present and continuous) in South Africa, especially since the interregnum years. I can safely say that the changes that took place and are currently underway have somehow lost the courtesy of walking hand in hand with Standard English. There is a wide gap between Standard English and the everyday continually changing experience in South Africa. This is not only true of English, but also native tongues. This gap creates tension and anxiety, a 'crisis of representation', in authors who aim to write their own narratives and that of their rapidly changing environments. Both authors under discussion here have chosen English as their medium of narration and, under the weight of these experiences, this language takes on great strain. Context overwhelms the text, so to say. When I decided to undertake this research I had a hunch about what it would reveal. I suspected from the start that the notion of taking the Standard English of the coloniser and twisting, bending and manipulating it had a lot to do with agency, retrieving power, and localising it. I picked up in these texts that language was used and abused to reflect the pathology of post-94 South Africa. This section of the dissertation aims to sum up my findings and answer the questions which were asked in Chapter One.

I will start by recalling the questions as outlined in Chapter One. Gordimer asked, during the interregnum years, what the post-94 writers would write about. One of my dissertation's primary aims was to find out *how* the two authors write their stories, as opposed to *what* they would write about. Furthermore, I wanted to find out how they invent and use various forms and tools of language to tell of their immediate environments. As mentioned above, when context overwhelms text these authors have to improvise and invent techniques to bypass linguistic constraints. A core question for this dissertation is, what medium and language can satisfy the concerns of Mpe and Magogodi, and what manipulation and reconstruction must

language endure in order to carry out these authors' agendas? This led to my scrutinising certain linguistic strategies and phenomena: are these labels sufficient in defining the ever-changing linguistic hybridity that happens due to cross-border mobility? Other questions that arose were related to inclusion and exclusion, centre and periphery, and whether the notion of 'writing back' is an acceptable one when dealing with these authors. Overall, this section aims to answer questions regarding the extent which the country's new-found freedom has affected these authors' pens.

My main questions were inspired by the practice of mixing Standard English with South African indigenous languages. The more I researched the more I realised that the issue of language is more complex than just labelling a strategy and expecting it to apply to the methods that the authors under discussion are employing. I realised that the terms and concepts coined by critics such as Brathwaite and Pennycook, regardless of how accurate and valid they are, were coined relating to different contexts and cannot entirely embody the emergent phenomena inherent in language hybridity in South Africa today. I found it very helpful to use terms such as code-switching to name what the authors were doing in the texts, but at this stage, I believe an extensive research on linguistic strategies and phenomena in South Africa may provide context-specific and relevant labels and definitions.

Language in its nature is unbounded; this fact already inscribes the concept of code-switching with problems. That concept implies and presupposes that there is a line where a language starts and finishes, and where another bounded language will take over. This is a colonial construct; upon arriving in South Africa, for example, the missionaries and colonial administrators sought to divide languages that flow into one another such as isiZulu and isiXhosa. They did not consider the mobility of Africans, and hence the mobility of language, and how a language that inhabits different spaces at the same time cannot possibly be expected to follow particular protocols of practice. In a similar manner, because of the mobility of English colonisers, those colonisers cannot expect to restore Standard English of England in various geographically disparate regions. Using this lens of viewing language, and considering the terms 'use' and 'abuse', it is advisable to see all language structures and forms as legitimate in particular contexts and for particular purposes, regardless of the number of people who speak it or how it sounds against the 'accepted' forms of language.

The label 'code-switching', used to refer to a switch from one language to another, is appropriate to refer to the manner in which Magogodi swiftly uses two or more languages in

one poem. Pennycook's term, 'metrolingualism' is an apt label to explain the linguistic phenomenon in the world today as a result of globalisation and the aftermath of colonisation. However, that label applies mainly to urban contexts and does not entirely manage to convey the rural and urban connection found in Mpe's novel. In that novel the label becomes flexible because Mpe *forces* fluidity between urban and rural. Therefore in *Welcome To Our Hillbrow* 'metrolingualism' allows language to function in an unbounded manner, where the mobility of the people, together with their languages and cultures, is embraced. That concept is accepting, without any prejudice or imperial influences, of the borderless and porous nature of language. In South Africa that concept is so apt because the new dispensation meant that previously geographically fragmented regions now came together, superimposing themselves over other language systems that had been used, and acting over and above hegemonic language structures that sought to oppress one group and elevate another group. Here one can think of the transformation of *tsotsitaal* to S'camto, and the power that those languages were denied. As discussed in Chapter Two, that language still suffers shunning and is denied in many domains, and accepted in different domains for different purposes.

"...English is an unfit medium for the truth of South Africa"

David Lurie (Coetzee, 1999: 117)

S'camto, the language of the street, is used heavily in Magogodi's poems, and used by Mpe to navigate the streets of Hillbrow. The use of this language in literature must be seen as a negotiation of power, as I believe, like Foucault (1967), that power is constantly shifting through "capillaries" of society. This language was dubbed *tsotsi-taal* in the Apartheid era and this history inscribed negativity and worthlessness to this language. What Magogodi does is reclaim this language through a long standing tradition of literature, and through a genre that is often associated with and is rooted in the English tradition: poetry. This turns the associations propagated by the Apartheid government on their head. The protest and resistance poets of the seventies and eighties used *tsotsi-taal* in their poetry and novels partly for exclusionary purposes because of the imposed cultural silence; partly to mask meaning, which could have led to banning or gaol. Magogodi still revels in and cherishes that language in the new free country where one is afforded the rights and opportunity of speech without fear of being jailed. Why then does Magogodi, a literary scholar in his own right, still use that language when he is 'educated' and 'above' street language? Precisely because he wants to

equip himself, the language and the speakers of that language with power. He enjoys how that language reflects and articulates daily realities. He also wants to free S'camto from its reputation of it being spoken by uneducated people fit only for the township streets. This way he also brings townships into discourses of power.

S'camto may seem like the logical language of choice for contemporary South Africa where writers are faced with challenges of having to produce texts whose main recipients are spread across the cultural and language divides, and where the multilingual policy itself is "compromised". However, Mpe and Magogodi are well aware of the fate of indigenous language texts, as suffered by O.K Matsepe (Mpe's epigraph), and oral tradition; and they therefore write their texts primarily in English whilst negotiating a way to foreground their indigenous languages. This ambivalent approach to the English language reflects the liminal position they find themselves in: they are living in a new democracy but they do not want to obliterate memories of the past and its injustices from their texts. They see the associations of the English language with colonialism, but also wish to address or redress the evils in their particular use of English. Furthermore, Mpe and Magogodi prove that the language of experience is, or should, ultimately be informed by the speaker/writer. English might not be a fit medium to carry the South African experience but certain strategies such as relexicalising and recontexualising of existing forms of language can make the text carry the South African context, indefinitely leading to a shift of power.

The two authors also use the languages available to them in particular combinations and forms. The texts that are produced here do not strive to satisfy the rules and conventions of traditional novel- or poetry-writing, rather they are consciously created and reflexive in relation to age-old domination of Standard English. They find themselves in a profoundly ambivalent position. Bakhtin sees this form of cultural ambivalence as 'extracarnival', where the authors 'deny, but review and renew at the same time' the resources of production available to him/her (Bakhtin, 1984: 11). Here, to put it in South African terms, the empire is on strike, being unruly, disobedient and disregarding 'authority', "liberating [self] from all forms of inhuman necessity that direct the prevailing concept of the world" (Bakhtin, 1984: 49).

The notions of writing back and striking back are problematic and prove to further enrich the hierarchy that is structured by a history of violence, hegemony, absurd rules and expanding of power bases. Mpe and Magogodi do not form part of that ideology. They are authors who

divorce themselves from those psychological ties to the colonizer, and furthermore, they do not write or strike back but are instead *writing black*; that is, writing stories that are futuristically driven, relevant and aimed at shifting the paradigm of post-oppression existence to self-reliance and agency. They rebuke the periphery position and place themselves in the centre of a new democratic discourse. They use 'nation language' (Brathwaite, 1980) to write literatures that aim to awaken the nation and individual consciousnesses.

With regards to the centre-periphery model, Magogodi and Mpe are not so much preoccupied with hijacking the centre of power as they are with circulating power that has been autonomously gained. They are relatively new authors on a mission to find new idioms and new epistemologies. Their works tend to be reflexive and reflective of self and community, hence they are 'writing black' instead of 'writing back'. Their works also have similarities in the sense of being semi-autobiographical. Mpe draws from some autobiographical details of his life to write about his two protagonists, whilst Magogodi ensures that the story of his life is told page after page. This creates an idea of tracing in both texts. The reader and the authors are both, in the process of reading and writing respectively, tracing development of identities, communities, political consciousness, and politics in relation to those respective bodies (of the writer and the reader). In this way the texts become some form of bildungsroman, where the reader is taken in as a voyeur of the author's lives. Politics in relation to the body relates to Whitebrook's (2001) idea that when identity is placed in a public sphere the bearer has capacity to take on a political role. Therefore the writers here have assumed a political stance in writing about self and community in relation to social, national and international socio-political concerns. The dichotomies of local and global, location and dislocation are encountered, and it is here that we see that one cannot 'go global' and hijack the centre of power before localising self and power.

In relation to David Lurie's bold statement, English is an unfit medium for the truth of South Africa, firstly because his take on truth is marred. He is not ready to see the truth of South Africa post-94; he is still stuck in the Romantic era of Byron. Secondly, Lurie cannot bring himself to participate in Coetzee's vision for an authentic language where language, consciousness and landscape are related (Coetzee, 1988). He takes a distanced stance towards the landscape and consciousness of both his daughter and Petrus. The new dispensation requires active engagement and dissection, as can be seen in the texts of Magogodi and Mpe. This way, when one immerses oneself in the socio-historical politics of South Africa, they are able to negotiate that 'new' language that Coetzee writes of. It is a tall order, however

Magogodi and Mpe have managed to construct their stories and tell the truth of South Africa in a medium that has proven to be fit.

David's take on and comprehension of Petrus is reminiscent of how the coloniser treated his subject. In a similar take, he construes Petrus as a rural, uncivilised man, whom the enlightened subjects such as himself [David] should not strive to save from darkness. The medium of the English language cannot suffice to tell Petrus' story precisely because David wants to own and 'preserve' that English in its 'accepted' form. He will shudder at the thought of that English being bent, twisted and forced to carry Petrus' story. David does not fully realise that in post-94 South Africa, those previously oppressed are in a different struggle than his. They need, amongst many others, a language to carry their stories, and they will ultimately and inevitably create it. People's everyday lives are not to be compared to life in the academic world, and this is seen through the languages people will use. The academic world makes demands on how to use English, but the personal space does not.

Authenticity and reinvention

Language is a pivotal aspect in the processes of *decolonising the mind* (Thiongo, 1986). Thiongo closely relates language with authority and legitimisation of one's culture, experience, existence and authorship. He reminds us in *Moving the Centre* that "every language has two aspects. One aspect is its role as an agent that enables us to communicate with one another in our struggle to find the means for survival. The other is its role as a carrier of the history and the culture built into the processes of that communication over time" (1993: 30). Two things are apt in relation to the post-94 environment of South Africa: firstly, as Mpe and Magogodi demonstrate, our languages, the indigenous ones, are very important signifiers to experiences of the past, and that past forms a huge part of identity. A language is needed to communicate with each other about the past, which will lead to a discourse about the present. These discourses and reflections about the immediate past are precisely what the two authors in this dissertation are trying to facilitate. The language they use to address issues such as confession and forgiveness, past and present, and memory and identity, is a language that carries the history and cultures of that language. In this way, there is an inclusion of the people that really matter through the localising of discourse. The authors, through language, are writing their own narratives instead of being written into these narratives and misrepresented.

The task is not easy. It is one that Fanon (1967) has called "dissecting the heart of the people". However, the one medium that can 'speak' to the people, rouse their consciousness and empower them is language. Reading Magogodi's two collections is partaking of a linguistic feast, and reading Mpe's novel side by side with his essay on the politics of the South African language policy is to gain access into the workings of the psychology of the oppressed. Language in their texts is key to freedom, authority, agency and legitimacy. Mpe states these issues with candour in his novel when he expresses disgust and dismay at publishing houses' constant expectations of novels guided by morality when the society itself is far from moral. He calls this euphemisms, and wonders why in Biology books genitals are called by the real names without any problems but when one seeks to do the same in Sepedi they are met with indignant responses – they have criminalised such linguistic honesty (56). This tends to imply that the same silencing that hindered the cultural workers under apartheid continues to suffocate the writers of post-94. But not Mpe and Magogodi. "Silence is not a place to hide the tide of violence", as Magogodi writes (2004).

In these two authors' texts, where there once dwelt silence now exists a freedom with words, song, orality and perfomativity. Through the texts explored in the dissertation, Magogodi and Mpe break the vicious cycle that has sought to oppress them and their people for centuries: they use *writing as 'righting'*: addressing the human condition and constitutional human rights, as well as righting the wrongs of the past. In literature, a language is needed to break silence, and we have observed the various strategies that these authors use to be 'outspoken'. Cultural silence has also pushed the national literature discourse to the peripheries, that is, through censorship authors have not been able to be 'outspoken' and 'fight with the tongue' freely. However, through this tradition of literature Mpe and Magogodi have participated in shifting that discourse from the margins to the centre. And because they write texts that are about the empowerment of selves, their centre is that in their hearts and the hearts of their immediate communities. Through language they have ensured that their centre is closer to home and does not aim to feed the grand centre of the imperialist dogma.

Silence and violence coexisted in apartheid South Africa. However, the violence that was the driving force of apartheid continues to ravage society today. That same violence that Mpe tells us "would be called surrealism or magic realism or some other strange realism were it simply told or written as a piece of fiction" (19) is the same violence that populates the pages of these two authors' texts. Fanon (1967) wrote extensively about this violence in his revered and controversial chapter in *Wretched of the Earth* called 'Concerning Violence'. In it, his

main premise is that violence begets violence and that the colonised subject will inevitably strike back with as much violence. This assertion holds, and when Mpe tells us in his epigraph that "a human being is a beast that when cornered throws away all weapons and fights with the tongue" we start to understand why a human is cornered. The theatrical performance of apartheid violence that is neither surrealism nor magic realism has led to various forms of violence in post-94, and tenets of the violence can be seen through language in both texts in this dissertation. Mpe and Magogodi are in combat, and with their pens and tongues, they riot, protest and dissect the pathologies of post-94 society through combat literature. Numerous techniques are mentioned in the dissertation of ways and forms in which the two authors force, bludgeon and '*donder*' the standard 'accepted' English form.

Having said that, many may argue that the violence and combat that populates the two authors' texts automatically make these texts spectacular in nature; and that they in fact are, contrary to what I argue, 'writing back' to a colonial centre. To this I respond that the core themes in these texts address the aftermath of colonialism. By this I refer to the inferiority complex, the symbolic violence caused by inscription of black identities, black history and indigenous languages. Magogodi and Mpe speak out to this social and cultural violence. And by doing so, it inevitably seems as though they are attacking the 'centre'. That may seem so, however, by focusing on these factors mentioned above, they give attention to the 'periphery' as opposed to the 'centre'. They do not 'write back', they write forward and inward. They are focusing on how to move forward from over four hundred years of symbolic violence. They are using writing to 'right' the wrongs of the past, to 'right' the visible effects of oppression seen today, and to 'right' the future which is forward not backwards.

Language plays a pivotal role in Mpe's and Magogodi's texts and it participates in reviving a collective consciousness of those who have a shared history of oppression. It is a crucial time to sever one's identity from that inscribed by the past oppressive regimes. Language is intricately linked to the people's dynamic and diverse culture and heritage, as Thiongo (1986) has asserted. Through remembering their rich culture and heritage, the people can take pride in where they come from and construct new identities informed by pride in oneself, one's history and one's future. This identity can be rooted in South Africa and relate to Africa, and hence its people can look no further than Africa for "ways of living" (Mda, 1995). Magogodi and Mpe do not say looking to the West is wrong, but rather that a loss of pride in our indigenous languages is a loss of our memory of the past, which is where we can find the tapestry of heritage linked to Africa. The biggest issue remains, a loss of memory is

tantamount to a loss of identity. Language facilitates this process of memory and remembering. By disengaging with our languages, we disengage with our identities. There must be a shift from dismembering to remembering: the people must aspire to come out of the struggles of the past by putting together the fragmented past caused by symbolic violence, at any cost (reflected in the protestant attitude in both texts). The language of the struggle is interconnected with the memory of that struggle, and this further consolidates the role of language in localising power, gaining agency and asserting authorship. When the people's experiences are included in the discourse of history and shifting paradigm of democracy, they can, via that particular language, relate to that discourse through remembering. They can furthermore visualise freedom and insert themselves in that picture, and, filled with pride, participate in the rebuilding of their communities, societies and ultimately, nation.

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Appendix

This section of the dissertation provides full length poems by Magogodi that are discussed in Chapter Four. The poems are from the anthology *Outspoken* (Magogodi, 2004), and I have retained the original page numbers, to which I make reference to in the citations of the relevant poems in Chapter Four.