

DEPICTING THE DISPOSSESSED IN THE 1940S: AN ANALYSIS OF
HOLMER JOHANSEN'S DIE ONTERFOES AND PETER ADRIAANS'S MINE
BOY.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation develops an account of the ideological and historical determinants embedded in the depiction of the dispossessed in two novels of the 1940s: Holmer Johanssen's Die Ontferdes and Peter Abrahams's Mine Boy. The study of Die Ontferdes is by way of a critical reading of Pierre Macherey's A Theory of Literary Production, in particular of his theoretical proposition that the literary text itself reveals the limits of the ideology which informs its production. The analysis of Die Ontferdes shows that the author's concern to portray compassionately the travails of the contemporary impoverished Afrikaner is determined by ideological discourses which conceal class contradictions in the interest of the dominant social forces of the 1930s and 1940s. In meeting the demands of its fictional form, especially its enabling "theme of apprenticeship", Die Ontferdes also foregrounds the contradictions of its ideological programme.

Mine Boy also utilises the "theme of apprenticeship" but in order to realise a diametrically opposed ideological programme to that of Die Ontferdes. A comparative analysis of Mine Boy and Die Ontferdes highlights the ideological imperatives governing the depiction of the dispossessed Afrikaner in Die Ontferdes but also demonstrates that Mine Boy undermines its project of explaining that racial oppression has its basis in the economic structures of society. Thus Macherey's theoretical proposition is shown to have relevance for two novels with diverging and opposed ideological agendas.

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university, nor has it been prepared under the aegis or with the assistance of any other body or organisation or person outside the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

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INTRODUCTION

Both Die Ontriefdes (1944) and Mine Boy (1948) have as their central characters the poor and dispossessed in the South African urban environment. Mine Boy has been termed the "first proletarian novel"¹ in English South African fiction; Die Ontriefdes has been viewed as depicting "proletariërbestaan",² the people from an "arbeidersbuurt",³ Both novels voice a protest against the South African society in which they are set. Although Johanness and Abrahams occupy a different social position to the central characters in the two novels, they draw from their own experience to represent the world of the "disinherited" and the oppressed. Johanness, a member of the educated petty bourgeoisie, had spent time in Riversdal where he had come into contact with the impoverished Afrikaner.⁴ Abrahams had been born into a working-class family, had grown up in the slums of Johannesburg, and had then as a young adult joined the ranks of the radical intelligentsia.⁵

As part of the Afrikaans literary canon Die Ontriefdes has been situated in the realist tradition of the "probleemdrama", the problem in the novel being that of the impoverished or proletarianised Afrikaner of especially the 1920s and 1930s. Mine Boy is seen within "English South African Literature" as belonging to the tradition of factional realism that situates itself within the complexities of South African social and racial cleavages. Whereas Mine Boy has been received as an ideological novel, concerned with a "kind of propaganda",⁶ Die Ontriefdes has been evaluated as being reasonably "algemeen-menslik",⁷ a novel of social protest and compassion but dealing with the white Afrikaans worker as "human being", dealing with "life" not politics or ideology. Little attempt has been made⁸ to situate Die Ontriefdes within a social and political milieu, or to explain the historical and ideological determinants embedded in the novel. My concern in Die Ontriefdes will therefore be with these determinants

and Mine Boy will be analysed comparatively to highlight and support aspects of my analysis of Die Onkerfdes.

In the first chapter of the dissertation I give a critical overview of the theoretical strategies of Pierre Macherey as they have informed my analysis of Die Onkerfdes. The first chapter also includes a brief summary of Macherey's critique of traditional literary criticism which I have used as a theoretical framework for my overview of the existing readings on Die Onkerfdes in chapter two. Chapter three explores the relationship between what can be identified as the ideological project of Die Onkerfdes and its realisation in literary form. The means employed by the author to realise his project, especially what I identify as the "theme of apprenticeship", enables a fictive solution to the contradictions of the ideology which informs the project of the work, while simultaneously revealing those contradictions. The narrative shows its protagonist growing towards a sense of autonomy and identity by freely accepting a system of values and beliefs - but by attempting to combine growth with submission, the narrative inadvertently depicts impoverished Afrikaners as incapable of shaping their own destinies, as defeated, not delivered from their material deprivation. In chapter four I show that the theme of apprenticeship is utilised also in Mine Boy but towards a different end and effect. Thus, by contrast, I highlight the specific ideological forms and contradictions in Die Onkerfdes.

The Heinemann edition of Mine Boy and the A.A. Balkema edition of Die Onkerfdes were used in the research. Quotations from the texts will be referenced as (NB) and (DO).

CHAPTER 1

LITERATURE AND IDEOLOGY

1.1. Introduction

In A Theory of Literary Production Pierre Macherey gives an account of the relations between the literary text, ideology and history, as well as a critique of "traditional" literary criticism and structuralism. Macherey shows the complex contradictions that produce the literary text and he develops a critical strategy to enable one to identify the gaps and silences which reveal the repressed presence of ideological elements in the text.¹ Macherey also relates these absences and contradictions to the text's historical conditions of production. Macherey writes as a marxist philosopher inside the problematic of the early Althusser. Louis Althusser is, of course, not primarily a literary theorist, but his attempt to combine marxism and structuralism, seen as mutually exclusive discourses in the late 1950s and early 1960s,² lead to a rethinking of the relationship between literature and ideology, especially to a re-evaluation of the so-called "reflectionist" model for literature.

1.1.1. Base and superstructure

Although Marx himself never systematically worked out any theory specifying the exact links between literature and society (he twice made attempts to do so)³, the scattered texts on literature and art by him and Engels have contributed to, but also hampered, attempts to develop a marxist aesthetic. In particular, two letters by Engels have perplexed marxist literary theorists who have tried to reconcile Engels' position ("The more the opinions of the author remain hidden, the better for the work of art") with Lenin's argument - in the early polemic against aestheticism - for literature becoming a part of the general cause of the proletariat ("Literature must become Party Literature").⁴ However, marxist literary critics have

not so much based their theories of literature on these scattered texts as on Marx's more general thought and methodology.

The proposition of a determining base (the means and relations of production) and a determined superstructure (legal, political, religious, aesthetic structures; also illusions, habits of thought, conception of life) has at times led to a theory or description of art as "reflection". This "metaphor of reflection" as Raymond Williams points out, has a long history in the analysis of art and ideas - art as "reflecting the real world", "holding the mirror up to nature", etc.⁴ However, the concept of a base and a superstructure provided a "materialist" approach to literature: art, as part of the superstructure, reflected reality, the base, and if it did not, it was often regarded as false or unimportant.⁵

The result of the reflection-metaphor for a theory of the novel and society has been an inclination to favour "realist" modes over other literary forms of writing. For Georg Lukács great fiction mirrors the complex totality of a society itself and reveals the essential traditions of the historical period to which it belongs. He names such art "realism" - the realist work being rich in a complex set of relations between man, nature and history. These relations should embody what is most "typical" about a particular phase in history, those forces which are from a marxist perspective most historically significant and progressive.⁶ The task of the realist writer is to flesh out these "typical" trends, to penetrate the incidental phenomena of social life in order to reveal the essences of a condition.⁷ Lukács's interpretation of the social content of literature, his notion of "typicality" and condemnation of naturalism and modernism (as opposed to "realism") has been heavily attacked (by amongst others the Frankfurt School which defended modernism)⁸, yet his holding himself "responsible to history" is praised by critics who do not share his beliefs.⁹

1.1.2. Althusser and the social formation

Althusser argues that the "social formation" should not be viewed as governed by a simple or essential contradiction - the "class contradiction" - but as consisting of a number of distinct but interrelated levels of practical activity ("practices"): the economic, the political, the ideological. Each of these practices is "relatively autonomous" in relation to the others, although determined in the last instance by the level of the economic. Each is governed by laws of its own that cannot be read off from elsewhere.¹² The key concept is that of "practice". In For Marx Althusser explains:

By *practice* in general I shall mean any process of transformation of a determinate given raw material into a determinate product, a transformation effected by a determinate human labour, using determinate means (of production).¹³

These formulations have meant that an "analysis that sets out to read literary texts so as to reveal the *essence* of the social whole to which they refer must prove irrelevant".¹⁴ Rather than the focus being on literature reflecting social reality, attention shifts to the effects which it is possible to attribute to literature as a social practice, not a secondary reflection of something else. It is the effect of the transformative relationship between *ideology* and literature which is the focus of Macherey's theoretical intervention in A Theory of Literary Production. As the difficulties surrounding the concept of ideology have been well documented,¹⁵ I will content myself with a brief overview of its various formulations so as to clarify further usage of the term in my study.

1.1.3. Ideology

It has been pointed out that the present uncertainty surrounding the concept of ideology lies with the word being used to indicate both a system of "normative" ideas

and at the same time a critique of that system.¹⁶ The normative use suggests either universal processes of the mind or a "world-view" expressing the values of a particular social group, while the critical approach suggests the possibility for change and opposition.¹⁷ Christopher Butler makes the distinction between ideology as denoting a "framework of belief" of "world picture" (which, among other things, can be described to give some indication of the way in which beliefs cohere) and ideology as "more than a framework of belief, in that it is wedded to a programme for action in the light of a model of the nature of human society".¹⁸ In this latter sense the way in which individuals stand in relation to a framework of belief is open to criticism and, from a certain marxist perspective, they can be thought of as being deluded, prevented from seeing things as "they really are", suffering from "false consciousness".

Williams takes account of these distinctions in setting out three common versions of the concept of ideology:

- (i) a system of beliefs characteristic of a particular class or group;
- (ii) a system of illusory beliefs - false ideas or false consciousness - which can be contrasted with true or scientific knowledge;
- (iii) the general process of the production of meanings and ideas.¹⁹

As a "system of beliefs" the term ideology can also suggest struggle and opposition since it can be argued that the political actions, individual goals and ideals that arise out of the system are dependent on the legitimacy of specific social institutions and practices and on the power relations they uphold²⁰. Ideology is therefore also seen as "a world picture which stabilises or legitimises domination".²¹

However, the debates around the concept of ideology are complex and beyond the scope of this study. I will conclude

with a broad indication of Macherey's view of ideology as elaborated in A Theory of Literary Production. For Macherey ideology is a "non - systematic ensemble of significations"²² but also a "false totality"²³ as its function is to efface all traces of the contradictions of existence.²⁴ Thus one cannot speak, according to Macherey, of "ideological contradictions" since ideology can only be put into contradiction by other practices which work on it from without; for example, scientific practice which "does away with ideology".²⁵ The language of ideology is the everyday language, a "language of illusion",²⁶ as it does not present to people the real nature of their existence or the real nature of their relationship to the conditions of their existence.

In the following section I give an overview of Macherey's theory and strategies as well as some criticism, as expressed by other theorists, of his positions. I then combine Macherey's propositions with its critiques and also with the theoretical development in Macherey's later work so as to construct a framework for my analysis of Dis-Interfides.

1.2. Macherey's "A Theory of Literary Production"

1.2.1. On literary criticism

In A Theory of Literary Production, Macherey starts by asking: What is literary criticism? If criticism is the attempt to know a work of literature, Macherey argues that one has given the enterprise of criticism a domain rather than an object, and has chosen an art or technique rather than a form of knowledge.²⁷ A technique or art appropriates for itself an empirically given domain, and seeks to reduce the distance between thought and object by "knowing"²⁸. Theoretical practice, he argues, following Althusser,²⁹ produces knowledge, thinks its object into being. The object of critical knowledge is never given but progressively discovered:

This means that a rigorous knowledge must beware of all forms of empiricism, for the objects of any rational investigation have no prior existence but are thought into being. The object does not pass before the interrogating eye, for thought is not the passive perception of a general disposition, as though the object should offer to share itself, like an open fruit both displayed and concealed by a single gesture. The act of knowing is not like listening to a discourse already constituted, a mere fiction which we have simply to translate, it is rather the elaboration of a new discourse, the articulation of a silence.

Knowledge is not the discovery or reconstruction of a latent meaning, forgotten or concealed. It is something newly raised up, an addition to the reality from which it begins...²⁰

For Macherey what can be said of the literary text and what the text itself is saying, constitutes two different kinds of discourse. Between the writer and the critic there is a difference which is not the difference between two points of view on the same object, but the division between two forms of discourse "that have nothing in common".²¹ The critic employs a new language which brings out a difference within the text by showing "that it is other than it is".²² Traditional criticism, however, has fallen prey to a number of fallacies which renders it unscientific.

Criticism falling into the empiricist fallacy treats the text as an object of consumption - it only asks how to receive and describe the spontaneously given object. It treats thought as a description or translation - an incorporation of the unknown into the known, and reduces the field of knowledge to the emergence of truth.²³ Science however, in Macherey's Althusserian problematic, produces knowledge, thus thought cannot be viewed as a provisional tactic or purely a means through which truth and reality are approached in order to take possession of them. The

"capacity of thought to generate novelty, to actively transform its initial data",³⁴ must be acknowledged.

Normative criticism, on the other hand, intervenes to modify the text in order for it to be better assimilated: it should be "other than it is". It grasps the text in comparison to an ideal object which precedes it, a model image present within the text from which the text deviates.³⁵ The characteristic mode of normative criticism is to inscribe a "could do better" in the work's margin.³⁶ As Macherey points out, normative criticism is in fact a displacement of the empiricist fallacy, a sublimation of empiricism - it transposes the empirical characteristics of the work by attributing it to a model existing alongside the text, a model which guarantees both the work's consistency and its readability.³⁷

Literary criticism, if it is to be a certain form of knowledge, has to have an object which is not given but which is a product of literary criticism. To this object literary criticism applies a certain effort of transformation: criticism constructs its object, produces the work and the work that the author wrote is not precisely the work explicated by the critic.³⁸

1.2.2. On literary production

Within Macherey's theoretical framework the notion of the author as mysterious creator also disappears and is replaced by a worker transforming a given raw material through the employment of a determinate means of production. This worker's raw material is the "language of illusion" - "the vehicle and source of everyday ideology".³⁹ The means of production are the specialised techniques of the writer's work, and here too Macherey rejects the artistic freedom implicit in the idea of creativity. The writer makes decisions about how he or she is going to use the tools at his or her disposal but the decisions are determined:

The causes that determine the existence of the work are not free implements useful to elaborate any meaning: they have a sort of specific weight, a peculiar power, which means that even when they are used and blended into a totality they retain a certain autonomy, not because there is some absolute and transcendent logic of aesthetic facts, but because their real inscription in a history of forms means that they cannot be defined exclusively by their immediate function in a specific work.⁴⁰

Macherey again follows Althusser by arguing that a practice also involves a transformation of the materials of production. The language of illusion (ideology), the raw material of the writer's work, is transformed by the aesthetic activity which arrests language by giving it form. The literary text interrupts and solidifies the apparent motion of ideology and in the process takes a stand against ideology, exposing it, and helps to release us from it.⁴¹ Although Macherey never asks "what is literature", he does offer a "provisional definition":

This enables us to say that the autonomy of the writer's discourse is established from its relationship with the other uses of language: everyday speech, scientific propositions. By its energy and thinness literary discourse mimics theoretical discourse...But in that evocative power, by which it denotes a specific reality, it also imitates the everyday language which is the language of ideology. We could offer a provisional definition of literature as being characterised by this power of parody. Mingling the real uses of language in an endless confrontation, it concludes by revealing their truth. Experimenting with language rather than inventing it, the literary work is both the analogy of a knowledge and a caricature of customary ideology.⁴²

Althusser too has argued that the specific nature of literature lies with its ability to render ideology perceptible so that, within the literary text, the reader is to some extent delivered from the usual mental associations which the dominant ideology sustains:

Let me explain. I believe that the peculiarity of art is to "make us see", "make us perceive", "make us feel" something which alludes to reality...What art makes us see, and therefore gives to us in the form of "seeing", "perceiving" and "feeling" (which is not the form of knowing) is the ideology from which it is born, in which it bathes, from which it detaches itself as art, and to which it alludes. Macherey has shown this very clearly in the case of Tolstoy, by extending Lenin's analyses. Balzac and Solzhenitsyn give us a "view" of the ideology to which their work alludes and with which it is constantly fed, a view which presupposes a retreat, an internal distanciation from the very ideology from which their novels emerged. They make us "perceive" (but not know) in some sense from the inside, by an internal distance, the very ideology in which they are held.⁴³

This internal distance, according to Macherey, is achieved by the effect of the form which the text bestows on ideology. The text, through its formal devices, establishes a transformative relationship between itself and ideology, allowing one to see the "usually concealed contours of the ideology from which it emerges".⁴⁴ This does not mean that the text is able to become its own criticism. However, by representing ideology within certain fictional limits, it does resist assimilation into the flow of ideology, thus giving an implicit critique of its ideological content.⁴⁵

In bestowing a form on ideology the text does not, Macherey stresses, contain a meaning that it conceals within its achieved form.⁴⁶ Certain kinds of structuralism, by treating the literary text as a "message" whose "code" has

to be deciphered, reduce it to being an intermediary, the simulacrum of a concealed structure. This approach, Macherey argues, rests on a Platonic notion of the artifact:

...when Barthes says that analysis elaborates a copy of the work it must be understood that the work is itself a copy. The object analysed is considered as the simulacrum of structure: to rediscover the structure is to construct a simulacrum of the simulacrum. This method of analysis... actually derives from the very traditional theory of the model.

...We are being offered a very thorough version of a familiar notion: the writer does not write, he merely appears to be writing; his production is merely an appearance because the object of this production is located behind it. Literary criticism, consequently, can be subsumed as an aspect of the theory of communication...its object exceeds the limited domain of literature: it is the art of transmitting and interpreting messages.⁴⁷

Furthermore, Macherey contends, structuralist criticism turns upon the traditional and metaphysical notion of harmony and totality: a work only exists in so far as it realises a totality, and it is this organic unity that endows it with meaning, a content.⁴⁸ Thus criticism, Macherey argues, becomes interpretation: "it elucidates the principle of this unity, the rationality of the whole".⁴⁹ To "defeat" the interpretive fallacy, Macherey proposes a theoretical hypothesis: the work exists above all by its "determinate" absences⁵⁰, by what it does not say, in its relation to what it is not. The literary text is generated from the incompatibility of several meanings: the text expresses the "reality" in which people live, a reality which is their ideology, and also articulates an "illusory order" at the level of its literary composition.⁵¹ This order which the text professes includes the fictive resolution of ideological conflicts, but a resolution "so

precarious that it is obvious in the very letter of the text where incoherence and incompleteness burst forth".¹² The incompleteness of the work, its "lack" and "absences", is what ties it to its ideological problematic: ideology is present in the form of its loquacious but obstinate silences.¹³ Thus the meaning of the work is not buried in its depths, rather it is on its margins, "at the limits where it ceases to be what it claims to be because it has reached back to the very conditions of its possibility".¹⁴ The task of criticism is not to fill in the "missing pieces" as it is in the nature of the text to be incomplete, but to install itself in the incompleteness of the work, to explain the ideological necessity of its silences and gaps.

1.2.3. The unconscious of the text

How does the critic go about making these silences speak? Macherey admits that this critical task is not simple. Drawing on Nietzsche (who asked "Hinterfrage", questions which come from behind, e.g. when we are confronted with any manifestation which someone has permitted us to see, we may ask: what is it meant to conceal? What is it meant to draw our attention from?);¹⁵ Macherey proposes that the critical task implies the "superposition" of two questions. The first question is one of structures:

In so far as a conscious intention to realise a project of writing begins invariably by taking the form of an ideological imperative - something to say (not the acceptance of rules), in other words something that must not be said - it will have to adopt the conditions of such an undertaking: the implements, the actual means of this practice; and the rules will play their part in so far as they are directly useful.¹⁶

The forms of expression which the writer invents or finds are forms which can be used immediately as the means of expression for a determinate content. These forms can be

inscribed in an ideological history which is the text's principle of reality and supplies its means of expression.⁵⁷ This ideological history gives the work, its reality but also that which it is not. The answer to the first question therefore also constitutes a question: what is the work compelled to say (which the work did not want to say) in order to say what it wanted to say?⁵⁸ The critic must show, Macherey argues, how it is possible to render visible the conditions of which the text has no awareness - as the text is only aware of the conditions that it adopts and uses. Macherey accounts for the text's latent knowledge by taking recourse to Freud's concept of the unconscious:

...we must show a sort of splitting within the work: this division is its unconscious, in so far as it possesses one - the unconscious which is history, the play of history beyond its edges....this is why it is possible to trace the path which leads from the haunted work to that which haunts it. Once again it is not a question of redoubling the work with an unconscious, but a question of revealing in the very gestures of expression that which it is not. Then, the reverse side of what is written will be history itself.⁵⁹

According to Freud's formulations dreams have a manifest content, which is the dream as experienced or remembered, and a latent content, which is discovered by interpretation. He also held that the dreamer performs work (the dream-work) in translating the latent into the manifest content, thus dream-interpretation is the reverse of dream-work.⁶⁰ Terry Eagleton, in his discussion of Macherey's work, elaborates on Macherey's notion of the text's "unconscious" by pointing to the correspondences between Freud's formulation on dreams and Macherey's theory of literature and ideology.⁶¹ Freud's "uppermost dream layer" exists to organise the dream, to produce from it a relatively non-contradictory text. Underlying this is the incomplete, distorted text of the dream itself, which

resists interpretation. The resistance is responsible for the gaps and confusion that interrupt dreams. The dream is a conflict between unconscious material seeking expression, and "the intervention of an ideological censor".⁵² Usually the unconscious is able to say what it wants, but not in the way it wants to say it. This dissonance is especially noticeable in the dream's gaps: "the breaks in the text".⁵³

Thus, according to Eagleton, both Freud and Macherey explain the gaps and silences in the text by referring the discourse in question to the conditions of production.⁵⁴ One could also take this further: corresponding to the "uppermost dream level" is the literary text as determinate representation, striving to create a coherent and internally consistent fictive world. In spite of itself, the text reveals omissions, absences, transgressions which betray the presence of ideology in the text. Like the "real" dream the literary text is divided, in conflict with itself, internally displaced and decentred. The contradiction between the formless language of ideology and the literary form of the text creates an absence at the centre of the text, its unconscious, which is its relation to the historical conditions of its production.

The unconscious of the work (not the author) arises in the interior of the work itself, is constructed in the moment of its entry into literary form. It is not a matter, Macherey stresses, "of introducing a historical explanation which is stuck on to the work from the outside"⁵⁵ but of showing and explaining the absence in the work, the gap between the ideological project and the literary form.

1.2.4. Macherey's analysis of a text

The texts of Jules Verne for example, Macherey argues, show that "if Jules Verne chose to be the spokesman of a certain ideological condition, he would not choose to be what he in fact became".⁵⁶ Macherey's analysis of Verne's texts show the incompatible elements between what he terms the level of representation (the ideological project or programme)

and the level of *figuration* (the realisation of the project in its literary form).⁶⁷ The conscious project of Verne's work is linked to the colonialist ideology of the bourgeoisie of the late nineteenth century, expressed in his works in the general theme of the "Conquest of Nature by Industry". This general theme is articulated in the three major themes of Verne's works: the voyage, scientific invention and colonisation. The theme of colonisation is less explicit in the works, "as though it had to be kept out of sight".⁶⁸ However, the protagonist of the stories is nearly always a scientist who is also a conqueror and an appropriator, "one who moves into the unknown as the expression of his power".⁶⁹ Verne's protagonists overcome the obstacles placed in their path and penetrate to one of nature's extremities⁷⁰ (the centre of the earth, the moon, the bottom of the sea) but, as Macherey shows, the journeys they undertake are disclosed as having happened before, *someone has anticipated them*. This "aberrant phenomenon" in the works of Verne, that anticipation is expressed only in the form of a regression,⁷¹ does not point to a contradiction in the ideology that informs Verne's project, but to a *decentering* in the novel in relation to what seemed its essential preoccupation, to the real limits of its bourgeois ideology.

In his analysis of The Mysterious Island Macherey elaborates on his insights. In The Mysterious Island the theme of colonisation is openly described but it is disrupted by an unpredicted and contradictory element. The intrigue surrounding the presence of Captain Nemo on the island breaks the ideological realisation of the project, develops a plot which seems "more real" to the reader.⁷² Far from the island being deserted "virgin territory" to be transformed by the application of human endeavour, science and industry, it is artificial, constructed by Nemo, its secret stage-manager, and the colonists are more acted upon than acting.⁷³ Furthermore, the island is not the site of a beginning but of an ending. When Nemo dies the island disappears with him and there is no trace of the work

accomplished by the colonists - the attempt at colonisation has failed. Nemo's existence in the text represents the return of the Robinson Crusoe story, the solitary struggle to transform and appropriate, but a "tragic, condemned Crusoe who does not progress, because he is already an anachronism".⁷⁴ However, in showing that a certain fictional mode is historically finished, the text ends with the opposite to what was intended: it finishes with destruction rather than conquest, with dispossession rather than appropriation. The "flaws" in Verne's project, Macherey stresses, are also the index of its independence, its distance from ideology. In revealing the limits of its ideology the text shows the history which constitutes it:

The conquering bourgeoisie, whose fictional potential image Verne wanted to draw, was not a traveler from nowhere: the new man, as Verne manages actually and positively to describe him, is not a solitary, the conqueror of an absolute, the appropriator of virgin nature, but simply the master of a certain number of relations. His most essential feature is that he has companions; he is accompanied not only by other men but also by...all that history in which they are ineluctably involved...The society which Verne "represents" has not yet cast off the fetters which checked the old mercantile society...and thus it is the prisoner of old dreams. The bourgeoisie has its revolution behind it: it cannot be revived by any kind of technical progress. Consequently bourgeois ideology has become incapable of thinking and representing the future.⁷⁵

Verne does not, Macherey argues, counter historical myths by recording the discord in the historical reality upon which the coherence of ideology rests. Nor is his book a simple reflection of the contradictions of its time, or a deliberated description of the project of a social class at a given time. Rather, history features in the text unconsciously, in gaps and contradictions between its

intentions and the realisation of its project, and Macherey offers an explanation "of the discords which connect the work to itself".¹⁶

Thus, Macherey's way of reading, as Catherine Belsey points out, is precisely contrary to the traditional Anglo-American critical practices which seek order and totality, rectifying inconsistencies by taking recourse to the author's world-view or the contemporary world picture.¹⁷ Such traditional critical practices become the accomplice of ideology by smoothing out contradictions, sealing the gaps and closing the text, whereas Macherey, Belsey argues, "deconstructs" the text, opens it up, and releases "the possible positions of its intelligibility".¹⁸

1.2.5. Decentering and deconstruction

Although Macherey has been viewed as beginning the work of decentering the text, and of extending Derridian self-contradiction to the level of ideology,¹⁹ there are important differences between his theoretical positions and strategies and those of the deconstructive approach to the text adopted by the so-called "post-structuralists". Belsey argues that when Macherey analyses Jules Verne he finds gaps and contradictions in the text which in "one sense" have always been there to see:

If Verne's nineteenth-century readers did not...recognise the silence with which the work finally confronts its own ideological project, it was because they read from within the same ideological framework, shared the same repressions and took for granted the same silences...Indeed, it is still only by distancing ourselves from the familiar modes of representation that we can expect to identify the areas on which ideology is silent.²⁰

In contrast to Macherey's approach, the concern of critics such as Lacan, Barthes, de Man, Mehler, etc., has been with the production of meaning by *the work of reading* the

text, not the process of production performed by the writer or the socio-historical conditions of the work's production. Within such critical practice the "raw material" is the text itself which is transformed by the employment of new forms of knowledge - Post-Saussurean linguistics; Freudian Psychoanalysis; Austin's Speech Act Theory, etc.⁸¹ Further, although deconstruction, as practised by Jacques Derrida for example, *does* engage in the investigations that marxism encourages (analysis of the covert and overt relations between base and superstructure or institutions and thought)⁸², Macherey's theory and strategies are grounded in the marxist conception of history, the "fundamental reality of the class struggle". As such, "deconstruction is inimical to marxist thought at the point where it questions the validity of any science or method set up in rigid separation from the play of textual meaning".⁸³ Marxist literary critics have countered the attack that marxist criticism is "blind" to the visual and spatial metaphors that determine the logic of its theoretical assumptions⁸⁴ by arguing, for example, that deconstructive criticism "brackets off" the social order, thus simultaneously bracketing off the political forces which seek to transform that order.⁸⁵ However, this study does not aim to do justice to these debates but is located at a specific theoretical conjuncture, namely that represented by the work of Pierre Macherey.

1.2.6. The limits of Macherey's project

For Macherey, as for Althusser, literature is positioned between science and ideology: through its formal mechanisms literature distances ideology from within, loosening its grip, although not usurping the place of knowledge. In seeking to establish the distinctions between "ideology" and "science" Althusser, Tony Bennett argues, construes them as eternal and unchanging forms of cognition, a denial of the "materialism of the superstructure" - the levels of practical activity each with its own material means, relations of production and material products.⁸⁶ Having

theorised "science" and "ideology" epistemologically as invariant forms of cognition, Althusser was forced to theorise "literature" as an equally invariant structure. The concept of literature as "practice" then turns out to be redundant, "a teleological process of the adjustment of the real to the ideal".⁸⁸ Furthermore, Bennett argues

Regarding ideology as the Other of science...Althusser further construed this opposition as inherently a *class* opposition. Rather than conceiving of particular ideologies, particular works of literature and particular sciences which, according to the nature and the uses to which they are put, may be either progressive or regressive in their political implications, each being mapped out as an area of class struggle, Althusser's position implied that class struggle takes place between the eternal verities of science, the eternal falsehoods of ideology and the eternal equivocations of literature.⁸⁹

Bennett finds the formulation that "literature" *as such* hovers between "science" *as such* and "ideology" *as such*, that literary texts occupy a special position in relation to both ideology and science, transforming dominant ideological forms so as to reveal or distance them "impossible to sustain".⁹⁰ A formulation that places literature between the "knowledge" of ideology produced by marxism (which "gives us" ideology in the form of a knowledge of its objective social function) and that ideology itself, Bennett *does* find acceptable but on the condition that it is accepted that it is marxist criticism which does the placing:

It is...Marxist criticism which, through an active and critical intervention, so "works" upon the texts concerned as to make them "reveal" or "distance" the dominant ideological forms to which they are made to "allude". The signification of ideology that they are

thus said to have is not somehow "natural" to them...but is a signification they are made to have by the operations of Marxist criticism upon them.⁹¹

Althusser has conceded the central thrust of the criticism that he has theorised science and ideology (and thus literature) as universal epistemological categories.⁹² Macherey too has subsequently called for a break with the concept of literature as an epistemological category. In a later essay (written in co-authorship with Etienne Balibar)⁹³ Macherey argues that to ask "What is Literature?" is an idealist question, a question about "its universal essence, human and artistic", not about its material function or its existence within historical and social conditions.⁹⁴ Macherey has explained⁹⁵ that the difference between his early work and the later essay "On Literature as an Ideological Form" should be seen as in terms of the effects of Althusser's essay "On Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses".⁹⁶ In this essay Althusser offers an explanation of how it comes about that human beings submit themselves to the dominant ideologies of their societies. Althusser's argument is complex and I will only outline it as it has informed my study.

1.3. "On Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses"

According to Althusser, ideology's major function is the "reproduction of the relations of production".⁹⁷ For example, if capitalism is to survive, then concrete social individuals must be reconciled both to the class structure and to the class positions within it which they occupy. And for Althusser this is assured by the workings of ideology. Althusser also sets down two conjoint theses:

- (i) There is no practice except by and in an ideology.
- (ii) There is no ideology except by the subject and for the subject.⁹⁸

The structure of ideology is "subject-centred":

...ideology "acts" or "functions" in such a way that it "recruits" subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all) or "transforms" the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation...called interpellation or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or others) hailing: "Hey, you there!"⁹⁹

People "recognise" themselves in the ways that ideology addresses them as subjects, they "freely" adopt the subject-positions necessary for their participation in the social formation. Although "subjected" to ideology, individuals experience themselves as autonomous, creative and responsible for their actions. As a result they "work all by themselves", willingly reproducing the relations of production.¹⁰⁰

It must also be remembered that for Althusser, ideology, which does the recruiting, is far more unconscious than a set of explicit doctrines. Even the ruling class, Althusser had said in For Marx, "does not maintain with the ruling ideology, which is its own ideology, an external and lucid relation of pure utility and cunning".¹⁰¹ Thus, in this later essay, Althusser draws attention to the constructedness of people's existence again, not only of their explicit ideas and arguments but of people's actual experience of themselves as autonomous, self-generating individuals. Although people perceive themselves as free individuals, that the world is centred on them (on "me"), it is ideology which has done this "centering" by hailing them as one of its subjects. As Eagleton says, being in the "grip of ideology", transformed from individual to subject, we see social reality as "natural", rather "than questioning how it, and ourselves, came to be constructed, and so could possibly be transformed".¹⁰²

Furthermore, Althusser argues, ideological forms are manifested through the workings of determinate practices in

determinate social relations, through what Althusser calls the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA).¹⁰³ ISAs present themselves to the observer in the form of distinct and specialised institutions and function predominantly by ideology (in contrast to the Repressive State Apparatus which functions mainly by violence and repression).¹⁰⁴ Althusser names a few of these ISAs - the religious ISA, the educational ISA, the family ISA, the communications ISA and also the cultural ISA which would include literature, the Arts, sports, etc.¹⁰⁵ Although the different ISAs seem to relate to diverse and disparate areas of social practice, they are constituted in a unity in that they all function to secure the reproduction of the dominant ideology, which is the ideology of the ruling class.¹⁰⁶

Far from seeing "Literature" as a practice which "distances" "Ideology" Althusser's formulations imply that literary production is an institutionalised social practice which ensures "class repression" and guarantees "the conditions of exploitation and its reproduction".¹⁰⁷ The concept of ideology also undergoes a change. Ideology now is not constituted as a prescientific mode of cognition which functions to efface all traces of contradiction in social relationships, but is seen as a material system of social practices which, by interpellating individuals as subjects, secures the reproduction of the conditions of production.

1.3.1. Macherey's revision

In "On Literature as an Ideological Form" Macherey restates the relationship between literature and ideology: literature is a particular ideological form, not reducible to other ideologies outside of it, but also not a practice which bestows form on an ideological content:

Such a pairing is thoroughly mechanical, and, moreover, serves to corroborate the way in which the ideology of literature by displacement misconstrues its historic determinance. It merely prolongs the

endless false dialectic of "form" and "content" whereby the artificially imposed terms alternate so that literature is sometimes perceived as content (ideology), sometimes as form ("real" literature). To define literature as a particular ideological form is to pose quite another problem: the specificity of ideological effects produced by literature and the means (techniques) of production.¹⁰⁸

Macherey's focus in this essay is the specific function of literature in reproducing the dominant ideology. Although Macherey here rejects the view that literature's special effect is to distance ideology, to take a stand against it, his elaboration of "literary effects" provides complementary insights to the critical strategies as proposed in A Theory of Literary Production.

As in A Theory of Literary Production Macherey stresses that literary production must not be studied from the viewpoint of its unity, its illusory totality and self-sufficiency but from its material diversity.¹⁰⁹ However, "literature" does not put "ideology" into contradiction with itself, but rather, as a particular ideological form, is produced by the effect of ideological contradictions, "in the last analysis through the effect of contradictory class positions within ideology".¹¹⁰ The signs of these contradictions (which are historically determined) appear in the text as unevenly resolved conflicts and are formed in the literary text itself. The text is incomplete, irregular and dispersed because it provides an imaginary solution to irreconcilable contradictions:

We shall say that literature "begins" with the imaginary solution to implacable ideological contradictions, with the representation of that solution: not in the sense of representing i.e. "figuring" (by images, allegories, symbols or arguments) a solution which is really there (to repeat, literature is produced because such a solution

is impossible) but in the sense of providing a "mise en scène", a presentation as solution of the very terms of an insurmountable contradiction, by means of various displacements and substitutions.¹¹¹

Thus, Macherey's emphasis has shifted: the literary text is ruptured by its attempt to cure and placate insoluble ideological contradictions (which Macherey now designates as the "raw material" of the text),¹¹² not, as previously proposed, by the conflict between the text's formal constraints and its ideological discourse. Yet, and here Macherey links up with his earlier work, the literary text as a *specific form of writing* does show that its expressive freedom is ideologically determined and curtailed:

...the literary text is not so much the expression of ideology (its "putting into words" [sa mise en mots]) as its staging (mise en scène), its display, an operation which has inbuilt disadvantages since it cannot be done without showing its limits, thereby revealing its inability to subsume a hostile ideology.¹¹³

Although the literary text is articulated in a special "language of compromise" which presents a fictive resolution of ideological conflicts "as natural and so both necessary and inevitable",¹¹⁴ the text's silences, gaps, absences are the signs of its inability to abolish the contradictions from which it is made. On the basis of this formulation these gaps and silences are not the signs of the text's unconscious knowledge of the conditions of its production, but rather points of entry for the reconstitution of the ideological contradictions from the system of textual strategies produced to conceal them.

One of the literary text's major strategies is to promote a process of identification between the text's reader and its fictional characters.¹¹⁵ Drawing on Althusser's theory of the interpellation of the individual as "subject", Macherey argues that the "identification effect of literature" rests

on the constituting of *subjects* "since there is only ever identification of one subject with another".¹¹⁶ Through its "reality effect", its presentation of a story which is in some way analogous to life,¹¹⁷ the text offers the reader a subject-position from which to understand and recognise its characters and its world. As subject the reader partakes in the production of an unthreatening array of ideological identities:

The realistic effect is the basis of this interpellation which makes characters or merely discourses "live" and which makes readers take up an attitude towards imaginary struggles as they would towards real ones, though undangerously. They flourish here, the subjects we have already named: the Author and his Readers, but also the Author and his Characters, and the Reader and his characters via the mediator, the Author - the Author identified with his Characters, or "on the contrary" with one of their Judges, and likewise for the Reader. And from there, the Author, the Reader, the Characters opposite their universal abstract subjects: God, History, the People, Art. The list is neither final nor finishable.¹¹⁸

1.4. Making use of Macherey

My analysis of Die Unterfiden draws critically from both Macherey's early and later work. Following Macherey in his later work, I do not approach the text from the assumption that it categorically "distances" ideology but rather view its effects as derived from a specific form of a practice of writing within society and its ideology.

The realist text, the dominant literary form in bourgeois society, constructs a position for the reader from which it and its fictive world are readily intelligible, diverting the reader from what is contradictory to a renewed recognition of what she or he already "knows" and "understands".¹¹⁹ In its presentation of a recognisable and internally coherent world the realist text conceals the

contradictions of its ideological "raw materials" and the artificial nature of its own production. The task of the critic should be to deny the "naturalness" of the text by, as Macherey proposes, reconstituting the contradictions in the text from their system of concealment and describing the text's "moment in the reproduction of the dominant ideology".¹²⁰

The problem with this approach is that it tends to overlook the signs of resistance from competing ideologies and discourses (for example, from dominated sectors of society) to be found in the literary text itself. Macherey's earlier work, with its emphasis on the literary text as the site of *incompatible* discourses, provides a methodological approach to the text which does not reduce its production to, in Macherey's words, "a single series of conditions" - not even to its function of reproducing the dominant ideology. Within this framework the critical quest is also one for the conflicts and transgressions in the text which undermine or even subvert its ideological programme, for the defects which give the literary text "a history and a relation to the historical".¹²¹

My point of departure in the analysis of Die Unterdegen is what Macherey calls the "something to say" on the part of the author, his project or intentions. The conscious intentions of the author I have established from within the text, especially from the position of identification constructed by the reader with one of the *subjects* of the narrative itself. My identification of the project of the author does not rest on establishing a "subjective viewpoint" but on Macherey's view that the author "always reveals or writes from a certain *position*..." in relation to an "ideological climate".¹²² The author's concerns in depicting the subordinate class of poor Afrikaners (in the text simply "arm mensche") I situate in an ideological history, a history which generates, in Macherey's words, the text's "thread of problematics",¹²³ its framework of ideas and accompanying problems. The focus of my analysis

of Die Ontarfdes is the author's utilisation of the "theme of apprenticeship", the solution adopted by the author to the problem of the means whereby to express a determinate project effectively.

In my analysis of the theme of apprenticeship I trace the text's production of its ideological discourses, discourses which conceal and obscure contradictions in the interest of the dominant forces in society, and the manner in which the text itself foregrounds the limits of its primary ideological "raw materials". Again, that the text questions its own ideology I do not regard as its invariant, constitutive characteristic but rather see this effect as arising from the historically conditioned demands of two discourses: its ideological project or programme and its enabling fictional form. Furthermore, I employ, where appropriate, terminology developed by structuralist theorists to describe the text's actual realisation of narrative fiction's "differentia specifica"¹² (events, characters, narration, etc.), so as to show how the text as a particular project creates the effects by which it is read.

In the following section I give an overview of the published commentary on Die Ontarfdes. In the overview I focus on the commentary of critics contemporary to the novel's publication as this provides valuable insight into the ideological function of Die Ontarfdes in its social and historical context. The commentary of F.E.J. Malherbe is especially interesting as it also highlights how the norms for evaluating literary texts are ideologically and historically determined. I also show the place that Die Ontarfdes presently occupies within the Afrikaans literary canon.

CHAPTER 2

SURVEY OF THE PUBLISHED DISCUSSIONS ON "DIE ONTERFERDES"

2.1. Introduction

In Vending en Inkeer (1948) F.R.J. Malherbe begins his discussion of Die Onterferdes by commending Johanssen as a serious young seeker with more than usual knowledge and insight, and sees Die Onterferdes as an expression of the "truths" which Johanssen had conquered in life. He evaluates the novel as "...van die suiwerste in ons taal..." for its sense of reality, its insights and its human sympathy.¹

These introductory remarks highlight three aspects of Malherbe's critical framework. I will briefly discuss these aspects as they contribute to a better understanding of Malherbe's analysis of Die Onterferdes. Firstly, as is apparent from the remarks I have quoted, Malherbe sees literature as an expression of the inner life of the writer. This view represents a shift away from the older patriotic Afrikaans literary criticism which saw Afrikaans literature as a reflection of the national reality of the Afrikaner.² The exact date of the transition is, of course, difficult to determine, but as Rialette Wiehahn points out, in the 1920s and 1930s this approach to literature was certainly regarded as new.³ This reformulation of the nature of literature - from reflecting the national reality to expressing the inner life of the artist - leads to a great emphasis being placed on understanding and typifying the "spirit" and "soul" of the writer. Secondly, as regards norms for evaluating literature, Malherbe asks for "lewensinhoud", that being: "Die elementêre waarhede, die idealisme, en menslikheid, die maatskaplike waarheid in kuns...".⁴ Thirdly, the appropriate methodology for literary criticism is to investigate the "lewensgevoel" of the artist as it takes on a form in the work of art. Malherbe summarises the essence of this method as "beleving en vorm".⁵ In the light of Malherbe's analysis of

Die Ontferdes it seems appropriate to mention Wellek and Warren's commentary on this method: that it often assumes that true or great art must be based on experience.⁸

2.2. F.E.J. Malherbe's reading of "Die Ontferdes"

It would seem that Malherbe's evaluation of Die Ontferdes as a work which carries a stamp of authenticity, and in which Johanssen knows his people (his people being both the characters in the novel and their "real-life" referent) is to some extent influenced by the autobiographical information provided by Johanssen in a preface to a later novel.⁹ Malherbe briefly summarises this information before his discussion of Die Ontferdes: Johanssen had worked as a magistrate's clerk in the "platteland" for a number of years where he had come into contact with the poor Afrikaner. It was, Johanssen says, from a feeling of compassion for this sector of the Afrikaner nation that Die Ontferdes was born.⁸

These biographical details, in conjunction with Malherbe's theoretical premise of literature as the expression of the writer's inner life, leads Malherbe to focus on what he perceives to be Johanssen's feelings towards his subject - "die ontferdes" - and to see the distinguishing feature of the novel as Johanssen's attitude towards his subject. From within this critical framework Malherbe does not, understandably, make any distinction between author and narrator, nor does he pay much attention to the structure of the narrative. The story, he says, is "doodseenvoudig".⁹

But it is perhaps the normative basis of Malherbe's critical practice - the demand for "leuensinhoud" - which provides the deciding factor in Malherbe's assessment of Die Ontferdes as authentic and Johanssen's depiction of the impoverished Afrikaner as just and true. As Wiehahn has shown, Malherbe's approbation or condemnation of literary works seems partly to have been due to his discerning "leuenshoudings" in them which did or did not correspond with his own conception of "leuensinhoud".¹⁰ The social

reality which Malherbe regards as a constitutive part of "lewensinhoud" and which he appreciates in *Die Onderwerdes*, would therefore, one can deduct, correspond with Malherbe's view of the social reality of the poor white.

Particularly telling is Malherbe's statement that we find in the novel the "armblanke soos hy is", not as he is depicted by a certain social class.¹¹ As Malherbe does not substantiate his statement by referring to an extra-textual referent, one can conclude that Johanssen's depiction of his characters also corresponds or reinforces Malherbe's view of them, that they are "...uit die aard goedige, onkundige, bygelowige, godvresende mense wat hul amsalige bestaan grotendeels as hulle regmatige toebedeelde lot aanvaar..."¹² (my emphasis).

It is doubtful, however, that the members of the dominant class in 1948, of which Malherbe is very much a representative, saw all "poor whites" as possessing the above qualities. Although the majority of Afrikaans-speakers had, by 1948, been mobilised under the banner of Afrikaner-Nationalism, the new alliance was not a passive response to class struggles but had developed as the organisational and ideological form through which these struggles were conducted. Malherbe's generation had witnessed the militancy of the 1922 white miners' strike, and during the 1930s and 1940s the fear was still expressed that "poor whites" would give support to militant struggles.¹³ Malherbe himself mentions class struggle as disrupting "die idilliese verhouding van 'meer-bevoorregte' tot 'minder-bevoorregte' " which he sees as still depicted in the novels of writers in the 1920s such as Jochem van Bruggen.¹⁴

A partial explanation of Malherbe's view that Johanssen depicts poor whites exactly as they are - kindly, god-fearing; above all, accepting, unresisting human beings - can be found in the phrase "uit die aard" that precedes the enumeration of these characteristics. "From their nature",

"naturally", "poor whites" would have these qualities. By implication, when they resist or rebel they are acting against their nature, unnaturally.

The historical and ideological determinants embedded in Malherbe's literary pronouncements on the "werklikheidsiening" in the depiction of the characters are further revealed by comparing these statements with a discussion of Die Ontferdes in one of his later works (1958).¹⁵ His endorsement of Johanssen's accuracy in depicting reality is now replaced by a disapproval of the "slappe berusting" of the characters, of a "...te maklike aanvaarding van toestande".¹⁶ In this later work he attempts to situate his condemnation of what he sees as "slappe berusting" historically:

Maar tye verander ook gesindhede. Trek na die stede en verstedeliking van die platteland bring 'n ander beeld na vore van die arbeider en die arbeid. Die arbeider het nie meer...die slappe berusting van Die Ontferdes nie. Intendeel. Hy kategoriseer die mantskappy in arbeiders en rykes. Ook daarvan kry ons neerslag in die literatuur.¹⁷

The above demonstrates an interesting disparity between Malherbe's view of the course of history (and its effects on literary production) in South Africa and the generally accepted accounts of the historical struggle between "arbeiders" and "rykes" in the first half of this century. Malherbe places the "slappe berusting" of the white workers as depicted in Die Ontferdes in a historical period before a newer consciousness and attitude amongst workers which divides society into workers and the rich, exploited and exploiters. From most historical perspectives it is accepted, however, that the victory of the Verenigde Nasionale Party (VNP) in 1948 (Die Ontferdes was written in 1944) marks its success in preventing Afrikaans workers from organising themselves as a class distinct from other classes.¹⁸

Malherbe's historical inversion seems partly due to his critical framework within which he makes little distinction between character depiction and extra-textual referent, thereby conflating the development of the literary image ("beeld") of the worker and the less-privileged with what he sees as a new attitude amongst "real-life" workers. Malherbe is also working within an already established canon of Afrikaans Literature which *includes* the protest literature that relates to "volks groei" and "volksbeelding"¹⁹ but *excludes* the literary products of white workers. The latter is exemplified by writings from the garment union workers during the 1930s and 1940s which most certainly depicted society as being divided into poor and rich.²⁰

A fuller explanation for this inversion is to be found in the statement which follows his "historical" placing:

En wanneer dit *nie* meer gaan om die posisie van die Afrikaner in die grootstad nie maar om die mens, kry ons onbevangener, suiwerder beelding van minderbevoorregtes, die misdeeldes, die fabriekslawe, na wie die deernis van die beskouer uitgaan; maar allengs kry ons ook die protes en die opstand.²¹

The terms of Malherbe's discourse are, in fact, not governed by an interest in history and its relationship to literary production but with literature's ability to displace and project historical conditions and contradictions onto a trans-historical plane. Malherbe sees "die Mens" as the subject of an "Algemeen-menslike" literary discourse, the highest stage in the development of a national literature:

So het dit ook in Suid-Afrika gegaan, en kry ons agtereenvolgens die historiese roman en didaktiek; humor- realisme en romantiek; en ten slotte dieper en meer veralgemeende waarheid; die ewig-menslik persoonlik, dikwels tragies aanvoel. Die Mens in die

mens, die *Kwige in the tydlike verskynsel*.²² (my emphasis)

This notion of the development of literature and the criterion that is thereby established for "great" art and literature is commonly held by both critics and "ordinary" readers, but it is not contested.²³ For my purposes it will be sufficient to determine what Malherbe means by the terms "die Mens" and "Algemeen-menslik" before discussing the implications for *Die Ontriefdes* in the light of those requirements. Although Malherbe states that the work of art should address the "'hele' mens in sy eties-metafisiese totaliteit"²⁴ (my emphasis), his conception of what is "human" is governed by a series of oppositions which excludes certain spheres of human activity from the "human condition" and its articulation in literature: "...politiek en kuns is twee aparte dinge...Die kuns hou hom met die menslike besig".²⁵ Furthermore, he opposes "protest" and "life", life being what the work of art should depict, protest belonging to the domain of sociology, not art.²⁶ Moreover, "alle opsetlike en indringende tendens, en moraal 'indecently exposed', is verkeerd".²⁷ As with Malherbe's "lewenshouding", his evaluation of what is intruding tendentiousness and what is not, relies not so much on narrative techniques and effects, such as an obtrusive and didactic narrative voice for example, as on a correspondence between his views and those he finds in the content of the text. As such he sees Alan Paton's *Cry the Beloved Country* as overly tendentious (also "voorbarig")²⁸ and F.A. Venter's *Swart Pelgrim* as totally untentious.²⁹

In *Wending en Inkeer* Malherbe evaluates the depiction of the "poor white" in *Die Ontriefdes* as "meer algemeen menslik" than the depiction of the same group in the novels of Jochum Brugman.³⁰ He does not find *Die Ontriefdes* a "great" novel ("Sal Johannes ons 'n groot realistiese roman oor die armlankes kan gee?"), but nevertheless feels that it is the "brandende lewe" which is shown in the novel.³¹ Ten years later Malherbe still finds *Die Ontriefdes*

"'n groot vooruitgang in suiwerder realisme van proletariër-bestaan",³² but his positive evaluation is now tempered by reservations about the worth of the second half of the novel. This negative criticism of the second part of the novel is shared by other critics; however, the specific quality he names as detracting from its aesthetic value is insightful. His criticism is of "bepaalde slapheid", "'n te maklike aanvaarding van toestande",³³ (dat dit) "verslap...teen die einde"³⁴ (my emphasis). This "slapheid" in the narrative also extends to the "slappe berusting" of the characters.³⁵ It is this quality which detracts from the "tragiek" of the "onterfdes", even if it does not from the "menslikheid" of the characters.³⁶

While one is hesitant to make mechanistic correlations, it would seem that the shift in Malherbe's description of the depicted qualities of the impoverished Afrikaner, from then having a "natural" acceptance of conditions to a "slappe berusting", has a relation to the historical and ideological changes in South Africa during the period 1948-1968. In the 1940s the fear of class conflict and class divisions amongst Afrikaans speakers had not been dispelled, the "cancer of class division"³⁷ had still to be combated, and Afrikaans workers were told that:

...the true worship of God lies in the faithful acceptance and execution of the tasks of that divine calling, no matter how humble (or badly paid) in the divine scheme of things...³⁸ (my emphasis).

The Afrikaans worker had to be rescued, not only from "the false prophets of class struggle"³⁹ but also from poverty and degradation through various activities which catered directly for their economic needs. The depiction of the Portjee family in Die Ontertfdes, their acceptance of their social conditions and the narrative plea for the improvement of their lot, has a striking correspondence with the dominant ideological views held by the Afrikaans power elite regarding the Afrikaans worker, a view of the

worker which Malherbe, in terms of their "berusting", elevates to a "natural" characteristic, thus foreclosing, as Macherey would say, the textual "figuration" by a normative representative reading. By 1950 however, the "volk" were officially declared to have been "rescued". The speaker at the "Ekonomiese Volkskongres" had the confidence to declare: "...the poor white problem no longer exists and Afrikanerdom is now established in the most important strategic points in urban commerce".⁴⁰ Whilst the spectre of class division and conflict haunted the 1940s, acceptance of one's task and place in the social hierarchy was articulated as being the will of God. By 1958, intellectuals, like Malherbe, expected a bit more spunk from less-privileged whites who within the consolidated unity of the volk could and should now strive to better their situation.

Malherbe makes little distinction between Johanssen's "menslikheid",⁴¹ the "menslike" moments in the narrative, an "algemeen-menslike" depiction of the characters in the novel,⁴² and an "algemeen-menslike" approach in the narrative.⁴³ This is in keeping with his critical framework within which all of these aspects can be subsumed under the term "lewensinhoud" and within his methodological procedure of investigating the "lewensgevoel" of the writer. This rather general "menslikheid" Malherbe finds especially in the depiction of Oom Hennie Portjee, who he finds "innig menslik"⁴⁴ and, in a later discussion of the work, "baie menslik".⁴⁵

2.3. Other readings of "Die Ontvrees"

Malherbe's appreciation of Oom Hennie is shared by P.C. Schoones, a literary critic working and writing during the same period as Malherbe and who largely shares his critical framework.⁴⁶ Like Malherbe he sees Die Ontvrees as an expression of Johanssen's "lewenshouding" which he describes as a changed and more mature approach to life - more mature than his approach to life as it is expressed in

his first novel *Getj*.⁴⁷ Schoonees's assessment of the events in the novel being "van minder belang"⁴⁸ echoes Malherbe's view of the story being "doodeenvoudig". Like Malherbe, Schoonees sees Oom Hennie as the central figure in the novel: "('n) gave en simpatieke figuur...wat die hele verhaal beheers". Schoonees also emphasises the "diepe menslikheid" of the character.⁴⁹ Both Malherbe and Schoonees mention what they see as the unselfishness and wisdom of the character.

M.P. Olivier Burgers, reviewing the novel in *Die Brandwag*, also characterises Oom Hennie as a "verstandige filosoof" with "begrip van sy medemens" and with a "diep behae in goeidoen".⁵⁰ His religiousness is furthermore seen as "geheel en al in die teken van Christus se opdrag dat jy jou medemens moet liefhê soos jouself"⁵¹ (my emphasis). To substantiate his interpretation of the character of Oom Hennie, Burgers gives the readers of his review a lengthy quote from the novel of which I will cite the start and the end:

"Sjakkie, ou seun, daar is drie soorte mense op die wereld: die Hotnots, ons en die rykmense. Oor die Hotnots hoef / jou nie te bekommer nie, hulle is sommer vuilgoed. En die rykmense hoel jou nie af te skrik nie, as jy maar net uit hul pad uithly en weet hul huis is nie joune nie...Nee, ou seun, ryk of arm, die mens is goed en God is goed. Haal jou hoed af vir die grotes en se hallo vir jou eie mense, en die Here sal jou sien, souwragtig!"⁵²

This quote, Burgers says, will give his readers an immediate insight into the character of Oom Hennie, the character of a lovable and wise philosopher. Of interest is that the description of Oom Hennie's "menslikheid", of his fulfilling Christ's directive to love your "medemens" like you love yourself, and his depiction as a man who can condemn a part of humanity to a status less than animal - "vuilgoed" - can coexist, peacefully, in the critical

discourse of the three writers I have discussed. This type of "inconsistency", Ernesto Laclau points out, tends to be found when the dominant power bloc in society is able to absorb most of its contradictions - when the social formation succeeds in neutralising its contradictions through displacements.³³ In South Africa, as Dan O'Hearn argues, class contradictions amongst Afrikaans speakers were neutralised by displacing them with other antagonisms, especially by the "threat" from "non-white" South Africans.³⁴

In contrast with Malherbe and Schoones, Burgers does not view the story of Die Ontferden as being only "sketse" or "doodeenvoudig" but devotes some care to the structure of the narrative. He commends its tight and unified structure and considers the development in the character of Oom Hennie and the contrasts and parallelisms between the Portjee and Coetzee families as the main structuring elements.³⁵

In his discussion of the development in the "gees" of Oom Hennie, Burgers points to the role which women play in the life of the character. The novel begins with the marriage of Sjakkie and Sanna, Sanna's entry also into Oom Hennie's life as a new member of the family, and ends with Oom Hennie's intervention which saves Sanna from the same fate that befell Oom Hennie's wife, Marie: death from TB, partly due to the uncaring attitude of the authorities. Through Oom Hennie's actions, Burgers says, "...sluit aan die end van die boek, Sanna se geskiedenis in Oubass Portjee se lewe op 'n hoër vlak aan by die van Marie".³⁶ Such a reading of the novel, Burgers hopes, will dispel the impression that the points at which the story begins and ends are accidental.³⁷

The two women, Sanna Portjee and Anna Coetzee, Burger argues, are also pivotal in the depiction of the contrasts and similarities between the two families. Burgers discusses a few "striking" comparisons: the difference in

the emotional reactions of the parents in the two families to the birth of a child ("moedeloosheid, levensuitputting en dronkenskap" in the Coetzee family; "doed, lewensaanvaarding en liefdevolle toewyding" in the PortJee family); the similarity of their socio-economic circumstances but the difference in the origins and resolution of conflict and violence in the family, especially as it affects the two women, Sanna and Anna.⁵⁵ Furthermore, Burgers extrapolates from the development in Oom Hennie's situation a more general and abstract meaning: "(So)...word die sirkel van blote aanvaarding deur 'n ingewikkelde vorm van boetedoening en losbinding gebreek, sodat die lyn kan opbuig na die land van nuwe hoop en geluk vir die onterfdes..."⁵⁶ Thus his overall evaluation of the transformation of the initial and final stages of the narrative is that it involves a process of improvement.

Although one cannot expect an in-depth analysis of a novel in a review of this kind, Burgers only discusses the female characters in the novel in so far as they are part of the structuring and development of the above theme and seems not at all concerned with what has been called the "hardhandige behandeling"⁵⁷ of the women in the course of the story: Marie dies from TB, Sanna too contracts the disease, Sanna's mother has a stroke and dies soon after, Anna commits suicide. The overall thematic progress can be considered a process of improvement but it is at the expense of these female characters.

Pollux, in a discussion of the novel in 1946, views the harsh treatment of the women characters as one of the novel's main distinguishing features.⁵⁸ In his discussion of this treatment he addresses the producer of the text but as a particular individual in the first instance. In what seems a parody of the "lebensbeskouing" of Malherbe and Schoones, he accuses the writer of an unresolved Oedipus complex of which Die Ontertdes is an expression:

kon 'n mens jou verbeel dat Jannie later in die lewe 'n skrywer geword het, en dat hy die Japie-en-Anna figure geskep het, dan kon hy nie onbewuste haat teenoor sy vader en sy gevoelens teenoor sy moeder beter uitgebeeld het nie.⁶²

Furthermore,

geleidelik ontstaan die indruk dat ons hier te doen het met die lewensbeskouing van 'n seuntjie by wie die Oedipus-kompleks nie opgelos is nie. Die manspersone in die boek is die seuntjie self; dan weer soos hulle vir so 'n seuntjie sou lyk.⁶³

This unresolved Oedipus complex, Pollux argues, accounts for the novel's treatment of its women characters. By removing "mothers" in the narrative the author is expressing the unconscious wish of the child (in this case a boy) to eliminate the female object of the father's affections. The argument that Pollux puts forward rests on a reversal of the usual formulation of the Oedipus complex (that it centres around "the wish to possess the parent of the opposite sex and eliminate that of the same sex" ⁶⁴.) Nevertheless, his analysis of the "innerlike identiteit" existing between the different characters is very interesting. He also touches on the ideological conditioning of the text by referring to the "stronge patriargalisme" which informs the various roles which the image of the father plays in the novel.⁶⁵ At the close of his discussion, however, Pollux condemns the novel for its lack of "persoonlikheid", "in vaste standpunt" and "in vaste lewensbeskouing",⁶⁶ thus practicing the same normative criticism as critics such as Malherbe and Schoonsee.

Meyer de Villiers, on the other hand, finds Die Onferfdes "...een van ons beste romans en sowel siekkindig as toornies verborg"⁶⁷ De Villiers' praise of the novel is somewhat tempered by reservations about the text's presentation of Gern Henkle's beliefs, and he says he has to confess: "om

Hennie Portjee is nie van my soort nie."⁶⁸ However, De Villiers still feels that the novel is the fruit of a humanitarian urge and comments on the sympathetic depiction of the characters. Of note is that De Villiers discusses Die Ontferden as an example of a "topical" novel (De Villiers' discussion was published in 1948) as this underlines that Die Ontferden was indeed received as dealing with its contemporary social structures and problems.

The "topicality" of Die Ontferden is also implicit in Abel Coetzee's overview of the novel in 1951. Die Ontferden, Coetzee says, "...word 'n aanklag teen die samelewing oor onverkilligheids teenoor die behoeftes van die uitgesaktes".⁶⁹ Coetzee also sees a deeper "truth" in the novel:

...geluk word gevind in die innigheid van die belewing van alledaagse kleinighede; en kleinighede - dit kan elkeen van ons aldag en orals vind.⁷⁰ (my emphasis)

Coetzee's observation provides insight into the ideological function of the novel in its social context. Although the novel, as Coetzee says, gives a moving depiction of poverty and its accompanying suffering, the text also confirms what its petty-bourgeois reader already "knows": that underlying the apparent differences between the rich and the poor, the possessors and the dispossessed, is an all-embracing "menslikheid" which allows "elkeen van ons" to find happiness. The result of understanding this "truth" will be reconciliation and harmony, not confrontation and struggle.

In a brief review in 1955, E. Lindenberg argues that Die Ontferden depicts its characters as small and limited, and that this depiction, in conjunction with the novel's "skynoplossing" precludes the possibility of "tragiek" in the text.⁷¹ In the more recent (1978) Geekiedenis van die Afrikaanse Literatuur J.C. Kannemeyer concurs with Lindenberg's reservations about the novel.⁷² However, he still evaluates Die Ontferden as "...'n roman wat die

kleinrealisme in die Afrikaans prosa... 'n trappie verder voor'.¹² Kannemeyer views some chapters of *Die Onderferdes* as "blote vulsel".¹⁴ This objection, if grouped with similar reservations expressed by some of the other critics I have discussed, demonstrates the corrosive effect of a normative critical praxis. Kannemeyer sees chapters 19, 13 and 20 as superfluous; burgers is unhappy with chapters 13, 15 and 17;¹⁵ Cantor, in the "Castor en Pollux" discussion, feels chapters 8 and 14 are "loose" episodes.¹⁶ Thus *Die Onderferdes* is confronted, as Macherey says, "...with its own truth - a truth so corrosive and substantial that the work finally vanishes, an embarrassed spectre."¹⁷ (my emphasis)

2.4. Reading "*Die Onderferdes*" differently

In *Maexisme and die Afrikaans letterkunde* Ample Coetzee develops an analysis of the ideological determinants embedded in *Die Onderferdes*.¹⁸ Coetzee gives the "agtergrond van die denke...waarin *Die Onderferdes*...saaggedink het" and then proceeds to show and explain how the text *itself* produces its ideological significations. The text, Coetzee argues, consistently pushes towards the acceptance of "Christelike Kapitalisme", also towards the acceptance of authority (as good and benevolent) and hierarchy (rich and poor, capitalist and worker), not only by its narrative events but also by its very existence as a text. For example,

...aan die begin word byna gelyke gedeeltes teks afgetaan aan die Portjee-familie as aan die Coetzee-familie; maar met die vindege retrogressie van die Coetzee's word die teksgedeeltes aan hulle gewy progressief minder, sodat die voorspoed van die Portjee's meer in die aandag van die leser bly. Hoofstuk twee eindig met 'n suggestie dat Sanna swanger is, en Skakkie se kommer oor haar. In Hoofstuk drie word Japie se sewende kind gehore van 'n verwaarloofde moeder. Hoofstuk vier eindig met alq Bester wat ekstra kookies van 'n goetliedheid neem.

"vir die kleinspan by die huis"; en hoofstuk vyf begin met Anna se kind wat nie soos ander babas is nie en nie wil drink nie.¹³

In this way the text itself underwrites the negative effects of chaos and irresponsibility as manifested in the Coetzee household. Coetzee also offers an insightful explanation of the final events of the narrative, demonstrating that its perceived "skynoplossing" is, in fact, the text's solution to ideological contradictions. The text implies, Coetzee argues, that

...as die wêreld goed is, is die aanvaarbaar...En aanvaarding van wêreld is aanvaarding van orde; end dit is: hiërargie, klas, ryk en arm, die verdeling van arbeid. As mens skynbaar is moet dit so wees; jy kan strewe teen die wêreld se dwars arbeid, maar ootmoedig moet jy bly en moet aan jou neederleg.¹⁴

Coetzee concludes by asking a rhetorical question ("Wie kan twyfel daaraan end dalk? Wat is die regte pad gekies het")¹⁵ to emphasize that the text leaves the reader in no doubt of the "correctness" of the values and beliefs that are found in the novel.

2.5. Conclusions

My survey of the discussions on *Die Ontriefdes* shows that, with the exception of Ample Coetzee's analysis, the critical discourses on the novel either become, as Macherey says of empiricist criticism, the "accomplices" of the author, or set themselves up, as Macherey says of normative criticism, "to instruct the writer...pointing out his carelessness".¹⁶ These discussions have given little or no consideration to the ideological and historical determinants of the work. Furthermore, while I concur with Ample Coetzee's findings in his analysis of *Die Ontriefdes*, I aim to show that the text also inadvertently questions its ideological programme, that the text itself questions that "...Sjakkie het toe die regte pad gekies het..."

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that "...Sjakkie Portjee die regte pad gekies het..."

CHAPTER 3

ANALYSIS OF "DIE ONTERFDES"

3.1. Introduction

The following overview gives a schematic account of the historical and ideological conditions pertaining to the "problem" of the impoverished Afrikaner during the period which informs the novel.

3.2. The "poor white" issue

The date at which Die Onterfdes is set is around 1925.¹ This means that the historical referent of the "goewerment" at the close of the narrative would be the "Pact" government (1924 - 1933). However, the narrative so briefly sets the date of the action that one is led to conclude that the actual historical referent for the fictional government is unimportant to the ideological project of the author. The period 1924 - 1948, although marked by changes and reconstitutions in governments, was essentially a period of continuity in terms of the type of social upliftment schemes for whites as mentioned in the story,² and the reference to the government as a knowing and caring "father" in the narrative rather signifies the author's faith in the state to secure a better deal for "the poor". The discrepancy between the date at which the novel is set and the time of its production and publication leads, at least on the level of the Party Politics of the time, to an abrogation of its political topicality. That the novel was received as topical³ is due to its subject-matter: the depiction of the travails of the impoverished Afrikaner or "poor white" ("armblanke") in the urban environment.

The term "poor whites" is rather vague as it was applied both to the white urban unemployed and to white manual labourers and, as can be seen in the commentary on Die Onterfdes, was also used to designate poor white wage-earners and petty-commodity producers. Be that as it may,

poor Afrikaans-speakers were already a feature of life in the cities and towns of the Cape Colony by the end of the nineteenth century. Development of capitalist production (including improvements in technology and expanding agribusiness) had presented smaller white farmers with new sets of challenges which many failed to meet, resulting in their growing impoverishment and large-scale migration to the cities. Various estimates of the number of "poor whites" (defined so as to include both urban unemployed and those reduced to hand-to-mouth subsistence farming, often with so-called "bywoner" status) show an estimated rise from 106 000 in 1916 to 120 000 in 1921. The Depression (1929 - 1933) caused increasing numbers of whites, farmers and workers, to fall into the "poor white" category and in 1932 the Carnegie Commission "conservatively" estimated the number of "poor whites" at 300 000 out of a white population of just over one and a half million. Nearly all of these impoverished were Afrikaans-speaking.⁴

The Pact government had sought to remedy white unemployment by replacing black workers with white labour. In the private sector the "civilised labour policy" had made government tenders conditional upon the contractor employing "a fair amount of civilised labour", and "civilised" had come to mean white. Also, by way of the Wage Act, the government had ensured that a large proportion of semiskilled jobs were filled by whites. "Poor whites" were also absorbed into the state's own departments which were instructed to favour whites at the expense of blacks.⁵ It is argued that the state intervened on behalf of "poor whites" and white workers because they were considered a threat to the stability of society: it was considered likely that they would give support to militant struggles by whites and even possibly blacks.⁶ In favouring white workers, it is suggested, the state sought to further divide the working class along racial lines, so as to minimise the possibility of white workers merging their struggles with black workers.⁷ In 1922 Tielman Roos summed up this fear in relation to the unemployed whites:

This country would always be on the edge of a volcano as long as they had large numbers of unemployed ... If they did not absorb the unemployed, they would have recurrences of the trouble on the Rand on a bigger scale than they had yet had.⁹

It was also feared that "poor whites" would sink into "corrupting intercourse with non-Europeans"⁸ and that their life-style would reflect badly on the "civilised" white race. However, both "poor whites" and Afrikaans workers were, in the dominant political discourses of the day, alternatively presented as victims of capitalist development and as lazy and degenerate, in need of the discipline of hard work.¹⁰ The distinction between the "deserving" and the "undeserving" poor still was often heard from official quarters.¹¹

There exist no statistics whatsoever, it has been pointed out, to measure African unemployment and poverty during this period. The "civilised labour policy" had forced unemployed black workers back into the overcrowded "native reserves". Government reports and commissions of the time warn of "appalling poverty" and possible "mass starvation".¹²

Although the Pact government's political rhetoric was designed to appeal to white workers and "poor whites" the notion of the Pact as representing a "workers' state", even a white workers' state, it is argued, is a myth.¹³ This period, as Innes and Plant discuss, was one of intense struggle between capital and labour. They argue that the defeat suffered by white mine workers in the 1922 revolt rendered white workers in general particularly susceptible to the state's onslaught: trade union membership declined sharply, the average white wage rates in the manufacturing industry which had been reduced after the 1922 strike were not restored to the pre-1922 levels in this period, and in certain manufacturing sectors there was a large-scale de-skilling of the white working class. By 1930, they

contend, the autonomy of white workers' organisations had been undermined and the conditions for the higher exploitation of white workers established¹⁴. The extent of the benefits gained by white workers is open to debate, but there is agreement amongst historians that the Pact did obtain relatively substantial economic concessions for the unemployed "poor whites". Also, the suggestions made by the Carnegie Commission, dealing with rural impoverishment, the psychology of the "poor white" and the education, health and social aspects of the problem were followed up by the government: white workers were provided subsidised housing, for example, and in 1937, under the "Fusion" government, a Department of Social Welfare was established.¹⁵ However, the gains made by Afrikaans workers and the "poor whites" were, as Dan O'Meara argues, at the expense of black workers rather than capital.¹⁶

Although the governments prior to the Herenigde Nasionale Party victory in 1948 were concerned about the possibility of militant action from working class whites, these governments implicitly accepted, O'Meara points out, the class divisions within the white population and were generally content to leave the organisation of white workers to the Labour Party.¹⁷ In contrast, in the ideological debates which redefined Afrikaner nationalism during the 1930s, the danger of class division amongst "Afrikaners" was a major theme. It was felt that Afrikaans workers and the large group of "poor whites" could be mobilised by working-class organisations, thereby undermining any potential mass base for Afrikaner nationalism. All Afrikaner nationalist ideologues agreed on the need for unity between Afrikaners of all classes and especially the need to win workers for Afrikaner nationalism. The very real class, cultural and political divisions amongst white Afrikaans-speakers were conceptually neutralised by, as O'Meara says, "reducing them to simple differences", as the various components of the "divinely-ordained", "organically-united" Afrikaans "volk".¹⁸ Afrikaans workers were assigned a special place

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and task within the volk which O'Meara summarises as follows:

Within the divinely-ordained organic unity of nations, the innate inequality of their individual members establishes an hierarchical order - with a correct, divinely-allotted place and task in the hierarchy for all. Within the ideal Christian-national society, the division of labour reflects the will of God, as does the relationship between the social strata, each with rights and duties relative to other strata (the term class is not used - God did not intend societies to be divided into antagonistic classes, but stratified in an ordered ranking). Those who, through natural ability, rise to higher strata, have correspondingly heavy duties to match their privileges... The state exists to mediate the organic unity of the nation and the relations between individuals within it, particularly the specific functions of the various social strata.¹⁹

The numerous fields in which the Broederbond and other members of the Afrikaans bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie organised Afrikaans-speakers during the 1920s and 1940s have been well documented. For the purpose of my analysis of Die Onterfde it is sufficient to note that nowhere in the anti-capitalist rhetoric of the emerging hegemonic discourse of Afrikaner nationalism was there an attack on the capital relation itself. Rather, as T. Dunbar Moodie says, capitalism had to be transformed from its base in liberal individualism to a system which, it was claimed, would benefit the Afrikaner volk as a whole.²⁰ Even the Broederbond, Moodie points out, had throughout the 1920s and 1930s opposed the commonly held view that the solution to the urban poverty of Afrikaners lay in white workers being returned to the country.²¹ The "Eeufees" or "Tweede Trek" in 1938 had mobilised Afrikaans-speakers in terms of an ethnic exclusivity, but had also succeeded in integrating the symbols of the past with the problems of

urban industrial life. Or, as O'Meara puts it, quoting Marx:

The awakening, of the ghosts of Retief, Cilliers, Kruger and Japie Fourie served the purpose of "glorifying the new struggles and not of parodying the old, of magnifying the given task in imagination, not of fleeing from its solution in reality".²²

The nature of these "new struggles" is indicated by Dr D.F. Malan's speech at the "Zuifees". The speech also illuminates O'Meara's argument that class divisions amongst Afrikaans speakers were overcome through their replacement "in thought", by other antagonisms.²³ Afrikaners, Malan said, were now fighting a new battle on a new battlefield:

I scarcely need tell you that Afrikanerdom is on trek again ... It is not a trek away from the centres of civilisation, as it was one hundred years ago, but a trek back - back from the country to the city... In that new Blood River, black and white meet together in much closer contact and a much more binding struggle than when one hundred years ago the circle of white tented wagons protected the laager... *Today black and white jostle together in the same labour market.*²⁴ (my emphasis)

Although the Northern delegates at the "Ekonomiese Volkskongres" in 1939 (initially planned as a congress on the "poor white" issue) still cast their proposals in strong anti-capitalistic rhetoric and focused on the plight of the "poor whites" and how they could be "rescued", the Cape delegates made little attempt to disguise the large-scale capitalist character of their proposals.²⁵ O'Meara discusses the differing class bases of the North and South in detail, but as concerns my analysis of *Die Onverfde*, it only is important to mention that the relief of the "poor white" was now seen as "an incidental by-product of an economic advance intended for the Afrikaner people as a whole".²⁶ Furthermore, at the congress it was even stated

urban industrial life. Or, as O'Meara puts it, quoting Marx:

The awakening, of the ghosts of Retief, Cilliers, Kruger and Jopie Fourie served the purpose of "glorifying the new struggles and not of parodying the old, of magnifying the given task in imagination, not of fleeing from its solution in reality".²²

The nature of these "new struggles" is indicated by Dr D.F. Malan's speech at the "Seufees". The speech also illuminates O'Meara's argument that class divisions amongst Afrikaans speakers were overcome through their replacement "in thought", by other antagonisms.²³ Afrikaners, Malan said, were now fighting a new battle on a new battlefield:

I scarcely need tell you that Afrikanerdom is on trek again ... It is not a trek away from the centres of civilisation, as it was one hundred years ago, but a trek back - back from the country to the city... In that new Blood River, black and white meet together in much closer contact and a much more binding struggle than when one hundred years ago the circle of white tented wagons protected the laager... Today black and white jostle together in the same labour market.²⁴ (my emphasis)

Although the Northern delegates at the "Ekonomiese Volkskongres" in 1939 (initially planned as a congress on the "poor white" issue) still cast their proposals in strong anti-capitalistic rhetoric and focused on the plight of the "poor whites" and how they could be "rescued", the Cape delegates made little attempt to disguise the large-scale capitalist character of their proposals.²⁵ O'Meara discusses the differing class bases of the North and South in detail, but as concerns my analysis of *Die Ontertog*, it only is important to mention that the relief of the "poor white" was now seen as "an incidental by-product of an economic advance intended for the Afrikaner people as a whole".²⁶ Furthermore, at the congress it was even stated

that in the past too much attention had been given to this "unhealthy section",²⁷ and that rather than offering "alms" or "poor relief" to the poor Afrikaner the concern should be with "a transformation of economic consciousness", with the dispelling of the belief that "the Afrikaner can never be a businessman".²⁸ O'Meara argues that this transformation of economic consciousness became a redefinition of Afrikaner nationalism itself,

...of its goals, strategies, alliances, priorities and class character. It became above all a redefinition which stressed the role of the Afrikaner entrepreneur, and in doing so, redefined the relations between classes. Now, more than ever, class consciousness was a mortal danger to the petty bourgeoisie and its developing economic movement.²⁹

The "cancerous" ideology of class amongst Afrikaners was seen to be the product of the machinations of "communists" who set workers and capitalists against each other in a never-ending struggle,³⁰ in the process transgressing the principles of the church (which were grounded in the Bible) by advocating equality between white and black.³¹ Furthermore, in the journals of Afrikaner capitalists and ideologues the Bible was also used to justify the division of society into workers and capitalists and was put forward as the guide to proper relations between and duties of the different "social strata". O'Meara's summary of the discourses in these journals is insightful:

Genesis 1 : 28-30 enjoined man to be fruitful and multiply. Thus, God clearly sanctioned accumulation, and with it "a certain egoism" (Die Calvinistiese Beskouing van die Arbeid, Koers October 1946). Moreover, as the great scriptural patriarchs such as Jacob, Abraham and Job (1) were "rich and powerful and lived like potentates", God obviously intended some men to be rich, the better to reflect His Image (Koers April 1941). Workers were thus not to be envious of

capital. It too was divinely bestowed and intended for creative, communal service. For the "Christian-capitalist" the ownership of capital meant "the opportunity to do much good and help many people": "Christ loved the wealthy youth who was a capitalist. The Master had no objection to his capital but to the purposeless, almost fruitless way he used it. Christ would have him use his capital to help the poor. Service was the great stipulation the Master laid down for capital."

With the capitalist providing service to the folk...the relationship between worker and capitalist was not antagonistic but harmonious: "How different would the world be if capital and labour everywhere became allies? If each helped and served the other: if the capitalist strove to provide as many as possible of the good things in life for the worker; and if the worker strove to give the capitalist the best and most abundant labour" (Die Christen-Kapitalis, Inspan February 1949).³²

Christian-nationalist organisers set out to take over trade unions and industrial organisations so as to wean Afrikaans workers away from a class ideology and to replace the notion of class struggle with the principle of mutual cooperation between workers and employers.³³ Although, as O'Neera points out, few attempts were made in practice to organise "poor whites", the existence of a large Afrikaans-speaking "poor white" population (even after 1940 when it was claimed by the Department of Labour that the problem had largely been solved) served a useful function for these Christian-nationalist organisers: Afrikaans workers were warned that it was only through Christian-nationalist organisations that they would avoid the trap of "poor whiteness".³⁴

The two families depicted in Die Ontferden do not fall into the narrow definition of "poor white" as "unemployed urban

whiten" but the emphasis throughout the narrative is on the conditions of their urban poverty. The historical and ideological aspects I have discussed above form the backdrop to the events related in the novel and, as I discuss in the following section, determine the conscious intentions of the author, what Macherey terms "the ideological project".

3.3. The ideological project

In the second last chapter of the novel *Oom Hennie*,³⁵ whose actions have been the object of narration, himself now engages in narrating a story to the magistrate:

Toe begin hy sy storie
Hy vertel waar hy gebore is, waar hy geleer het. Dat
hy nooit geld gehad het nie...
Hy vertel die magistraat van sy vrou...
Die trane rol uit sy oë, maar hy gee nie om nie. Hy
voel 'n onkeerbare drang in hom om uit te praat...
Hy begin nou oor Sanna, sy seun Sjakkie se jong vrou,
hulle het laasjaar hul eerste kind gekry, 'n
dogtertjie...
Hierdie winter het Sanna begin hoes... (DO p153)

On a textual level *Oom Hennie*'s recounting of his life's events imitates the distinction made between the "story" and the "discourse" of a narrative. The events he describes initially, his first beginning ("Toe begin hy sy storie") would form part of the "story" of the narrative, as a rendering of all the chronological and logical events independent of their manifestation in the text, whereas his second beginning ("Hy begin nou oor Sanna") covers the story which has also been discursively presented in the text as events, events which the reader has encountered in the text.³⁶ The text itself therefore reinforces the reliability of *Oom Hennie* as a narrator by manifesting a break between what the reader in the course of the narrative has "learnt" about the characters and what the reader has actually been "shown".

The magistrate, as the narrator of this narrative, comes to occupy a position analogous to that of the reader of the novel. Moreover, the magistrate's response to Oom Hennie's tale comes to function as a model for the reader to follow. The magistrate listens to Oom Hennie's story (which is a condensed version of the preceding narrative events as a whole), interprets the story "correctly", and acts upon the information given to him. Although the reader is not addressed directly, a similar course of action is also suggested for the reader to follow by Oom Hennie's response to the magistrate's "story": *The magistrate*

...verle van die mooi klein huisies wat die
 Government op party plekke vir die arm mense gegee
 het, hulle betaal net 'n paar sjielings in die maand,
 en dan kan hulle daarin bly. Vader Portjee word sommer
 opgewonde as hy die magistrant so hoor praat. As dit
 alre kan gebeur, sal die wêreld mos reg wees? Hy knik
 nadruklik... en die magistrant sê dit kan alles gedoen
 word, die Wet is klaar gemaak. Dit kos net baie
 geduld en moeite, want daar is baie mense wat nie wil
 glo dis nodig nie. Vader Portjee is verontwaardig. Nie
 nodig nie? Hulle moet net kom kyk, hy sal vir hulle
 wys waar arm mense is! (my emphasis) (90 p154)

The reader therefore would occupy an oppositional position to those who do not want to "believe" that legislation for the material upliftment of the poor is necessary because the reader has been involved in exactly that procedure which Oom Hennie recommends for converting the disbelievers: the reader has been shown in the preceding chapters "waar arm mense is". In contrast to those people the reader is "in the know", the reader has seen and should therefore understand and act. But just as the magistrate only has to make a telephone call to secure Sanna a place in the sanatorium (thereby saving her life) the reader's "action" only has to consist of believing the existing legislation for the upliftment of the poor is justified and needed.

The play of analogies in this episode invites the reader to take up a certain position in relation to something which becomes marked as existing outside of the discourse of the novel. The "pragmatic"³⁷ nature of the narrative in this episode has been recognised by "real" readers like Malherbe:

Oubaas Portjee se hartstogtelike onderhoud met die magistrant in die voorlaaste hoofstuk behoort vir elke leser meer dan duidelik te maak met watter doel voor oë Johannesen hierdie boek geskrywe het.³⁸ (my emphasis)

Malherbe sees this "purpose" as being so obvious that he elaborates no further. Even if one does not share Malherbe's view that the purpose here is "meer dan duidelik", it is clear that the mode in which the text addresses the reader in this second last chapter has shifted. Whereas the dominant mode in the preceding episodes was "declarative", imparting "knowledge" to the reader,³⁹ this second last chapter also includes the pragmatic mode which takes the form of a rule of action based on the knowledge which the reader has gained in the course of the declarative discourse.

This shift in the discursive relationship between text and reader provides for the identification of what Pierre Macherey calls "the ideological project" of the novel, "...the point of departure which it has chosen, its project, or even its intentions...".⁴⁰ The project of Die Ontriefdes is, foremostly, to expose to view the social grouping - "arm mense" - of which the reader presumably, like the magistrate, has very little knowledge. The position that the interchange between Oom Hennie and the magistrate offers the reader also indicates the effect that the imparting of information wishes to have. The reader should enter imaginatively into the experiences of the characters so that the reader will care that the social ills that contribute to their plight are ameliorated.

Furthermore, the knowledge gained by the reader should lead to the insight that the poor are in need of the type of material support and upliftment as provided for by the legislation of the government, that the poor cannot redeem themselves from the conditions of their poverty all on their own.

In constructing a relationship of identification between the reader and the magistrate the text underlines what is already "obvious" in a novel which deals with the uneducated poor: that the implied reader and the central characters of the novel belong to potentially antagonistic social classes. It is also quite clear that the notion of opposing "classes" is an anathema to the project of the work: the text, after all, aims to produce its characters so that the reader will respond to them empathetically, will feel compassion for them but, as the interview with the magistrate shows, on the basis of harmony, understanding and caring cooperation. This is borne out by the "rule of action" in the pragmatic discourse: the work's perceived "aanklag teen die samelewing oor onverskilligheid"¹ is not directed at the organisation of economic relations or at the political representatives of those relations ("Die Wette is klaar gemaak" - my emphasis). Instead, the reader is asked for a change of consciousness, to believe that there are justifiable grounds for existing legislation.

3.3.1. The social imperatives of the project

The appeal to the reader's subjectivity as discussed above is characteristic of realist fiction and is linked, as Belsey points out, to ideology and the mode of production in society:

It is in the epoch of capitalism that ideology emphasises the value of individual freedom, freedom of conscience and, of course, consumer choice in all its multiplicity of forms... (Classic realism) performs, I wish to suggest, the work of ideology, not only in its

representation of a world of consistent subjects who are the origin of meaning, knowledge and action, but also in offering the reader, as the position from which the text is most readily intelligible, the position of subject as the origin both of understanding and of action in accordance with that understanding.⁴²

This "action", however, would pose no threat to the dominant forces in society since the reader, in understanding the text, is led to a recognition of what she or he already "knows" - experience in the way in which it is conventionally expressed in society.⁴³ In Die Ontarfdes the possibility of any real action on the part of the reader is negated: the position of the reader is stabilised from above (the political) and from below (the economic) and the reader is only invited "to feel" differently.

The emphasis which Die Ontarfdes places on the subjectivity of the reader (and its concomitant effacing of the author's subjectivity) can be related to the historical and ideological transition in South Africa during the 1930s and 1940s. Whereas the novels of Jochen van Bruggen with their manipulating central consciousness correspond, as Ampie Coetzee has argued,⁴⁴ to the transition between pre-capitalist and capitalist modes of production, Die Ontarfdes corresponds to a later period of capitalism in South Africa. Die Ontarfdes is situated in a period when Afrikaner ideologues recognised that "a permanent (Afrikaner) proletariat had been created"⁴⁵ and the view was held, by especially the Cape Afrikaners, that economic upliftment for Afrikaners lay with helping the Afrikaner to become "an entrepreneur, an employer and an owner of capital".⁴⁶ In constructing its position for the reader, Die Ontarfdes, on the one hand, produces the kind of subject appropriate to the capitalist mode of production, on the other hand, the particular position offered to the reader is the effect of the dominant ideological and economic formations in society.

In keeping with its more "progressive realism", *Die Ontaridas* purports not to deal in politics (the words "volk", "Afrikaner" are absent from the narrative) but in "people", and the knowledge that the reader gains in the course of the narrative is about the "menslikheid" of the characters. The novel's conception of "menslikheid" is embodied in the figure of the wise and god-fearing Oom Hennie, especially in his living of "christian" values. As the narrative moves towards closure, the unifying principle of "menslikheid" is superseded by a unity represented in the image of a family. It is to Oom Hennie that this final insight falls:

Hy sê sag vir Sjakkie: "Jy weet, dis darem snaaks. Jou pa is nou 'n ou man. Hy't al baie gehoor van die *Gouvernement*. En elke slag as hulle sê, dis die *Gouvernement*, dan moet jou pa dink aan 'n poliesman." Sjakkie knik. Nou pa dit sê, weet hy, hy het ook maar altyd so gedink.

"Maar hoekom sê pa dit nou?"

Die oubaas soek sy woorde.

Dan sê hy stadig: "Ek dink mos nou weer oor die ding...Die magistraat het gesê dat die *Gouvernement* het wette gemaak, juis vir ons kla. En mense...en vir dié wat glad niks het nie...Nou lyk die *Gouvernement* mos glad anders...darein nie soos 'n poliesman nie...eerder soos 'n man wat vir sy kinders wil sorg." (my emphasis) (DO p157)

Within this paternalistic family structure both reader and characters are constituted as children. Unlike society, with its members who are unaware of or indifferent to the plight of the poor, the government knows and the government cares:

Die goewerment weet daar is arm mense wat siek is. Hulle kan verniet gehelp word. *Die goewerment weet*, party se huisies is maar vrotterig, so nat en donker. Daar kan nuwes gebou word. (my emphasis) (DO p156)

That the spelling of "goeverment" here has changed to the conventional form is a textual indicator of the shift from character-focalisation to a mixture of character- and narrator-focalisation, indicating that these insights are not attributable to Oom Hennie's naivete but are endorsed by the narrator. However, the notion of a "family" is not the "family of man" of liberal humanism (whose "transcendental signified" would be Man, or in Althusser's framework the Subject, Man) but a family under the patronage of the Father, the government. The notion of the government as a father recalls the emerging hegemonic discourses of the 1940s, of which O'Heara says:

The HNP, the NO and the OS all viewed the forthcoming Christian-national state as authoritarian...Laissez-faire capitalism was rejected. While the Volkseconomie would be based on private property and the "greater entrepreneurial spirit enhanced by private capital", capital would be placed under the supervision and control of the state, to ensure its use in the service of the volk.⁴⁷ (my emphasis)

The government as represented in the narrative is not so much a guardian as a provider for those children who are in need of material support. However, the vision of the government as a caring father does not represent a plea for the provision of "alms" or "poor relief" to an "unhealthy section" of Afrikaans workers who, as L.J. du Plessis had said at the "Ekonomiese Volkskongres", had sunk into "poor whiteism" because they were unable to adapt to capitalism.⁴⁸ Although Oom Hennie and his family are depicted as materially deprived and ultimately in need of material intervention on the part of the authorities, they possess, as I discuss in section 3.5, the "correct" spiritual and moral goods to enable them to accept their place and fulfill their task in a capitalist society. What then is the ideological imperative of the plea that intervention on behalf of the poor is necessary? Oom Hennie's reverie in the final chapter provides the key:

Die oubaas rook sy pyp, diep ingedagie. Hy het dit nodig om na die hoë hemel te kyk. Hy voel wonderlik klein vanaand, nederig in sy dankbaarheid.

Vanaand is die Nuwe Heer naby. Hy het die oubaas se siel oopgemaak, Sy Vrede daarin gelê. Vader Portjies weet, hy kan nou die verlede vergewe... (DO p.156)

Because of the intervention by the magistrate and the promises of further economic upliftment the last trace of any resentment towards the authorities disappears: Oom Hennie feels "wonderlik" small and humble, able to forgive the injustices of "die verlede". It is from these feelings that his insight into the "real" nature of the government ensues, that it is not an enforcer of law and order ("n poliesman") but a guardian and provider.

Thus, the narrative demonstrates, it is by taking the disadvantaged position of impoverished Afrikaners into account, by making economic concessions for them, that a truly harmonious and compassionate social order can be established and maintained. Material intervention has made certain that the authorities govern not by *force*, but by *consensus*, that the powers that be are not seen as "n poliesman" but as "n man wat vir sy kinders wil sorg".

3.3.2. The means of the project

The author does not attempt to find an imaginary "solution" to the "problem" of the relations of domination and subordination between the different classes since the ideology which informs his project already constitutes a relatively coherent discourse which conceals class contradictions by displacing them with the image of harmonious social relations. As Macherrey stresses, the problem of the text is "something different from the awareness of the problem".⁴⁰ The project of writing, however, presents the author with the problem, as Macherrey says, of

...inventing forms of expression, or merely finding them: not ideal forms, or forms derived from a principle which transcends the enterprise itself, but forms which can be used immediately as the means of expression for a determinate content...⁵⁰

The author's own comments on the novel offer some insight into the problem of the means of expression:

Die Jare in Riversdal, as allemaanskog in die magistratkantoor, het my eeter in aanraking laat kom met 'n deel van die Afrikanervo'k wat ek nie geken het nie: die eenvoudige van gees in die wêreld van die kleinmensdom. Ek het hulle in my hart toegevoeg. Die Onderfides is uit daardie emosie gebore.⁵¹ (my emphasis)

Like Johannesburg used to be, the reader is presumed ignorant of the world of the impoverished Afrikaner. The extent to which ignorance on the part of the reader is central to the project of the text is indicated by the representation of the experienced and knowledgeable magistrate as *unaware* of the conditions of existence of the poor in his own district, an "aberrational" element in the text which critics have noticed with surprise and scorn.⁵² This ignorance is the effect of the "difference" which separates the reader, the author, the fictional magistrate from the poor Afrikaner. In the project of the work it is this ignorance which produces the indifference towards the lot of the underprivileged, and which must be replaced with knowledge so as to produce empathy and understanding. The problem of the text is to find the means whereby to produce this knowledge.

In Die Onderfides the form of the narrative is a modified continuation of the narrative style previously employed by the author,⁵³ the style of the "nuwe saaklikheid", which distinguishing feature is "in drang om...by die kate saak - 'n dinamiese bewegende wêreld van dinge en mense tussen dinge - uit te kom".⁵⁴ In using this style ("The means of

expression for a determinate content which can be used immediately") the author displays his belief that *experience* of the poor (albeit in a fictional world) will produce the required knowledge. This also duplicates, in fictional form, the author's own process of learning - "aunraking" with the poor dispelled his ignorance. The reader need not be "told" anything by a voice or character outside of the world of *Die onterfdes*: it will suffice to "show" the poor to the reader. However, what is shown must also display a movement compatible with the social imperatives of the project of the work. To realise his project the author has borrowed from, in Macherey's words, "the repertoire of images and fables without which nothing can be done",³¹ utilising what is termed the "theme of apprenticeship", the story of an individual's growth towards recognition of his identity and role in the world. As this story of apprenticeship also includes the imparting of overtly ideological values and beliefs to the apprentice, the attitude of the author towards these values and beliefs is important in establishing the meaning which the theme of apprenticeship actually acquires in the work. Thus, before analysing the theme in the work, the mode of narration must be examined in detail.

3.4. Narration

The fictional narrator of *Die Onterfdes* is "above" or superior to the story narrated (an "extradiegetic" narrator) and is also absent from the story, does not participate in it (a "heterodiegetic" narrator).³² Such a narrator is also called "omniscient", and the narrator of *Die Onterfdes* manifests the characteristics associated with omniscience: familiarity with the characters' most innermost thoughts and feelings, knowledge of what happens in several places at the same time, presence in locations where the characters are supposed to be unaccompanied and knowledge of past, present and future.³³ However, the effect is still that of *covertiness* on the part of the narrator as the narrative voice offers little overt

commentary on or interpretation of the events, characters or the world that the characters inhabit. Even those signs usually associated with the presence of the narrative voice - descriptions of setting or definitions of character⁵⁶ - are minimally manifested. Instead, the narration in the novel employs the representation of characters' speech to an unusually great extent. And, as Rimmon-Kenan points out, the representation of speech, imitating as it does language, comes closest to pure mimesis or showing.⁵⁷ Thus the traits of different characters are established by verbal exchanges, as the following example shows:

Die registrasieklerk steek geweldig sy pen in die ink
en trek 'n lang vorm uit sy laai.
"Die naam van die kind?"
Japie dink na... "Johannes Adolfus," sê hy toe. "Dit
was glo my oorlê oupa se naam...nee, tog nie, hy was
Johannes Andries..."
"Met 'n 'r' of met 'n 'ph'?" vra die klerk saaklik.
"Haak nie saak nie," sebaan Japie lugtig...
Hoeder: Anna Elizabeth, huolenaar van Du Preez,
Ouderdom? Demmit! hy is nie seker nie, laas
Paasmanndag het sy nog verjaar, ...vyf-en-twintig of
ses-en-twintig, sê maar ses-en-twintig.
By sweet van inspanning toe hy teenslotte sy naam moet
teken. (D0 p21)

Japie's slapdash attitude towards his wife and family is left to the reader to infer. The event is dramatically presented, achieving the illusion of an imitation of events by "supplying the maximum of information and the minimum of informant".⁵⁸

Van den Berg has argued that since all recorded language in a text emanates from the narrator, the narrator's role should be acknowledged in any typological framework used for the classification of speech in a narrative.⁶¹ The closest approximation to "direct speech" would then be the representation of purely the narrator's words. In *Die*

Often the introductory sentences of each typographic episode are usually presented in this mode, a mode which Van den Berg calls "direct diegetic narration".⁶² More often though, this type of speech is closely linked to the characters' words, filling in, as it were, the characters' non-verbal actions and reactions during verbal exchanges:

"Om Hennie weet nie dalk waar 'n mens hier sowat kan vaste werk vind nie?"

Die oubaas skud bedenklik.

"Gits nee, Faantjie...maar as ek van so iets hoor, sal ek vir jou sê."

Hy grawe in sy broekzak.

"Faantjie, onthou jy nou daardie keer..."

Faantjie kyk hom verbaas aan.

"Om Hennie maak 'n fout..."

Maar dit ou man hou koppig vol.

"Faantjie, dis jy wat die fout maak..."

Faantjie kyk wantrouend na die twee halfkrone voor hom op die tafel.

"Om Hennie..."

Toe word hy skielik rooi. Hy skuif die geld terug.

"Nee, dummie, Om Hennie..."

Oubaas Portjee neem die geld terug.

"Skous, Faantjie..."

Faantjie se mond trek snags.

"Ek weet, Om Hennie..." (my emphasis) (DO p94)

The emphasized words are those of the narrator, and are examples of direct diegetic narration. However, by limiting itself to describing character response in relation to the conversation represented, the narrator reduces its perceptibility and achieves a greater effect of "showing".

Connected to this mode of presentation is the manner in which the narrator styles the characters' words, adding a qualification or description:

"Om Hennie se oë is nog goed," prys sy hom vriendelik.

"A ja n, kind" as hy trots, "as mens jou hele lewe met 'n hamer gespoek het..."

Hulle kyk tevrede na die resultaat.

"Ek is bly Oom Hennie het haar daar gehang," sê Sanna eenvoudig.

Hy kyk haar aan. Sy oë word baie sag.

"Eendag sal ek jou baie van haar vertel," belowe hy dankbaar. (DO p13)

Van den Berg calls the above narrative mode "indirect mimetic narration".⁵³ (Direct mimetic narration would be that of the so-called "I"-narrator, which is "ook 'n direkte vertelwyse, maar daardeur word gepoog om die werklikheid na te boots".)⁵⁴ This term describes both the representation of characters' speech (which is usually called "direct speech") and the narrator's additions to their speech. The type of combination, as quoted above, is characteristic of the novel. On the one hand, this technique also obscures the role of the narrator; on the other, the narrator's comments often appear superfluous (for example the "belowe" above) and the reader's response to the utterances of the characters becomes somewhat overdetermined.

The most interesting aspect of the narrative mode of *Die Ongegrasde* is the way in which the narrative voice is often intimately interwoven with the representation of the characters' speech and thoughts, thus forging a close link between narrator and characters:

Sjakkie moet maar goed in die smidswinkel rondkyk of hy nie dalk iets vind wat hy kan gebruik nie...Los boute, 'n paar voet xsterband...Mens betaal mos deur jou nek as jy die goed een-een moet koop. En die manse van die garage weet tog nie wat hy alles in sy plak hou nie. En Sjakkie moet nie worrie oor die terugbetaal nie. Hy weet seif mens kry maar swaar in die begin... (DO p14)

This type of speech representation is known as "free indirect discourse" (FID). (Van den Berg classifies what is usually called "indirect discourse" - "Hannes het net gesê dat sy swaer by Rabinowitz 'n tafel...gekoop het" (DO p75) - and FID together as "indirect diegetic narration" on account of the predominant role of the narrator in both discourses)⁶⁵. In the above passage words and phrases can be identified as the actual words of the character, embedded in what also appears to be the voice of the narrator - a character would obviously not refer to himself as "hy". The linguistic feature of FID is that it gives the impression of combining what is usually known as "direct discourse" with what is known as "indirect discourse".⁶⁶

This mode of writing calls into question, as Valentin Volisimov points out, both the integrity of the speech of the characters which it reports, and also its own authority to speak.⁶⁷ The narrator's speech can become "just as individualised, colourful, and non-authoritarian as is the speech of the characters".⁶⁸ The narrator thus becomes a character within the text, unable to stand back from it. In Die Ontriefde the use of FID further effaces the role that the narrator plays in telling the story and promotes an empathic identification with the characters on the part of the reader. It is notable that the many amusing incidents in the text, most of them the result of the characters' ignorance or innocence, are read as humorous, not ironical. This is an indication of the tone of acceptance and sympathy brought about by the close link between narrator and characters.⁶⁹

However, the frequent use of FID in Die Ontriefde has a double-edged effect. Although the use of FID, as Volisimov argues, calls into question the integrity of the characters' speech, this effect is countered by the text manifesting a high degree of showing in the form of the representation of the actual speech of the characters. In contrast, the representation of the thoughts of the characters is nearly always presented in FID, thereby not

affording the reader the opportunity to partake in the mimetic illusion of the characters experiencing an inner "I", a seemingly whole and integrated centre of consciousness. In this way the narrative mode, by foregrounding the narrator's voice in the representation of thought, contributes to the establishment of a relationship of difference between character and reader, between the constructed consciousness of the character and the "free subjectivity" of the reader.

This double-edged effect is heightened by the patterns of focalisation in the narrative. The focalisation in the novel is close to the narrating agent: the representation of purely the narrator's words usually corresponds with what is termed external or narrator-focalisation, while in the many combinations of the narrator's voice with the words and thoughts of the characters the perceptions often shift to that of the particular character and become character-focalisation or a mixture of narrator- and character-focalisation.⁷⁰ The narrator-focaliser usually restricts itself to a view of the world "level" with that of the various characters. As such the narrator-focaliser, who could well locate itself at a point above the object(s) of its perception,⁷¹ takes on the role of a limited observer. On the one hand this too encourages an emphatic response towards the characters, on the other hand it enhances the perception of the world that the characters inhabit as small and restricted.

Although the narrator does not express itself much in general commentary or interpretation, "free" from the characters' speech representation, the repetition of certain narrative descriptions by the narrator highlights the attitude of the author towards his characters. The repetition of "soos 'n kind" and its derivations is such an example:

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Hy herhaal koppig soos 'n kind: "Môre-oggend, brekfis in die bed" (DO p7)

Tee grinnik hy soos 'n seun. "Krismis, Japie..." (DO p22)

"'y as dit, nê?" en die ou kârel is so gelukkig soos 'n kind. (DO p.29)

Sy babbel soos 'n kind (DO p38)

Sy deins terug, bang soos 'n kind (DO p49).

"Ek wou dit net vir jou wys," vertel hy kinderlik (DO p59).

Sy is so bly soos 'n kind. (DO p62)

Enader Portjee verduidelik geduldig, asof hy met 'n dom kind praat. (DO p76)

Hear hande is sag en rond, nes 'n kind s'n. (DO p84)

Dis of sy pa 'n seuntjie is, wat hy teen sy bors moet druk. (DO p100)

Tee die tyd om is en Sanna haar toestop onder die komberse, is sy vol fiemies, nes 'n stout kind. (DO p114)

Hy help die ou vro met haar kos, prys "mooi so", nes of sy 'n kind is... (DO p132)

Tee kruip sy soos 'n klein kindjie in sy arms. (DO p142)

"Soos 'n kind" and its permutations denotes itself as a sign by its "obsessional character",⁷² indicating also the relationship of difference between the author (and the reader) and the characters in the novel. What is above all a class difference is displaced onto a generational level and is expressed as a binary opposition: child and adult.

The efficacy of this sign derives not only from its repetition in the text, but also from its relationship with other signs. The analogy of "like a child" is especially linked to the play of the words "klein" and "groot" (and their connotated terms) in the narrative. As signs, the attributes of "klein" and "groot" signify weakness and power respectively. There are many examples, of which I quote only a few:

Toe hy twee siksponse uit sy broeksak grawe, merk hy tevrede op dat die hotelbaas nog *kleiner* is as hy. (DO p7)

Dis of 'n laggie skud binnekant in die dokter se *groot* liggaam. (DO p20)

Hy rek hom uit en dis vir Portjee of sy seun *groter* is as anders. (DO p44)

Maar hulle het gedorie nog nooit so *klein* en minderwaardig gevoel nie. (DO p56)

Nou eers merk Japie hoe *fris* dominee gebou is. (DO p57)

Sy kyk rustig terug in sy oë. Dis of sy effens *langer* word. (DO p60)

Sy slaan haar oë neer. Dis of sy effens *kleiner* word. (DO p105)

Japie knik. Hy voel baie *klein*. (DO p127)

Sy maak haarself *klein* in sy arm. (DO p143)

It is significant that the members of the petit-bourgeoisie, the doctor and the dominee, are presented as physically big, while "klein" is used so often to describe the physical and emotional states of the characters who represent "die onderides". That these terms are related to power or the lack thereof, is clear from Sanna and Sjakkie "seeming bigger" when they assert themselves. Although the important figure of the magistrate is not designated as physically big, his status as an adult is underlined during his interview with Oom Wennie:

"Ek is darem nie meer *vandag* se *kind* nie, oubaas"...Die ou man kyk na die magistraat se gesig, so naby syne. Nou sien hy daar is baie rimpels onder die magistraat se oë...Hy besef opeens, die magistraat is ook 'n man wat al dinge gesien het in sy lewe... (my emphasis) (DO p162,p163)

As the signs "kind" and "klein" combine to signify the poor and underprivileged, the "adult" of the implied child-adult opposition combines with "groot" and signifies the petty

diminutives throughout the narrative also functions to constitute the world which the subject of the novel inhabits, as "die wêreld van die kleinmensdom", a world different to the "big" world of the author and reader of the novel.

It is clear that within the device of allowing the characters "transparently" to display themselves, above all, apparently to speak for themselves, the voice of the narrator manipulates and directs the reader's response to the characters. The difference between reader and characters is represented as that between adults and children, a representation "borrowed" from the arsenal of both literature and ideology as a means to portray the difference between dominant and subordinate groupings. The emphasis on the childlikeness of the characters encourages the reader to respond to them sympathetically on the grounds of a caring paternalism, foreshadowing the image of the paternal government at the close of the narrative. But, as G.S. Gerwel argues in relation to the depiction of "the coloured" in Afrikaans literature, the quality of childlikeness attached to subordinate groupings throws into question their portrayal as full human beings.¹³ The childlikeness of the characters in *Die Oorlofsdag* thus also undermines what critics have termed their "menslikheid".

As Michel Foucault has argued, the manipulation of "sameness" and "difference" is at the basis of all social praxis,¹⁴ and in *Die Oorlofsdag* the unity of "menslikheid" is subject to the "difference" of the imperative of the division of labour and its hierarchies. However, although the characters are not quite "the same" as the reader, the emphasis on their childlikeness, I would argue, does not by itself cast doubt on the values and beliefs explicitly expressed by the "positive" characters in the novel. In keeping with the small world of the characters Oom Hennie's beliefs and values, for example, are presented as the stuff of simple "common sense", not high-minded philosophy or ideology, but these values also are not signaled as being

in conflict with the narrator's and by extension the author's system of beliefs or world-view. Where there is conflict it is, in *Macherey's* terms, on the text's "margins", in its gaps and transgressions. In the case of the reader's personal values (what Umberto Eco calls the reader's "ideological subcodes" ¹⁵) causing him or her to challenge the value-judgements as voiced by Oom Hennie, the relationship of difference between author and characters allows the reader to dissociate himself or herself from these statements without rejecting the whole project of the novel. Meyer de Villiers, as I have mentioned, can state that due to Oom Hennie's racial beliefs he feels that Oom Hennie "is nie van my soort nie" while still viewing the novel as "die vrug van 'n humanitêre drang" and commending the novel for its sympathetic depiction of its characters.¹⁶ However, most critics, as I have discussed in chapter two, have not felt the need to separate the author's intentions from the world-view held by the central characters.

The focus of the following analysis is on the utilisation of the theme of apprenticeship in the novel. The theme (what Macherey calls its "formal unity" ¹⁷) directs and organises the project of the novel, in fact, as I show, sustains it; yet the text, in the process of the attempt to realise its ideological project and to meet the demands of its enabling fictional form, itself foregrounds the limits of the ideology which informs its production.

3.5. The Theme of Apprenticeship

3.5.1. Introduction

In the third-last chapter (chapter twenty-one) Sjakkie thinks about the change he has undergone:

'n Jaar gelede sou hy mos self bang gevoel het vir soveel geld. Maar nou voel hy dat hy amper enigiets kan aanvang, en hy sal dit regkry. (DO p144)

Soon after this Sanna's thoughts affirm Sjakkie's feelings about himself:

Sy dink terug aan die tyd toe Sjakkie bang was om vir Oubaas Van Dyk geld te vra...Wêreld, dit lyk al so lank gelede! Oubaas Van Dyk het al sy geld teruggekry, die laaste pennie...Dis vir haar of Sjakkie in daardie tyd nog eintlik 'n seuntjie was, en of hy nou heeltemal groot geword het...Alle onsekerheid gly skielik uit haar weg... (DO p145)

In the course of the narrative Sjakkie has moved from wage-earner (worker) to petty-commodity producer, and he has come to fulfill his role as breadwinner, as "head of the household". But, as is clear from these two extracts, it is especially his perception of himself and his capabilities which has changed. From being a timid and uncertain individual (both he and Sanna use "scared" to describe his previous state) he has progressed to a person who has confidence in himself, trust in his own abilities and who is prepared to act from these perceptions of himself. He has developed, above all, a sense of his own worth as an individual; and the confidence to act upon that realisation.

The transformation which Sjakkie undergoes serves to organise the narrative discourse as a passage from one state to another, thereby allowing the various elements of that discourse to be synthesised into what is traditionally termed a "theme". In its abstract form this theme (as it relates to Sjakkie's development) would read: "An individual's growth from fear, uncertainty (of his own worth) and passivity to knowledge (of his own worth), confidence (in his abilities) and activity.

"Theme" and "story" are, of course, correlated. Events (which form the constituent units of a story) can be classified as either "kernels" or "satellites", depending on whether they advance the action by opening an

alternative (kernels) or whether they expand, amplify, maintain or delay the former (satellites).⁷⁸ What this "action" consists of, or entails, is governed, however, by what is perceived as being the theme of the story. Conversely, events seen as being significant to the advancement of the story will contribute to a thematic modification of the story.⁷⁹ A story can clearly be said to have more than one theme, or to put it differently, different readers could discover different themes. The overarching theme of a literary work (also called the "sluitmotief"⁸⁰) is often viewed as involving a degree of abstraction (the abstraction of the message of the novel) or as the form of unity which succeeds in making the greatest number of codes in the text come together coherently.⁸¹

The theme I have isolated above (briefly: "An individual's growth from ignorance (of self) to knowledge (of self)") seemingly does not fit the definition of "sluitmotief". Firstly, since Sjakkie's transformation is "complete" by the third last chapter, it does not apparently adequately describe the final events of the story - what I have termed the "pragmatic discourse". Secondly, it would also seem to relegate some obviously significant events to the status of satellite events, such as the events pertaining to the Coetzee story-line and Oom Hennie's interaction with that family. I will, however, in the analysis which follows, show that Sjakkie's growth to "maturity" is indeed a central theme of the novel and does account for the events mentioned above.

In the course of the narrative Sjakkie undergoes two parallel transformations: Firstly, a transformation from ignorance (of self) to knowledge (of self); secondly, a transformation from passivity to action. Furthermore, Sjakkie attains this knowledge through a series of "trials" - challenges he must face and overcome in order for him to grow. This particular form which the story of Sjakkie's transformation displays, is characteristic of the change

which the protagonist in the "Bildungsroman" undergoes, and has been called a story of *apprenticeship*.⁸²

In the story of apprenticeship the protagonist, in his quest (for himself) goes out into the world to find knowledge (of himself), and acquires such knowledge through a series of "adventures" that function both as "tests" and as "proofs" of his newfound knowledge. The story of apprenticeship ends on the threshold of a "new life" for the protagonist, a life to be led in accordance with the knowledge attained.⁸³ I say "his" and "himself" because in the traditional Bildungsroman, the protagonist is nearly always a young man, often an adolescent.⁸⁴ That Sjakkie goes forth "into the world" no further than to borrow money from his employer or to confront a dissatisfied business client should not detract from the structural similarities with the "theme of apprenticeship". Sjakkie "lives" his experiences as if they are indeed great trials to be overcome and through the successful results of his actions he gains the required knowledge of himself. His "triumphs", however small, function as "proof" of that knowledge. Furthermore, the "smallness" of these triumphs are in keeping with the "world" created by the novel, populated by the "kleinmenaden". Also, although Sjakkie might not be a young man or an adolescent at the start of the narrative, his progress is depicted : from a "boy" to a "man", and his transformation is seen by his wife as "growing up" - "dat hy nou heeltemaal groot geword het" (DO p145). The completion of his transformation is also marked by a vision of a new future - "...hy voel dat hy enigiets kan aanvang en dit reghry" (DO p144) - in accordance with his newfound knowledge of himself.

The function which the different characters fulfill in the development of Sjakkie's story also shows a correspondence with the system of characters in the Bildungsroman, as expressed in terms of A.J. Greiman's actantial model.⁸⁵ In the Bildungsroman the categories of subject, object and receiver are fused in a single actor, the protagonist of

the story. The protagonist goes forth in order to find knowledge of himself (object) and it is also he who will benefit from that knowledge (receiver). He usually receives the help of a donor or helper and probably has to confront a number of adversaries who play the actantial role of opponent.⁸⁶ The donor, according to Greimas, is located on the axis of communication; the donor communicates or gives the object, whereas the helper and the opponent are situated on the axis of aid - the helper acts to expedite the acquisition of the object, the opponent to impede or to prevent it.⁸⁷

The actantial model, in Greimas's theory, is the dramatised representation of the deep structure or "mythic level" of a discursive structure. Greimas also applied his schema to explicit ideologies and gave the following account of the actantial structure of "marxist ideology"⁸⁸:

Subject	: Man
Object	: Classless society
Donor	: History
Receiver	: Mankind
Opponent	: The Bourgeois class
Helper	: The Working class

Leaving aside the well-documented problems with Greimas's attempt to find a scientifically rigorous way of arriving at the "meaning" of a text,⁸⁹ the notion that there are only a limited number of actants in a narrative (while there might be a great number of "actors", actual "characters") is very useful. Also, although Greimas's schema has been viewed as too limited and reductive for an analysis of ideology in general,⁹⁰ the model provides a valuable descriptive tool for explaining the functions which the various characters fulfill in relation to the ideological significations produced by the text. In *Die Ontarides*, for example, Japie and Paantjie both fulfill the role of "opponent". Though they do not function explicitly as Sjakkie's adversaries, they function as opponents in

relation to the values and beliefs which are a constituent part of the knowledge that Sjakkie is to gain during his apprenticeship. Similarly, Oom Hennie functions as more than a father-mentor to Sjakkie: by communicating "the truth" to Sjakkie about his place and role in the world and by facilitating Sjakkie's progress towards that knowledge (and its accompanying "action") Oom Hennie functions as "donor" and "helper" in Sjakkie's apprenticeship. Furthermore, that it is Sjakkie's father who fulfills the important role of donor is also, as I will show, ideologically significant.

The structure of apprenticeship as it is utilised in *Die Oorlofs* furthermore shows a correspondence with what is termed "the roman à thèse". This Susan Sulciman defines as "a novel written in the realistic mode (that is, based on an aesthetic of verisimilitude and representation) which signals itself to the reader as primarily didactic in intent, seeking to demonstrate the validity of a political, philosophical, or religious doctrine"¹. What characterises the roman à thèse further is a structure of opposition, of a "positive" versus a "negative" apprenticeship: a positive apprenticeship leads the hero to the values propounded by the doctrine that founds the novel; a negative apprenticeship leads him either to opposite values, or to a position where the positive values are not recognised as such.²

If, in *Die Oorlofs*, Sjakkie can be seen as acting out a positive apprenticeship (he comes to "knowledge of self" and "activity"), Japie Coetzee, the protagonist of the subsidiary story-line, performs a negative apprenticeship, culminating in "non-knowledge" and "inactivity". Sjakkie's growth to "knowledge of self" can also be substituted by "knowledge of truth", while Japie's negative apprenticeship leads him pronouncedly to non-knowledge of truth as defined in Sjakkie's apprenticeship. Japie, like Sjakkie, is also confronted with a series of "trials" or "tests", but in contrast to Sjakkie, does not surmount them. Moreover,

whereas Sjakkie's completion of a positive apprenticeship demonstrates (within the project of the work) that the poor are deserving (on both an economic and "spiritual" level) of material intervention on their behalf, Japie's negative apprenticeship functions to alert the reader to the precarious position of the poor in society and as a warning of the devastating effects of being "undeserving" (also both economically and spiritually').

Sjakkie's growth to "maturity" can be summarized by a schema adapted from the one that Suleiman presents for the positive apprenticeship in the roman à thèse³:

Ignorance of self	Trials surmounted	Knowledge of self	----->	New life in accordance with knowledge
Passivity	----->			Action based on knowledge

As in the schema for the roman à thèse, the dotted line between knowledge and the new life indicates that the latter is merely evoked, not represented. The representation of the hero's "new life" is not necessary in a story of apprenticeship, according to Suleiman, but its evocation is, because it is in the "new life" that the protagonist will undertake the action for which his apprenticeship has prepared him.³⁴ The evocation for this future life may be very brief. In Die Ontferfde Sjakkie's dreams of the future and the action he proposes to undertake from the newfound confidence in himself is presented simultaneously with the narrative signaling (especially by means of Sanna's thoughts) that his transformation is now complete. Although the evocation of a better life in the future is brief, it is explicit, since the difference between the "old" and the "new" Sjakkie is so marked. He now feels "dat hy amper enigiets kan aanvang". The episode ends with reference to the future and a better life:

"Eendag, fluister hy, dan kan jy maar vir my vra wat jy wil hê, enigiets...en ek sal dit vir jou gee." (DO p146)

To approach Sjakkie's and Japie's "stories" as "themes of apprenticeship" does not imply that the novel as a whole is therefore either a "Bildungsroman" or a "roman à thèse". The narrative is not, for example, as in the Bildungsroman, presented as the conflicts of one central consciousness, or, as in the roman à thèse, invested sufficiently with "non-problematic" meanings.³⁵ My approach relates to what Macherey calls the "implements" of the practice of writing, the forms available to the author in realising his project. The author may, as Eagleton points out, combine and transmute available forms, but these forms themselves, as well as permutations of them, are ideologically significant.³⁷ My study of the utilisation of the "theme of apprenticeship" in Die Ontferden will attempt to explain the ideological significance of the meaning that the theme acquires in the text.

The following analysis of the theme of apprenticeship in the novel is structured around the trials which Sjakkie surmounts since those events are marked as highlights in the unfolding of his story. As the actantial functions which the different characters fulfill also determine the nature of the trials, I will discuss them where appropriate. Purely textual elements, which are independent of the causal and temporal dimensions of the narrative, will similarly be included.

Each trial is characterised by a change in Sjakkie's state or condition. The initial state (which is transformed in the course of the trial sequence) does not always originate in the events of the trial but is often related to a situation of disequilibrium earlier on in the story. The trials also distinguish themselves from the other learning episodes (Sjakkie learns throughout the narrative) by including a confrontation or struggle where Sjakkie faces

an opponent. The events of the trial furthermore always verify the knowledge he gains in surmounting the trial.

Although the first chapter does not include a trial for Sjakkie, I discuss it in detail as it provides the point of departure, Sjakkie's initial state, from which his transformation is enacted. It "sets the scene" from which the characters and events are presented as evolving, and presents the specific elements of the situation which are to be transformed. The first chapter also functions as an exposition, giving the reader information about the circumstances which led to the situation at the start of the narrative. As the episode dealing with Faantjie's visit provides further elements important to Sjakkie's apprenticeship, and functions as a preparation for his final trial, I also give a detailed discussion of this episode.

3.5.2. The positive apprenticeship

3.5.2.1. Setting the scene (1)

The opening sequence of the narrative presents Sjakkie as tense, uncertain, clumsy, with his bride Sanna as an oppositional point of reference - it is also her wedding, but she is sufficiently confident to look after him, to be "moederlik" towards him. With the signing of the register physical aspects connotatively characterise the different members of the family (DO p5). Sanna's tongue is "sigbaar tussen haar vogtige lippe", suggesting sensuality and emphasising her womanliness; Oom Hennie blows his nose and pushes up his sleeves before signing, suggesting earthiness, unsophistication, the "worker"; Sanna's mother says she is trembling too much to sign and the curator signs for her. Sjakkie is sweating, the outward manifestation of his nervousness. Although all of these signifiers of the physical, the body, can be "naturalised": (Sanna's moist lips, for example, by what Culler refers to as the "conventionally natural" *) they also function as secondary signifiers of a connoted system. In each case

they function to signify the initial state of a process which will be executed along the temporal axis of the story: Sjakkie's sweating (his nervousness) will develop into confidence; Sanna's moist lips (her womanliness) will be replaced by the dry cough, the thinness of the TB sufferer, undermining her femininity; Oom Hennie's nose-blowing earthiness will save the family; Sanna's mother's non-participation in the event, only trembling in response to the call made on her to sign the register, foreshadows her death, her departure from the family.

Sjakkie's marriage, his acquiring a wife, here obviously does not function as a reward for successfully completing an apprenticeship but rather, coming as it does at the start of the narrative, functions as the precondition for his development. Sjakkie's immaturity is highlighted in relation to the confidence of his young wife and assumes the dimensions of a "problem" when the curator states: "...die man, as hoof van die gesin, gaan voor. Die vrou sal volg waar die man gaan..." (DO p10). In terms of this value (endorsed, as I shall show, by the linear unfolding of the story), the initial situation can be termed a situation of disequilibrium. Even put more strongly, the initial situation is the inverse of the "proper" hierarchy between man and woman - instead of Sjakkie being "the head of the household", he assumes the role of child in relation to Sanna who acts "like a mother" ("moederlik" DO p5) towards him. This disequilibrium is therefore characterized by an opposition - an opposition which is also a negation of an accepted value within the world of the novel.

This "disequilibrium" forms part of what Roland Barthes terms the "hermeneutic inventory".⁸⁹ Under this heading one could put anything which, as one goes through the text, poses problems, and this acts as a structuring force - the desire to see a problem resolved would lead the reader to organise sequences in the narrative so as to make them signify.⁹⁰ The initial opposition: Sjakkie to Sanna like child to mother, and its relationship of negation or

inversion with the hierarchical opposition "proper" to the family unit, poses a problem to which the course of events to follow is expected to give a solution. The above oppositions, as part of a "hermeneutic inventory", account for defining the theme of the story as Sjakkie's "growth to maturity", or "manhood". The reader's desire to see "the problem resolved" would lead to those sequences which deal with the "problem" being highlighted and effects what she or he considers "the story to be about".

The honeymoon sequence also emphasizes Sjakkie's lack of confidence. In contrast to Sanna who is happy that they are now alone at last, Sjakkie is presented as "n bietjie hulpeloos", "verleë". In his head "sing nog die drukke van die troupartjie soos 'n verre branding by die see" (DO p6). The meaning of "drukke" as not only "bustle" but also "pressure" and the comparison with the sound of the sea, becomes linked to the scene depicted in the painting on the wall of their hotel room, the scene Sjakkie sees as he looks around helplessly:

"Aan die muur duik 'n engel omlaag en sleep 'n dronkeling met lang, nat hare on uitgestrekte arms uit 'n graasgroen-kelkende see. 'n Gevaarlike blits spat teen die kop van 'n grimmige golf." (DO p7)

Through the imagery of the sound of the sea to express the lingering effects of the wedding reception and Sjakkie's helplessness as he looks around, the painting on the wall comes to reinforce, through analogy, through a textual link (independent of story-causality), the relationship between Sanna and Sjakkie. Sjakkie, helpless, is like the "dronkeling"; Sanna, like the angel, can save him, thereby affirming her, at this stage, as the dominant partner in the relationship.

Furthermore, when Sanna pulls Sjakkie towards her, he feels as if "n groot golf hom opneem en saandra" (DO p7). Of note is that the image of a wave here functions as a link with the previous two images of the sea and that Sanna's

inversion with the hierarchical opposition "proper" to the festivity unit, poses a problem to which the course of events to follow is expected to give a solution. The above oppositions, as part of a "hermeneutic inventory", account for defining the theme of the story as Sjakkie's "growth to maturity", or "manhood". The reader's desire to see "the problem resolved" would lead to those sequences which deal with the "problem" being highlighted and effects what she or he considers "the story to be about".

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ysical approaches to Sjakkie, the onset of physical intimacy, evokes an association with drowning - a wave carrying him off. The opposite, therefore, of the previous evocation of Sanna of "an angel" saving the "drowning" Sjakkie from the sea. The image of sexual arousal as a wave is, of course, quite conventional; of interest here is that the image serves to undermine the notion of Sanna as saviour and confirms Sjakkie's helplessness.

The depiction of Sjakkie's thoughts and memories after the consummation of the marriage functions as an exposition, as well as to provide the further elements of the initial situation which will be central in the transformation enacted by the narrative. It also establishes the actual functions which the different characters will fulfill.

As an exposition it informs the reader of events which took place before the onset of the narrative. It tells the reader about how Sjakkie and Sanna met, how his first interaction with her made a physical demand on him - "hy (het) 'n geskreeu om hulp gehoor..." (DO p8). Even though, as it turned out, nothing more was expected of him than that he sees her home safely, her reaction of "dappere meneer" foreshadows the implicit demands she later makes - that he fulfills his role as a man.

It is interesting that this exposition imparts no information to the reader about the circumstances which led to the family's poverty, although their more recent situation is cleverly sketched. The lack of a broader historical placing (and this remains so in the ensuing story) assumes some significance in relation to the title of the novel - "onterf" suggesting a state and a process prior to the condition of being "disinherited". As *Die Onterdas* has been compared, in terms of its subject matter, with the novels of Jochem van Bruggen about the "poor white",¹²¹ the following extracts from *Ampie: Die Natuurkind* provide an interesting contrast with *Die*

Ontarfdas' silence about the historical process which left its characters impoverished:

Sy oupa was ook een van hulle wat die pad hier oopgemaak het vir die beskawing. Maar die beskawing wat wissel na die luiz van volksbegrippe, het Ampie se vader, soos duisende van sy lotgenote, oorweldig en gebreek. Vreemde toestande het hom en sy huisgesin afgeatoot langs die hange wat opklim uit die moerasse van ons armlankedom.¹⁰²

"En hoekom is daar sulke slegte witmense, Flip? Ek sal jou sê - Vroeër, onder ons oumense, was dit buurmanskap en vriendskapliker reëlings van kwessies, soms onder mekaar. Later het besigheid-is-besigheid gekom...Maar al te heftig het die besigheidswêreld hulle oorweldig, deur oorlog en verwoesing van hulle siendomme...Baie het weggetrek...Die golf van beskawing...was te geweldig...¹⁰³

The "explanation" for the existing state of affairs in Ampie is obviously from a very specific and overt ideological perspective; in Die Ontarfdas, however, it is suggested that the situation has never been different:

"Seun, ek is 'n ou man. Solank soos ek kan onthou, was die wêreld so. Eenkant die ryk mense, anderkant die armes...soos ons." (DO p96)

The contradiction between what is implied by the title of the novel and Oom Hennie's statement above points towards the contradictions of the ideology that informs the project of the novel: the plea for upliftment is based on the notion that the impoverished Afrikaners have lost the stake in society to which they were entitled, yet the call in the novel is also towards stability, acceptance of the status quo as given by God, as I later discuss.

That Oom Hennie, Sjakkie's father, functions as donor and helper in the theme of apprenticeship is also established during this retrospective episode. It is clear that the narrator wants to ensure that Oom Hennie is interpreted as a "true" donor, a wise counsellor, by the high degree of "redundancy"¹⁰⁴ which the text manifests in relation to Oom Hennie's portrayal. In one of the few instances of the narrator passing explicit judgment on a character, we read that he is "n dierbare oubaas" (DO p8). Oom Hennie is also constituted as a positive figure by Sjakkie as the character-focaliser:

"Goeie ou Pa wat sy seun 'n hanniemoen gegee het" (DO p8)

"Goeie ou Pa van hom (ibid.)

"Sy hande was vir alles reg (ibid.)

"...Maar geen een kon swaer vleg soos Pa nie" (ibid.)

In a following paragraph Oom Hennie is the object of a mixture of narrator- and character-focalisation. This functions not only to portray Oom Hennie positively but also to validate Sjakkie's perceptions of his father:

...maar toe die perde in die stad skaars word, het die Oubaas aan die toekoms gedink en sy seun by ene Du Preez, 'n timmerman, laat leer. Daar het hy geleer om te skaaf, om hamer en beitel en saag te gebruik. Totdat Du Preez water op sy longe gekry het en dood is. Toe het Pa nog 'n bietjie gereedskap uit die boedeltjie gekoop. "Vir later, mens kan nooit weet nie," het hy gesê. (DO p8)

"Die Oubaas" en "sy seun" are verbal indicators that the focalisation is that of the narrator, but "Toe het Pa..." indicates that Sjakkie is the focaliser. For the one negative quality of Oom Hennie to emerge from the exposition an excuse is made:

"Net partykeer die bottel...Dit was dan oor oorlê ma, wat dood is toe hy nog 'n tjokkertjie was. (DO p8)

The "excuse" quality of the reason given for Oom Hennie's drinking emerges from a comparison, on a textual level, with the reference to the "jong" a few lines earlier, who shares the same indulgence: "Dié is baie knap met perde, maar hy sul partykeer..." (DO p8)

The reference to the "jong" ends with the suggestive run-on dots; unlike Oom Hennie he is not afforded an excuse.

Sjakkie's thoughts about Sanna being "baie meer selfversekerd as wat hy is" is followed by a passage devoted explicitly to Oom Hennie's function as donor of values in his son's life. The "overcoded"¹⁰⁸ sentence - "Sy pa het meermale vir hom gesê" - introduces the "common wisdom" by which Oom Hennie has charted his life, and which his son has accepted as not only the "patroon van die mensewêreld" but as God's "orde" (DO p10). As the content of the values and beliefs which Oom Hennie has donated to his son functions as a major structuring device in the syntagmatic development of Sjakkie's apprenticeship, and as I will discuss some of its signifiers on a textual level, I quote the passage in full:

Sy pa het meermale vir hom gesê: "Sjakkie, ou seun, daar is drie soorte mense op die wêreld: Die hotnots, ons en die ryk mense. Oor die hotnots hoef jy nie te bekommer nie, hulle is sommer vuilgoed. En die ryk mense hoef jou nie af te skrik nie, as jy maar net uit hul pad uitbly en weet hul huis is nie joune nie. Ou Paantjie Delpot mag sê dat ryk mense jakhalse is wat die bietjie vleis van die arm man wegvreet. Maar Paantjie was al in die tronk vir die Here-weet-wat, en hy is 'n kommunis! Onthou jy daardie rysweep wat ek vir kaptein Wilmot gemaak het? Portjee, het die kaptein gesê, ek is so damn satisfied met my sweep, as jy nog netso een vir Miesien Wilmot maak betaal ek jou twee pond en 'n dop goeie ou whiskey. Hy was vir jou 'n gentleman, en so ryk dat jy nie naby kon kom nie. Nee, ou seun, ryk of arm, die mens is goed en God is

goed. Haal jou hoes af vir die grotes en sê hulle vir
jou eie mense, en die Here sal jou seën, sowragtig!
(DO p10)

Although Oom Hennie presents the "ons", the poor, as distinct from the other two "types" of people, their exclusion from the category of "ryk mense" is not as absolute as from "die hotnots". A causal relationship is given for Sjakkie not worrying about hotnots - "because" is the conjunction which is implied between the two clauses that refer to the "hotnots". That their position in relation to the "ryk mense" is more flexible, is signified by the "as", which is a conditional conjunction. The passage also provides the reader with the signified of the signifier "mens" in the context of the novel: "mens" signifies "witmens". Oom Hennie might start his classification of humanity by referring to "drie soorte mense", but he then strips the "hotnots" of humanity, designating them as "vuilgoed" - "rubbish", but also "goed" - "things".

That Oom Hennie's "common wisdom" has a relationship to a particular belief system is suggested by the reference to Faantjie who is a "kommunis". Oom Hennie's earthy and simple beliefs take on the aspect of a counter ideology to Faantjie's communism. This is, however, again played down by Oom Hennie's example of good behaviour by the rich - Captain Wilmet and his whip - as it appears to place Oom Hennie's values and beliefs on the common sense terrain again.

Oom Hennie's words instill in Sjakkie a sense of resignation to life's dispensation: "Dit was die wêreld waarin die Liewe Heer op 'n goeie dag vir Sjakkie gesit het. En wie sou teen sy orde spook? Nie Sjakkie Portjee nie!" (DO p10). Nevertheless, Sjakkie's certainties are disturbed by Sanna aspiring to more, who talks about "eendag, as jy ryk is" (DO p10). Sanna's ambitions are motivated, on the level of the story, by her losing her job

to an "ou waid" (DO p10), similarly, her vehement insistence that Sjakkie says he is "knap" (DO p10) can be "psychologically" attributed to her insight that any improvement in their life's material condition depends on Sjakkie's competence and self-esteem.

Although the representation of the retrospective events are "filtered through" a character's (Sjakkie's) memories and thoughts, the text prepares the reader for future events and developments. Sjakkie might not know, for example, where he could find work "as dit nie by oubaas Van Dyk is nie" (DO p10); the text, however, has ordered the next remembered incident around Sjakkie's competence in fixing a table, thereby hinting at the future establishment of their own carpentry shop. It is also possible to extrapolate the structure by which Sjakkie will acquire an appropriate system of values ("the object"). That Sjakkie's personal credo "Trots op sy wit vel, solidêr met hulle wa' vir elke pennie moes dankie-sê, en met 'n skutere cerbied vir die grotes..." (DO p10) is not adequate as a philosophy to deal with life's realities, is indicated by the way in which the text orders the presentation of the tension between Sjakkie's resignation and Sanna's aspirations. Sanna has lost her work on spurious grounds, thereby putting into question the sufficiency of Sjakkie's belief in the value of having a white skin. Sanna's demand that Sjakkie recognise his own worth points to the way in which the lack in Sjakkie's belief-structure will be rectified: Sjakkie's pride in being white must be accompanied by a heightened sense of self-worth brought about by a demonstration of his abilities.

Sjakkie's development towards a recognition of his own "ableness", thereby concomitantly remedying one of the shortcomings of his value-system, is the focus of his first trial. His second trial relates to his belief in solidarity with his fellow poor and the third trial to his shy respect for the rich.

Oom Hennie's "fyn gliemiaggie" (DO p10) at the end of the episode signals that Sanna's demands are not at odds with his own words to his son. Oom Hennie's words "address" his son as "'n mens"; Sanna's ambitions, on the other hand, relate to the process whereby Sjakkie will also become constituted as "a man". Sanna functions as a "pseudo-opponent" in Sjakkie's apprenticeship: not only does she adopt the role of adversary so as to goad Sjakkie into action, but Sjakkie must reverse the nature of their relationship and bring it in line with the male-female hierarchy as announced during their marriage ceremony. Sanna's self-confidence becomes a quality to be combated. Furthermore, that Sanna's role as donor is subject to her function as pseudo-opponent bespeaks of the underlying ideological assumptions of the text. The narrative enacts a vision of a patriarchal society (indicated, above all, by the number of roles which the image of "the father" is called on to play)¹⁸ which implicitly dictates that it will not be Sanna who will "represent" (as donor) the values and beliefs constituent to the ideological programme of the work but Oom Hennie, the established "head" of the family.

The exposition ends with Sjakkie experiencing a "logge behaaglikheid" (DO p11). The physical union of husband and wife has been successfully accomplished and progression is signposted by the transformation of Sjakkie's body: from being nervous, sweaty, he now experiences a state of comfort. Physically Sjakkie has taken the first steps to becoming a man.

3.5.2.2. Sjakkie's first trial

Trial 1 : loss of work ———> starting own business
 : confusion ———> understanding

The equilibrium established in the household is disturbed dramatically by Sjakkie losing his job. The enormity of this change is reflected in Sjakkie's reaction to the news:

Sy gedagtes probeer nog vorentoe dwing, maar dan stoot hulle vas. Want voor lê 'n donker afgrond en dis die end. In die diepte borrel net onsekerheid en ang. My sweet van benoudheid. (DO p40)

His anxiety about the family's future is heightened by the fact that Sanna is now pregnant. Sanna shares Sjakkie's reaction which is one of fright. The plan which Oom Hennie offers - that they start their own business - presents Sjakkie with a challenge that he is loathe to accept: that he borrow money from Van Dyk so as to finance them initially. Sjakkie eventually is goaded into action by Sanna, and their verbal exchange is presented in the imagery of a battle:

Sjakkie kyk haar aan. Daar is iets hards en onversetlik in haar oë, asof sy haar gewapen het vir 'n bittere stryd. Hy slaan sy oë neer...

'n Gevoel van verset kruip in hom op...

Sanna se stem is hoër as gewoonlik. Hy voel die uitdaging en daar kom staal in sy hande. Weer kyk hy haar aan, en hierdie slag is dit of twee swaarde mekaar kruis. Koud en meedoënloos besef hy dat daar nou gestry gaan word wie die sterkste is van hulle twee.

Toe val Sanna aan:

"As jy nie gaan nie, sal ek met hom praat." (DO p43)

Sanna "attacks" but is "defeated". Sjakkie asserts himself as head of the household ("Daar is net een wat met onsas Van Dyk sal gesels...en dis ek." - DO p44) and now it is Sanna who lowers her eyes. The battle is over. Having successfully fought Sanna he goes forth "into the world" to borrow money, and, as the reader expects, also emerges victorious. Sjakkie as the "returning hero" is treated to

an unusual meal of meat and sausage, a feast, and to the warmth and admiration of his wife.

The trial which Sjakkie surmounts is of a particular kind. The notion of a trial, or a test, implies a confrontation or a struggle: to surmount the trial, the protagonist must overcome an opponent. Yet neither Sanna nor Oubaas Van Dyk really function as opponents. Oubaas Van Dyk turns out to be more than willing to help and, although Sjakkie's confrontation with Sanna is presented as a battle, Sanna is pleased to be defeated - her defeat is their victory. Sanna only functions as a "pseudo-opponent", goading Sjakkie into action. The key to the nature of the trial which Sjakkie has undergone is given at the "feast" when Sanna takes his hand:

Hy sien die warmte in haar oë en hy raak verward in sy geluk. Nou onthou hy, sneaks genoeg, hoe sy een aand, lank gelede, op die vloer gestamp het en met trane in haar oë geskreu het: "Ek wil hê jy moet sê jy's knap!"

Hy verstaan nie mooi hoekom hy nou so skielik daarvan dink nie.

Hy hoor sy pa sê: "Daar is nog een tjoppie."

Sanna beslis: "Dié is vir Sjakkie. Dis mos hy wat die geld gekry het!"

Sy skuif die vleis op sy bord.

Toe is dit of hy sy vrou beter as ooit begryp... (DO p45)

Sjakkie now not only understands Sanna and her expectations of him as the head and provider of the family better, but also, as suggested in the above passage, can now understand a situation which previously confused him: Sanna's vehement insistence that he admit to his own capabilities, that he sees himself as "knap". Thus, Sjakkie also has surmounted a trial of interpretation: as the narrative shows, he now understands a situation which he earlier could not explain.¹⁴⁷

Through the narrative organisation of retrospective events in chapter one, Sjakkie's initial state of confusion became linked to the apparent contradiction between Sanna's aspirations and Sjakkie's own values as distilled from his father's guiding words to him. This conflict the text presents as "solved" in that Sjakkie is depicted as rectifying his lack of self-esteem by "recognising" himself in relation to Sanna ("Daar is net een wat...sal gesels...en dis ek"). By exercising, in Michel Foucault's terms, "the exclusive right of the speaking subject"¹⁰⁸ in the context of their union, Sjakkie positions himself in relation to Sanna ("die sterkste"), thereby realising the proper relationship between husband and wife. Once this condition is established Sjakkie is able to act, to "rescue" himself and his family from the dangers of their situation, without questioning the hierarchy of society as expressed to him by his father or engaging in struggle (except with Sanna, whose function as a pseudo-opponent is underlined by the metaphors employed to describe their interaction). Furthermore, their economic vulnerability, their deliverance unto the whims of employers (as in the case of both Sanna and Sjakkie's dismissal from their work) or the demands of progress (implicit in the reason for Sjakkie losing his job) is addressed by the nature of the proposed new work for Sjakkie - his own business - to which the outcome of Sjakkie's first trial provides a promising start.

Sjakkie's trial leads him to knowledge as regards two interrelated aspects. Firstly, where he had been depicted as having pride only in one personal attribute - his white skin - he has experienced himself as competent to effect a change in his and his family's fortunes. Secondly, within the hierarchy of society, in which they are at the bottom of the pile (since the "hotshots" don't feature) he has experienced a measure of personal power as the dominant partner in his relationship with Sanna. The admiration he receives from Sanna functions as proof of both the "truth"

of male leadership in the family and the knowledge of himself that he has gained.

3.5.2.3. Sjakkie's second trial

Trial II : strife in the family —————> harmony

: confusion —————> understanding

Sjakkie's second trial follows directly on his first. Sanna's demands for nappies for the expected baby meets with resistance from Sjakkie on the grounds of their depleted finances. He defends his position by referring to Japie and his family:

"Ek swaer Japie se kleingoed het nooit doeke gehad nie. En hulle het tog ook groot geword."

Hy voel nou self dat hy 'n fout maak. Sy rig haar half op.

"My kind sal nie soos 'n hotnot gebore word nie!"

Dis of 'n koue wind oor hom waai. Hy probeer nog goedmaak, hy hakkel:

"Nee, natuurlik nie...ek wou net sê..."

Maar hy kom nie verder nie. Hy weet ook nie eintlik wat hy kan sê nie. Dis net dat daar nie geld is nie.

Dat hy partykeer kan sweet van angs as hy aan die toekoms dink... (DO p48)

Although Sjakkie is shaken by Sanna's reference to the "uncivilised" upbringing of Japie's children, he seeks confirmation for his point of view (his priorities) by asking his father whether he, Sjakkie, had worn nappies as a child. His father's reply, that he had not, Sjakkie reads as confirmation of the correctness of his stand on the matter: "Sjakkie sug verlig asof daar 'n groot las van sy skouers afgeneem word." (DO p48) Yet, once again, there is an obstacle to his fully understanding the situation: "Maar hy kan nie die skielike vyandigheid in sy pa se stem verstaan nie." (DO p48)

When Sanna takes matters into her own hands (that is, without Sjakkie's permission) and takes the money, her action meets with a violent response from Sjakkie - he slaps her. His immediate and intense remorse leads not only to Sanna forgiving him, the crisis forging a stronger link between them, but also to Sjakkie's resolution to somehow provide for the baby's needs. He decides to borrow money again (thus once more overcoming his "onverklaarbare ang om gunste te vra" - DO p43), a plan which meets, as during his first trial, with great enthusiasm from Oom Hennie. That night in bed he prays for forgiveness, also "dat hy nou belowe het om dit nooit weer te doen nie, want hy is nie van Japie se soort nie" (DO p51). The episode ends with Sanna and Sjakkie depicted as being intensely happy: Sanna is "diep-gelukkig"; Sjakkie presses her against him "in 'n opwelling van bruisende geluk" (DO p52).

Although Sjakkie feels deep and anguished remorse about his violent behaviour, the episode, especially if read as an extension of his first trial, still functions to affirm Sjakkie's position as head of the household. Sjakkie is guilty of an unacceptable reaction; of extending the battle of words and wills of the previous episode into physical violence. Sanna's forgiveness is of that excess; the role allocation which allows Sjakkie to deny her requests is not challenged. A fact, her reaction to his violence, especially in conjunction with the deep happiness she feels at the close of the episode, has a rather ambiguous quality:

Toe roep iets haar wakker. Sy kyk af na hom. Daar is sowaar 'n flou glimlag om haar mond, verlei, amper verwonderd... (DO p49)

Her "wonder" seems to relate as much to Sjakkie's crying desperately for forgiveness, as to a certain amazement about her timid husband's assertive behaviour. What is clear though, is that the combination of his assertiveness

and his anguish about the form it took, leads Sanna to experience intense happiness.

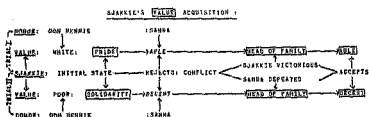
Sjakkie's second trial thus consolidates the knowledge gained during his first. He once more resolves to borrow money, repeating the action which led to him establishing himself as "able"; furthermore, his violent behaviour toward Sanna, a manifestation of the outer limits of male power in the family, still serves to emphasise his position as head of the household.

Here Sjakkie, as in the previous episode, has surmounted a trial of interpretation: he has come to the realisation that "hy nie van Japie se soort is nie". The pattern which his passage to understanding follows, also corresponds to that of his previous trial: a demand made by Sanna is at first resisted, not understood, a confrontation between the couple follows in which Sanna assumes the role of pseudo-opponent, Sanna is "defeated" (in this episode Oom Hennie sighs: "Sanna sa) hulle [the nappies] nie moet koop nie...nie soos ek haec ken nie" - DO p51), Sjakkie acts (or resolves to act) and gains insight and understanding.

As at the close of his first trial, Sjakkie's understanding of the situation is expressed in terms of Sanna. In this case, he comes to an expressed *disavowal* of solidarity with Japie by promising never again to subject Sanna to the treatment which Japie inflicts on his wife Anna. He has also resolved to meet Sanna's requirements about a decent child-rearing practice, thereby affirming the initial distinction that Sanna had drawn between them and Japie, Japie's family being raised like "hothots". Thus the new knowledge gained, through Sjakkie's trial of interpretation, is that of *secondary differentiation*: within the unity of poverty and whiteness (the "one" as proposed by his father), distinctions, based on civilised norms, still hold. Although Japie is physically absent from the episode, he has fulfilled the role of "opponent" in this trial, representing the values and mode of behaviour

which Sjakkie must reject in order for him to grow towards full "manhood".

The structural similarities between Sjakkie's first and second trials can be summarised by the following schema:



Although the demands made by Sanna are signalled as undermined and supported by Oom Henrie (the "tyn glimsmid" - DO p10 - in relation to Sjakkie's first trial and his "skielike yndigheid" - DO p18 - towards Sjakkie during the second), Sanna also fulfills the role, as I have said, of pseudo-opponent. It is through *confrontation* with Sanna that Sjakkie is goaded into action and into accepting the values appropriate to the demands of society. The conflict between Sanna and Sjakkie ensues because Sanna overreaches herself, oversteps her role and place in the family. Sanna's "defeat" in the *confrontation* leads the couple to experience happiness and harmony at the close of each trial: the proper relationship, the "natural" hierarchy between husband and wife, has been established and maintained and Sanna's interests (her desire for Sjakkie to improve their economic standing and for "civilised" child-rearing practices) have been taken into account. Thus Sjakkie, like the government at the close of the narrative, can "rule" by consensus, not force, and all is harmonious and orderly, above all in the text, "happy". Of note, is that by casting Sanna in the role of pseudo-

opponent the text displays, on its "margins", an awareness that underlying the "natural", orderly relations of dominance and subservience in society is conflict, a struggle and, of course, a victory and a defeat.

3.5.2.4. The motif of modernisation

Up to the episode dealing with Sjakkie's loss of work the advancement of the Portjee story-line mostly centres around Oom Hennie and his interaction with Sanna. Oom Hennie's keen interest in helping Sanna with her household duties is psychologically motivated by the early death of his wife Marie, for whom Sanna becomes a substitute.

Oom Hennie, as donor, communicates the values which form the basis of Sjakkie's belief-structure. Whereas Oom Hennie's function as donor is quite overt, (so much so that it has been the focus of negative criticism), the extent to which he fulfills the role of helper - facilitating the acquisition of the "object" - is not always immediately apparent. It requires a greater degree of abstraction from the reader, based on an awareness of certain authorial choices as to the representation of characters and events. Till Sjakkie and Sanna's relationship is redefined during Sjakkie's first trial, for example, Oom Hennie helps by functioning as a substitute for Sjakkie, who, up to the establishing of the "proper" relationship between husband and wife, is largely absent from the narrative. Oom Hennie also helps by improving the home environment before Sjakkie begins his climb up the class ladder. Furthermore, Oom Hennie modernises their household arrangement by building the "kontrèpsen" (DO p26), the ironing-board. The ironing-board episodes constitute an element for which one can account by constructing a "model of coherence",¹⁰ namely the motif of modernisation.

In the first chapter, during the retrospective episode, Oom Hennie is established as a forward-looking person: "...maar toe die perde in die stad skaars word, het die oubaas aan die toekomst gedink en sy seun by ene Du Preez, 'n

timmerman, laat leer" (DO p9). It is also Oom Hennie's foresight in purchasing the carpentry tools that enables Sjakkie to start his own business after the loss of his work: "Toe het pa nog 'n bietjie gervredskap uit die boedeltjie gekoop. "Vir later, mens weet nooit nie," het hy gesê" (DO p8). The notion of progress and modernisation is positively valorized especially in the episode following upon the sequences devoted to the building and giving of the "kontrèpsen". In this episode, Sanna's birthday party, the men's conversation is represented as focused on the changing world. The representation of their conversation as it pertains to the new car of neef Lewies is particularly significant:

Praat van veranderings en vooruitgang! Hier kan neef Lewies darem 'n woordjie saangesels. In die ou dae moes hy kar en perde vat en die verbrande Wit Hoogte uittrek om in die dorp te kom...Maar nou klim hy net in sy nuwe motor...Lewies is die kapitalis van die klomp, want hy besit 'n motorkar. Die vader-alleen weet waar Lewies die geld gekry het om die ding te koop. Hy het mos nie sy eie grond nie? Maar Lewies verkondig sy oortuiging. Mens kan nie agterbly nie...Tien pond in die hand en die res bietjies-bietjies. En kyk net die gemak wat 'n mens daarvan het! (DO p30)

Not only is the notion of progress approvingly contemplated by the group of men, but the possession of land as prerequisite for material improvement is seemingly dispelled.

The motif of modernisation is developed further by the contrasting attitudes of Oom Hennie and Ma Saayman towards change and progress. Like Tant Mietjie at Sanna's party, Ma Saayman is depicted as being highly suspicious of anything new or unusual, as even sometimes dangerously ignorant and superstitious. Whereas Ma Saayman, after smelling Anna's newborn baby, infers that Anna is somehow contribut... to

its sickly state, Oom Hennie is able to disregard the inferences that magic ("toordery" - DO p35) caused the subsequent death of the baby by taking recourse to the scientific knowledge of the doctor. Although the narrative does not treat Ma Saayman's old ways and beliefs altogether unsympathetically, the outcome of the different events (such as the birth of Sanna's baby) proves the validity of Oom Hennie's standpoint and casts doubts over hers. Furthermore though there is no causal relationship between Ma Saayman's traditionalism, her superstitious beliefs, and her death, her departure from the text serves to highlight the inappropriateness of such values, beliefs and practices.

The notion of progress as a positive force underlies the trials which Sjakkie undergoes in that by growing to "maturity" Sjakkie also moves from worker to petty-commodity producer, engaging in the practice of business - the practice by which the poor can improve their lot. This is explicitly stated by Oom Hennie after Faantjie's visit:

Sjakkie voel deurmekaar. Dis nie dat hy glo sy pa is verkeerd nie. Maar hy kan nog nie sien n'e hoe die wêreld gaan beter word as net die armes mekaar help nie. Dis dan hulle wat al so min het?

Vader Portjee het sy antwoord klaar.

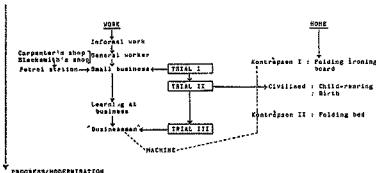
"Sjakkie, ons doen besigheid met ou Rabinowitz...Natuurlik verdien hy klomp geld met die goed wat ons maak, ek sê jou mos, dis besigheid. Maar moet jy nou wees soos Faantjie en sê: 'Hy is 'n kapitalis, hy is soos gif'...? Waar sou ons werk gekry het in die begin? (my emphasis) (DO p97)

Oom Hennie's solution to the problem of their poverty shows an obvious correspondence with the proposals for the upliftment of the Afrikaner as put forward by the Afrikaner nationalist ideologues of the 1930s and 1940s. Oom Hennie does not have the cultural or psychological resistance to urban capitalism which T.E. Dönges warned about at the

"Ekonomiese Volkskongres" in 1939¹⁰ but is depicted as having the appropriate "economic consciousness" for the challenges facing the poor Afrikaner in the urban environment. Furthermore, Oom Hennie's construction of the different "kontrèpsens" (the folding bed, the folding ironing board) develops the idea of modernisation as a bulwark against further proletarianisation, against a further dropping of "civilised" (white) living standards. This is clearly signalled in the narrative by Oom Hennie's ingenuity in building the folding bed which prevents their home from looking "na 'n bruinmens se huis" (DO p103) after Na Saayman's illness necessitates Oom Hennie moving into the family's "voorhuis". The value of modern, civilised practices is also, as I have discussed, the focus of Sjakkie's second trial, and it is implicit in the episode dealing with the birth of Sjakkie and Sanna's baby. Here it is suggested that the traditional home-and-midwife birth is not effective, a problem alluded to by the forward-looking Oom Hennie and underlined by the doctor: "Hoekom roep julle net 'n dokter as dit amper te laat is?" (DO p71).

The development of the motif of modernisation and progress culminates in Sjakkie's plans for the "masjien" for their business at the close of his apprenticeship. The technological wonder of the machine ("'n wonderwerk" - DO p144) embraces the vision of a new future for the family: not only is it an advance on the homemade "kontrèpsens" with which the narrative has dealt, but as a modern means of production it symbolises the great leap forward for the family in terms of their class position, enabling them to make the decisive shift away from their working-class status. It also underlines the fact that Sjakkie has completed his apprenticeship successfully.

The following schema summarises the development of the motif of modernisation in relation to the trials which Sjakkie surmounts:



3.5.2.5. The motif of "naasteliefde"

"Naasteliefde" as a corrective, harmonising practice is articulated explicitly by Oom Hennie in response to the ideology of resistance as advocated by Faantjie during his visit:

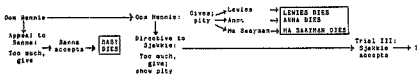
"Jy sal vra: 'Waar is die Here nou, dat Hy dit regmaak'. Sjakkie, moenie worrie nie. Ek sê vir jou, Hy is daar. Sê net vir jouself: 'Wat het ek wat daardie man nie het nie'...en as jy te veel het, gee vir hom. En het jy dalk niks nie, wys vir hom jy veel jammer... (DO p96)

Oom Hennie's words to Sjakkie also recall his appeal to Sanna to breast-feed the dying baby of another family - "Jy sê te veel, ne?" (DO p81); "Jy sê jy het te veel, dalk kan jy..." (DO p83). Sanna has "too much" (milk) and Oom Hennie's appeal to her is based on the same moral directive that he gives to Sjakkie after Faantjie's visit.

The practice of "naasteliefde" and the practice of business become closely linked in the narrative. In response to Sjakkie's misgivings about their business dealings with Rabinowitz Oom Hennie stresses the value and rewards of kindness and tolerance in business, explaining Rabinowitz's behaviour in terms of the lack of goodwill shown to him by the other members of their community. Even though Oom

Hennie is depicted as also taking recourse to "inherent" racial characteristics to explain Rabinowitz's sometimes exploitative dealings (... "hy is 'n Jood. Hulle is maar so..." - DO p87) the portrayal of Rabinowitz in the narrative is different to the stereotype of the heartless and money-grabbing Jew as utilised in other early Afrikaans novels. Some aspects of the stereotype are realised (Rabinowitz's obsession with prices and good deals, his initial exploitation of their inexperience at business), nevertheless his "humaneness" is emphasised through the humorous presentation of character and events, and especially by the reference to his personal travails and Oom Hennie's sympathetic and caring attitude toward him and his family. This, of course, contributes to showing the reader "business with a human face". Moreover, as it is Oom Hennie's charitable practices which soften Rabinowitz's heart, furthering business dealing between him and the Portjee's, the practice of naasteliefde and successful business practices are shown to be by no means mutually exclusive. Of significance, on the other hand, is Oom Hennie's resolution, after Rabinowitz has cashed in on Sjakkie's initial experience, that "hy gaan veg vir sy pennies" (DO p75). The notion of struggle, so vehemently opposed by Oom Hennie, is deemed necessary in the context of "biesnies".

In the episodes following Faantjie's visit and preceding Sjakkie's final trial Oom Hennie also functions as "helper" by demonstrating, through his actions, the moral value of "naasteliefde". He supports Anna and her children, materially and emotionally, during Japie's trial and term in jail; he cares for Ma Saayman during her illness, encouraging and comforting her. Chapters xvii, xviii and xix are almost entirely devoted to Oom Hennie in this role. A schematic summary of the syntagmatic unfolding of events in relation to Oom Hennie's enactment of naasteliefde shows an interesting feature:



The only character to survive the narrative's emphasis on Oom Hennie's charitable behaviour towards them (outside of the Portjee family) is Rabinowitz, and in his case the events pertaining to Oom Hennie's kindness fall outside of the "discourse" to "text" of the novel. Also, once Sjakkie has fully internalised his father's values (at the close of the apprenticeship), in the process coming to resemble his father, the effects of the belief in "naasteliefde" continue: Sanna becomes seriously ill, like Marie, Oom Hennie's wife, and only forces outside the world of "die onterfdes" can save her.

3.5.2.5. Setting the scene (2)

After the completion of Sjakkie's first two trials his relationship with Sanna ceases to be the focus of the narrative. Sanna's function in the narrative becomes increasingly linked to the functions of her body, thus implicitly realising Sanna as the "body" if Sjakkie is to be the "head" of the family. It is significant that in the birth-episode, an event which should be one of the marks of "true" womanhood, Sanna's body does not function as it should and the doctor has to be called in. On the one hand, this develops the motif of modernisation, as I have discussed, on the other hand, it contributes to establishing a woman's body as the site of fallibility and fickleness. Of interest too, is Sanna's resolution not to cry out during childbirth. While this also forms part of the modernisation motif (a nurse had once told Sanna: "dis gied nie noudig om so 'n bohaal op te skop nie" - DO p80) Sanna's rigid execution of her resolution furthers the association of women with non-linguistic forms of expression, an association which becomes embodied particularly in Anna, Sanna's counterpart in the Coetzee family.

In the episodes between Sjakkie's second trial and his third, final trial he continues to learn at business under the tutelage of his father. Although Sjakkie has been

established as "n man" in relation to Sanna, the episode of Faantjie's visit indicates that his apprenticeship is far from complete (underlined by the narrative in that Oom Hennie is depicted as still seeing him as a "bogkind" - DO p95). The reader is prepared for Faantjie's visit by the reference to him in the overcoded passage in the first chapter and the values contested and expressed during Faantjie's visit function as a major structuring device in relation to Sjakkie's last trial.

Raymond Williams, in a discussion of the "working class novel", points out that one of the ways of writing about working class lives has been to centre the story on the working class family, often with some of the great crises of working-class experience happening to that family.¹¹¹ Although Die Onterdfes cannot be said to be a "working-class novel" (the notion of antagonistic "classes" being so clearly unacceptable to the author) the family of the positive apprenticeship story are depicted as faced with one of the most debilitating crises in terms of the material well-being of the already poor: the loss of work. The episode of Faantjie's visit represents a further "danger" to families in their socioeconomic circumstances: the "communist threat" which was, as I have mentioned, a major preoccupation of Afrikaner politicians and ideologues during the 1930s and 1940s.

However, Faantjie as "communist" is represented as a bit of a caricature ("hy skree en hy slaan met sy vuiste op sy rooi - nogal rooi! - hemp" - DO p92). The narrative also juxtaposes the outward sign of Faantjie's beliefs - his red shirt - with the "reality" of his degraded state ("Nou sien hulle ook dat bo sy fel-rooi hemp, Faantjie se gesig maar naar lyk, so maer en mosg" - DO p93) thereby undermining Faantjie's claim of holding the solution to a better deal for the poor. In contrast, the values which Oom Hennie donates to Sjakkie in response to Faantjie's claims and visions are taken seriously by the narrative, indicated by the internal structure of the episode and the dialogical

relationship established both with Oom Hennie's initial guiding words (DO p9) to his son and with Sjakkie's final trial.

Faantjie first challenges Oom Hennie's stratification of society ("hotnots", "ons", "ryk mense" - DO p9) by presenting an alternative: die "verdomde kapitaliste" and the "arm werkvolk" (DO p92). That Faantjie's alternative stratification cannot be subsumed under the "ons" (the poor) and the "ryk mense" as given by Oom Hennie to Sjakkie is clearly indicated by the two groups which Faantjie singles out as particularly oppressed: "Arm winkeldametjies" and "arm kaffers" (DO p92). Faantjie's appeal to Oom Hennie's own experience, the incident with the "ryk generaal of kolonel" (DO p92), recalls Oom Hennie's recourse to own experience in giving his words of wisdom to Sjakkie, his experience with "Kaptein Wilmot", thus establishing a continuity between Oom Hennie's words then and now. Oom Hennie's response to Faantjie, that he had not been paid because he had bungled the job, functions as a preparation for Sjakkie's faulty measurements which leads to his final trial.

Faantjie's enthusiastic promotion of the texts "Die Werker en sy Brood" and "Die Vloek van die Mensdom" is represented as not meeting with any response from Oom Hennie. However, when he turns his attention to Rabinowitz and in the language of the apocalypse, condemns him as "gemerk, vir die groot dag, eendag, as hulle uit die stof sal opstaan!" (DO p93), Oom Hennie cuts him short: "Ek sê vir jou, jy praat twak." (DO p93). Faantjie succumbs to Oom Hennie's suggestion that they rather drink together and the talk turns to Faantjie's family's poor and sad circumstances.

Although the circumstances of Faantjie's family and Faantjie's thoughts that "dis verdomp swaar om te lewe" (DO p94) recalls Japie ("Baesagtige wêreld" - DO p22; "...hierdie beneukte wêreld." - DO p24) and his family, Faantjie is depicted as still having some pride - he turns

down Oom Hennie's attempt to lend him money. Whereas Japie as "opponent" realises the "scoundrelly" type (he is contextually and culturally negative), Faantjie realises the "pathetic" type. He espouses the "wrong" doctrine, which could make him "tragic",¹¹² but the reference to his tired appearance (in contrast to his bright red shirt), the poverty of his family and his desire, in spite of his beliefs, for "vaante werk" (DO p94) establishes him as a figure of pity.

After Faantjie's departure it is made clear to the reader that Sjakkie is in no danger of accepting Faantjie's beliefs as a viable option in place of those propounded by his father. Sjakkie's fit of passion subsides immediately in response to his father's pressure on his arm ("...sank weg soos water in los sand" - DO p95) and after his father has countered Faantjie's arguments he feels confused but not "dat hy glo sy pa is verkeerd nie" (DO p97).

Although the narrative voice is complete in the representation of the countering of Faantjie's arguments (only Oom Hennie's speech is represented), it is resonant by the systematic manner in which Oom Hennie articulates his set of beliefs and by the many verbal indicators which link Oom Hennie's words to his previous utterances. Faantjie's textual authorities, "Die Werker en sy Brood" and "Die vloek van die Menshejd", are countered by "Die Skrif"; his "organisasie" which is "perfek" by the perfection of God; Faantjie's apocalyptic vision of "eendag, as hulle uit die stof sal opstaan" by the day of judgment "eendag", when God will judge the wicked (DO p98).

Oom Hennie also elaborates on the initial values he had imparted to his son. He stresses the moral value of labour, of hard work:

"Natuurlik moet jy werk dat jy bars. Dis mos waarvoor die Here jou gemaak het. Daarvoor het 'n man mos 'n vrou en kinders." (DO p96)

That Oom Hennie's words here are a further explication of his basic set of values is indicated by the correspondence of verbal signifiers between the two passages. His directive to "sê hallo vir jou eie mense, en die Here sal jou seën, sowragtig" (DO p10) returns as a directive to Sjakkie to practise *naasteliefde* and then "*sowaar, ou seun, jy sal voel die Here het jou geseën*" (DO p98). Their relationship with the rich he again expresses in terms of a "pad" but now he adds a further condition: "...En as daar een is wat dink hy is hond se koning, bly net uit sy pad uit" (DO p96).

Oom Hennie's description of Faantjie's ultimate destiny, that he will "*vrek soos 'n hond*" (DO p97) again suggests similarities between Faantjie and Japie (animal-imagery is associated with Japie throughout the narrative). It also relates to Sjakkie's final trial where, in decisively rejecting Faantjie's system of values and "living" his father's, he is praised for talking "*soos 'n man*" (DO p141). In accepting his father's values Sjakkie establishes himself as a man, divorcing himself from Faantjie's fate of dying like an animal.

The systematic manner in which Oom Hennie is represented as counteracting Faantjie's arguments is significant in its relationship with Sjakkie's final trial. In rejecting the mode of behaviour as suggested by Faantjie, Sjakkie in his last trial accepts the system of values as set out by his father in opposition to Faantjie's ideology. As there was no real possibility that Sjakkie would accept the options as expressed by Faantjie, the episode of Faantjie's visit functions to articulate the final set of values which Sjakkie has to acquire during his apprenticeship.

That the main thrust of Oom Hennie's argument is concluded is indicated by the resumption of the narrative voice and by Oom Hennie's utterance of "*so is dit*" (DO p97). To a further question by Sjakkie, about how things can possibly improve if only poor people help one another, Oom Hennie

has his answer ready: through business. The episode concludes with an embellishment on Oom Hennie's previous "die mens is goed en God is goed" (DO p10):

"Jy sien, die neukery is net, so baie mense dink eerste 'n ander man is sleg, en dan vind hulle later uit hy is glad nie so sleg nie. Pleks hulle eers dink 'n man is goed...Jou oorle Oupa het altyd gese: 'Moenie dink 'n ander man is slegter as wat jy is nie', en ek dink dis 'n ding wat jy kan onthou..." (DO p98)

The efficacy of this passage - if it is to accentuate Oom Hennie's "diepe deernis met die mens"¹¹³ and his role as "verstandige ou filosoof" relies on the reader maintaining, with Oom Hennie, a relationship of absolute mutual exclusivity between "mens" and "hotnot".

3.6.2.7. Sjakkie's third trial

Trial III : disaster at work → success at business

: confusion → understanding

The steady progress that the family has been making in improving their material conditions of life is threatened by a mistake made in measuring the counter for Rabinowitz's shop, a mistake which could cost them their entire business. Sjakkie, in the absence of his father, cannot stand up to Rabinowitz's anger:

Dis te veel vir Sjakkie. Hy voel te beroerd om nog te sry. Hy wil net huis toe, met pa praat, nou...Hy vlug weg, asof hy pak gekry het. (DO p136)

"Asof hy pak gekry het" evokes the saying "soos 'n hond wat pak gekry het", a comparison which is spared Sjakkie but which does, nonetheless, recall both Faantjie and Japie to mind. Japie, in the course of the narrative, has both "dog" and "thrashing" linked to his behaviour ("...soos 'n

geslane hond - DO p25; "...soos 'n man wat pak gekry het..." - DO p86); Faantjie is spared the thrashing but is compared to a dog ("En wie sal op die ou end vrek soos 'n hond...Faantjie Delpont..." - DO p87). The evocation of Sjakkie's two "opponents" highlights the event as a crisis, especially since Sjakkie initially reads the mishap as confirmation of Faantjie's views and beliefs:

"...maar ek sê vir pa, ou Faantjie is reg. Hy's 'n vuilgoed, dis wat Rabinowits is. Hy's 'n kapitalis en 'n vuilgoed!"

Hy ruk sy keps van die tafel af.

Sy vader staan op, opeens bang.

"Sjakkie...wat wil jy maak?"

Maar Sjakkie is al by die deur.

"Ek sal hoer in sy meer in donder!" dreig hy. (DO p137)

A further disaster is averted by Rabinowitz not being at home to receive Sjakkie. On returning home the words of his father lead him to re-evaluate his reaction and to admit that his anger is directed primarily at himself. Oom Hennie's suggestion about how to remedy the situation, that perhaps he, Oom Hennie, should speak to Rabinowitz, recalls Sanna's challenge to Sjakkie during his first trial. Oom Hennie, however, does not present his option as a challenge and interprets his own suggestion so as to leave Sjakkie in no doubt as to his real meaning: Sjakkie should speak to Rabinowitz.

Sjakkie acts upon his father's suggestion and his talk with Rabinowitz has extremely successful results: Rabinowitz will give them the opportunity to rectify their mistake and what is more, even offers to help them with anything they might require further. At home Sjakkie is treated to the respect of his father:

Maar toe Sanna slaapdrunk uit die bed kom om vir hulle swart koffie te maak, sê hy inniglik trots:

"Sjakkie het met ou Rabinowits gesels. Hy't soos 'n man gepraat. Dis alles reg nou." (DO p141)

Rabinowitz, like Sjakkie's other "opponents", has turned out to be not a real opponent at all. What has been at stake, as in Sjakkie's previous trials, is the question of interpreting "correctly". Although Sjakkie's evocation of Faantjie and his views seem to imply that there were two competing world-views in the situation, Sjakkie does not get much further than emulating Faantjie's excited mannerisms and his threats. (Faantjie, during his visit, "ruk sy keps van sy kop", "hy slaan met sy vuiste" - DO p92; Sjakkie "ruk sy keps van die tafel af", "hy slaan met sy vuist" - DO p137; Faantjie shouts "hulle sal geskiet word" - DO p92; Sjakkie shouts "ek sal hom donder" - DO p137). Just as Oom Hennie's pressure on his arm, after Faantjie's visit, is enough to cause his anger to subside, Rabinowitz's absence from home and a few words from his father are sufficient to calm him down. Sjakkie's trial of interpretation therefore lies not so much in rejecting Faantjie's ideology, but in correctly applying his father's system of values in a situation so as to transform it to his advantage. He appeals to Rabinowitz by referring to "hoe hy ea sy pa hard gewerk het" (DO p138), thereby verbally confirming the value of hard work, and then by actually producing his father's words to Rabinowitz: "Hoe pa vir hom gesê het dat as jy 'n man goed behandel, hy vir jou ook goed sal behandel" (DO p139). It is this appeal to the practice of "naasteliefde" which really transforms the situation: Rabinowitz remembers and recounts Oom Hennie's kindness towards him, this leading not only to establishing harmony between Sjakkie and Rabinowitz, thereby saving their business, but to promises of more support and business dealings.

The values and beliefs imparted to Sjakkie by Oom Hennie and which Sjakkie has come to fully internalise in the course of his apprenticeship, show a striking correspondence to the tenets of Christian-nationalism, especially to that discourse's elaboration of the place of Afrikaans workers within the "volk". Oom Hennie's presentation of the divinely-ordered "world" to Sjakkie,

his rejection of struggle as proposed by the "communist" Faantjie are all beliefs and values consistent with the ideology of Christian-nationalism. However, in putting his father's beliefs into practice Sjakkie has not spoken like an Afrikaner but, as the accolade that he receives from his father signifies, simply like "n man".

3.5.2.6. Conclusion: The positive apprenticeship

The episode which follows immediately on Sjakkie's third trial concludes his apprenticeship. The episode opens with Sjakkie in bed, thinking of a plan so "nuut en geweldig" (DO p142) that he cannot sleep. His thoughts are disturbed by Sanna's restlessness, due to, as she confesses, his lack of attention paid to her. After reassuring her of his love, he shares his plans for the future with her, enjoying her amazement and even her trepidation at the enormity of his plans. In accordance with his newfound confidence and experience, her fright, which he previously would have shared, if not initiated, pleases him:

Hy glimlag. Hy het verwag sy sal skrik. Dit laat hom sommer lekker voel. Hy weet self, honderd pond is nie hoendermis nie...allakrag! 'n Jaar gelede sou hy mos self bang geword het vir soveel geld. Maar nou voel hy dat hy amper enigiets kan aanvang, en hy sal dit estry... (DO p144)

Sjakkie's confidence leads Sanna to reflect on the transformation he has undergone, that "hy nou heeltemaal groot geword het" (DO p145). Furthermore, as he elaborates on his plans, she is prompted to share her insights with him: in the process of growing to adulthood, Sjakkie has come to resemble a particular man:

Toe sê sy: "Jy weet, as jy so praat, gaan dit vir my nes of dit jou pa is."
Hy vra tog "hoekom". Maar as sy ontwykend sê: "Weet nie...sommer..." begryp hy tog wat sy bedoel het. (DO p146)

The episode concludes with a promise which encapsulates Sjakkie's confidence in himself and the future:

"Eendag," fluister hy, "dan kan jy maar vir my vra wat jy wil hê, enigiets...en ek sal dit vir jou gee." (DO p146)

Although it is in itself significant that the episode in which it is stated that Sjakkie "nou heeltemaal groot geword het" also deals with Sanna's unhappiness and insecurities, it is especially the voice of the narrator that allows the reader to draw meaning from this presentation. Sanna's voice is "onseker"; she crawls "soos 'n klein kindjie in sy arms"; "smeek hulpeloos" (DO p142); "sy maak haarself klein in sy arms", "bedel" (DO p143). Sanna has, in fact, functioned as the ultimate donor. She has given Sjakkie her qualities - self-confidence, assertiveness, ambition - leaving her devoid of those attributes. However, whereas the relationship of Sanna to Sjakkie like mother to child was improper in terms of the system values as elaborated in the narrative, the relationship: Sjakkie to Sanna like adult to child is entirely proper, constituting both Sjakkie and Sanna as fully sex-ed subjects. Sanna now fulfills the role of child in relation to the adult Sjakkie but she has also in the course of the narrative realised the attributes associated with a certain stereotyped vision of women: submissive (she submits to Sjakkie's authority during his first trial), passive (it is Oom Nennie who will like "'n bloesing vroumens" buy the nappies after the crisis surrounding their purchase), silent (her resolve not to cry out during birth and the text itself not representing much of her speech after Sjakkie's first two trials). After Sjakkie's first two trials Sanna is only once depicted as asserting herself divorced from the above three attributes but then in a manner that calls to mind a negative stereotype of women:

Toe bars Sanna uit. "Ja wat, laat hom betaal, die stinkjood!"

Dis of vanuit die donker 'n sandsak teen hulle koppe gegooi word. Hulle kyk haar oorbluf aan. Sy bloos effens, maar slaan nie haar oë neer nie. Sy herhaal koppig en hard: "Hy is 'n stinkjood."

Sjakkie vra onseker: "Hoekom sê jy dit?"

Maar Sanna het nie 'n argument nie. Sy voel sy het 'n bietjie te ver gegaan. Die vader-alleen weet waarom, sy kan partykeer so hard en meedoënloos voel as sy aan ryk mense dink. Hy is ryk en hy is 'n Jood. Dis genoeg, en sy voel of daar iets bitters is waarteen sy moet stry.

Sy sê weer: "Hy is 'n vuil Jood, almal sê so, laat hom betaal"...

Die oubaas staar haar agterna. Sy opgewonde blyheid van 'n paar minute tevore is oor. Daar is 'n gryse gevoel in hom, of hy opeens nie meer van haar hou nie, of haar naam koud word in hom... (DO p78)

In the episode which concludes Sjakkie's apprenticeship Sanna's prejudice is again mentioned:

Sy gee nie direk antwoord nie. Sy worstel met 'n vooroordeel wat haar nie maklik loslaat nie. Sy het mos altyd gehoor, 'n Jood is die laaste man van wie jy moet geld leen... (DO p145)

This aspect of Sanna's characterisation recalls the effects, described by Juliet Mitchell, of women's oppression within the family:

It produces a tendency to small-mindedness, petty jealousy, irrational emotionality and random violence, dependency, competitive selfishness and possessiveness, passivity, a lack of vision and conservatism.¹¹⁴

The "tendency" towards conservatism, and especially irrational emotionality, is embodied in the figure of Ma

Saayman. Her conservatism constitutes an oppositional point of reference to the forward-looking Oom Hennie and in the later episodes, her behaviour is most certainly depicted as emotionally irrational, so much so that the narrative in signifying her behaviour seems itself to be breaking down, fragmenting. Furthermore, just as Sjakkie grows towards being like his father, Sanna's model for the future, by extension, is Ma Saayman. On her deathbed, in fact, Ma Saayman resembles Sanna in the eyes of Oom Hennie. Here, at the completion of Sjakkie's apprenticeship, it is also in Sanna that the dangers of the past become embodied in the form of a returning illness, an "opponent" against which Sjakkie, even though he is now "n man", is powerless.

3.5.3. *The Negative Apprenticeship*

The events of the narrative effect the fortunes of the two families in the novel in very different ways. They lead to a state of improvement for the Portjee family and a state of deterioration for the Coetzee family. Furthermore, the events are of such a nature as to draw attention to the contrasts between the two families. The similarities between the two families rests mainly on the relationship of contiguity, of adjacency. Both families inhabit the same poor neighbourhood, a spatial allocation, which they occupy because they are poor. The relationship of difference is established especially by the contrast in the organisation of sexual relations within the family, emphasised by the similarity of the names of the two women in the two families - Sanna and Anna.

Sjakkie surmounts his trial of apprenticeship by amongst other, differentiating himself from Japie, the husband and father in the Coetzee household. Whereas Sjakkie completes a positive apprenticeship, Japie completes a negative apprenticeship. The narrative juxtaposes these two apprenticeship stories, thus emphasising the contrast between them and reinforcing the positive or negative value of each.¹¹⁵ Sjakkie's successes and the accompanying

improvement in the condition of his family are highlighted by the failures of Japie and the deterioration of his circumstances.

As Suleiman says in relation to the roman *A these*, the subject of a negative apprenticeship evolves in a "morphologically similar, but semantically opposite" direction from the protagonist of the positive apprenticeship.¹¹⁰ In both cases, the subject undergoes a transformation but "whereas the hero succeeds, the negative subject fails: the former ends up in the euphoric space of the right doctrine, the latter does not: the former will live in a new life in accordance with the truth, the latter will not".¹¹¹ Japie's apprenticeship can be summarised by the following modification of Suleiman's schema:¹¹²

Ignorance	Trials	Non-knowledge	No new life
of self	→	of self	→ in accordance
not surmounted			with knowledge

Passivity -----> Non-action

The actual configuration of Japie's negative apprenticeship conforms to the model as set out by Suleiman for the roman *A these*. According to her the object, whether it be the protagonist himself or an abstract object like a doctrine that the protagonist advocates, is designated as inauthentic, degraded; the benevolent is absent or ineffectual, as is the helper, and the opponent is present, and overdetermined.¹¹³ Japie, at the conclusion of his story, is utterly defeated and degraded; an equivalent donor to Sjakkin's, a father, or mentor, is absent and the other donors, for example the doctor and the dominee, ineffectual. Japie's opponent is his own self, and he is his own worst enemy. Japie does not end up with false knowledge or error, but with absence of knowledge - he has not learnt what he should have. Japie experiences a conversion of sorts at the end of his story but it comes too late and is not quite "authentic".

Japie is negatively characterised before his story begins, before he actually appears on the scene (if one discounts the very brief reference to him at the wedding reception). The cosy family environment of the Portjee family is disturbed by a knock on the door - Anna, Japie's wife, asking for food for her children. In the ensuing conversation between the members of the Portjee family the terrible circumstances of the Coetzee family are highlighted and, above all, Japie is established as a negative figure:

"Het Japie weer gesuip?" vra hy.

"Hy het haar geslaan," sê die ou vrou met toegeknypte mond.

Sanna kom vorentoe. "Sy het kom brood en koffie vra," sê sy awak. "Sy kon niks meer op skuld kry nie. Sy sê die kinders het van vanoggend af niks gehad nie. Hulle huil..."

Sjakkie klem sy kake opsaak...Laasweek nog was hy daar gewees om Japie te sien...Hy het Anna gevind in die kombuis, drie kleingoes het aan haar rokke gehang...Een outjie het op sy kaal boudjies rondgeskuiwe oor die vuil vloer, vlieë het geplak gesit op sy bene en gesiggie...In die voorkamer het hy amper geval oor 'n baba van omtrent tien maande oud, wat tevrede op die grond in sy eie vuil geslaap het... (my emphasis) (DO p16)

Before Japie appears on the scene he has been established as a drunk, a wife-beater, neglecter of his family and an uncontrolled breeder. Japie's behaviour and home circumstances evoke a reaction from the family about what being "n man" entails (Sjakkie, who still has to grow to "manhood", interestingly enough, does not partake in the interaction). Sanna expresses herself in "Dat 'n man só kan wees" (ie. a man should not be like that), Ma Saayman counters with "'n man is maar so..." and the last words on Japie are given by Oom Hennie: "...daar is so iets in ons mans" (DO p16). The truth of Oom Hennie's words is proven

in the unfolding of Sjakkie's apprenticeship - Sjakkie expresses that "something" during his second trial but rejects it. Japie, however, progressively realises the negative side of his manhood.

Like Sjakkie's trials, the trials that Japie faces require him to understand, to interpret a situation correctly. The first situation that requires understanding is the birth of Japie's seventh child which is delivered "na veel gesukkel van die dokter" (DO p19). In the absence of a donor who can function as a paternal figure to Japie, is Oom Hennie to Sjakkie, the doctor fulfills that role, but *ineffectually*:

Die dokter trek sy skouers op. Sy gesig is grys van moegheid. Met 'n *hulpelose* handgebaar stel hy Japie gerus "Laat staan dit maar..." (my emphasis) (DO p19)

It is significant that the doctor does not make more of an attempt to explain the situation to Japie. This is in keeping with the actantial figuration for the negative apprenticeship - the donor is either absent or ineffectual.

The doctor, as *focaliser*, also characterises Japie as a sensual weakling:

Die dokter kyk hom aan, sien sy fletse o die swak ken, die slap sensuele mond.
Hy sug. (DO p19)

The implication that there is something animal-like in Japie's behaviour is also set in motion by the doctor saying to Japie: "'n Vrou is nie 'n sog nie, Coetsee" (DO p20). That Japie's negative apprenticeship consists of the failure of the interpretive faculty is also indicated by the doctor's words to him, advising him to stop precreating:

"...sy het sleg gevel, Japie, haar gees is baie moeg.
Verstaan jy?"
"Ja dokter," hinkel Japie.

Die dokter kyk hom skerp aan. "Ek wonder of jy my reg verstaan..." (DO p19)

It is clear from the ensuing bar-episode that Japie definitely has not understood correctly. Japie "sal nie rus voor hy dertien atekame het nie, nêr oorle pa" (DO p21). As the drunken Japie struggles to get home, he is "korsloos" (DO p22), a sign of the directionlessness of his life. Japie, like Faantjie, also sees life as antagonistic towards him but in Japie's case this is accoutented, so that he experiences himself as a passive victim. Japie occupies the extreme point on a continuum of resignation to life's circumstances which characterises Sjakkie's initial state.

Another interesting feature of Japie's apprenticeship is the tolerance with which he is treated by Oom Honnie. When Oom Honnie finds Japie drunk in the street (DO p22) he treats him kindly, in keeping with his avowed practice of naasteliefde. This, however, precludes him from truly functioning as a donor towards Japie as it excludes real intervention so as to attempt to change Japie's behaviour.

As has been pointed out, the events surrounding the birth of Japie's child function as a contrast to the joyful arrival of the baby in the Portjee household.¹²⁸ The depiction of Japie's disregard for his responsibilities towards his family also function to prove the value of "responsible" male leadership in the family as realised by Sjakkie during his first trial. Moreover, by the narrative linking Japie's failure as a husband to his unbridled bodily urges and desires, and by the proliferation of animal imagery and references to animals when Japie is the focus of the narrative, Japie's behaviour is transported on to the plane of an opposing image in relation to Sjakkie's apprenticeship, that of "man" versus "animal". In the course of a few pages Japie is referred to as a "hulperpa" (DO p21); Japie thinks "beestige wêreld" (DO p22); Japie shouts "Ek is nie 'n vark nie!" and "My vrou is ook nie 'n

sog nie" (DO p23); Japie leaves his kitchen "so 'n geslane hond" (DO p26); even Anna "kreun...soos 'n voël" (DO p25); Japie's dreams are "vol met groot, harige spinnekoppe" (DO p25).

The final outcome of Japie's trial of interpretation is described a few episodes later. Although there is no direct causal relationship between the death of Japie's newborn baby and Japie's behaviour, the event functions as "proof" of Japie's failure to understand the situation. Japie's inability to control his body leads to Anna being unable to control her mind; after the death of the baby Anna is depicted as sliding from what was perceived as her "illness" into mental breakdown.

Japie's second trial involves a confrontation with another member of the petit-bourgeoisie. This time it is the dominee who decides to confront Japie because of the abysmal circumstances he finds at Japie's home during a "huisbesoek". In contrast to the doctor the dominee's talk to Japie does not focus on Japie's number of children but on his neglect of his family, that his house is "'n varkhok" (DO p57) due to his behaviour towards his wife and children. Although Japie leaves the dominee upset and shaken, it is indicated that the dominee's apparently successful intervention owes more to the dominee's immediate presence than towards Japie's progress towards understanding:

Japie kan hom nie meer mooi volg nie. Dominee vra waar Japie getroud is en of hy nog weet wat hy voor die kansel in die aangesig van die Here belowe het. Japie knik stem dat hy nog weet, ja dominee. Maar hy kan op daardie oomblik glad niks meer onthou nie. Hy weet nie meer 'n woord van die trouformulier nie. Hy kan nie eens behoorlik dink nie. Hy weet net dat dominee die hele kamer vul... (my emphasis) (DO p57, p58)

Even though Japie is presented as making some progress ("Dis of hy nou baie vaag dominee se woorde begin verstaan")

- DO p88), it becomes clear a few episodes later that the dominee's intervention was ineffectual. As in the case of the doctor, Japie is portrayed as feeling a growing resentment towards the dominee because of what he perceives to be interference in his sexual relationship with Anna (DO p88). That the dominee does not appear on the scene again has been noted by critics of the novel as a peculiarity,¹²¹ even a defect in the text.¹²² This absence can be explained by the conflict between the demands of the form of the negative apprenticeship and the system of beliefs internalised by Sjakkie in his opposing positive apprenticeship. On the one hand, the dominee has to prove ineffectual as a donor in Japie's apprenticeship so that Japie can fulfill his destined progress towards failure and degradation; on the other hand, the dominee as a representative of the God who sanctions the values and beliefs in Sjakkie's apprenticeship cannot be portrayed as utterly helpless in the face of Japie's behaviour. The narrative solves this problem by relieving the dominee of a further presence in the story. Similarly, that Japie's father is dead (DO p55) solves the problem of the absence of a true donor in Japie's story whilst it maintains the integrity of the notion of a "father" as a caring provider which is so important to Oom Hennie's final insights at the close of the narrative.

That Japie once again has failed his trial of interpretation is underlined by his reference to Anna's strange behaviour and to his understanding of how to deal with her:

Japie vertel...Sy bly net weg, nes 'n malmens...
 Vader Portjee frons. "So...?"
 "En sy laat die kinders netso by die huis, as 'n mens
 om na hulle te kyk nie."
 Japie lyk somber. "En dit help ook nie meer om vir
 haar 'n leesing te gee nie...dis of sy niks versta nie."
 Hy kreun, en die kneukels van sy vuiste word wit.

God, as sy maar net haar bek wil oopmaak, hy weet, dan
sou hy haar kan doodmaak! (DO p87)

In relation to Japie's apprenticeship even the wise Oom Hennie is portrayed as ineffectual. Oom Hennie "twyfel self of Anna partykeer reg in haar kop is" (DO p87) and is presented as unable to draw the correct meaning from the contrast between Anna as the "oulike meisie, vroeër" (DO p87) and Anna's present state. The reader, on the other hand, is able to understand Anna's "madness": not only is the reader witness to the circumstances in the Coetzee household but the reader also has been informed, by distinctly uncharacteristic commentary on the part of the narrator, about the effects of Japie's carnality:

Soos die dokter gesê het, Anna het slag
geveg...Hierdie kind sou geen verlossing bring uit
haar swangerskap nie. Dit was een van 'n eindelose ry
van laste wat elke jaar doodswaar in haar gestroei het.
Wat sy sonder vreugde soos oorryp vrugte op die aarde
laat val het - waarna sy gebukkend op die volgende
oog gewag het. So het Anna haar sewende kind gedra.
(DO p20)

The above passage represents one of the instances of overtly authorial commentary in the text and assumes some significance in the light of the narrative depicting Anna nearly always "from without", her thoughts and feelings hidden from the reader. Anna functions as a passive victim (the reader is not afforded a glimpse as to how Anna sees her circumstances), the victim not only of poverty, or even of the untenable number of children for whom she has to care, but especially of Japie's brutish sexuality, the "overdetermined opponent" in his story of apprenticeship. Although Anna's burden and their poverty are linked (the dominion, after all, is represented as quite happy with his eight children since he can afford two "witnesses" to help care for them - DO p55) the narrative deflects the reader's attention from Anna's circumstances as materially caused by

emphasising Anna's pitiful lot as the outcome of Japie's uncontrolled appetites. The text also further underwrites the idea that what Oom Hennie calls the "so teis" in men (as manifested in Japie) is an *animality* of sorts: Japie's home is called a "varkhok" (DO p57), Japie is "so alek...soos 'n hond" (DO p48) and when Japie teases Sanna she retorts "asof sy 'n slangbyt ontyk" (DO p8). Even Japie's relationship with his eldest child is depicted as animal-like: Jannie "soos 'n hondjie...snuffel na 'n reukie van sy pappie" (DO p53); Jannie and Japie look for "ongediertes" in Jannie's clothes (DO p54); Jannie looks for a "neessie" in the crook of his father's arm (DO p58); Jannie seeks after "'n reukie van sy pa" (DO p64). Although this is also a touching portrayal of a little boy's desire for love and affection from a parent, it emphasises the idea that Japie's behaviour and the life-style it imposes on his family is less than human.

The reader is prepared for the final, cataclysmic events in the Coetzee household by the narrator's comment "En by Japie-bulle gaan dit nou maar afdraam" (DO p101) and by the reference to Anna's strange and contradictory behaviour as seen by their neighbours. Anna's attempt at resisting Japie is depicted as having an adverse effect on Japie: it is suggested that her success in staving off his sexual demands leads to his drinking more. This in turn has the effect of putting Japie's job in jeopardy and leads to further deprivation for his family - Japie's employer has seen "hoe meer en bleek Japie se kleingood lyk" (DO p102). That both Japie's employer and Oom Hennie think "daar gaan nou dinge gebeur by Japie-bulle" (DO p102) functions as an anticipatory comment on the events to follow.

The process of deterioration for the Coetzee family reaches its climax when the behaviour that Japie has displayed in the course of his story is manifested in its extreme form. The narrator says it is "lank laaste dat Japie so dol-besope is soos hierdie nand" (DO p105) and the homely scene which greets Japie on his return home ("Anna sit by die

tafel, 'n broekie van Lewies in haar hande", [Jannie] "kom stralend na Japie, 'n houtperdjie in sy hande" - DO p106) does not deter him from his attempt to exercise what he perceives to be his sexual rights ("Dis sy vrou hierdie" - DO p106):

Hy vang haar aan die nek en wring haar gesig na hom toe. Hy soen haar gulsig, tot hy haar tande teen syne voel stoot. Sy kreun onder sy omhelsing. Dis of hy haar rug wil breek. Met 'n wanhopige inspanning ruk sy los van hom af.

"Wag, jou bees!"

Hy tuimel opsy teen die muur. Die potret van sy pa val in skerwe voor sy voete. Hy merk dit nie op nie. (DO p106)

That in this violent, brutish encounter between Japie and his family the portrait of his father crashes to the floor highlights not only the absence of a mentor or counsellor in Japie's life, but also the extent to which Japie has reneged on his responsibilities as a man, father and husband. Furthermore, Japie has betrayed the image of the father as the caring, providing custodian of the structures of society, and the text prominently displays the effects of that betrayal. Where benevolent authority is absent, the text shows, chaos and destruction reign.

Within the framework of Japie's story of apprenticeship this episode represents the victory of the "overdetermined opponent" over Japie, and this opponent is Japie himself. Japie's ensuing humiliation in court (where he is seen by his community as a "vark" and a "bees" - DO p109) and his sentence to a term in jail, function as proof of the "non-knowledge" attained by Japie during his apprenticeship. However, Japie's public degradation only serves to underline a negative destiny already established by the culturally negative designations (wife-beater, drunkard, lecher) attached to him in the course of the narrative. As Suleiman points out, the protagonist of a negative

apprenticeship "who ends up in a culturally reprovved position functions as an elementary symbol whose meaning is immediately apparent: to become a gigolo, a blackmailer, an unwed mother, or a murderer [etc], is in any case a negative destiny".¹²³

3.5.3.1. Conclusion: the negative apprenticeship

Japie's term in jail leads him to a kind of conversion, to recognise his own negativity. On coming home he admits to Anna that he was "'n bees" (DO p124), begs her forgiveness and promises her a new life in accordance with his newfound knowledge of himself. However, it is suggested by the narrative that Japie has not really gained the required insight for a new life:

Hy soen haar hande. Sy kyk hom verward aan.
Hy sien nie dat haar oë soos in pyn toetrek nie.
Hy voel net 'n verlate *honger* in hom. Hy wil alleen 'n
bietjie warmte hê, nou die wêreld so lank koud was...
Daar kreun iets in hom. Dis of 'n veldbrand teen hom
opslaan. Hy hyg, klem haar teen hom aan...
Japie soek *soon* 'n *blinde* na haar liefde.
Toe gly haar gevoel weg uit haar, in die nag... (my
emphasis) (DO p125)

Japie is still "hungry", "blind" to Anna's feelings, and it is the resuming of his sexual relationship with Anna which, it is indicated, drives her over the edge and towards suicide. The narrative also motivates Anna's suicide by Oom Hennie's reference to Anna still being "siek" (DO p126). However, her death functions to negatively valorise the form of Japie's desire for "'n bietjie warmte". Japie, it is implied, has still not conquered his greedy, selfish sexuality, an unacceptable form in which to express both desire and love.

At the end of Japie's apprenticeship (also the point at which he departs from the story) he is depicted as utterly defeated and degraded. Japie's self-pity, his ranting

against his community ('Hy wens net hy kan hulle...op hul vuil bekke slaan, hulle verwurg' - DO p126), and the alacrity with which he accepts the offer of a drink indicate that Japie has not gained insight into himself and will have no "new life" in accordance with any knowledge gained. However, Japie's appeal to Oom Hennis to pardon his behaviour and his feeling "baie klein" (DO p127) presents him as a figure of pity, the "pathetic" negative protagonist, rather than the "scoundrelly" type as realized in the course of his apprenticeship. Here, at the close of Japie's apprenticeship, his failure is highlighted by the reference to Sjakkie's work, that Sjakkie has gone to find out about the "blink bande" (DO p127) which Rabinowitz wants for his counter. Similarly, Sjakkie's success - his budding entrepreneurship and the concomitant improvement in his family's circumstances - is accentuated by the pitiful deterioration of Japie's situation.

Although it has been argued that the author portrays Japie as the victim of social conditions "waarin hy gebore is en waaroor hy geen beheer het nie",¹²⁴ the narrative, in fact, depicts Japie as *unable to control himself*, as his own worst enemy. Japie's overdetermined opponent (the counterpart of the overdetermined helper and donor in Sjakkie's positive apprenticeship) is his physical greediness, his selfish desires, which are figured in the text as an expression of animality. In terms of the ideological project of the author, Japie's story functions both as a warning of the potential dangers (wife-beating, drunkenness, disintegration of the family) inherent in the social situation of the poor. However, by foregrounding Japie's opponent as himself and by linking Japie's behaviour to that of an animal, the narrative displaces the effects of poverty onto the level of a "natural" beastliness which manifests itself in the absence of a donor of the beliefs and values internalized by Sjakkie in the course of his apprenticeship. Significantly, Japie's behaviour is seen as "so iets in ons mens" (my emphasis), and it is that "something" in himself that Sjakkie rejects

in his growth towards becoming "n man". By contrasting Sjakkie's growth towards manhood with Japie's manifested animality, the narrative implicitly proposes a relation of cause and effect between Japie's negative destiny and the absence of the values and beliefs donated to Sjakkie. At the same time, the narrative pushes, albeit in an unconscious manner as Macherey would have it, towards the need and acceptance of a father-figure, a role ultimately played by the state in society.

3.5.4. Conclusion: the theme of apprenticeship

Sjakkie surmounts his trials and concludes a positive apprenticeship. The transformation he undergoes is expressed as a process of "growing up". As his initial state is described as being like a boy, his final state is that of a metaphorical manhood, being "n man" obviously signifying far more than the biological state of "adult human male" that he occupies at the start of the narrative.

The initial state of disequilibrium at the start of the narrative is established by the juxtaposition of Sjakkie's lack of confidence with the self-confidence of his younger wife, Sanna. The effect of the contrast derives especially from it being situated within a recognisable system of values that requires the husband to be head of the household, the dominant and decision-making partner in the union. This value is explicitly expressed during the wedding ceremony. Initially Sjakkie and Sanna's relationship manifests the inverse of a "proper" relationship, Sanna's "motherly" behaviour towards Sjakkie establishing him as the child. The disequilibrium is highlighted and given a broader dimension by the tension produced when the author contrasts Sjakkie's resignation to life's dispensation with Sanna's aspirations for a better life.

Sjakkie's resignation to his position in society is signalled as due to his belief in the hierarchical order of society as donated to him by his father. This

stratification, to which he has adapted his life, is accepted as "die patroon van die menswêreld" and as God's order (DO p10). It is this hierarchy and its divinely ordained relations which are the constituent feature of the world into which he was born ("Dit was die wêreld waarop die Liewe Heer op 'n goeie dag vir Sjakkie gesit het" - DO p10). From the notion that "hoofnoots" are "vuilgoed" Sjakkie derives his pride in being white; from their own position as "the poor", Sjakkie values solidarity with other poor folk; from the superior position of the rich he feels shy respect for them.

Sjakkie's resignation to his position is called into question by the narrative organisation of retrospective events in three ways. Firstly, Sanna's aspiration for a better life is materially founded; her ambitions are presented as linked to her having lost her job to an "ou meid" (DO p10) and thus to their social and economic vulnerability. Secondly, Sanna's demands engender in Sjakkie a state of confusion - he is unable to reconcile his resignation with her aspirations or to reject them, and the result of the conflict is a disruption of his certainties. Thirdly, and most importantly, Sjakkie is depicted as being unable to respond to Sanna's insistence that he is "knap" (DO p10), that he admit to his own capabilities. Significantly, Sanna's demand does not centre around his being knap or acting knap but on his recognising his own worth. The validity of Sanna's demand is endorsed by the "fyn glimlaggie" (DO p10) on the face of the donor of his world view, his father.

Although Sjakkie's resignation to his position is called into question, the unfolding of events, especially the trials that confront Sjakkie, demonstrate that the "problem" is not the view of the world as given by his father (who is, after all, constituted as a reliable donor), or even Sjakkie's acceptance of that world. The problem lies with the way in which Sjakkie lives his relationship with that world. For Sjakkie does not live his

relation with his conditions of existence as if he were the autonomous principle of determination in that relation, but views himself as fitting into, adapting to an order, a world already given. This, the narrative organisation of retrospective events indicates, is the problem, at the root of the disequilibrium. It is not Sjakkie's beliefs and values that must change but Sjakkie's experience of self, knowledge of himself. Sjakkie's problem is an underrating of his own capacities due to experiencing himself as the passive recipient of values, only slotting into structures "already there", structures that assign him a given position within the hierarchy of society, thereby taking away his capacity for self-determination and creativity. This state of consciousness the narrative gives a name: by the problematic nature of Sjakkie's relationship with Samna at the start of the narrative, Sjakkie is constituted as still being a child, a boy.

As Althusser has shown, ideology produces "subjects" through the mechanism of interpellating or hailing people, a process that involves self-recognition and simultaneously a misrecognition: although "centred" by ideology as a subject, the subject perceives itself to be a free, autonomous, creative human being. As a result, subjects "work all by themselves".¹²⁵ In a similar manner, literature, by its representation of a world of consistent characters, by its offering the reader the position as the origin of understanding and by inviting the reader to judge the "truth" of the world as perceived by an autonomous author,¹²⁶ transforms "concrete" and "abstract" individuals into subjects, endowing them with a quasi-real individuality.¹²⁷ The "appropriate names" of the subjects' ideological identity in literature are Authors, Works, Readers, and Characters.¹²⁸ Thus, characters too are constituted as subjects since, as Macherey argues, "there is only ever identification of one subject with another".¹²⁹

While all literature "unceasingly 'produces' subjects, on display for everyone",¹¹⁰ a novel with a "theme of apprenticeship" foregrounds the very issue of the development of subjectivity. A novel with a "theme of apprenticeship" is about the protagonist's recognition of his role and identity in the world. However, the theme of apprenticeship in *Die Ontriefdes* is utilised differently in two significant aspects. The world in which the action takes place is not depicted as deprived of transcendental meaning, a world where subjectivity becomes the "object of a quest" as in the Bildungsroman; neither is the hero, Sjakkie, at the start of his apprenticeship ignorant of "truth" as in the roman à thèse.¹¹¹ Sjakkie's "world" is constituted by God, and the beliefs and values donated to him by his father are accepted by him as "the truth". His "ignorance of self" exists because he does not view himself as the centre of creativity, consciousness and initiative. And, as the confusion he feels when confronted with Sanna's ambitious shows, he cannot work "all on his own".

At the end of Sjakkie's apprenticeship his consciousness has been transformed, he has developed towards recognition of himself as a free subjectivity, as the author of his actions. However, this transformation is effected by his freely submitting himself to the world view donated to him by his father. Sjakkie, within the fictional world of the narrative, has been fully constituted as the "subject" of a system of beliefs, an ideology, and, instead of the name of his ideological identity being "a kind", it has become "a man". Thus, the theme of apprenticeship, as utilised in *Die Ontriefdes*, is not so much about the formation of subjectivity as it is about the constitution of subjectness.

Oom Hennie's directive to Sjakkie on how to conduct himself within the divinely ordered world therefore is aptly expressed in the imagery of greeting ("Haal jou hoed af... en sê hallo..." - DO p16). Sjakkie is constituted as a fully formed subject by being hailed by ideology, but he

has to experience the "recognition" of his identity as if he effects the greeting, the recognition, as if he is the author of his actions. At the close of his apprenticeship Sjakkie indeed experiences himself in this way and can now "work all by himself", "all on his own". Japie, in contrast, has been constituted as a "bad subject" and has provoked, like Althusser says bad subjects are wont to do, "the intervention of one of the detachments of the (repressive) State apparatus".¹³² The intervention of the Repressive State apparatus (the police, the court, a term in jail) is depicted as ineffectual in transforming Japie, and he and his family have the fate of being "untimely" transported from the narrative, of not sharing in the vision of redemption for the poor as promised in the final chapter.

In freely submitting to the authority of the social formation, Althusser argues, the subject submits to the Absolute Subject represented in ideology. In the Christian Religious Ideology, for example, there can only be a multitude of possible religious subjects on the condition that there is a Unique, Absolute, Other Subject, i.e. God,¹³³ but in other ideological formations it could be, to name a few, the King, the Boss, Man, Conscience, Human Essence. The "amen" - the "so be it" of the prayer in Christian Ideology, Althusser says, is an appropriate expression of ideology's absolute guarantee that everything really is so, and that, if the subjects recognise what they are and act accordingly, everything will be all right.¹³⁴ Significantly, Oom Hennie utters "so is dit" (DO p97) to conclude his instruction to Sjakkie after Faantjie's visit, a pointer to his status as the representative of the Absolute Subject of the ideology which, at the conclusion of Sjakkie's apprenticeship, constitutes him as subject.

The Absolute Subject is God, God who sanctions, has given the division of people into the rich, the poor, and those who are not white and thus can be excluded from the category of "human being"; it is God who calls on the poor

to accept their station in life, to work hard and practise "naasteliefde", to reject struggle, "kommunisme". These values and beliefs given and sanctioned by God bear a striking similarity, as I have discussed, with the tenets of a "pre-textual" ideology, namely the ideology of Christian-nationalism. Of interest, of course, is that nowhere in the text is Sjakkie, or any other character, greeted as "Afrikaner" or is the unifying principle of the "volk" mentioned. While this absence can be attributed to an aesthetic practice that eschews overt political statements or interventions, or perhaps to the author's apparent unconcern with or disregard for the political programmes of Afrikaner nationalism, the silence is significant in the presence of the text's production of the place and role of the poor Afrikaner as articulated in the discourse of Christian-nationalism. This silence can be explained by taking recourse to the concept of "hegemony".

Hegemony of a political class meant for Antonio Gramsci that that class had succeeded in persuading other social groups to accept its own moral, political and cultural values.¹³⁵ The achievement and maintenance of hegemony is largely a matter of education: "Every relationship of hegemony is necessarily a pedagogic relationship."¹³⁶ For Gramsci the specifically political moment is characterised by ideological struggle which attempts to forge unity between economic, political and intellectual objectives, "placing all the questions around which the struggle rages on a "universal", not corporate level...".¹³⁷ In Die Oorlofske the correspondence between the ideological significations produced by the text and the ideology of Christian-nationalism indicates the extent to which the Christian-nationalist conception of the subordinate class of Afrikaans workers had taken root in the dominant groupings of society. The author's intentions is to provide a "realistic" picture of the impoverished Afrikaner, not to propagate Afrikaner-nationalism, yet the process of hegemony has "educated" the author: his depiction of "die armblanke soos hy is"¹³⁸ (my emphasis), is determined by the

hegemonic discourses of his time, discourses which, in the last instance, produced the subject of the "Afrikaans worker" in the interest of the dominant Afrikaans-speaking groupings of the 1930s and 1940s.

That it is Japie's story, not Faantjie's, which is given a full representation in the narrative and contrasted with Sjakkie's story is also related to the hegemonic effect of placing struggle on a universal, "human" level. The beliefs donated to Sjakkie are represented as natural, simple common-sense, beliefs "spontaneously" held by the "baie menslike" Oom Hennie.¹³⁹ Sjakkie's completion of a positive apprenticeship is not intended to demonstrate the validity of a doctrine, or of an "opposing ideology" (opposed to Faantjie's "kommunisme") but is intended to show the values and beliefs of deserving "mense". Japie's apprenticeship, as I have discussed, demonstrates the de-humanising (animalising) effect of the absence of civilised, "human" values. However, following my argument, Sjakkie's apprenticeship does constitute him as the subject of an ideological discourse constituent with the discourse of Christian-nationalism. Within the formal device of the theme of apprenticeship his trials are highlighted also in terms of the experience he must gain in order to become a fully constituted subject, freely submitting himself to the "truth" of his role and place in the world.

During each of Sjakkie's trials he differentiates himself from a character in the narrative, also on the basis of being addressed as a subject within a particular discourse. In his first trial he establishes a relationship of difference with Sanna. This relationship is situated within a gender discourse that produces the subject "'n man" by the individual human male being head of the family, stronger than the other, woman. In his second trial he affirms that he is different to Japie. Sjakkie's identification with Japie had been on the basis of a spatial interpellation that had constituted him and Japie as subject resident in the same poor neighbourhood, the

same residential social grouping. By a familial interpellation, embracing both a spatial and gender interpellation, Sjakkie experiences himself as different to Japie: as "n man" he will not practise the type of relationship with Sanna that Japie does with Anna and although part of the same poor neighbourhood, their family practices will be decent, civilised. By the end of his first two trials Sjakkie has thus been established as a man in two important respects. As John Urry argues:

The most important interpellations of the subject are those of spatio-temporal location and of gender. The effect of the former is that individual subjects resident with a particular spatial location (street, town/countryside, region, nation) at a given period of time...The interpellation of gender is to produce autonomous sex-ed subjects, each defined by its relationship of difference with the other...The other interpellations, of ethnicity, class, religion, politics and so on, can only be understood and related to these primary interpellations.¹⁴⁰

Sjakkie's initial state can be attributed to a dysfunction in terms of these two "most important" interpellations: Sjakkie initially lacks an appropriate gender identity (a gender interpellation is conspicuously absent in his father's guiding words to him) and his value of "solidarity with the poor", constituting him in a spatial discourse as identifying with Japie, has to be redefined and qualified by the standards of decent and civilised familial practices. Once "correctly" constituted, transformed by his lived experience, Sjakkie is then ready for the final religious interpellation (which embraces gender, spatial and political interpellations) that constitutes him as a fully formed subject at the close of his final trial. The nomenclature of the subject position he has come to occupy is "n man", but even more than that, he now resembles a particular man, his father - a "witman" as designated by Tant Lettie (DO p67). Furthermore, that the humanitarian

thrust of the religious interpellation is at odds with the interpellation of race (as given by Oom Hennie) need not detract from the ideological unity of the discourse constituting Sjakkie as subaltern. As Laclau says:

When a familial interpellation, for example, evokes a political interpellation, or an aesthetic interpellation, and when each of these isolated interpellations operates as a symbol of the others, we have a relatively unified ideological discourse. In periods of stability, when the social formation tends to reproduce its relations following traditional channels and succeeds in neutralising its contradictions by displacements,...This is when, generally, the correlation between the logical consistency of the elements of the discourse and its ideological unity reaches its lowest point. (Religious interpellations of an ascetic type can, for example, coexist with an increasing enjoyment of worldly goods without the social agents "living" them as incompatible.)¹⁴¹

Of course it is not only the character Sjakkie who has to experience his system of values and beliefs as non-contradictory. A reader similarly constituted as Oom Hennie and Sjakkie would not experience the religious and racial interpellations as incompatible and would find that Oom Hennie's religiousness "staan...geheel-en-al in die teken van Christus se opdrag, dat jy jou medemens soos jouself moet liefhê".¹⁴² (my emphasis) It is, after all, dominant ideological discourses that mask contradictions, discourses to which Oom Hennie's system of beliefs bears a striking similarity. If, on the other hand, the reader should feel that, by explicitly voicing such racial prejudice, "Oom Hennie Portjee is nie van my soort nie",¹⁴³ the narrative structure does offer a way out: the reader is offered as subject position vis à vis the characters that would constitute the reader as different - the characters are part of the kleinmensdom, like children, poor and

illiterate, in need of upliftment; the reader, like the members of the petit bourgeoisie in the narrative, is big, adult, and cares about the upliftment of the poor. As such the reader can still empathize with the characters as people, as part of the "menadom", while finding the excesses of their beliefs distasteful.

Underlying the above-mentioned interpellations is an unconscious textual concern with the racial group about whom the ideological discourse stresses Sjakkie does not have to worry ("Oor die hotnota hoef jy jou nie te bekommer nie" - DO p9). That Sanna had lost her work to an "ou meid" points to a concern with black encroachment on the labour front, although the text conceals this anxiety by situating Sanna's economic vulnerability in her sexuality, that the "mevrou" had perceived a threat in both Sanna and her male relative being present in the house. Sjakkie's demonstration of ableness, by recognising his position as head of the family and acting from that identity, starting his own business, therefore not only supplements his pride in being white, but allays unconscious fears about being white and poor (unskilled, uneducated) in a world where "vulgoed" are just as capable of doing work, participating in the labour system. Sjakkie's second trial functions to differentiate the living and sexual arrangements of the Portjee family from the uncivilised practices of the Coetzee family but also shows, by Sanna's equation of the Coetzee family with "hotnota", a concern with the danger of further proletarianisation, perceived as a degrading process whereby the distinction between the "ons" and the "hotnota" would not hold:

The European must keep to a standard of living which shall meet the demands of white civilisation, civilisation and standards of living always go hand in hand. Thus a white cannot exist on a native wage-scale, because this means that he has to give up his own standard of living and take on the standard of

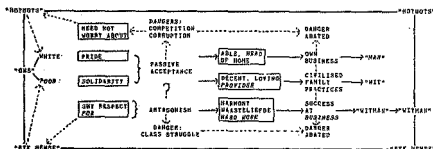
living of the native. In short, the white man becomes
a white kaffer.¹¹¹

The notion that the Coetzees are like "holnots" is overtly expressed by Sanna, yet, by the nature of subsequent resolution of the family drama, the emphasis falls on the personal relationship between Sjakkie and Sanna, on Sjakkie distinguishing himself from Japie by his caring, loving behaviour towards Sanna. Sanna's attack on the Coetzee family takes on the dimension of personal eruption of feeling, obscuring the perceived threat from black South Africans as embodied in her statement.

Sjakkie's third trial also indicates a consciousness of a historically situated anxiety about the position of the impoverished Afrikaner in relation to black South Africans, namely that they would give support to militant struggles by whites and possibly even blacks. In keeping with Oom Hennie's "common sense" of blacks as being totally excluded from humanity, Faantjie's proposition of the poor as including "arm kaffers" (DO p92) is ignored, beneath notice. Instead the focus is deflected, and rejecting Faantjie's ideology is presented as rejecting a type of anarchy - "...daarby twak van doodskiet en stukkend slaan and val" (DO p95). However, by renouncing Faantjie and by the successful outcome of his confrontation with Rabinowitz, Sjakkie, in the ensuing episode, is said to resemble his father, who is, significantly, a real "witman".

Although uneasy about the group of people who has been excluded from the category of "mens" is not depicted as having any bearing on Sjakkie's transformation, it nevertheless underlies Sjakkie's apprenticeship, his constitution as "in man". The two movements in Sjakkie's apprenticeship, his "living" of the correct values and beliefs and his movement up the class ladder, are accompanied by a third progression that distance him and his family from the "holnots". If one includes this

unconscious threat in Sjakkie's development the overall progression in the positive apprenticeship can be summarized by the following schema:



3.6. Conclusion

In keeping with the formal demands of the theme of apprenticeship, Sjakkie is depicted as having a vision of a future life in accordance with this newfound knowledge of himself and his lived experience of his place in the world. As fully constituted *subject* of a system of beliefs and values Sjakkie can now also *work all on his own*. However, as the narrative moves towards closure the outcome of Sjakkie's apprenticeship is *reversed*: Sjakkie, it seems, will *not* have a new and better life, Sjakkie can *not* work all on his own. At the point where Sjakkie's identity *becomes assimilated* to that of his father, a "witman", the donor in his story of apprenticeship and the spokesperson for God, the *Absolute Subject*, the same illness befalls Sanna as did Oom Hennie's wife Marie. And against the cycle of death and deprivation *only* intervention from without the world of "die onderfled" is effective.

At the close of the narrative Sjakkie's vision of a new future is *superseded* by a promise of the "good life" given to Oom Hennie:

Vansand is die Liewe Heer naby. Hy het die oubaas se siel oopgemaak, Sy Vrede daarin gelê. Vader Portjee weet, hy kan nou die verlede vergewe. In sy hart bêre hy die belofte vir die toekoms, die goeie lewe. Die magistrat het vir hom gesê, dis nie onmoontlik nie. Net moeite en geduld, maar dit kan gedoen word. Vir almal 'n huis waarin die son kan binneskyn. Vir almal gesondheid, 'n bietjie geluk, ook vir die armes...en vir Sanna... (DO p166)

Just as Oom Hennie donated the moral value of hard work and acceptance of the divinely ordained stratification of society to Sjakkie, the magistrate donates the value of "moeite" and "geduld" to Oom Hennie. Thus Oom Hennie too is subjected to a pedagogic relationship in order to learn about the "true" relationship between the powers that be and their subjects in society. The harmonious unity between poor and rich, worker and capitalist, as figured by Oom Hennie's final insight into the paternal nature of the authorities, is brought about by the promise that the needs of the poor will be taken into account ("Vir almal 'n huis..."; "Vir almal gesondheid..."). However, as Gramsci says:

The fact of hegemony undoubtedly presupposes that the interests and the tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised are taken into account, that there is a certain equilibrium of compromise, that, that is, the ruling group makes sacrifices of an economic-corporate kind, *but it is also indubitable that such sacrifices and such compromise cannot effect what is essential.*¹⁴⁵ (my emphasis)

Die *Onterfdes* demonstrates that what is "essential" cannot be compromised: the text presents the realisation of the promise of "die goeie lewe" as dependent on subjective conditions (effort and patience) not on a transformation of the relations and mode of production which divide society into rich and poor, possessors and dispossessed, owners and

non-owners of the means of production. Thus the plea for intervention, the call to the reader to support a more equitable dispensation for the poor (to believe that it "is nodig" - DO p154) recalls the social reformers of whom Marx and Engels were so scathing, reformers who were "desirous of redressing social grievances, in order to secure the continued existence of bourgeois society".¹⁴⁶

Moreover, the theme of apprenticeship in Die Ontferdes has been utilised to depict the transformation of "n seuntjie" into a fully fledged subject who can work on his own, who has accepted fully his "correct, divinely allotted place and task in the hierarchy"¹⁴⁷ of a christian and capitalist society. But the text cannot allow Sjakkie's confident vision of future in which "hy amper enigiets kan aanvang, en hy sal dit regkry" (DO p144) and by its final events drives home its ideological message of submission to authority, not only to God but to the human authorities which regulate and mediate the "proper" relations between the dominant and subordinate classes in society. However, as Macherey has argued, the "implements" or the means of the practice of writing keep "a certain autonomy" even when blended into the totality of the work produced by the author.¹⁴⁸ Sjakkie's apprenticeship has functioned to demonstrate the "truth" of a system of values and beliefs (as has Japie's negative apprenticeship) and Sjakkie's lived experience of this system has enabled his passage from a child to a man. Yet in showing Sjakkie as unable to function on his own, the text also displays the limits of those values and beliefs to effect a real transformation in the lives of the "ontferdes". Furthermore, the notion of progress and modernisation, so positively valorised in the narrative, is undermined: it is the past that returns, in the form of Sanna's illness. Only the government can fully vanquish the past and only the government can practice "naasteliefde" successfully, without the terminal results effected by Oom Hennie's practice. Sanna's illness is not figured, therefore, as ungovernable "fate" which, it could be said, undermines all human beings' attempts to manage

their lives, but represents the point at which only submission to human authority, the government as "father", can provide an "authentic" future. In return for this future "goeie lewe" the outcome of Sjakkie's overtly successful apprenticeship, culminating in his being "'n man", has to be reversed and Sjakkie's ideological identity (like Oom Hennie's) has to become "kind" again. Yet the full-scale representation of a successful apprenticeship retains its autonomy in the text, and by displaying Sjakkie's defeat as "'n man", the text also displays the limits of the ideology which has interpellated him as its subject, which should have enabled him to work all on his own. The "gap" between the text's realisation of its enabling theme and its ideological programme offers a testimony of, in Macherey's words, "the discord in the historical reality"¹⁴ upon which the text's ideological coherence is built. The defeat suffered by the Afrikaans working class in the 1920s and 1930s is "silently" present in their fictional portrayal in 1944: the text displays that without the transformation of the mode of production in society the "ontferdes" are unable to leave "childhood" behind, unable to take their fate into their own hands, delivered as children, but defeated as adult human beings.

CHAPTER 3

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE "THEME OF APPRENTICESHIP" IN "DIE ONTERRYDES" AND "MINE BOY"

3.1. Introduction

The comparative analysis of *Mine Boy* and *Die Onterrydes* proceeds from the methodological premise that by, in S.S. Fawer's terminology, "placing" two texts "side by side", they will mutually illuminate each other¹. In the case of *Mine Boy* and *Die Onterrydes* these two texts will illuminate each other's ideologically determined utilisation of the "theme of apprenticeship". Although *Mine Boy* and *Die Onterrydes* might seem too disparate for a meaningful comparison (especially since *Mine Boy* deals with the plight of black people in the city, something consciously ignored by *Die Onterrydes*), an overview of the similarities (other than date of publication) between the two texts reveals that there indeed is ground for fruitful comparison.

Mine Boy and *Die Onterrydes* both deal with the groups (Afrikaners-speakers and black South Africans) who suffered most under the impact of capitalist accumulation in South Africa, especially during the 1920s and 1930s. However, whereas both Afrikaners and black writers in the 1920s and 1930s focused on the city as a "revolting and immoral place",² *Mine Boy* and *Die Onterrydes* propose that "redemption" for the dispossessed lies in the city, in fulfilling their roles in an already-existing capitalist society. Both *Mine Boy* and *Die Onterrydes* utilise the theme of apprenticeship to demonstrate what the nature of that role in the city should be.

The unfolding of the theme of apprenticeship in both novels offers a solution to a problem already alluded to in their respective titles. The title "*Die Onterrydes*" evokes the process of urbanisation and proletarianisation undergone by rural Afrikaners, yet the novel holds that their salvation lies not in the return to an older mode of production but

in being provided for within the contemporary economic structures of society. The title "Mine Boy" points to two of the experiences which confront black people in the city - industrialisation and race discrimination ("boy" being a testimony of white feelings of superiority towards black adults) - yet black people, the narrative argues, are capable of finding their real strength in the city. Lastly, like Die Ontriefdes, Mine Boy has been evaluated as having "little plot"³ and being "very thin on plot".⁴ It is Mine Boy's depiction of its characters, as with Die Ontriefdes, which has been seen to be its distinguishing and most interesting feature.⁵

A Die Ontriefdes, the fictional narrator of Mine Boy is of the omniscient kind. In contrast to Die Ontriefdes, however, this narrator is overtly present and frequently manifests all the signs associated with the presence of the narrative voice (identification of characters, temporal summaries, commentary on and interpretations of characters and events).⁶ Although Xuma, the protagonist in Mine Boy, is often the focaliser of the events and other characters (with the effect that the reader gets to know the city and its people through his unaccustomed eyes), commentary and interpretation by the narrator in conjunction with narrator-focalisation also has the effect of the reader learning more about the city and its practices than Xuma does.

In the analysis following in section 4.2. I concentrate on the utilisation of the theme of apprenticeship in Mine Boy so as to contrast the notion of "knowledge of self" attained by Sjakkie in the course of his apprenticeship with the "knowledge of self" achieved by Xuma, the protagonist of the apprenticeship story in Mine Boy. Both Sjakkie's and Xuma's apprenticeships conclude in their reaching a metaphorical "manhood", yet the values and beliefs that are constituent to the two apprenticeships are diametrically opposed. Mine Boy has been said to be a "proletarian novel" which "consciously stresses the idea

...that the conflicts and difficulties of the Africans in town life in South Africa have their basis in the class struggle".⁷ In Mine Boy, Kolawole Ogungbesan argues, Abrahams sought to explain the racialism in South African society by "the Marxian theories of economics and imperialism".⁸ However, the novels of Peter Abrahams have also been said to depict people's "...eternal spiritual resistance to isolation by colour"⁹ (my emphasis) and to set "freedom of the mind over and above political independence".¹⁰ My analysis of Mine Boy will show the specifics of a proletarian discourse co-existing with a statement of a generalised humanism in the text.

4.2. The theme of apprenticeship in "Mine Boy"

4.2.1. Introduction

In the final chapter of the novel Xuma has the following insights:

Xuma felt stronger than he had ever felt in all his life. Strong enough to be a man without colour. And now, suddenly, he knew that it could be so. Man could be without colour. (MB p181)

When Paddy, the white overseer, joins the black workers (led by Xuma) who are striking because of the unsafe conditions on the mine, Xuma finally fully understands himself and the situation:

Xuma smiled. Now he understood. He understood many things. One can be a person first. A man first and then a black man or a white man... (MB p182)

Although Xuma runs away from the police, he overcomes his fear and decides to surrender, to join Paddy in jail. In the course of his apprenticeship Xuma has been transformed from an inarticulate, innocent "Jim comes to Jo'burg"¹¹ type of figure to the representative of the new class of black urban workers and to the spokesperson for the black

that the conflicts and difficulties of the Africans in town life in South Africa have their basis in the class struggle".⁷ In Mine Boy, Kolawole Ogungbesan argues, Abrahams sought to explain the racialism in South African society by "the Marxian theories of economics and imperialism".⁸ However, the novels of Peter Abrahams have also been said to depict people's "...eternal spiritual resistance to isolation by colour"⁹ (my emphasis) and to set "freedom of the mind over and above political independence".¹⁰ My analysis of Mine Boy will show the specifics of a proletarian discourse co-existing with a statement of a generalised humanism in the text.

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cause. As Xuma explains his resolve to surrender to the police:

"The Red One is there. He is not a black man but he is going to jail for our people. How can I not go? And there are many things I want to say too. I want to tell them how I feel and how the black people feel.

"...it is good that a black man should tell the white people how we feel. And also, a black man must tell the black people how they feel and what they want. These things I must do, then I will feel like a man.
(NB p183)

Like Sjakkie, Xuma is an adult male at the start of his apprenticeship and, as in Sjakkie's story, Xuma's development is depicted as a process of "growing up", a transformation from "child" to "man". As in Sjakkie's apprenticeship the trials which Xuma undergoes emerge as highlights in his story. Xuma's trials also include a confrontation where he faces an "opponent". Whereas each of Sjakkie's trials, as I have discussed in chapter three, is characterised by a change in Sjakkie's consciousness, Xuma's trials are characterised by a postponement of understanding, and it is only at the close of his apprenticeship that Xuma is depicted as really understanding himself and his role in the world. However, in each of Xuma's trials the reader, by way of commentary and description on the part of the narrator is led to a better understanding of the conditions of life of black people in the city.

While nearly every episode that Xuma encounters exemplifies an aspect of urban life and its accompanying racist oppression, these episodes also demonstrate that race per se does not determine the consciousness of a person. Thus the space is cleared for the oppression suffered by "non-whites" in the novel to be explained in other terms than essentialist notions of inherent racial antagonism. In conjunction with the nickname of Xuma's "donor" in his

apprenticeship ("the Red One"), the strike at the close of the narrative (the symbol of working-class resistance) and the description of Xuma's work on the mines, the narrative suggests that the oppressive situation has its basis in the class struggle. The underlying actantial structure for Xuma's apprenticeship one would therefore expect to be Greimas's model cited in chapter three of my study (see p.75).

Subject	:	Man
Object	:	Classless society
Donor	:	History
Receiver	:	Mankind
Opponent	:	The Bourgeois Class
Helper	:	The Working Class

To what extent the narrative realizes this structure I discuss after my analysis of the trials which Xuma surmounts in his story of apprenticeship. As in Sjakkie's story of apprenticeship in Pis Ontariden, the first episodes of Mine Boy "set the scene" from which Xuma is presented as undergoing a transformation and also provides the elements of the story pertinent to his growth from "child" to "man". Also, as in Pis Ontariden, the scene is set again for the final trial to be surmounted. These episodes I discuss under "setting the scene(1)" and "setting the scene(2)".

4.2.2. Setting the scene (1)

The novel begins with the hero, Xuma, faced with an intimidating situation, one in which he is at a disadvantage because he is in a location utterly unfamiliar and unknown to him. The intimidating nature of the situation is especially established by the repetitions related to the darkness in which he finds himself: "...a dark, narrow street full of shadows", "...whole Malay camp full of shadows...", "...she was part of the shadowy gate..." (MB pl). The shadowy nature of the location in which he finds himself is extended to include the people

who are also totally unknown to him: "He saw the shadow move", "(She had returned) like a shadow" (MB p2). Everything depicted contributes to establish the alienating environment - the darkness, the time (three o'clock in the morning) and Xuma has no external resources - no matches to combat the darkness, no money to buy hospitality. His assets are internal to him - he is immediately described as a "big man" (MB p1), his voice is "deep and husky" (MB p1). In the shadowy world his dislocation is to some extent compensated for by his concrete manliness. This is taken further in the description of his appearance in the light of Leah's torch. The absence of material assets is emphasised, even his clothes are in danger of falling away, but his masculine assets are highlighted and his appearance establishes him as positive "...the immense chest and huge shoulders", "the broad, good-natured face" (MB p2). In the light he passes Leah's test and is allowed into her house.

The role which Leah fulfills in the narrative as the challenger of Xuma's manhood is indicated by her response to Xuma's hesitance before following her into the house: "So big and strong and you are afraid" (MB p2). Xuma's answer, that he is only hesitating because he cannot see, indicates the situational nature of what she perceives as his weakness. Since the reader knows that moments before he fleetingly had contemplated breaking down her door to get inside, Leah's interpretation is obviously not valid. Leah's role as challenger to the male ego is further indicated by her introduction of Dladla to Xuma once inside the house: "He thinks he is a strong man...but he's a puppy" (MB p3). This leads to Xuma's first experience of gratuitous violence in the city, and to the first demonstration of the values which Xuma brings with him to the city - he steps in as Dladla violently knocks Daddy to the ground for exploding in mirth at Leah's remark. Leah intervenes and subdues Dladla, affirming in action what Xuma already had deduced her to be, first by her voice and then by her appearance: a strong woman, whose "eyes can see right through a man" (MB p3).

Whereas it is especially Xuma's strength which constitutes him as a man, it is Leah's weakness which shows her essential womanliness. Her loss of strength is because of the power of love. In response to Xuma's question about "her man" she undergoes a transformation:

Her eyes softened. A half smile played around her lips. And as Xuma watched her it seemed that her face had grown weaker. Not so strong any more. And her eyes were not so sharp. They were just the eyes of a woman.
(MB p4) (my emphasis)

In the discussion that follows Xuma's manhood is affirmed in different ways. Leah compares him to her man, in jail for killing a man while protecting her. Leah sees Xuma as "a man" too because he is strong (MB p5). Xuma sees the mines as a suitable place for him to work as it is a "man's work" (MB p5). When Xuma declines Leah's offer to work for her, perhaps to become her "head-man", she sees this as a sign of his manhood: "...Well, you are a man with the dumbness of a man..." (MB p5). It is also Xuma's strength that assures Leah he will be able to work and pay her for her hospitality and perhaps even return the favour if she should need "a strong man" (MB p5).

In response to Leah's threats about the consequences of cheating her Xuma only laughs and disarms her by referring to her kindness. Leah's response to Xuma introduces the motif of the city and the country. That Xuma is unable to understand Leah, that she is "strange" (MB p6), becomes linked to the strangeness of the city, which Xuma, coming from "the North" (MB p1), has not yet experienced. Thus, from the start, Leah embodies the strangeness of the city, and all that Xuma still has to learn about the city.

This first introductory episode ends with Xuma's thoughts about the people in the house:

A strange group of people, there, he thought. Nothing tied them down. But well, they had given him a bed.

She had given it to him. She who was the strangest of them all. And in the other room the old one they call Daddy was sleeping against a wall with an open mouth and with nothing to cover him. But life is strange. Yes, and these people are life...of course... (MB p6)

Xuma's thoughts at the close of his initial introduction to the people of the city provides an important element of the situation which will be transformed in the course of his apprenticeship. Whereas Xuma here equates the "strangeness" of the people in the house with the strangeness of life, his exposure to the city will teach him that the black people in the city live as if "nothing tied them down" because of the aggression of city life towards them. That even Leah later conflates the debilitating effects of their experience in the city with "life" (by saying that Lena knows "life" and "wants to forget it" - MB p8) indicates the extent to which life for black people in the city has come to mean constant hostility towards them, rather than an acceptance of a general "human condition".

Once darkness has disappeared, the city and its people are presented as no less strange to Xuma. The next morning Xuma is confronted with a scene which is a perversion of the customs of the country. Initially it seems as if the activity is something which Xuma knows - Daddy is "yelling ancient battle cries" - but then Xuma meets with an affront to his values. The crowd is enjoying the spectacle of two women fighting; Xuma, however, turns "his eyes away", curses "under his breath" and feels "a strange heaviness in his heart" (MB p8). In contrast to Xuma's reaction, Daddy is portrayed as taking excessive glee in the situation: "Daddy shouted, and rolled in the gutter with excitement", "Daddy lay cackling in the gutter and kicking his feet in the air"; "Daddy could not contain himself and rubbed his head against the pavement" (MB p8). Even Leah's power in being able to interrupt the fight and control the crowd is depicted as an inversion of traditional gender roles as Leah's behaviour resembles the actions usually associated

with a man: Leah "beat her chest with her fists. 'Come and fight me.'" (NB p9).

In the ensuing interaction between Xuma and Leah it again is Xuma's inability to understand Leah which is presented as a sign of his ignorance of the city and its people. Leah, however, understands that Xuma is confused about the contrast between her aggressive behaviour and her being "just an ordinary woman" (NB p10), and attempts to explain her behaviour by situating it in the difference between the rural background they both share and her life in the city. Leah proposes a new unifying principle for "their" people: their people are unified by "the tribal law and the tribal custom" (NB p10), not by whether they come, as Xuma holds, from "the north" or "the south" (NB p10). The city, Leah is at pains to explain to Xuma, alienates the black person from his or her "people". Xuma cannot really understand Leah's explanation and it is both his lack of experience of city life and its people and his inability to comprehend the thrust of Leah's explanation that makes Leah see him as a "baby" and "a child" (NB p10). Leah's remark, "I cannot make you understand" (NB p11), functions as a comment on her actual role in Xuma's apprenticeship: it is not Leah but Paddy, Xuma's overseer on the mines, who will lead Xuma to a full understanding of the situation, who will donate the "truth" required for Xuma to grow towards knowledge of himself and his place in the world.

Leah also attempts to make Xuma understand the situation in the city by calling on Daddy to tell Xuma "about the custom and the city" (NB p11). Daddy too, in his allegorical explanation, stresses the corrupting effect of the meeting of the traditional way of life with the ways of the city:

"One day the city came to visit the custom, Xuma. And the custom was kind. It gave the city food and it gave the city beer and it gave the city beautiful young women...

"...As I was saying, it gave the city beautiful young women. And then what do you think. Unbelievable. The city didn't say a word. It didn't say 'No thank you' and it didn't say 'thank you'. And the people said, 'Ah, everything will be all right now, the custom and the city are friends', Hmamm ...they did say that and they went out into the fields to look after their crops. And when the sun was going down they came back and looked for their beer but their beer was gone. And then they looked for the custom but he had gone too. And the city was there laughing at them. And now they go to jail if they drink beer. That's why I like beer... (HB pl1)

Daddy's explanation emphasises the corruption and ruthlessness of the city, that the city never gives but only takes from the black person. However, whereas both Leah and Daddy explain the city's relation with the traditional, rural way of life in terms of a polarity, Xuma, in the course of his apprenticeship, will grow towards an understanding of a possible productive synthesis of "the city" and "the custom". At this point though, Xuma is depicted as not understanding Leah's explanation or Daddy's and, in fact, only is further confused by what he perceives to be the incongruity of Leah's affection for Daddy.

The events that "set the scene" for Xuma's apprenticeship constitute Xuma, as Leah says, as a "child" and a "baby" in relation to the new world in which he finds himself. However, the problem of Xuma's childlikeness differs from the similar problem of Sjakkie's immaturity at the start of Dis-Order Ideas in a significant way. Whereas Sjakkie initially is established as a child in relation to his more confident, self-assured wife, Xuma is constituted as a child in relation to the totally new, unknown and potentially intimidating situation in which he finds himself. Furthermore, while Sjakkie is represented as lacking in the physical qualities associated with manhood,

Xuma's physical manliness is emphasised, and initially it is his manly assets which establish his viability in the new and strange environment. In contrast to Sjakkie, Xuma need not be subject to a gender interpellation, need not be positioned as "man" in relation to "woman". In this manner, the narrative underlines what is already suggested by Xuma's cryptic answer to Leah about his name and his origins ("Xuma. I come from the North" - MB pl): Xuma functions as a representational figure and what is at stake in his apprenticeship is not a transformation of his "personal" qualities but his development towards an understanding of himself as part of a bigger social structure, towards the knowledge that his function in white, bourgeois society can be explained and can be transformed.

Of note, too, is that the power of love (an idea which by its repetition constitutes a motif in the narrative) only transforms Xuma's "manhood" in so far that it enhances the masculine qualities which he already possesses (see p.163). Xuma's loss of "his woman", although an important element in the story, also does not redefine or question his gender identity but is linked to the broader process of alienation to which he becomes subject. Similarly, his rediscovery of love - his love for Maisy at the close of his story - concurs with his emergence to a "full human being", not a discovery of his appropriate gender role.

Xuma's manly qualities also function as "helping elements" in his story of apprenticeship.¹² Thus Xuma himself belongs to the category of "helper". In relation to the syntagmatic unfolding of his apprenticeship Xuma here fulfills an important actantial function since Faddy, the "true" donor in Xuma's story, only manifests his role fully towards the close of the narrative. Like Sjakkie, Xuma is depicted as in possession of "authentic" values and beliefs at the start of his apprenticeship; like Sjakkie, these values and beliefs must be supplemented and refined by experience and understanding. In contrast to the introductory episodes to

the trials with which Sjakkie is confronted, Xuma initially is not provided with a parental figure or mentor to fulfill the role of donor in his apprenticeship. Although Leah functions as helper, both she and Daddy, by donating the notion of "the city" in a relationship of opposition with the traditional, rural environment, function as pseudo-donors vis à vis the true knowledge to be gained by Xuma in the course of his story.

The absence of a true donor at the start of Xuma's apprenticeship highlights an important difference between the theme of apprenticeship as it is utilized in Mine Boy and as it is utilized in Die Omtersdes. In Die Omtersdes Oom Hennie, the donor, is overtly present in the episodes which set the scene of Sjakkie's apprenticeship (see pp. 84-88) and, in comparison with Xuma, Sjakkie's own good qualities which could be considered "helping elements", are conspicuously absent (even Sjakkie's lack of many attributes is emphasised - his "borsontrek te klein" - DO p9; the hotel owner "nog kleiner" than Sjakkie - DO p7). As Suleiman points out, the donor's "beneficial presence guarantees, in a sense, the hero's success".¹³ In Die Omtersdes Oom Hennie's persistent presence, even in the initial introductory episodes of Sjakkie's apprenticeship, underlines the role which the image of the father is called on to play in the text: that the benevolent presence of authority is the only guarantee of success, that without that presence the subjects in society cannot function on their own. Xuma, on the other hand, initially is delivered onto himself, and, as the unfolding of his story shows, can achieve partial success even in the absence of a true donor. Although Xuma functions as a representational figure, Mine Boy's utilisation of its actantial configuration, nevertheless, demonstrates a belief in the individual's power to effect a change in his or her fortunes.

Leah, like Sanna in Sjakkie's apprenticeship, also functions as pseudo-opponent, as challenger to the male ego

(it is she who sets Xuma up as a "baby" and a "child") so as to goad Xuma into change and learning. Leah embodies all that Xuma has to learn about the city, about "life" (in the city), but, as is already indicated by Daddy's degraded state in these introductory episodes, by emulating Leah Xuma runs the risk of becoming another victim of the city. Leah's actantial function in Xuma's apprenticeship can be best explained by what Suleiman terms the opposition between the axis of "seeming" and the axis of "being" in the story of apprenticeship.¹⁴ In Mine Boy the axis of "seeming" is constituted from what seems to be the cause of black people's oppression, namely the opposition between the good "black" countryside and the evil "white" city. Leah gives Xuma, in words and deeds, the appropriate mode of coping with this opposition and, on the axis of "seeming" fulfills the role of donor. On the axis of "being", however, the oppression is due to the economic structures of the society, manifested as racial exploitation. On this axis, only Paddy, the Red One, fulfills the role of true donor. For Xuma, true knowledge of himself and his place in the world lies on the axis of "being", not "seeming".

4.2.3. Xuma's First Trial

Xuma's first afternoon in the city ushers in his first trial. A vision of the city is presented also to the reader through Xuma's unaccustomed eyes, in keeping with the narrative device of allowing the reader to experience the world of black people in the city as Xuma comes to know it. The episode comes to a climax when Xuma himself experiences the gratuitous violence which the city inflicts on black people. Xuma's country values, his sense of justice, causes him to respond to the violence in a different way to the city folk: he does not run away from the policemen because he has "done nothing" (MB p16). When Xuma resists the policeman a "look of strange surprise" (MB p16) creeps into the policeman's eyes, an indication that resistance from black people is unusual and unexpected. Although it is a

"coloured" civilian who attempts to apprehend Xuma in his dash away from the police, bringing Xuma's own colour prejudices to the fore ("He hated the coloureds...these half-castes!" - MB p16), it is also a "coloured" man who steps in to help him, Xuma's preconceptions are further put into question by what he notes "with surprise" (MB p17) at his deliverer's home: the "coloured" man is married to a black woman. It is this black woman who again highlights the fact that Xuma's response to the violence of the police is unusual in the context of life in the city:

"Why did you strike the policeman?" the woman asked.

"The policeman struck him for no reason," the coloured man said.

The woman looked *searchingly* at Xuma.

"It is so," Xuma said.

The woman *nodded*... "Are you new to the city?"

Xuma *nodded*.

"That is why he struck the policeman," the woman said to her husband. (MB p17)

Xuma finds his way back to Leah's house where he is congratulated by Leah for resisting the police but also reprimanded for not emulating Joseph who ran away because he "knows the city" (MB p20). Nevertheless, Leah praises him for being "a man" (MB p20), even though his inappropriate action in the context of city life would still constitute him as the "baby" and the "child". It is significant that Leah's ensuing interaction with the black policeman and her refusal to share the information she buys from him with the other members of her community, is not only at odds with Xuma's country values but also with what the reader has been shown during Xuma's first trial: the value of *solidarity* in the face of the oppressor. Furthermore, the extent to which Leah is reneging on an important value in her quest for a measure of personal power is highlighted by the fact that solidarity in the face of the oppressor was characteristic of the beer-brewing culture of the time. As Eddie Koch points out:

The process of brewing beer involved women in extensive mutual assistance. Women and young children would assist each other by looking out for police raiding parties. Women...would avoid organising parties that clashed with each other and friends would brew for a woman who was ill or in jail...If a woman was arrested during a raid neighbours would assist in feeding and looking after her children.¹³

The conflict between the value of solidarity and Leah's display of disloyalty towards her fellow-oppressed, as well as the discord between Xuma's sense of justice as demonstrated during his trial and Leah's manifest unjust behaviour, characterises Xuma's trial as leading to confusion not understanding. Although Xuma has confronted the "opponent" in the form of society's "repressive state apparatus",¹⁴ and although Leah's praise of Xuma functions as "proof" of the value of his actions, understanding for Xuma is postponed and Leah to him is still "a strange woman" (HB p22).

Thus, in contrast to Sjakkie's trials of interpretation, Xuma's apprenticeship is not "developmental", Xuma will not progressively grow towards "true" understanding. This difference between Sjakkie's and Xuma's stories is related to the outcome of their apprenticeships. Whereas Sjakkie's transformation is towards that of identity with his father, the donor of his story, Xuma has to break with the structures of "seeming" as given by Leah in order for him to realise his new ideological identity as constituted at the close of his apprenticeship. Also, whereas Sjakkie is donated the value of "naastelliefde" to effect a unity of the (white) dispossessed in society ("Sé net vir jouself: 'Wat het ek wat daardie man nie het nie'...en as jy te veel het, gee vir hom" - DO p96) and the practice of business to improve the lot of the poor in society, Xuma's first trial demonstrates that concerted action on the part of the oppressed (irrespective of "colour") is effective in resisting the repressive forces in a oppressive society.

4.2.4. Xuma's second trial

Xuma's initial experience of the work on the mine is depicted as even stranger to him than his experience of the city and its people. The emphasis throughout this episode falls on the alienation inherent in the kind of work that black men are required to perform. Xuma, however, is also brought into contact with two white overseers who are well-disposed towards the black workers: Chris, significantly, is a "dutchman" (NB p38); Paddy, Irish.

When the other overseers attempt to humiliate Xuma by demanding work from him for which he has not been trained and which is "the work of two men" (NB p39), it is, as in Xuma's first trial, his strength and courage that allow him to surmount the test. It is also Xuma's display of fortitude which constitutes him, in Paddy's eyes, as a suitable "strong man" (NB p16) to lead an underground crew. That Paddy, the white overseer, and Xuma, the "mine boy" from the country, are capable of relating to each other as equals is indicated by their parting handshake, which is "the grip of two strong men" (NB p16).

That the narrative presents Xuma and Paddy as equals ("two strong men") is significant in the light of Paddy's function as donor in Xuma's apprenticeship. In Sjakkie's apprenticeship a relationship of subservience to his donor, Oom Henrie, is established and maintained. (Sjakkie's attempts at resisting his father are quickly quashed, in fact "...mak seeg moss water in los sand" - DO p95). In Xuma's apprenticeship the equality established between him and Paddy points to the novel's ideological programme: Paddy fulfills the role of donor so that Xuma can understand the real nature of the oppression of life in the city; then, as the final events of the narrative show, Xuma has to outgrow his donor and fulfill his historically given task in a capitalist society.

Although Xuma surmounts the test presented to him in his first working day on the mines, it is especially the reader

who learns about the conditions of economic exploitation. The description of Xuma's work provides the reader, as Michael Wade argues, with a "full-scale dramatisation of the Marxist theory of alienation".¹¹ The aspects of this theory pertinent to the description of Xuma's work reads as follows:

Alienation expresses the fact that the creations of men's hands and minds turn against their creators and come to dominate their lives. Thus, instead of enlarging freedom, these uncontrollable powers increase human servitude and strip men of the capacities for self-determination and self-direction which have raised them above the animals

...The causes of existing alienation are rooted in capitalism which was born and bred in the dispossession of the working masses from the means of production and the consequent alienation of wage labour. In the further course of development this system keeps reproducing the conditions of alienation more extensively on all levels of social existence.¹² (my emphasis)

Xuma is not ever depicted as *understanding* that "the causes of...alienation are rooted in capitalism" but he and the other black workers are presented as *fully experiencing* the effects of alienation through wage labour. The eyes of the men working with Xuma frighten him because their eyes are "like the eyes of sheep that did not know where to run when the dog barked" (NB p11). The effect of their form of work is to reduce human beings to the level of *animals*, so that they experience labour as *servitude* to uncontrollable powers, to the "stomping and terrifying noises", to the "hissing and extrusions from the bowels of the earth" (NB p42). Furthermore, though Xuma is at first terrified by the effect on the men, he is then frightened by its *cause*:

It was this that frightened Xuma. This seeing of nothing for a man's work. This mocking of a man by the sand...

...It made him feel desperate and anxious. He worked feverishly. Straining his strength behind the loaded truck and running behind the empty truck and looking carefully to see if the dump had grown any bigger, and watching the sand from the earth to see if it had grown less. But it was the same. The same all the time. No change. (MB p42)

Thus Xuma's experience of his work explains the immediate cause of the dehumanising effect of working-class labour: human effort and labour is experienced as pointless, futile, unable to yield fruits beyond the depersonalised imperative to earn a wage. In this way, workers lose the "capacity for self-determination and self-direction which have raised them above the animals".¹⁸

This episode also takes on an explanatory function that modifies the country-city polarity as manifested during Xuma's contact with the different inhabitants of Leah's house and his own learning experiences. The notion of the city as a wily and calculating enemy of traditional values and ways of life, an enemy armed especially with the weapon of race discrimination, is superseded by the notion of economic exploitation. Whilst Daddy can still conceive of the city anthropomorphically, Xuma and the other workers experience their economic servitude as the oppression of an inhuman power and process. Moreover, whereas the racial oppression of the urban situation deprives people of their personal identities, economic exploitation goes a step further and robs people of their *humanity*.

The episode discussed above forms a sharp contrast to Die Ontferden's articulation of what causes people (its "mensse") to manifest not their humanity but an *animality*. In Die Ontferden it is the absence of certain beliefs and values, and their accompanying practices, which constitute Japie

and even his family as "animals", not their exploitation and oppression in society. Thus Mine Boy, by comparison, highlights Die Onsefdes' project of transporting objective economic conditions onto a subjective plane, thereby concealing the real nature of people's relationship to their conditions of existence.

4.2.5. Xuma's third trial

Xuma's third trial is the only true trial of interpretation that he surmounts, in which his opponent is his own unwillingness to understand a situation. Loneliness drives Xuma from his room towards the streets of Johannesburg. On the way his feeling of loneliness is heightened by seeing many couples and groups of friends in the street. For Xuma even the very poor, poorer than himself, seem better off than he is for most of them are not alone. Although Xuma is so deeply aware of his own personal deprivation (he has not got his loved one, Eliza, with him) in relation to the black people who pass him on the streets, his interest in the personal relationships of others disappears when the people who pass him are white:

There were more white people now and they were different. They did not walk or look like his people and it was as if they were not really there. He stepped aside for them to pass and he heard their voices, but they were strangers. He did not look at them or watch carefully to see what they said and how their eyes looked and whether there was love in the eyes of the woman who hung on the arm of the man. They were not his people so he did not care. (MB p82)

The material privileges of the white people, forbidden to him, do interest him however. He looks through the window of a restaurant at white people "eating and talking and smoking and laughing at each other" (MB p82) in a warm environment (in contrast to the cold outside). The author economically highlights the oppression of black people by juxtaposing that warm environment with what happens to Xuma

outside the restaurant. Not only is Xuma forbidden from entering the restaurant but a tap from a policeman means that Xuma has to show his *pass*, without which he cannot even be on the street. The extent to which Xuma has adapted to life in the city is suggested by the *wordless* exchange between him and the policeman. Xuma's adaptation is further suggested by his response to the reasonably congenial behaviour of the policeman: Xuma thinks "Maybe he's new" (MB p53).

Xuma's thoughts about the situation on the mines lead him to ponder the relationship between blacks and whites - that a "white man and a black man cannot be friends. They work together. That's all" and that "he did not want the things of the white man" (MB p53). His pride in his good work on the mines and that he "knew how to deal" with the whites vanishes at the thought of Eliza, who "does want the things of the white man" (MB p53). The episode that follows with Di and Paddy presents a challenge to Xuma's certainties. Whereas Xuma had been able to ignore the other white couples, he is unable to do so with Paddy and Di and wishes that "the Red One would take his woman away" (MB p54). Di and Paddy also invite him to Paddy's flat to eat with them, where Xuma's assertion that a "white man and a black man cannot be friends" is challenged:

When they had finished eating they drank more wine. And Xuma and Paddy talked about the mines and the funny things that happened there and soon they were all laughing. And in spots Xuma forgot that they were white and even spoke to the woman. (MB p55)

Xuma also for the first time sees how whites live. Although he, after his interaction with Paddy and Di, feels that he now *understands* what Eliza wants and that *knowing* makes things less difficult for him, his conviction, based on what he perceives to be the fundamental difference between whites and blacks, remains intact: that it is foolish for blacks to want what whites have. Di's attempts, in the

the course of the evening, to persuade Xuma of the irrelevance of colour as a barrier between people, had not succeeded.

What Xuma could not learn from Di he learns from the black doctor, Doctor Mini. On his way home he encounters another scene of urban violence: people looking on as policemen hunt down a man on the rooftops who they had attempted to arrest for playing dice in the streets. The man falls and a man "dressed in the clothes of the white man" (NB p71) steps in. Even though Dr Mini is a doctor he meets with the same sort of violence dished out to working-class blacks: a policeman hits him in his face. Even in this depiction of extreme disregard for the human dignity of black people the author offers the reader an alternative to the view of all policemen as evil in the figure of the "older" policeman. This older policeman intervenes when Dr Mini is treated brutally and is depicted as "tired and weary" (NB p73), suggesting his disillusionment but also fatalistic acceptance of the behaviour of his fellow policemen.

Xuma helps the injured man to the doctor's car. In the car Xuma has *some* insight into how different "his people" can also be from one another. He feels that he has little respect for the injured man and Dr Mini, although black, although one of "his people", is also "different" (NB p74). This idea is extended by the middle-class comfort he encounters at Dr Mini's home - the same comfort he had seen at Paddy's flat. As in Paddy's home he feels out of place. The doctor sees his discomfort and in response to Xuma's statement that his home is "like the white people's place" reiterates the message that Di had wanted to get across:

"No, Xuma," the doctor said. "Not like the white people's place. Just a comfortable place. You are not copying the white man when you live in a place like this. This is the sort of place a man should live in because it is good for him. Whether he is white or black does not matter. A place like this is good for

him. It is the other places that are the white people's. The places they make you live in." (MB p75)

Before Xuma can respond to this the doctor's nurse informs them that the patient has escaped. Xuma sees a look of sadness and hopelessness on the doctor's face before it grows cold and hard again, a look that reminds Xuma of the faces of the miners "who had worked on the pile of fine wet sand that would not grow less" (MB p75). Then Dr Mini abruptly dismisses Xuma.

Dr Mini figures once more in the narrative, at Daddy's death-bed, where the situation is hopeless and he as a doctor helpless. Dr Mini's helplessness in the face of these two situations suggests the powerlessness of the black petit-bourgeoisie, set apart from the mass of black workers although part of them because of colour and the accompanying oppression based on colour. The black petit-bourgeoisie, as Kelwyn Sole has pointed out, was a small repressed elite from its beginning, subject to "strong blocking pressures to its aspirations because of the existing social and economic conditions";²⁰ during the 1920s and 1930s their aspirations were further thwarted by intensified segregation (which denied them access to white society) and continued exclusion from access to political power in the form of the vote. As Wade has argued, the similarity between the doctor's response to his work and the response of the black miners to theirs is an effective way of showing that politically they are in the same boat.²¹

Although Xuma still feels confused after the twin encounters - Paddy and Di, and Dr Mini - ("Xuma tried to think clearly and to arrange his thoughts in word-patterns, but failed" - MB p78), these experiences lead him to Leah's house which he previously had avoided because of his love for Eliza. Here he is welcomed by Ma Plank. Although Ma Plank comments on the fact that Xuma has changed, that the "city has taught (him) to speak", thus, that he is more

experienced than when he first arrived ("You were very silent when you first came" - MB p79) she still calls him a fool for asserting his values, for asking whether Leah warns her neighbours of the police raids. Towards Eliza he asserts that he now has seen and understands the things for which she longs. They consummate their relationship (which functions as "proof" of Xuma's new knowledge) but the next morning Eliza again rejects him. In response to her dramatic change of mood and mind he verbally expresses an acceptance of what he had previously rejected: not only does he now understand what Eliza wants, but he is prepared to "save money" (MB p89) so as to attempt to acquire the things she wants. The situation for Xuma is obviously desperate and this can be read as a desperate bid for Eliza's love, not an indication that he has changed his view that Eliza's expectations are unrealistic. Of importance, though, is that Xuma's understanding of the relationship between black and white and the difference in their material situations has changed. In contrast to the value of acceptance (of the material dispensation of "life") donated to Sjakkie, Xuma's experiences have shown that the distribution of wealth in society is not a "natural" phenomenon which should be passively accepted. That Xuma, at this stage of his apprenticeship, does not really understand (indicated by his promise to "save money") the true nature of this phenomenon, is in keeping with the opposition of "seeming" and "being" in the narrative. Xuma is still facing "the city" as opponent, not the exploitative economic structures of a capitalist society.

4.2.6. Conclusion to Xuma's first, second and third trials

Xuma returns with Maisy to Leah's house to warn her that it is Dladia who is betraying her to the police. He watches from Leah's house as Eliza makes her way home down the street. To his surprise, and the reader's, Eliza has undergone another change and is fully prepared to engage in a relationship with Xuma. In response to Eliza's assertion

that she is "his woman" (MB p119), Xuma repeats what he had promised her before - that he is prepared to work hard so that they perhaps can acquire the things of white people, but stresses that *he* won't be able to become what she longs for, he cannot speak in "the white man's language" (MB p120) and read books. The power of love, however, is able to enhance Xuma's manly qualities: Xuma now speaks like a "victorious male" (MB p120). The transformational power of love is further emphasised by Leah as the character-focalliser:

She could see that Xuma was happy. And Eliza, too, was happy. And she was different. Leah could see that. There was a new *softness* in her eyes, it made her more beautiful. And the *hardness* was gone from her mouth. And she *looked weaker*. Her body was not so tight and upright.

...Leah nodded to herself. It is ever so with lovers. A woman finds a man and the world is a new place. And the *fighting stiffness* that was ever in her body, goes. And the hardness in her head stops and she does not think any more with her head but feels with her heart. Yes, it is ever so. And with a man it is so too. His shoulders *square* and a smile is not far from his lips and there is a *new certainty* in him. Yes, it has ever been so and it will ever be so when a man and a woman love. (my emphasis) (MB p123)

The episode ends with Xuma and Eliza returning to the place to which she had taken him on their first meeting. Again Xuma sees the "dark, shadowy figures towering up to the sky" (MB p128) and reflects on the change he has undergone:

Xuma remembered the first time he had been on that spot with her. He had tried to kiss her then but she had fought him. It seemed such a long time ago. Then he knew nothing of the mines. Now he was a *boss boy* and *knew very much*. Almost everything. (my emphasis) (MB p128)

Thus it would seem that Xuma has reached a significant point in his development on two fronts: Eliza's initial resistance to him has disappeared and he seemingly has mastered the situation at work. However, Xuma's knowledge of himself on the labour front is still as "a boy" (even though "a boss" in relation to the other black workers), therefore still an understanding of himself and his role and place in society as seen through the eyes of white hegemony.

In the process of Xuma's development a situation of equilibrium is briefly attained by the domestic bliss which he and Eliza now enter. This period with Eliza is marked by the phrases and ideas of the most conventional of love stories. They talk about previous lovers, Eliza realises the conventional expectations of women in love relationships ("She was leaning on him. She had prepared food for him. She had made his ... look nice. That was how a woman behaved when she lo. ... MB p131); and the outside world is depicted as ... only the silence and the peace were real. Only the ... them sitting there, staring into the fire ... Only love was real, and two people in love" - MB p132). Furthermore, it would seem as if Xuma has now left his status as a "child" and a "baby" behind and is constituted fully as "a man" in relation to life in the city:

At other times they would go to Leah's after food and they would talk and help with the selling...And Leah always said selling meant money, and money meant power.

And then again at other times they would join the crowd and dance with the crowd on street corners. For that, too, was good when they did it together. Life was good and love was a wonderful thing. (my emphasis) (MB p139)

Of importance is that Xuma, in the process of becoming a fully fledged city dweller, apparently has relinquished his

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