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THE MOVEMENT OF TRANSITION: TRENDS IN THE POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICAN NOVELS OF ENGLISH EXPRESSION

Nathan Osita Ezeliora

Being a Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Johannesburg, 2007.

Abstract

The period of South Africa's political transition in the late 1980s and 1990s also saw a number of interesting developments in the field of cultural production, especially within the province of literature. A number of literary scholars, critics of all realms, writers, some enthusiasts and adventurers all showed interest in the direction of literature after the repressive years of apartheid. The dominant academic question at the time centred on the possible transition in the thematic and formalistic dimension of the literature of the new South Africa. Scholars and cultural commentators that include Es'kia Mphahlele, Njabulo Ndebele, Albie Sachs, Guy Butler, Elleke Boehmer, Michael Chapman, Mbulelo Mzamane, Andries Walter Oliphant, amongst others, all contributed immensely in the debates that attempted to define the possible direction of the literature after apartheid. This research is concerned with the developments in the Post-Apartheid South African Novels of English expression. Its focus is on how temporal mobility has impacted on cultural production especially as witnessed in the many transformations in the field of literature, particularly the novel as a genre. Using the tropes of memory, violence, and otherness, it examines the novels of writers as varying as André Brink, J.M. Coetzee, Zakes Mda, Zoë Wicomb, and Jo-Anne Richards. At the level of form, the fantastical and the confessional modes of narration are discussed as significant manifestations of the post-apartheid narratives using the novels of André Brink and Jo-Anne Richards respectively. It suggests that, among other things, the post-apartheid novels of English expression are marked by some interesting thematic blocs that include the fascination with land, the artistic display of remorse through the confessional mode, the rekindling of memory and its representation in narrative, the peculiar interest in violence and alterity, the continuing reportage of the urban space and the implications of urbanity on the ordinary citizenry, the recourse to gangsterism, miscegenation and the dilemma of a humankind confined to the psychological spaces of the interstices. Efforts were made in this research to avoid the 'intellectual apartheid' often associated with the hermeneutic engagements of the literati previously devoted to South Africa's literary scholarship. It is for this reason that a more elaborate introductory chapter highlights aspects of the contributions of novelists and scholars that include Nadine Gordimer, Mongane Wally Serote, Lewis Nkosi, Njabulo Ndebele, and the 'emergent' ones such as Phaswane Mpe, K. Sello Duiker, Pamela Jooste, among others. An important dimension to this study is that it situates the Post-Apartheid narratives not only within relevant historical contexts,

but also develops its argument by drawing immensely from the intellectual culture dominant in South Africa *before*, *during*, and *after* the notorious era of racial separatism. It concludes on the suggestive note that South African writers and literary scholars should attempt to demonstrate a more rigorous interest in locating the creative points of convergence between the aesthetic and social ideals.

KEYWORDS: Post-Apartheid Narratives, Postcolonial African Literature, English Studies, Memory, Violence, Otherness/Alterity, Magic Realism, Confessional Fiction.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.

……

Nathan Osita Ezeliora

July 2007.

Dedication

To the memory of my late

Father: Jonathan Emejulu Ezeliora;
Mother: Elizabeth Nwakegbe Ezeliora (nee: Udeagwu);
Sister: Patience Nneka Okafor (nee: Ezeliora);
Maternal uncle: Clement Udeagwu,

&
for the eternal preservation
of the *Ọfọ na ọtọnsị*.

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Preface and Acknowledgements

This study is a partial outcome of my long ruminations on *what* and *how* to approach the teaching of 'The Post-Apartheid Novels of English Expression' as a course in literature departments in our tertiary institutions. While it does not present a totalising pattern of reading, its interest is to draw attention to, and elaborate on some broader trends that could accommodate other modes of interpretation of the narratives of the 'new' South Africa. While locating the modes within the confines of what is gradually emerging as postcolonial narratology, I have taken into consideration the fact of the nation's history and how it impacts on the literature of the new era. While the peculiar issues of race, class, ethnicity, and gender will always appear in discussions of South Africa, I have followed the thematic thrusts closely since issues of violence, systematic social deprivation in form of denial of quality education, land dispossession—among others—will always resurface in the discourse of the liberal order. The new narratives are examined from the perspectives of memory, violence, and representation; the confessional genre and the impact of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) during the liberal order; the subject of the 'Other' and the politics of gender; as well as the *Plaasroman* tradition and the problem of land dispossession. The troublesome territories of realism, the fantastical, and post-modernism finally collide to form a major narrative mode deployed by a number of the writers.

My sojourn into South African literary scholarship started earlier than the period that is often situated with 'the Mandela Republic'. As a student in secondary school, way back in the 1980s, I was introduced to South African letters like most students preparing for the General Certificate of Education, Ordinary Level, (G.C.E: 'O' Level) conducted by the West African Examinations Council. Of the many writers that 'brought' me down to the villages, cities, minefields, as well as to the socio-economic and political life of South Africa, Peter Abrahams, Es'kia Mphahlele, Lewis Nkosi, Denis Brutus, Oswald Mtshali, and Mongane Serote served as major cultural ambassadors. They successfully presented the oddity of racial separatism to most West Africans. The works of many of these writers also resonated in the literature classes during my Higher School Certificate years (G.C.E. 'Advanced Level') at the Federal School of Arts and Science, Ogoja, Nigeria.

These were earlier encounters that made indelible impressions on me, and were finally entrenched in my consciousness during my undergraduate and postgraduate years in the English department of the University of Lagos. Writers such as Njabulo Ndebele, Keorapetse Kgositsile, André Brink, Nadine Gordimer, D.M. Zwelonke, Can Themba, Steve Biko, among others, were added to the list. It was little or no surprise that at the Honour's level, I submitted a Long Essay on the theatre of Athol Fugard, John Kani and Winston Ntshona in a study that also explored selected plays of Gibson Kente, Nthuli Shezi, and the Workshop '71 theatre group. Sad enough, due to the racial politics in South Africa at the time, very little was known in most West African countries about white South African writers. Although my zeal at the time was evident in my tireless attempts to acquire materials on South African literature, hardly did it occur to me that I was already preparing myself for a much more rigorous engagement with developments in South African letters; even then, hardly did it occur to me that South Africa was on a very serious march towards political irredentism and the kind of freedom that would eventually bring me to have a first-hand encounter with life in the would-be 'nation' at a period of democratic non-racialism.

The journey has been a long, tortuous, but very fruitful one. In the course of developing this study, I had picked and read some forty-five or more novels of English expression given my implicit belief that the best way to embrace the post-apartheid imaginary is to explore the emergent narratives directly and closely, rather than simply rely on panoramic proclamations made by 'authorities' and journalists who hardly go beyond the blurbs on the back pages of novels. My initial dilemma was on how to present the narratives of the 'new' South Africa in its authentic 'Rainbow-ness'. Novels by black, white, Indian and 'Coloured' South Africans were selected in the process. In addition, there was the issue of gender sensitivity, and even within specific racial groups, there was also the question of how to select novels to cover the experiences of the many peoples that now go beyond autochthonous groups. In other words, there was need to now cover the narratives of naturalised South Africans from many regions of the world. Luckily for me, a number of the writers address similar issues, some others recycle old stories, some experiment with forms, and yet others report life as it is lived in the new liberal order. I had to 'lean' on some very useful suggestions made by a number of faculty members in the process. Notwithstanding my efforts, I benefited immensely from the many readers of my work; from critics at seminars and conferences where I presented aspects of my

research; from editors and assessors of a number of journals and books who had the privilege of reading sections of my work; from acquaintances who probably did not spend more than forty-five minutes with me in a discussion of the post-apartheid narratives; from some of my colleagues and former students who found time to read some of the chapters, as well as friends and researchers from across disciplines who attended some of my presentations. Support came, indeed, from several quarters and in different forms.

I am particularly grateful to the Council and Management of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, for the immeasurable support that I enjoyed throughout my stay in South Africa. Apart from offering me admission to pursue the doctoral research in the first place, the University provided me support in forms of the Postgraduate Merit Awards as well as a number of University Council's Merit Scholarships. The University also provided me with some support in sponsoring my presentation of the chapter on J.M. Coetzee's post-apartheid novels at the University of Karlstad, Sweden, in June 2004. The Harold and Doris Tothill Prestige Bequest Scholarship came in handy to save me at very troublesome moments, and still stood by me through the period of my research. In addition, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation not only provided very generous financial support in form of a prestigious scholarship award, but also gave me an opportunity to present the two chapters on Andre Brink and Zoë Wicomb in an international conference on Postcoloniality that held in Södertörn University in Stockholm, Sweden, in 2006. The English Department and the Faculty of Culture and Communications of the University of Karlstad, Sweden, not only provided me a platform to present one of the chapters, but also gave me an opportunity to address the entire Faculty members in a 'Talk' entitled 'Talking Africa: Nigeria and South Africa in Focus', just as the English Department and Södertörn University in Stockholm provided me a 'home' and comfort that I never envisaged during my presentations at the conference.

Of the individuals whose suggestions were helpful at one time or the other, especially at the proposal level, Professors David Attwell (formerly of Wits University), James Ogude, and Isabel Hofmeyr, as well as Dr Dan Ojwang—all of the University of the Witwatersrand—drew my attention to some problem areas that continued to resonate till the last minute of this research. So also were the many postgraduate students who

attended my presentations at Wits University. Beyond Wits University, some other senior academics made some useful suggestions as editors of books and/or journals where aspects of this study appeared, or about to appear. Professor Mbulelo Mzamane's comments on aspects of the introduction energised me very much, and the essay 'The Novels of Phaswane Mpe and K. Sello Duiker' originally extracted and developed from the introductory chapter was later to appear in Prof. Mzamane's edited *Words Gone Two Soon* (Pretoria: Umgangatho, 2005: 164-175); Kerstin Shands' meticulous reading of an extract from the chapter on André Brink taught me some interesting lesson on 'gender sensitivity', and I am highly appreciative to Prof. Shands' committee for considering one of my presentations for publication from the over 170 papers presented at the conference in Sweden.

I owe immense gratitude to many of my teachers at the University of Lagos, and my mentors at Olabisi Onabanjo (formerly: Ogun State U.) University, Nigeria. In particular, Professors Theo Vincent, F.B.O. Akporobaro, T. Akachi Ezeigbo, Sam Uzochukwu (Lagos), Oyin Ogunba, and 'Lekan Oyegoke (Ogun University) were all instrumental to my leaving Nigeria to pursue my research in South Africa. Their letters, messages, and encouragement secured me a number of scholarships while at Wits University. Dr Z.A. Adejumo (formerly of the University of Lagos) is acknowledged, here, not only for taking me through South African protest theatre, but also for his several enquiries about my progress. The Vice-Chancellor of Olabisi Onabanjo University, Prof. Afolabi Soyode, prepared my mind in an 'informal orientation' during my chat with him on what to expect in the "quite urbane University of the Witwatersrand". Profs Merle Williams, Michael Titlestead (English Department), Gerriet Olivier and Tawana Kupe (former and current Deans, Humanities) of Wits University also came to my rescue during difficult periods during my study.

A brief chat with Prof. Simon Gikandi during his visit to the department at Wits University alerted me on the manifestations of 'Petrus' in several South African narratives, as well as the recycling that has come to mark some of the post-apartheid novels; while a chance correspondence with Prof. Ernest N. Emenyonu whom I have never had the privilege of meeting in person, taught me that it is possible to write as many as fourteen research papers during the course of one's doctoral programme. Prof. Richard Terdiman was to send me an impressive collection of his essays on 'Memory'

and the subject of the 'Other' all the way from the University of California at Santa Cruz. His interest in my work even from such a distance, his many letters of encouragement and, especially, his emails that enquire about "my progress" were lessons for me on how to become a true scholar. My friends and colleagues at the Olabisi Onabanjo University are also hereby appreciated for their support in more ways than could be listed here. Drs Oyeniyi Okunoye (now of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife), and Patrick Oloko (University of Lagos) taught me the meaning of friendship; Drs 'Lekan Dairo, Samson Dare, and Tunde Onadeko showed immense encouragement during my absence from the department. So also are Olugbenga Ogunbote, Victor Olamigoke, Tony Nwazuoke, Udu Yakubu, Mrs Grace Ibanga and Toyin Aguoru. Sad though, I lost some friends and former colleagues during my absence: my former teacher and friend, Prof. Emmanuel A. Babalola of the University of Lagos, as well as my colleagues in the English Department of Olabisi Onabanjo University: 'Wale Oyedele and 'Seun Oyedola who left too soon are remembered.

In Johannesburg, Abiye and Akhere Opuamah stood by me throughout my stay. I enjoyed the support of many friends that include a number of doctoral research students: Emeka Egbeonu, Emeka Amaechi, Ben Simon Okolo, Peter Nwafor; and Victor Oforah. Also: Senayon Olaoluwa and Jendele Hungbo who were my former students and in many ways now my teachers, as well as Mekusi Busayo, Esther Aremu, Agatha Ukata, and Ijeoma Uche-Okeke all helped to make South Africa a 'home': in our numerous informal debates on Nigeria's socio-economic life and the dilemma of the continent, we all energised one another on the promise of life. The impressive assembly of West African students that gave me opportunities to deliver 'talks' at their seminars are also acknowledged for the chance at testing some of my private ruminations on Africa's politics and cultural development over the period. It is thanks to the West African Students Union that one of the 'talks' it gave me the opportunity of delivering: 'Ojemba as Metaphor: The West African Students' Union in Context' recently appeared in the London-based Brunel University's journal, *Entertext*, just as the second presentation, 'Progressive Retrogression, Retrogressive Progression: Nigeria's Political Independence and the Tyranny of Kleptocracy' has received impressive reactions after appearing in *Nigerianworld.*

The members of staff of the Witwatersrand University's Library constitute a basic statement in devotion and commitment to service. The sheer energy and politeness with which I was attended to by many of these fine breed of workers is, to say the least, simply unrivalled. I shall always remember Margaret Northey and her team that includes Mapula Mazibuko, Fay Blain, and Peter Duncan of the Africana Library. Margaret is particularly remembered here for her ability to remember the names of nearly every Library user. This gratitude goes also to the staff of both the Wartenweiler and Education Libraries of the University. Mrs Joan Johnson and her team at the Scholarships Office are also fondly appreciated for following the idiom of excellence rather than be distracted by the pettiness of race and xenophobia. But for their neutrality, my applications for funding probably would have been "lost in transit".

It is special thanks to my supervisor, Prof. Bheki Peterson, for his patience in containing me. I will always remember his insistence: "it is not how fast, but how well", especially for studies that promise to make significant statements on narratives of nations and of nationhood. I also remember his numerous pieces of advise, and encouragement that I should try and send out my essays for publication before someone else does it before me. This way, the pioneering efforts will enjoy the credit it deserves. With Prof. Peterson is also the Department (now: Discipline of) African Literature itself. The 'family' helped me in more ways than could be enumerated here. Prof. James Ogude's numerous letters made my movement to South Africa an easy experience; Prof Isabel Hofmeyr even remembered my homefront and supported my efforts at uniting with my family, and Dr. Dan Ojwang was faced with the burden of writing numerous reports in my support at the end of my programme. Merle Govind, the department's secretary, was always willing to listen to my complaints. Above all, however, the Department of African Literature at Wits University gave me a rare opportunity of testing aspects of my research within classroom situations. The experience of teaching in a multi-racial setting enriched me immensely. My teaching of Oral Literature and aspects of Caribbean letters, as well as my discussions of writers as varying as Chinua Achebe, H.I. E. Dhlomo, Sol Plaatje, Es'kia Mphahlele, Njabulo Ndebele, A.C. Jordan, Zakes Mda, Sembene Ousmane, Ngugi wa Thiongo, Gibson Kente etc, with the undergraduate students constitute part of my learning process. In this respect, teaching became finally, for me, not just an experience in self-abandonment: it became a compassionate engagement in which the teacher must necessarily demonstrate empathy with younger generations of students who do not

necessarily comprehend the politics of eugenics that tend to confront them not just as a historical fact, but also as a quotidian reality.

The support of my kith and kin, wherever they are based, is also acknowledged. Anthony Okafor (Ezenwagu), the Ubaneches (Emmanuel and Titus), S.N. Okeke (Ochendo Amichi), Emmanuel Okoli (Oba), Chukwudi Anyaegbu (Chisco), and my parents-in-law—the Ibegbulems—and, especially Tonia, are all highly appreciated. The Umu-Nri families of Amichi and Neni from whom I found parentage; the Ezelioras, especially my younger brothers—Emeka, Ebele, and Chidi—and their immediate families have been simply wonderful. My little sister, Obiageli, and her new family were relentless in their weekly phone-calls as they enquire about my safety in a 'far-away-land'. To Jane: I can only say thanks forever for having so patiently sacrificed your right to being cuddled. And to God: Many more thanks for not only seeing me through, but especially for blessing Jane and I with Chinualum who arrived just as this study was being concluded. To the many whose names do not appear here, especially the 'anonymous donor', I sincerely apologize. You remain in my spirit, even as I look forward to documenting your assistance in the next opportunity I might have.

I take responsibility for the omissions, typos, and expectations that this study does not fulfil, especially to the many researchers who are currently looking forward to reading about developments in South African literature after apartheid. There is an appendix of the new novels of English expression at the end of the study. I believe that it will be of assistance to researchers and other readers who are interested in the narratives of the 'new' South Africa. It is my hope that some of the failures that could be suggested by earlier readers of my study will be attended to before the work finally gets published in book form within the next few years.

Nathan Osita Ezeliora,
Johannesburg, July 2007.

Chapter One

The Movement of Transition: Trends in the Post-Apartheid South African Novels of English Expression: Introduction.[1]

> There is no simple set of ready-made answers.
>
> (Andries Walter Oliphant, 1991: 32)

> Many Literatures emerge into self-awareness during political and cultural struggles and, indeed, are created almost as a by-product of the commitment of writers to national, political, religious and other causes, by their quarrels with such causes, and their refusal to be swallowed by them.
>
> (Guy Butler, 1990:35)

> South African Literature since 1990 has taken upon itself the task of articulating (this) larger predicament. Its fields are the experiential, ethical, and political ambiguities of transition: the tension between memory and amnesia. It emphasizes the imperative of breaking silences necessitated by long years of struggle, the refashioning of identities caught between stasis and change, and the role of culture – or representation — in limiting or enabling new forms of understanding.
>
> (Attwell & Harlow, 2000:3)

The period of South Africa's political transition in the late 1980s and 1990s also saw a number of interesting developments in the field of cultural production, especially within the province of literature. A number of literary scholars, critics of all realms, writers,

[1] Prof. Oyin Ogunba is hereby acknowledged for the prefix to this research title derived from one of his books, *The Movement of Transition: A Study of the Plays of Wole Soyinka.* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1975).

some enthusiasts and adventurers all showed interest in the direction of literature after the repressive years of apartheid. The dominant academic question at the time centred on the possible transition in the thematic and formalistic dimension of the literature of the new South Africa. Scholars and cultural commentators that include Es'kia Mphahlele, Njabulo Ndebele, Albie Sachs, Guy Butler, Elleke Boehmer, Mbulelo Mzamane, Andries Walter Oliphant, amongst others, all contributed immensely in the debates that attempted to define the possible direction of the literature after apartheid. The mission of this study, then, is to investigate the developments in prose fictional writing from South Africa since the collapse of official apartheid and the enthronement of democratic non-racialism in 1994. Its focus is on how temporal mobility has impacted on cultural production especially as witnessed in the many transformations in the field of literature, particularly the novel of English expression.

The nature of these transitions will be explored across the dominant trends that are beginning to define the narratives of the 'new' South Africa. In this instance, the questions of remembering, forgetting and the dilemmas of everyday life, narratives of urbanity and alterity, the pastoral, crime, and rise in violence, the deployment of the magical narrative mode, the tendency toward the confessional form etc, are some of the recurrent concerns and forms that continue to resonate in the new narratives. The old themes of racism and racial violence appear to be gradually giving way to some of these new developments. The interest in racism, however, recurs indirectly in such sensitive issues as land ownership and land re/distribution. This is often seen in narratives that portray the assassination of several farm owners and farm workers during the nation's transition to majority rule. Coetzee's ***Disgrace,*** Brink's ***Imaginings of Sand***, Mda's ***Ways of Dying***, and Richard's ***The Innocence of Roast Chicken*** are all, by little or more, thematically integrated by their shared depiction of forms of violence emanating from land re/possession, vengeance, and politically motivated massacres amongst others.

Examined here, amongst others, are J.M. Coetzee's ***Boyhood*** (1997) and ***Disgrace*** (1999), André Brink's ***Imaginings of Sand*** (1996), and ***Devil's Valley*** (1998), Jo-Anne Richard's ***The Innocence of Roast Chicken*** (1996) and ***Touching the Lighthouse***

(1997), Zakes Mda's ***Ways of Dying*** (1995), ***She Plays with the Darkness*** (1995), ***Heart of Redness*** (2000), and ***The Madonna of Excelsior*** (2002), and Zoë Wicomb's ***David's Story*** (2000). This interest is sustained by my persuasion that many South African writers have always responded to the socio-historical and political realities of the country. In apartheid South Africa, for instance, a number of the novels from this part of the world remain very representational of the massive dehumanisation and state-sponsored violence— physical, mental and systematic— on a people whose past seems to provide only a history of repression and dispossession on the one hand, and on the other, their doggedness, resilience and struggle for political and socio-psychological liberation. Although many of the writers still narrate the violence of the *ancien regime*, it is salutary that many of the events are often represented in historical terms.[2]

The persistence of the writers in drawing from *history* makes it necessary for one to return to *memory* and *discourse*. What, for instance, is the nature of the historical memory projected in the new fiction? Is the recourse to the historical the reason for the *confessional*? What, in fact, is confessional narrative, and why is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission relevant in the literary scholarship of post-apartheid South Africa? Is there any truth in the claims that white South African writing is *experimental* while black South African writing is *reportorial*? Are all white writers experimental while all black writers apply the documentary narrative mode? What is the basis of these assumptions? What about the politics of *Otherness*? How has the writer in the 'new' South Africa responded to the crisis of *difference*? Are their women writers in the new nation? How are women represented in the new narratives? These are some of the questions that I attempt to answer in the chapters that follow.

[2] I have elected to look at the new novels from South Africa from a broad spectrum partly to avoid the 'intellectual apartheid' inherent in such categorizations as 'white', or 'black' South African writing. In making this choice, I am very much persuaded by Michael Chapman's observation that "literary creativity, including the activity of criticism, is (regarded as) a social activity concerned with justice". (See M. Chapman, *Southern African Literatures* (1996:4). No writer worthy of the name in South Africa can claim ignorance of the appalling humanistic issues associated with separatism and the brutality of the agencies entrusted with maintaining its triumph. Each work will, therefore, be treated on its own merit based on the writer's attitude to the human predicament. The point must be made, however, that so far novel-writing in the new South Africa is predominantly the engagement of the whites.

Female characterization is, for instance, central for all the writers, and presents a very unique formalistic trope in understanding Mda's ***Madonna*** and ***Ways of Dying***, Richard's ***The Innocence***, Wicomb's ***David's Story***, Coetzee's ***Disgrace*** and Brink's ***Imaginings***. Forms of violations as a result of some historical injustices in the areas of land distribution and re/possession are seen in narratives as diverse as Coetzee's ***Disgrace*** and ***Boyhood***, Brink's ***Imaginings of Sand*** and ***Devil's Valley***, Wicomb's ***David's Story***, Mda's ***The Heart of Darkness***, etc. In addition, the postcolonial question of Otherness resonates in nearly all the narratives, especially in works like ***David's Story***, Brink's ***Devil's Valley*** and ***The Other Side of Silence***, Coetzee's ***Disgrace***, and so on. In terms of forms of the narrative representation, the fantastical or magical realistic, as well as the confessional modes seem to fascinate a number of the black and white writers.

Although one could locate article-size essays that attempt to explicate some of the novels scattered in literary journals, it has not been possible to find a single, sustained, work that focuses on the post-apartheid South African novels. Even then, some of the essays are adumbrated readings, summaries and general reviews of some of the novels. It is my hope that a rigorous and focused approach to textual explication of the novels will lead to a better understanding of the recently published writing.

In addition, some of the writers whose works are examined in this study such as Zakes Mda, Jo-Anne Richards and Zoë Wicomb are relatively new. But they have been quite progressive and impressive in their contribution to the novelistic genre. In deed, there is a possibility that their work may provide some markers for the reading of South African Literature in the 21st century. In locating narrative forms and thematic orientations, therefore, I have attempted to read the novels through some of the dominant tropes that fascinate novelists of post-apartheid South Africa from the points of view of *memory and history*, *violence, metaphor and alterity, fantasy and magic, gender and confession,* as well as through a recognition of *the self and the other*.

A general overview of the post-apartheid imaginary is highlighted through aspects of the dominant discourses such as the establishment of the South African social formation, the

debates on the future of South African literature after apartheid, South African literary scholarship and the figuration of the past, the politics of writing literary history in South Africa, as well as issues of narrative forms, especially at the levels of realism, postmodernism, and the fantastical forms.

I.

Background

The era of South Africa's first democratic dispensation in 1994 was, to put it mildly, politically chaotic. The general unrest by the oppressed black majority and the anxiety of the ruling white minority had created a situation of massive repression and extreme brutality by the security agencies of the government. There was violence and counter-violence in all quarters, and with the declaration of the state of emergency in 1985, the government literally 'murdered sleep' since, by implication, the security units were practically given unlimited powers to arrest, detain, torture and, possibly, kill anybody "seen" to constitute a threat to the regime[3]. The emergency period produced immense works of fiction that continued with the theme of violence and brutality that had so much preoccupied South African writing since the first decade of the 20th century and through the institutionalisation of apartheid in 1948 by the National Party. Two writers that easily come to mind during the emergency period of the 1980s are Mongane Serote and Nadine Gordimer. In what reads like a symbolic cultural memento for the liberation struggle of the B.C.M[4], for instance, Mongane Wally Serote attempts to commemorate and eulogize the heroic efforts of the men, women and students who suffered innumerable and immeasurable forms of brutality and oppression in the hands of the State's security agencies in ***To Every Birth its Blood***. Clearly, the *agit-prop* novel is constructed upon the complex tapestries of memory and violence. It is a novel of memory because of the writer's fascination with, and explicit inclination to situate the temporal settings of his "stories" in the historical consciousness of the black characters who, in their struggle to

[3] André Brink paints a moving picture of the dilemma of the artist in South Africa during the years of emergency in his *Mapmakers: Writing in a State of Siege.* (London: Faber & Faber, 1983): See pp. 71-95; 172-195.

[4] Serote was a prominent member of the Black Consciousness Movement (B.C.M.).

confront the inhumane dispossession of their land by the white settler community, also remember that their ancestors had fought in similar vein since the arrival of the Europeans in Africa. Serote's deployment of Tsi Molepe, a journalist who becomes frustrated – like the whole lot of characters who populate the world of the text – and who, like the rest, takes to alcoholism in the face of extreme police brutality, is a reminder of a conscious effort to chronicle the topography, actions, events and mentality of the representative human figures in the universe of this highly political text. In this singular effort at aesthetic reconstruction of multi-racial relations, however, Serote also succeeds in preserving for posterity a memory of the culture of struggle and the resilience of the people in the face of systematic repression by the apartheid government.

Serote's evocation of historical antecedents to illuminate a xenophobic tradition and culture of wickedness very much in line with Europe's relationship with the so-called third world nations becomes a self-evident truth in the crisis-ridden South Africa, especially of the late 1970s to the Emergency years of the 1980s. Africa, he seems to be saying, may not have been totally innocent in the human trafficking that decimated the population of her ebullient manpower for several centuries. The narrator recalls, for instance, 'how Africa once conspired and gave birth to a slave trade. And the sea too aided the insane adventurer' (***To Every Birth***, 84). But it is also true that the Europeans who finally settled down in Africa came from a civilization that achieved great technological feats but lacked humane essence; a civilization that embraces avarice but abhors compassion; indeed, a culture that would apply every objectionable form of brutality in the masturbatory ego of dramatizing its victory. Serote writes of "them" (***To Every Birth***, 96), "the security police", and ultimately locates the *infant terrible* of their closest generic lineage in "Hitler"(***To Every Birth****,* 18-19).

Nadine Gordimer, too, inscribed several aspects of the separatists' inhumanities in a number of her novels and short stories. Apparently one of the most established voices in the contemporary South African literary garden, Gordimer had capped her imaginative profile when she won the prestigious and internationally venerated Nobel Prize for Literature in 1991. Her preoccupations have not been so much the representational

statements of remand on the brutality of the divisive system as it is the anger, distrust and hatred, which that system was capable of generating amongst trusted friends of yester-years. In several of her writings – novellas, novels and critical essays – Gordimer has tried to explore the predicaments of the selfless in a society dangerously polarized by racial absolutism. If ***The Late Bourgeois World*** set in the emergency period of the 1960s addressed this sense of dilemma, ***July's People*** (1981) equally examines another moment of emergency, a period that falls within what Gordimer has described as the 'interregnum'[5]. By the end of the 1970s, South Africa had experienced immense politically motivated violence: the Soweto uprising of 1976 remains a monumental mass response against the State. But the revolt did not stop the systematic and mysterious elimination of all perceived enemies by the government. In the prophetic novel of apocalypse, ***July's People,*** Gordimer transposes the effect of violence on the innocent who becomes criminalized with the charge of his racial belonging. Bamford Smales is a white South African. He is a successful architect, married to an equally successful white woman, Maureen, and the family is blessed with three children. For fifteen years, the Smales played the ideal 'master' to the humble African 'messenger'**,** who appears to be happy in the service of this 'enormously generous' white family. But the Africa of the 1970s and '80s was no longer the Africa of the slave trade era: the messenger of yester-years has risen in the re-awakening for self-determination, and the Smales are placed within a spatio-temporal setting in which their survival would for a while be dependent on their former servant. The emergency novels are often marked by this pattern of displacement, anxiety, fear, torture, mass revolt, police brutality, and deaths arising from hate crimes.[6]

[5] In 'Living in the Interregnum', one of her famous and very inspiring essays, Gordimer had insisted on the Universalist ideal of a common humanity. In the context of South Africa and in the face of the confusion which, in the words of the literary philosopher, Gramsci, "the old is dying while the new refuses to be born", Gordimer highlights the peculiar predicament of the white South African writer who "has become highly conscious of a dependency on distorted vision induced since childhood", and accordingly suggests that "the way to begin entering history out of a dying white regime is through set backs, encouragements and rebuffs from others, and frequent disappointments in oneself. A necessary learning process…." (in C. Malan (Ed), *Race and Literature*, 221).

[6] Some of the memorable novels of the Emergency years of the 1980s are Serote's *To Every Birth*, Gordimer's *July's People* and *A Sport of Nature,* Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Age of Iron,* Brink's *States of Emergency*, etc.

It is important to observe, here, that previous scholarships on South African literary development have consistently drawn attention to the limitations derived from South Africa's racial politics. Where the now out-dated Manfred Nathan's ***South African Literature*** (1925) provides us with a historical sense in the development of literature on the basis of significant tensions at the time, it focused on a South Africa that prided itself on divisiveness. Compelling as it was in the author's show of loyalty to writers who deployed "English" and "Dutch" (Nathan, 1925: 13), it was possible for Nathan to note in 1925 that "South Africa, unfortunately for itself, has been the scene of much racial strife", with the implication that "Much of the literature which it has produced has been polemical and partisan" (Nathan, 16-17). In spite of this earlier promise at developing a literary history of South Africa, it took more than another half-a-century to feel the implications of such racial balkanisation in the literary-cultural industry. Stephen Gray apologizes, for instance, for his 'introduction' to a South African literature that "comes from a divided land": a description of the separatist legacies of apartheid. It is in this system, Gray had written, that "the apartheid state would drive an author like Mphahlele abroad and ban his work at home for two decades and would erect barriers between black and white, between English-speaker and Afrikaner, between resident writer and exile" (Gray, 1979:1-2). But while it was possible in 1979 to write of "two distinct literatures" of English expression in South Africa, the transformations that followed the 'emergencies' of the 1980s and, especially, the 1990s have been greeted with a novelistic tradition that is consistently gaining currency globally, as well as clearly indicating the direction of post-1994 South African literature. It is interesting that a number of South African scholars and the literary academic community have continued to offer rudimentary statements on the emerging paradigms of South African literature after apartheid. Special issues of some leading journals such as ***Modern Fiction Studies***, ***Poetics Today***, ***Research in African Literatures***, have all done editions that focus on South African literature after apartheid[7].

[7] As of the time of writing this chapter, the University of Lagos-based *New Black Orpheus* was doing a special edition on South African literature after apartheid.

By 1990, official apartheid had collapsed. Most of the infamous apartheid legislations including the 'pass' and 'permit' laws were jettisoned. The F.W. de Klerk's administration had by the 2nd day of February released most prisoners whose 'crime(s)' were considered political, including Nelson Mandela, the most 'mythical' of the apartheid regimes' prisoners. With the release of political 'offenders' came also the unbanning of the many emancipational unions that reappeared as political parties, especially the Oliver Tambo-led ANC, the PAC, the SACP and the IFP.[8] The three years that followed de Klerk's epochal speech witnessed the transition process that led to South Africa's first general elections in April 1994 in which Nelson Mandela emerged the first president of a democratic South Africa. But the process of transition itself was marked by deadly violence all over the nation, and some perceptive scholars have observed that more deaths were recorded during this time than there were throughout the anti-apartheid struggle. Over 16000 lives were reported to have been lost in the violence that erupted in KwaZulu-Natal and the Reef alone (Taylor & Shaw, 1998:13) during 1990 to 1994. These killings did not stop with the ascendancy to power of the African National Congress in 1994. For, indeed, the killings continued, and as Rupert Taylor notes in his later study, political violence in KwaZulu-Natal has "taken as many as 20,000 lives since 1984" (Taylor, 2002:5). After 1994, many deaths were recorded in the Shobashobane massacre, the Richmond killings, and the Nongoma assassinations. There were also killings arising from struggles for supremacy and route control by taxi drivers all over the country especially in the Cape Province and KwaZulu region. Added to these was the loss of lives arising from the attacks on white farmers as well as the terrorist insurrections against black train passengers and road commuters.

Given this highly charged political atmosphere, the challenges for a nation in transition were enormous. The newly inaugurated ANC administration under Mandela was to embrace a positive, all-inclusive humanist model of honesty and forgiveness for the atrocities of the apartheid days through the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), an inquest panel, led by the venerable Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

[8] All were eventually registered as political parties and, respectively, they stand as African National Congress (ANC), Pan-African Congress (PAC), South African Communist Party (SACP), and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP).

As a way of healing the wounds of the past, amnesty was granted to various offenders who testified to various racial and hate crimes during the apartheid days. Whether or not the TRC succeeded in healing such colossal physical and psychological injuries to the oppressed is another matter. Yet, the implications for the social formation and aesthetic representation are eloquent. These are partly felt in the several governmental policies that aim at bridging the gaps of social inequality as well as in the economic emancipation of the historically disadvantaged peoples of South Africa through the institutionalisation of various poverty alleviation programmes such as the Black Economic Empowerment programme (B.E.E.)

II.

The Post-Apartheid Imaginary and the Subject of Transition

A brief review of the historical context of the South African social formation could help in elucidating my use of the idiom in its post-1994 application in South Africa's socio-cultural politics. A nation of heterogeneous identities best defined by its racial, class, and gender dis/harmony, South Africa is made up of a dominant black population, a significant white population, a continually growing coloured population, and a seemingly content Indian (Asiatic) population. By available data, the territory was originally home to the Khoikhoi and the San— now commonly referred to as the 'Khoisan'—by about 1000 BC. The population took a high turn sometime around the 4th Century AD following a massive inflow of other African migrants. While the territory saw many European adventurers and businessmen, mostly the Portuguese in the 14th and 15th centuries, the white settler population of Dutch extraction—the Boer—further boosted the population with the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck in the mid 17th century AD, precisely in 1652, and much later by the British colonialists in the early 19th century. The discovery of mineral resources in form of diamonds in the 1870s, and gold in the 1880s changed the socio-economic, political and historical map of this Southern-most tip of Africa for several centuries.

Whereas the Khoisan and the indigenous Africans lived together for over a millennia and a half before the arrival of Europeans, the massive dispossession of land and the inhumanity that came with the Europeans in form of slavery and the slave trade, and much later through direct British colonization and imperialism was later to define the future of the territory. While the struggles and intrigues to colonize Africans as well as the many struggles for the collective emancipation of the black people of South Africa summarize the fundamental moments of South Africa's history, certain historical markers remain too visible to be missed. The tendency of some members of the white community to assert a sense of superiority over the black population manifested very early during their arrival in Africa; there was also the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910; the Native Land Act of 1913 and the elections of 1924, among others—all of which point to a conspiracy between the British colonialist and their arch-rival, the Boer. This conspiracy led to the systematic disenfranchisement of Africans, the curious denial of the black population of South African citizenship, the forceful removal of blacks from many parts of the country into areas considered native 'homelands', and so on.

The assumption of office by the National Party-led government in 1948 under the 'apartheid' slogan is another significant marker. In fact, 1948 is often seen as the single most important year in South Africa's 20th century history. The year marked the official enthronement of 'apartness' as a political philosophy—an actualisation of the 1923 ***Native (Urban Areas) Act*** that first formalised urban segregation. 1948 remains a marker that anticipated the 1950s ***Group Areas and Population Registration Acts*****,** a notorious law that enabled the racist regime to compulsively send away 'Blacks' to 'Homelands' and further deprived them the opportunity of gainful employment in the cities. But the legislations of 1948 and beyond were not left unchallenged. It is for this reason that several dates remain equally important in the annals of South Africa's history. For instance, the years 1960, 1964, 1976 and 1994 mark fundamental moments in the life of the 'nation'. The challenge of white racism and repressive legislations led to several revolts that met with inhuman suppression by the apartheid government. While the women of South Africa had matched to the Parliament to register their displeasure over apartheid inhumanities in 1956 without success, the revolt against the system eventuated

in the Sharpeville massacre of 1960 in which 67 Africans were murdered by the state's police operatives. By 1961, South Africa was declared a republic. But it still sidelined the black population, and the struggle to upturn the system further led to the incarceration of a number of black leaders and other opposition leaders to various terms of imprisonment in 1964. The foundation of the South African Students' Organization (SASO) in 1969 was to mark a further interesting chapter toward the conscientization of the black population.

In 1976, school children in the black township of Soweto in the outskirts of Johannesburg took it upon themselves to challenge the quality of the 'Bantustan' education provided them, and kicked against the imposition on them of the 'oppressive' Afrikaans language. Once again, the apartheid government engaged the children with a terrifying state security apparatus, and by the time the revolt was ended, over 700 school children were murdered. The resilience and sense of struggle demonstrated by the Youth became a timely reminder to the state that things would never be the same again. The desperate measures that led to the elimination of many black leaders in the long years between 1948 and the 1980s, including the leader of the Black Consciousness Movement, Steve Biko on September 12, 1977, in a way, partly led to the final capitulation of political power to democratic non-racialism in 1994. The many transformations that took place during the period and the many 'transitions' that manifested in many areas of life, all came to define a 'new' nation in which racial separatism gives way for a new idiom of harmony: 'rainbow nation'. Of the many factors that led to this possibility, it has been suggested (Butler, 2004: 22-28), pressures from the international community, developments in the rest of the African continent, the structural crisis in South Africa itself, the "struggle between Afrikaner regime and a powerful mass protest movement", a negotiation process that "finally found an adroit and brave Afrikaner tactician", F.W. de Klerk, the willingness of the black leaders to 'negotiate' even with the attainment of "sufficient consensus" among others, led to a 'miraculous' transition in which "A multi-party executive was guaranteed for a transitional period; fundamental rights were defined; the potential use of emergency powers was restricted; courts with new review

powers were set up; and new offices, including the Public Protector, the Human Rights Commission, and the Financial and Fiscal Commission were developed" (Butler, 27).

By 1994, there was a non-racial democratic election that significantly defined the new dawn. The assumption of office by Nelson Mandela, the 1996 establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the initial fear of many white settlers who were worried about a possible backlash or vengeance by the previously oppressed blacks; the government's removal of certain remaining draconian legislations such as capital punishment; the new obsession with the principles of gender equality; the establishment of the Black Economic Empowerment (B.E.E) programme; the dilemma and challenges imposed on the new leadership by emergent Health-related pandemics, all come to define the social imaginary of the 'new' South Africa. Added to these developments are the resonance of some troublesome zones that continue to resurface in the daily life of the people such as the land question, the economic dominance of the society by the minority white population, the many sites of power such as the universities, health and research departments that resist transformation along the dictates of the new liberal order.

The ultimate question then arises: how have all these segments of the social imaginary impacted on literary representation? The search for new paradigms must of necessity, therefore, take into account the notions of the transitional politics that brought in non-racial capitalism in the 'new' South Africa. Where scholarship on South Africa's transition is immense, it would be presumptuous to embark on a mission that would take one into every facet of the transitional life of a democratic South Africa. In what has been described as 'Elite Transition', for instance, Patrick Bond has tried to explicate the transitional within the confines of "a popular-nationalist anti-apartheid project to official neoliberalism", by which he implies "adherence to free market economic principles, bolstered by the narrowest practical definition of democracy over an extremely short period of time" (Bond, 2005:1). For N. Chabani Manganyi, the transitional is seen to be concerned with "the most useful ways of thinking about the transformative changes that have taken place since the dawn of democratic rule in South Africa since April 1994"

(Manganyi, 2004:3). "Countries" he suggests, "go into transition as a way of coming to terms with an intolerable and unsustainable past" (Manganyi, 4).

Of the many significant developments of the post-1994 South Africa, the inauguration of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) by the Mandela government is one that quite readily suggests itself as a pivotal marker in the discourse of the emergent narratives. The TRC was not just a speculative rehash of the injustices of the past. It is one that immediately re-states its relevance not only because it ingeniously translates to "the recall of memory", of temporality's restoration of "the imagination", but more importantly because "the stories of the TRC represent a ritualistic lifting of the veil", and confirms the nation's transition "from representation to expression" (Ndebele, 1998: 19-20). The TRC is, more than anything else, significant because "it acted as a psychological bridge between a violent past and a post-authoritarian future" (Manganyi, 41).

In our specific instance, here, 'the transitional' subsumes the entire range of political and socio-historical interests and experiences that have come to define the new South Africa. The transitional, in this case, addresses not only the conceptual and pragmatic nuances that enable a systematic apprehension of South Africa's emergent 'nation' but does so in its total context in which "it has renewed thinking and created fissures in the sclerotic dogmas of academic writing, as old certainties are reworked and new positions articulated" (Howarth & Norval, 1998: 2). One is reminded, for instance, of the negotiations that saw the emergence of the ANC-led government to power in 1994, and the volatile events that ushered in black leadership at the time. In 1991, the then Law and Order Minister, Hernus Kriel, was reported as saying: "We are in a period of change in our country, of political change, of constitutional change. And history has taught us that whenever something like that happens in a country, it is always accompanied by some sort of instability"[9].

What, then, is the nature of this instability with respect to its representation in the novel as a genre? These, I believe, are traceable to the challenges confronting the new liberal

[9] Cited in Rupert Taylor and M. Shaw, 'The Dying Days of Apartheid', in Howarth and Norval (1998: 13).

regime such as the public perceptions of issues of gender and religion, health, land, crime, xenophobia and homophobia, among others. Hogarth and Norval (1998: 3) write of "The relatively recent interest in gender and religious forms of identification". In literature, we find the fiction of not only women writers such as Wicomb, Richards, Jooste, etc, but also even male writers such as André Brink and Zakes Mda address themselves quite seriously to the issues of gender; Rayda Jacobs, Imraam Coovadia, and Ahmed Essop, in a number of their new novels equally show enormous concern for religious issues, especially the place of the Asiatic/Islamic communities in South Africa.

III.

Debates on South African Literature of Transition

The debates that followed at various fora on the possible direction of South African literature after apartheid were fundamentally speculative. Writers and critics had during the years of urgency ruminated on the dilemma of inter-racial relations while pointing at fresher directions for a more harmonious South Africa of the future. The publications Act, a legislation of the apartheid regime had created a repressive and disenabling environment for writers, especially the black artists: apart from censorship, interest in the publication of black writing was partly stalled by the fact that the black population could not afford to establish their own publishing outfit. Publishers were mostly interested in educational materials and the creative imagination naturally suffered a severe setback. Given the unavailability of publishing outfits for Africans and the many censorship laws, the African writer was compelled to tailor his imagination within the acceptable expectations of the Afrikaans publishers as well as the missionaries and some non-sympathetic governmental institutions. The implication for writers could only be imagined and one locates the apparent frustration in a writer like Es'kia Mphahlele who notes that "authors have to censor their own protest or indignation, seek refuge in satire turned on their own people, and at times even depict life the way that pleases the Establishment". This sense of frustration was made worse by the awareness that "one can seldom live on one's own terms" because "the remedy does not lie in the hands of the blacks yet" (Mphahlele, 52-53).

But while the black writers had suffered immensely as a result of apartheid legislations, the reality of censorship, imprisonment, exile, torture, bans and confiscation of published materials was not peculiarly limited to the black artists. André Brink and Breyten Breytenbach, amongst others, experienced the wrath of apartheid policies at individual levels in different ways. The quest for change and the fear for the place of the whites in a future, liberated, South Africa was to engage a number of the writers and critics. It was this concern that inspired Nadine Gordimer who, in 'Living in the interregnum', draws attention to the fact that the image of South Africa presented to the Western world has always been that of the white ego. With the changing tides of the times arising from the increasing political awareness of the oppressed black majority, she suggests that the white communities should embark on a mission of re-educating themselves into accepting their common humanity with that of the so-called racial 'Other'. Significantly, even though the transition to majority rule was yet to be achieved, signals from some influential African leaders point to the practical realism that the whites must necessarily change their mindset from the 'master/servant' relationship of yester-years into becoming more listening members of the emerging post-apartheid South African society. For the white artist, then, there was something of a stalemate arising from a certain sense of insecurity for the present and the future. The way forward, Gordimer had concluded in the essay cited above, would be to unlearn the fixities of the past. As she puts it: "There is no forgetting how we could live if only we could find the way. We must continue to be tormented by the ideal…. Without the will to tramp toward that possibility, no relations of whites, of the West, with the West's formerly subject peoples can ever be free of the past, because the past, for them, was the jungle of Western capitalism, not the light the missionaries thought they brought with them"(Gordimer, 1987: 225).

The years of urgency and the period of transition that followed, therefore, had immense implications both for the social formation as it had for aesthetic representation. The several narratives of transition indicate what Njabulo Ndebele (1998: 19-28) describes as a "triumph" for the nexus between metaphor and memory. What emerges, here, is that the many concrete, realistic, social experiences 'narrated' during the national search for truth and reconciliation finally affirm stories that read like mere propaganda in the works of

most black writers of the apartheid and emergency years. In a way, then, 'narratives' of the TRC were even more horrific and bizarre than the reportorial narratives of the apartheid years.

In Literary circles, many of the debates had anticipated a Post-Emergency South African society. While some were preoccupied with interrogating the very basis of emerging literary traditions through a comparative reading of literatures across the world, others had looked at the whole idea of emerging literatures from the point of view of a literary identity defined by the degree of the foreign influence(s), language and nationality that come to bear in the construction of such new forms.

Of the many conferences that anticipated the possible turn of events in a non-racial South African literature, three particularly come to mind: the 1986 Colloquium of JO-FO on "Emerging Literatures" at the Witwatersrand University, the March 1990 conference on "Literature in Another South Africa" in Australia, and the May, 1994 Colloquium at the University of the Western Cape on 'rethinking South African literary history'. Some positive manifestations of these conferences were the publications of the Reingard Nethersole's edited ***Emerging Literatures*** (Peter Lang, 1990), ***Altered State? Writing and South Africa*** (Dangaroo, 1994), edited by Elleke Boehmer *et al*, and the James Wade's edited ***Rethinking South African Literary History*** (CENSALL, 1996). These conferences, in more ways than could be imagined, set the pace for my investigations into the new writing in South Africa after apartheid. They also establish the peculiar dilemmas in the discourse of South African literary scholarship: the problem of writing a literary history for South Africa, the crisis of language imposed on the nation by colonial and apartheid legacies, the place of women in the 'new' nation, the inadequacies of bifurcating South African literature from the purely racial perspectives of black writing as 'realist' or white writing as '[post]-modernist' and, above all, they point to the immediacy of locating the direction of South African literature after apartheid. This immediacy authorizes an awareness of the major socio-historical developments in post-1994 South Africa.

In “Foreword: Emerging Constellations”, an elaborate introduction to the contributions to the first, Nethersole suggests that “the conflict between past and present, as well as between descent and ascent in terms of emergence, need not be seen as succession but rather as simultaneous exchange of different forces” (Nethersole 1990:xxix). “It is in and through language”, she continues, “where the forces of emergence, literary as well as socially and politically play themselves out”. In an almost similar line of reasoning, the renowned comparatist, Claudio Guillén, observes that “Emerging literatures will be likely to be receptive to the forms and themes of one or two foreign literatures of singular prestige and availability and thus find stimulation for their own growth” (Guillén, 1990:15). Guillén’s discussion of ‘Emerging Literatures’ from the broad spectrum of global literary peculiarities and, particularly the Italian literary tradition point at “allegiances, projects and self-definitions on the part of particular societies and groups” as principles of its newness and national identity. Most importantly, he concludes in his ‘Emerging Literatures: Critical Questionings of a Historical Concept’ that “Literature and its subdivisions as concepts and as bodies of texts can and will be challenged and changed and dislocated – in an open-ended process of disjunction and conjunction – and reconstituted time and again” (Guillén 1990: 20-21).

Commenting on the ‘Emergence of South African Literature in English’, Guy Butler (1990:35-52) draws attention to the resistance nature of all developing literatures. He examines the identity of South African literatures first as peculiarly belonging to the exile tradition, and then goes on to some issues of interest especially the place of all the literatures in the apartheid state, the problematics of language and cultures in South Africa, the case of South African English and its variants, the issue of translation amongst others. He argues that South African Literature – of whatever language – is basically a literature of protest against the ruling regimes since no writer has brazenly propagated the cause of racism in South Africa.

A more illuminating discussion, however, came from Tony Voss who argues: “emergent literature strives to express the hitherto unexpressed…. To talk of a “literature” as emergent is to apply the ideas and terminology of “natural history” to the humanities and

social sciences. In evolutionary theory, an emergent—"a system that cannot be predicted or explained from antecedent conditions"—is to be contrasted with a 'resultant' – a phenomenon predictable from its pre-constituent parts"(Voss, 1990:28,31). The focus of Voss's study, apparently South African literature of emergency especially of the 1980s, indicates that much of the fiction of the period was, thematically speaking, antagonistic to the impulsive tenets of " permanent emergency or 'state of siege'". While I am very much persuaded by Voss's conception of the subject, it needs to be pointed out that many of the essays were too theoretical and generalized without addressing equivalent interest on the specific. It does seem that even in that 'state of siege', the 'prophets' could not conjecture the possibility of alterity both within the South African state and in its socio-cultural discourses. None showed any iota of optimism in the possibility of change in the literary culture of South Africa – whether it is of English expression, Afrikaans or in any of the indigenous African languages – in the nearest future.

On the contrary, Njabulo S. Ndebele in 'Liberation and the Crisis of Culture', a prognostic and incisive statement that looks at the South African dilemma at a moment of transition, proffers some pragmatic codes in the comprehension, cohesion and socio-psychological emancipation of all South Africans – black or white – in a post-apartheid South Africa. "The problem of South African culture", he writes, "is one that results from the interaction of many languages yielding discordant meanings. In this situation we need to look for a creative point of convergence such as would inspire a universal confidence that our strivings towards a viable national culture are based on as inclusive an understanding as possible" (Ndebele, 1994:3). The metaphor couldn't be more appropriate. The crisis so pressing for attention and consequent resolution is not strictly one of language or linguistics. It is one emanating from the structured epistemology of racism and which, over the years, made it impossible for the many peoples of South Africa to understand, let-alone show respect for the values of one another. The elixir for a more harmonious future South Africa, Ndebele would suggest, lies partly in a radical erosion of all the barriers created and sustained by the initiators and beneficiaries of apartheid.

In practical terms**,** the concerns of post-apartheid South African novelists have been multivalent. Some of these are "the experiential, ethical, and political ambiguities of transition, the tension between memory and amnesia, and the role of culture in limiting or enabling new forms of understanding" (Attwell & Harlow 2000). Put differently, they include issues of reconciliation and reconstruction, exile and return, child abuse, homelessness, xenophobia, homophobia, the challenges of building a new nation, the health dilemma especially in matters relating to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, land restitution, crime and violence of all forms, the collapse of the myth of white superiority, the privileging of minorities, etc. (Mphahlele 2005, Oliphant 2005, Mzamane, 2005).[10]

Although David Attwell and Barbara Harlow have broadly categorized the fiction into the private and public spheres, one outstanding development is that the jettisoning of the apartheid legislation, rather than stifle the creative muse of the writers, has instead stimulated their desire to address issues that would have been taboo during the age of 'siege'. The predominant confessionality of the new writing, the historicity of the viewpoints, the diversity and topicality of the ethics and aesthetics have all combined to give credence to the postulations of Graham Pechey and Njabulo Ndebele on the prevalent sensibilities that occupy, and should fascinate the writer in a new South Africa. Pechey, for instance, had argued: "Today's narratives, 'fictional' or 'political', are neither black nor white…. They have a face that parodies and a face that praises, a tone of doubt and a tone of celebration"(Pechey 1994:33), while Ndebele has remained very eloquent in the need to privilege the problematics of the ordinary citizenry if genuine progress is to be made in redressing the injustice of the past.

Again, in their introduction to the special issue of ***Modern Fiction Studies*** on 'South African Fiction after Apartheid', Attwell and Harlow tried to summarize the emerging trends in the novel in a democratic South Africa. By delineating the "experiential, ethical, and political ambiguities of transition", they implicate history or memory as fundamental in any sane discussion of South Africa. While these notions of ambiguities appear rather

[10] Elsewhere in 'The South African Novel after Apartheid: Mphahlele, Mzamane, and Oliphant on the idiom of Transition' (2006), I have attempted to explore the many dimensions of the transitional by focusing specifically on the essays of the three black South African scholars.

esoteric in decoding the transformations in the ethics and aesthetics of the new writing, Attwell takes it further in a separate essay where his perception of the emerging traditions or what he calls "a field of ambiguities" is locatable

> (in) keeping with a political settlement in which no party could claim a clean victory, but in which everyone shared both the gains and sacrifices which are the products of compromise. Post-apartheid writing, that is to say, has made ambiguity its particular subject, and if it is relishing anything, it is relishing the freedom it now has to explore complexity, irony, new alignments of subjectivity and history, new forms of identity, new traditions, and new formal possibilities. This is a tougher road than the simplified one of a literature of praise and denunciation, and consequently, the field may not be as volatile as the literature of the 1980s, which was the most violent phase of our history. But the best products of the current phase will, I believe, be more durable (2003:7).[11]

But the ambiguities of transition, one might add, transcend any simplistic approach at lubricating the injured psyche of a people through a globally dramatized Truth and Reconciliation Commission's sittings. For, indeed, whereas the repressive policies of the past may have been jettisoned, the economic structures are still very much in place, and poverty is still the lot of the historically disadvantaged majority, with the implication that the disparity in the standard of living across racial lines is best left to the imaginations.

This reality in the socio-economic structure of Post-apartheid South Africa presents some daunting challenges to the writer. As tangential as they might seem, there are certain realities—positive and negative —, which are equally part of South Africa's history, and should be recognized by any scholar of neutral interest. For instance, it is a historical fact that during the period of transition to majority rule, acts of violence—some political, others vindictive—were pervasive throughout South Africa; it is a fact that political exiles were granted pardon and were allowed to return to their motherland; it is a fact that

[11] I am grateful to Prof. David Attwell for making the essay 'South African Literature After Apartheid" available to me. It is the text of an unpublished lecture he delivered at John Carrol University in the United States of America on 27th January 2003.

the bond of unity that held together all the black population during the anti-apartheid struggle was smartly broken by the ruling National Party as a bargaining ploy for continued relevance in an altered South African state; it is a fact that in the struggle for leadership and political superiority, the black-on-black violence gained higher momentum during the electioneering campaigns especially between the African National Congress and the Inkatha Freedom Party; it is a fact that many white farmers were brutally murdered during the transition and after; it is a fact that in spite of the level of bitterness that shrouded the society at the time, many people still lived their lives to the fullest; it is a fact that some white South Africans courageously scorned the privilege accorded them by apartheid and suffered the injustice of the system through imprisonment, torture and even exiled; it is a fact that there were also some blacks who sabotaged the struggle against the denigration of their own people and accepted several luxury contracts for their own personal aggrandizement; it is, indeed a fact that many white South Africans were genuinely irritated by the policies of the divisive regime and fought the policies in the only way they could; above all, it is a fact that many of these realities have manifested in the post-apartheid South African fiction of English expression with the implication that there seems to be a visible change in the thematic orientations.

The challenge for the writer becomes very obvious, given the complex reality of the South African history and the ambiguity of Post-apartheid 'liberation'. It is in this context that one might ask: how does the white writer, or the black writer for that matter, represent land possession, land distribution or its redistribution in South Africa or Zimbabwe? How does the black literary artist present violence, especially the black-on-black violence in an era of black leadership? Will it be reasonable for the black writer, for instance, to attribute every misgiving in the polity to apartheid? Are the emergent black leaders corrupt in their life styles and general dispositions? Suppose they are, how does the white writer portray corruption in high places, and how does the black writer do the same? How does the writer present issues such as xenophobia amongst the South African population, bearing in mind that the greater problem of South Africa such as child rape and drug abuse are created by South Africans themselves? How does the white writer

present the diabolic mentality of a fellow white that turns his dogs on helpless black beggars? How does such a writer project the white farmer who kills blacks on the excuse of animal protection? These and many more questions would continue to present themselves to the writers, and it does seem that in the final analysis, the triumph of the individual writer would be dependent on a disinterested representation of a common humanism devoid of racial definitions and myopia at one level, and on the other, who embraces originality of imagination and aesthetic experimentations.

Where the thematic preponderance of apartheid literature had had to deal with "police terror, prison life, the emotional and physical violence of ghetto life, the fight for survival… and more recently with exile" (Mphahlele, 1974:53)[12], "the experiential, ethical and political ambiguities of transition" of which Attwell and Harlow write about find expression, therefore, in the fact that in spite of the transfer of political power to a new black elite, the ultimate power – namely economic and social control – still resides with the minority white population who, ultimately, steer the direction of political transformations. Within the social circle, there has been a new kind of violence between blacks-on blacks, in the attack on landowners and white farmers, in political thuggery and senseless arson. Consequently, some of the new writing find voice in interrogating the morality of dispossession and forceful removals of the black population groups during the apartheid days through what reads like a confessional mode. A major influence on the psyche of the populace was the inauguration of the TRC in 1996 by the then President Mandela, and although Attwell and Harlow descend very heavily on the basic flaws of the Commission, they recognize the immense contribution of the initiative in the propagation of a non-racial South African society.

The flurry of incidents that followed the repeal of several unpopular policies by the F.W.de Klerk-led government in 1990, the congress of the African National Congress (A.N.C.) the year before and the rhetoric of some of the leaders on cultural reformation, the collapse of official apartheid, the release of political offenders and the un-banning of

[12] See also Es'kia Mphahlele's 'Landmarks of Literary History in South Africa: A Black Perspective', in *Perspectives on South African English Literature*, (Eds). Michael Chapman, Colin Gardner, and Es'kia Mphahlele. (Parklands, South Africa: Ad Donker Publishers, 1992): 37-59.

several political parties, the tribal violence that assumed a higher proportion during the transition following the exploitation of ethnic sentiments by some of the tribal chiefs, and more— these are all historical realities to which many of the writers responded, and there may well be some logic to the claim that South African writers are often so responsive to historical incidents that sometimes the journalistic imperative tends to over-cloud the imaginative. A number of the new writings have addressed, retrospectively, the evils of the divisive ideology and the dilemma of the citizenry at the time. The sense of nostalgia with which novelists now write about the South African past as witnesses to the oppression of the blacks, and sometimes as helpless observers to the counter-violence by the revolting victims indicates that the past as well as the present provide for the writer in a post-apartheid state a minefield of literary creativity. Richards' ***The Innocence of Roast Chicken***, Mda's ***The Madonna of Excelsior***, ***Heart of Redness***, as well as ***Ways of Dying***, Wicomb's ***David's Story***, Brink's ***Imaginings of Sand,*** and Coetzee's ***Boyhood*** and ***Disgrace*** provide elaborate illustrations of these developments, as I shall show in the course of this discussion. As Attwell and Harlow further emphasize:

> The liberalism of the new order is more accommodating than a revolutionary culture could ever be, to the re-invention of tradition, to irony, to play. Under apartheid, writers were expected to address the great historical issues of the time, whereas now they are free to write in a more personal key. Finally, under apartheid, particularly in the intense 1980s, anxiety about the future fuelled a number of writers; now, it is the past that sustains many of the most earnest reflections. In post-apartheid literature, the future has little future, whereas the future of the past is reasonably secure (4).

Arising from all these developments is that in as much as efforts may be made to downplay historical incidents that may propel and sustain xenophobia, amnesia certainly has no space in the new South Africa. The history of the country is indisputably the history of repression and dispossession, and any writer or critic who ignores these fundamental injuries to the human psyche is either complicit in the sustenance of the

oddity or afflicted with ethical paralysis. My notion of 'emergent', therefore, transcends the often-perceived conception of the term as the literature of the so-called newly discovered peoples of the world or the imagined literature(s) of the subalterns. South Africa already had a thriving tradition of writing, and it is equally a fact of history that novelistic writing in English had thrived on this part of the continent since the early decades of the 19th century. 'Emergent', here, is not also confined merely to the verbal qualitative of emergency or the urgency novels of the 1970s and 1980s. While acknowledging the unique idiosyncrasies of the emergency novels in many of the thematic structures outlined by Mphahlele (53), the term 'emergent' is deployed here to cover the changes and developments in an already existing literature of resistance informed by racial absolutism. It is deployed in the Websterian notion of 'emergent evolution'—"evolution conceived as characterized by the appearance at different levels of wholly new and unpredictable characters or qualities (as life and consciousness) through a rearrangement of preexistent entities" (Webster 1961:71).

The 'new' narratives are read against the background of the fundamental developments in the fiction of South Africa after the long, tortuous history of racial separatism. It is weighed through the socio-cultural and economic barometers that have come to privilege what is often referred to in South Africa as 'previously marginalized categories'; it recognizes the immense contributions of the dominant groups, and suggests that the artist—whatever his or her social and racial category—has a responsibility to humankind; it recognizes the multiracial nature of South Africa's 'Rainbow' state and seeks a way of integrating narratives of the many racial categories into what will eventually emerge as South Africa's 'Rainbow literature'.

IV.

The Post-Apartheid Imaginary, South African Literary Criticism, and the Figuration of the Past

The literary-intellectual culture in South Africa after apartheid has demonstrated unique vibrancy. A number of influential scholars have continued to combine literary theorising,

cultural hermeneutics, and literary criticism, with the implication that critical scholarships sometimes tend toward the prognostic. This is evident in the many speculative statements on the possible direction of literature in South Africa at the dawn of the liberal order. Njabulo Ndebele, it has been noted, for instance, had suggested a return to the ordinary. And while responding to Ndebele's seminal appeal for the resuscitation of the mundane in imaginative writing, Graham Pechey (1998) suggests that "it is at the heart of the ordinary that the extraordinary is to be found". He observes further: "Post-apartheid writing turns from the fight against apartheid, with its fixation upon suffering and the seizure of power, into just such stories as these: stories which then open out to transform the victory over apartheid into a gain for postmodern knowledge, a new symbiosis of the sacred and the profane, the quotidian and the numinous" (Pechey, 58). These apparent contradictions and convergences equally resurface in David Attwell's reduction of the narratives of the 'new' order as "a field of ambiguities" (Attwell 2003:6)[13]. But Attwell's closer scrutiny of the new narratives points to a sense of the experimental, particularly in 'black writing'[14].

The danger in the persistent appeal for the privileging of the so-called experimental form, however, is not so much in the mode itself as it is in the refusal of some of the commentators to highlight modes of articulating relevant historical issues. In spite of his celebration of the 'polyphonous' nature of South African writing, therefore, Pechey seems persuaded that the past should be seen with a new eye: "The metanarratives of nationalism and communism alike have proved in too many empirical cases to be instances of that idolatrous *hubris* of modernity which diverts the worship proper only to God or gods on to unworthy worldly projects.... Opportunities for re-imagining community without setting up the false gods of overarching politics open at sundry moments in history; it is as latter-day prophets of these rare moments that we value writers wherever they may be" (Pechey, 1998:60). The appeal for a totalising effacement of 'history and discourse' or 'history as discourse', it need be observed, here, will

[13] David Attwell, 'South African Literature after Apartheid'.
[14] David Attwell, 'The Experimental Turn in Black South African Writing', in Leon de Kock, Louise Bethlehem and Sonja Laden (Eds). *South Africa in the Global Imaginary*, (Pretoria: University of South Africa Press/Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2004): 154-179.

ultimately result in what, elsewhere, Pechey (1994:166) describes as "an insult to the human imagination". It needs be noted that while some South Africa's white writers could be excused for their efforts to escape from the historical, it is precisely now that the embrace of history or the historical calls for more urgency on the part of the black writers. One recalls here the essential truth implicit in Steve Biko's statement that "the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed" (Biko, 1988:108). What seems evident in recent proclamations for the effacement of history and the embrace of the narrative loitering of postmodernism which we find among white commentators is that it is simply 'convenient' for certain racial categories in the 'new' South Africa to now do so.

But the truth of history can best be served by the truth of fiction when compassionately revisited and humanely re-invented. Earliest Settler-narratives of South Africa had created the impression of the region as a barren land. South Africa and, indeed, the Southern African sub-region remains for these chroniclers an environment devoid of the human person and, for the most part, occupied by wild animals. This impression of an absence becomes dubious when explored against the backdrop of the many peoples that actually inhabit the region long before the arrival of the Europeans. This dishonesty of the earliest Western historians calls for a total 're-visiting' and re-documentation to put many of the deliberately confused narratives of the region in their proper context. For, after all, a historiography that presents the banality of South Africa's landscape as one only populated by elephants, lions and monkeys needs be interrogated with a view to locating how the encounter between the earliest Europeans and the many African elephants, lions and monkeys led to the birth of the coloured population of South Africa's Western Cape and beyond. It does seem to me that it is partly through this exploratory 'revisiting' that Graham Pechey's interest in "the project of righting the wrongs of South Africa" (Pechey 1998: 166) could better be addressed. Lewis Nkosi (1998:75), too, has observed that the most obvious problem in the reading of South African novel is in "the domain of theory". The perennial crisis of categorizing narratives within the frameworks of realism and postmodernism is so strong in the discourse of the South African novel that it immediately evokes such readings within the dynamics of racial categories of

'black' and 'white' writing. Where it is taken for granted that black South African writers are essentially at ease with documentary realist narrative mode that calls for 'witness' especially during the turbulent past, the white writers are generally 'seen' to be more adventurous and experimental. The bias to codify South African novel within the lens of postmodernism has, however, led to some major controversies with respect to the identity of the literature and the politics of selection and consequent canonization of writers by some influential critics[15].

One dilemma arising in engaging with a study of 'post-apartheid fiction of English expression', therefore, is that the field of interest immediately conjures up the many problems associated with inscribing a South African *national* literary history. First, the notion of 'post' in 'post-apartheid' indicates a period: 'after-'. It situates the temporal interest at the moment following democratic non-racialism. If our notion of 'post-ness' for racial separatism is appropriate in the literature of the new South Africa, however, it immediately triggers off the allied concern to define the nature of the *nation-ness* of South Africa, a 'nation' built on a crafty deployment of *difference* or ethnicity and *race* for many centuries. The separateness of the many 'nations' of South Africa based on race and ethnicity points to the many 'national literary histories' of South Africa *before* and *since* the 'Mandela Republic'. A further problem irrupting from this field of interest is the

[15]While David Attwell celebrates the dawn of experimental writing by black writers in the 'new' South Africa, no where else is the controversy so intense as in the debate between Graham Pechey and Lewis Nkosi. Pechey is happy that "The post-apartheid condition is only one of the more striking contemporary instances of (this) coming-home-to-roost of lost histories" (1998): 153-4. To his claims (p.165) that South African writing is "the place where marginalities of *all* kinds can meet and be positively valued", Nkosi objects to this kind of levelling of the narratives of South Africans. As he rightly observes, "it is black writing which is so obviously marginalized and occupies, in fact, a minority status". The reason for this is obvious: "Much black writing" he argues, has always operated "in an autonomous region entirely untouched by contemporary cultural theory" (1998: 77-78). Simply put, Pechey's claim that realism is a moribund narrative form is totally unacceptable. It is safe to conclude that for Nkosi, realism has a role to play in the representation of the historical process. See Graham Pechey, 'Post-apartheid Narratives', in Barker, Francis, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iverson (Eds), *Colonial Discourse/Postcolonial Theory* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1994): 151-171; also Lewis Nkosi, 'Postmodernism and Black Writing in South Africa', in Attridge, Derek and Rosemary Jolly (Eds), *Writing South Africa: Literature, apartheid and democracy, 1970-1995* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1998): 75-90. See also David Attwell's 'The Experimental Turn in Black South African Writing', in Leon de Kock, Louise Bethlehem and Sonja Laden (Eds), ibid, 2004:154-179; Graham Pechey, 'Cultural Struggle' and the Narratives of South African Freedom', in *Altered State: Writing and South Africa*. Eds. Elleke Boehmer, Laura Chrisman, and Kenneth Parker. (Sydney: Dangaroo Press, 1994): 25-35, and Elleke Boehmer, 'Endings and new beginning: South African Fiction in Transition', in Derek Attridge and Rosemary Jolly (Eds), *Writing South Africa: Literature, apartheid, and democracy, 1970-1995*, 1998: 43-56.

limiting of interest to the novel as a genre rather than simply 'fiction' or even 'fiction of English expression'. While fiction will necessarily accommodate the full-length novel as well as 'short stories', it equally creates the additional problem of distinguishing between 'serious' and 'popular' fiction. The choice of the novels of English expression is equally faced with the crisis associated with 'marginalizing' indigenous language literatures as well as literature in Afrikaans.

The attempt to 'level' South African letters into a single 'national writing' has been the subject of a number of debates that goes back to Nathan's survey, ***South African Literature*** (1925). In recent times, in particular, it has placed in perspective the vibrant intellectual culture within South Africa itself, and the sub-region at large. One manifestation of such debates is the tendency to resist such a history in some quarters, and to embrace it through the tapestries of many 'nationalities' that constitute South Africa over the years. It also brings to focus the bold attempt in other quarters to attempt inscribing a totalising South African national literary history, in spite of the overwhelming difficulties associated with such a project. The Centre for the Study of South African Literature and Languages, established in 1994, had taken on the challenge of constructing a national literary history for South Africa and its neighbours. The publication of its May 1994 Colloquium as ***Rethinking South African Literary History*** (1996) is a pointer to an enormous effort made by the literary academe to subject the dilemma to rational, academic thinking. Its editor, Jean-Phillip Wade, for instance, writes of "the dubious political ambitions" implicit in the earlier attempts to write a South African literary history (Wade 1996:2). Like Graham Pechey and others[16], Wade affirms this curious call for a totalising deletion of history: "In the language of Russian Formalism, we similarly need to 'defamiliarize' (the) traditional past to construct a 'shocking', renewed, unrecognizable cultural history" (Wade, 3).

Elsewhere, in 'Genealogies of Desire' (Wade, 1996: 236-246), he leans on Anthony Easthorpe to suggest a repositioning from "literary studies" to "cultural studies" which

[16] In particular, here, are essays by Boehmer earlier mentioned, as well as a number of the contributions in Wade's edited *Rethinking South African Literature*.

analyses texts as "examples of signifying practice" (Wade 237). While observing, therefore, that "a key element in the educational re-structuration of post-apartheid South Africa would involve the construction of an integrated national literary history manifesting itself in school and tertiary syllabuses", Wade notes the problems implicit in such an engagement since it would require "that such a project be rigorously *inter-disciplinary*, not only drawing upon work done in the eleven official South African languages, but also upon disciplines such as history, anthropology and cultural studies" (Wade 236). While the interdisciplinary method is quite welcome and, certainly, a practicable mode of reading, to further insist on excavating the hidden treasures of the eleven official languages is to insist on the insensible. It is in this respect that cultural translations become necessary because, in the final analysis, it makes more sense for the individual scholar to be competent in a given linguistic medium than to embark on the neck-breaking mission of embracing eleven linguistic media.

But even if we conceive of the novel as "a contested territory whose identity is continually re-articulated by successive generations" (Wade, 1996:240), there are still certain universally recognizable principles which inhere some breathe of a unique literary identity to the novel as a genre. A narratological dissection of a given fictional narrative text will ultimately involve a reading based on a careful recognition of the unifying elements of language, temporal and spatial spaces, the 'peopling' of the textual universe or the narrative elements of character and characterization, the dynamics of fantasy and realism, imagistic evocations of significant cultural and 'national' identities, authorial style and artistic vision, or what Wade calls "a theologics of the author" as "authoritative genius", among others. Yet, our concern with the topical nature of the discursive formations enables us to imagine such narratives within the frames of postcolonial, postmodernist, realist, modernists, and other such categorizing critical idioms.

Following on the heels of Wade is the call for 'the pursuit of smaller things'. In this, Leon de Kock insists on the recognition of the nature of education given to many critics and writers in South Africa: an education "fashioned in an aesthetics of separateness". On this basis, de Kock argues against what he calls the 'total history' approach due to the

many limitations that such engagements present. Literary history, he suggests, should transcend the banal, and "address more critical issues about the *emergence* of literary form under contextually specific conditions" (de Kock, 1996:87). Michael Green, too, writes of the strengths of some revisionist literary historians whose methodology is best seen as "a sort of academic guerrilla warfare" (Green, 1996: 229). Even while 'resisting' a totalising history of South Africa's literatures, Green recognises the points of convergence or the intersections of "nation, literature and history". To this end, however, he opts for a fuller understanding of the partial, rather than a partial understanding of the total: "Peripheral vision, not hindsight, makes the best history, the best nationalism, the best literature" (Green, 1996: 231, 234). If history or 'total history' must be resisted in the discourse of South African literature, what possible paradigm(s) should be adopted to accommodate the vibrant intellectual culture made possible by the liberalism of the new order? The ideals presented by a number of survey studies in journals and book-length studies are variously challenged for what is often called their "illusionary and superficial" reliance on "thematic correspondence".

Where a number of South African scholars frown against this model (Wade 1996; de Kock 1996, Green 1996, Pechey 1998, etc), Malvern van Wyk Smith writes about the danger of reading South African literary history from the perspective of thematic uniformity: "*thematic* correspondences are the most obvious, but also the most superficial of features that one would expect to find in South African writing" (Wyk Smith, 1996:73).[17] Van Wyk Smith's identification of what he calls "the anxiety of non-influence" is quite revealing. Perhaps, even more important is his recognition of the place of "thematic correspondence" in South African writing. Following Harold Bloom, Smith argues that while "thematic uniformity" could be very tempting in the reading of South African writing, critics should transcend this superficial mode of reading since such

[17] In a 1991 speculative essay, 'Renewal of South African Literature', Andries Walter Oliphant had prophesied a possible direction of South African writing after apartheid. His position is essentially delineated along the lines of thematology. The danger of such prognostic statement is however seen in a recent study, 'A Changing Topography' (Oliphant, 2005:230-248), where he attempts to identify themes in new writing from South Africa along the lines of his earlier speculations. See Oliphant's 'Renewal', *Staffrider*, 9.4(1991): 29-35, and 'A Changing Topography: Tracing some recent developments in South African writing', in Mbulelo Vizikhungo Mzamane (Ed), *Words Gone Two Soon: tribute to Phaswane Mpe, and K. Sello Duiker*, (Pretoria: Umgangatho, 2005): 230-250.

recourse to experiential oneness is pitiably illusional. Writers, he suggests, should engage each other; works of literature should engage other works of literature for any meaningful literary identity to emerge in the 'new' South Africa: "What needs to be demonstrated, *by scholarly archival research and close textual analysis* (my emphasis), is whether our writers have actually listened and talked to one another across the cultural and linguistic rifts and abysses which till recently defined our socio-political landscape. What is required is the evidence of genuine intertextuality, of texts resonating intentionally to one another, and not merely exploring the same subject matter because they happen to have been written in the same part of the world" (Van Wyk Smith, 1996:75).

Whether such recourse to searching for 'interpretive' and 'archival' evidence in South African writing could provide instances of continuities and influences might be difficult to prove at the moment. But there are certainly influences of Western writing on white South African letters. The specific influences of Becket, Defoe, Kafka, Dostoevsky and others on J.M. Coetzee, or even Christopher Marlowe on Mike Nicol, as well as the many explorers of the Adamastor myth are common. Where such engagement need be focused, however, is in the interaction of South African letters with works in the rest of the continent. In any case, if white South African writers feel more comfortable in seeking inspiration from Europe, is it not only reasonable that black South African writers should, at least, attempt to engage in creative dialogue with writers and scholars in the rest of the continent? In other words, is van Wyk Smith's location of 'non-influence' among South African writers as responsible for its 'isolationism' really different from the white writers' embrace of only western writers and philosophers? Where is the place of Africa in all of these? How does the African writer of South African origin interact creatively with his 'relatives' from north of the Limpopo? If white writers in Afrikaans and white writers of English expression engage with their 'relatives' in Europe, why stop black South Africans from engaging with their 'relatives' in the rest of the continent? Van Wyk Smith's proposition, to this extent, is quite ambivalent. Zakes Mda — thank Goodness — has successfully made an imaginary statement to this effect. ***The Heart of Redness*****,** for instance, seems to be echoing the voice of Mda addressing Achebe: "My dear brother,

those things the British did to the Igbo nation of West Africa, they did even worse to my Xhosa ancestors of Southern Africa".

In an important respect, too, Ampie Coetzee carefully interrogates the notions of nationhood, history, and literary history in the context of the emerging South Africa. While noting the immense difficulty in locating a 'national literature' in the context of a nation with a turbulent past, Coetzee suggests an engagement informed by a rigorous identification of discursive formations within the cultural polity. To this end, he argues, discursive formations would locate the concrete issues or events that pervade the socio-political memory of the people. In the case of South Africa, then, anyone involved with the project of articulating its national literary identity should necessarily demonstrate an impressive awareness not only of the history of colonial domination and the implications of such dominance to the relevant discursive domains such as language, travel writing, missionary incursion, land dispossession, some relevant miscellanies and, of course, an informed codification and perception of literature as a discourse within a discourse (Ampie Coetzee, 1996: 10-19). But the point needs be reiterated: whether the call is for the embrace of 'cultural studies' or the purely literary discipline, a basic thrust of the white literary intelligentsia is the fascination with western thoughts. Laura H. Chrisman (1997: 184-195) has raised this question in 'Appropriate Appropriations?' and it seems to me that the evocation of the spirits of western thinkers are sometimes done to lend credence to the scholar's sense of 'erudition'. There is almost an unwritten code that tends to suggest that the brilliant academic is one who dramatizes his awareness of some torturous theorising of Hegel, Gramsci, Benjamin, Barthes, Derrida, Foucault, among others. Scholars who take the risk of ignoring western epistemological proclamations are almost treated as 'unserious' for their failure to advance *any* theoretical perspective.[18]

[18] In 'Appropriate Appropriations? Developing Cultural Studies in South Africa', Laura H. Chrisman takes a swipe at South African scholars who tend to believe that knowledge production must necessarily emanate from the West for onward dissemination to Africa and the rest of the so-called third world countries. While reviewing developments in what she calls 'intellectual paradigms for African cultural studies', Chrisman notes the painful truth that "South African academe continues to see itself with colonial eyes", just as it continues "to place itself as intellectually dependent, for the most part, upon metropolitan values and formulations" (190). See full discussion in Brenda Cooper and Andrew Steyn (Eds), *Transgressing Boundaries: New Directions in the study of culture in Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1997): 184-195.

Whereas my orientation is within the scope of literary scholarship, I have had to lean on the expertise of scholars across the disciplines and genres of the humanities to enable me engage more fruitfully with this mission of contributing to the project of rethinking 'aspects' of South Africa's literary history. In doing this, I have invoked opinions of scholars within Africa and beyond from fields as diverse as critical theory, cultural studies, psychology, sociology and anthropology, political science and geography, as well as history, economics, and philosophy. The echoes of scholars as varying as Richard Terdiman, Piera Nora, Jerome Mcgann, Stephen Greenblatt, Jacques Derrida, Michael Foucault, Hayden White, Homi K. Bhabha, Edward Said or Fredric Jameson have equally not diminished the relevance, here, of some major voices in Africa such as Es'kia Mphahlele, Mbulelo Mzamane, Njabulo Ndebele, Andries Walter Oliphant, N. Chabani Manganyi, Stephen Gray, to mention these few. Within the South African intellectual community itself, I have been inspired by various scholars who have made profound statements on many aspects of the literature of the 'new' South Africa. Johannes A. Smit is particularly acknowledged here for the essay 'Rethinking: History and Literature' (1996: 209-223), where he suggests that such an engagement will not only create "productive space" where theories of western and African origins will fruitfully be kept in tension toward cultural production in South Africa, but also because such tension will lead to "imagining a space where we (may) practice a rigorous and interdisciplinary writing, analysis, study and research as a South African literary history" (Smit, 209)[19].

Above all, I am indebted to Michael Chapman whose many pronouncements in the field of Southern African letters have guided my interest in the literature of South Africa at the dawn of democratic non-racialism. Two central paradigms quite germane to my investigations are summarized in what Chapman categorizes as "a hermeneutics of

[19] It is fascinating that leading South African literary scholars would consistently appeal for *rigour* and *interdisciplinarity*. Where Albert Gerard's request for this pattern of reading leans heavily on literary comparatism, Isabel Hofmeyr and Michael Chapman, among others, request that such rigour and interdisciplinarity be constructed firmly within social referents. As Hofmeyr suggested at the end of the 1970s, "South African literary criticism needs to be a rigorous and exacting discipline, placed on a respectable theoretical footing and grounded in a truly interdisciplinary approach" (1979): 48.

suspicion" and "a humanism of reconstruction" (Chapman 1996b: 43).[20] But even "a humanism of reconstruction" presents its peculiar problem: While it is taken for granted that the black peoples of the world and, especially women, are daily confronted with varying degree of marginality at the fields of racial and gender politics, how does the critic abandon his cultural and/or religious persuasions to embrace what could be described as 'abomination' in some locations? How does s/he 'persuade' his/her community to embrace 'sodomy' and 'sodomistic narratives' simply for purposes of political correctness? How does such a critic escape the charge of being labelled a homophobe? Jean-Phillipe Wade's levelling of 'nation-ness' becomes apparently disturbing: in spite of the attempt to sound 'politically correct', such cultural levelling obviously amounts to cultural and religious insensitivity. Political correctness, to this end, constitutes a tyrannical ideological construct.

But while I have borrowed immensely from scholars of South African literatures, my point of departure, however, is implicit in the testing of a number of theories calling for *a more rigorous interdisciplinary reading* of South African letters. My approach is both theoretical and analytical, and rather than constrict my discussion to conform to the speculations of the many panoramic statements on the possible direction of South African writing after apartheid, I have allowed the thrusts of the selected novels to dictate the direction of my analysis. In delineating the narrative progressions, it becomes apparent that there are some dominant experiential and stylistic thrusts common to the work of many of the novelists in matters of aesthetic and artistic visions. It is in this respect that the tropes of memory, violence, the confessional form, deliberate recourse to metaphor and allegory, alterity and the quest for individuation, history and the authorial deployment of the fantasia, among others, form the essential thrusts of my investigation.

[20] Chapman clarifies by noting that a hermeneutics of suspicion implies "a re-reading of authorities, a questioning of positions, reputations, traditions, influences, as texts are set in contexts of controversy in which terms such as major/minor, functional/aesthetic, the West/Africa, are held up to discursive investigation", while for "a humanism of reconstruction", he avers a study in which "damaged identities are reassembled, silenced voices given speech, and causes rooted close to home in the priorities of the Southern African scene examining itself while it examines its relations to the West" (Chapman,1996b:43).

V.

Realism, (Post)-modernism, and the Fantastical Forms

There is a sense in which the dismissal of the realist narrative mode and the call for the effacement of history and cultural nationalism by an influential constituency of the white literary intelligentsia could be perceived as insensitive. Where the so-called experimental writing of the post-modernist mode is in principle a salutary engagement, the perception of 'black writing' as unnecessarily essentialist and 'demeaning' tends to portray the privileged white critic as too lost in the Ivory Tower's alienating mentality. Evoked in this kind of reasoning is the more demeaning possibility that a number of white academics in South Africa are simply out of touch with the reality of black humanism in spite of centuries of racial contact with Africans of South African origin. Patrick Bond captures this feeling quite aptly in his ***Elite Transition***: "The gut feeling of joy (even if temporarily) when acquiring a new collective water tap in a desperately poor rural area, or conversely the fury and indignity of a water cut-off due to inability to pay, are, frankly, beyond the comprehension of any white, petit-bourgeois male academic" (2000:4). It might help here, though, to clarify our usage of the terms 'realism', 'postmodernism', and 'the fantastical'.

Classical realism, celebrated by Georg Lukács because it "gave adequate pictures of great periods of human development and at the same time serve as signposts in the ideological battle fought for the restoration of the unbroken human personality" (1978:5) provided many writers of the apartheid years the finest of the platforms from where they took on novelistic composition as a form of cultural struggle. Lewis Nkosi's earlier dismissal of Black South African writing as journalistic in his much-quoted essay, 'Fiction by Black South Africans', was inspired by this form of writing. Literary realism saw the truth of fiction in verisimilitude or the proximity of narrative experience to real-life situations since, as Lukács observes, it involves a quest for a functionalist aesthetic in which "the central aesthetic problem (...) is the adequate presentation of the complete human personality" (1978:7). In this regard, there is often a preponderance of the political in matters of narrative discourse. He celebrates "the great achievement of Russian realism"

for what he describes as the combined roles of the writers and interpreters (Lukács, 116) in establishing "the live trends in which social evolution finds its true, aesthetic reflection, its artistic fulfilment" (Lukács, 117). But the recourse to materiality in literary figurations cannot be dismissed carelessly given the immense contribution of this aesthetic form in the development of the novel as a genre.

Whether or not we restrict our illustrations to developments in apartheid narratives, or search for semblance in the West, it does seem that, in the final analysis, the dominant literary form deployed within any specific epoch would usually remain a statement on the social and ethical personalities of such societies and their historical identities. In many of South Africa's apartheid narratives, the embrace of the realistic aesthetic mode served its purpose at the time, although its abuse, overuse, and the recourse of many of the writers to what Njabulo Ndebele (Ndebele, 2006:31-54) calls "the representation of spectacle" soon led to a 'glut' of the reportorial form over the imaginative. The implication is that in the quest to address pressing dictates of the time, narrativity is stifled in "the artistic presentation of politics itself", a point which Lukács underscores when he notes its results to be implicit in "pictured political action in a stark and abstract immediacy and disjunction, without any serious and penetratingly realist portrayal of the human essence of the politically active characters" (Lukács, 124). Arising from this reasoning in the context of South African writing is whether there is any point of convergence or divergence between the realistic tradition and the more 'experimental' mode often called Postmodernism. Is there a clear-cut distinction between reportorial writing and the rambling form, and can the two be creatively merged to produce cerebral fiction that challenges our intellect even as it presents narratives of familiar spaces?

It is, indeed, possible to talk of [post]-modernism within the structures of realist narrativity, for we do find in recent 'psychological' narratives a totalising narration that struggles to bear witness within, and beyond the perceptual and mental realisms of the narratives' actants. The instances of William Faulker's ***As I Lay Dying*** (1934), Isidore Okpewho's ***The Last Duty*** (1976) and, quite recently, K. Sello Duiker's ***The Quiet Violence of Dreams*** (2001) provide ready examples of narratives whose [post]-modernist

stance are defined by their realist aesthetic idioms. A problem with the 'post-modern' South African narratives, however, is one arising from the general crisis of its definitional non-specificity. Like the old arguments between 'the Ancients' and 'the Moderns', post-modernism as a theoretical and exegetical idiom defies a simple pattern of critical identity given, among other things, its tendency to embrace the old and the new, distort order and convention, as well as its predilection to accommodate new forms that, ordinarily, would have fallen short of the dictates of classical conventions of writing and interpretation. Often attributed to the ruminations of Jean Baudrillard and Jean-Francois Lyotard, postmodernism has emerged, over the years, as a rejection of the idea of the sublime narrative that was celebrated by the Enlightenment and, especially, the modernist's contextualization of the basis of sublimity within the frames of history and 'reality'. When deployed as "both a descriptive and evaluative term", Selden et al argue, "[T]he three terms 'postmodern', 'postmodernity' and 'postmodernism' are (in fact) often used interchangeably as a way of periodizing post-war developments in advanced media societies and capitalist economies; to describe developments within or across the arts—which frequently do not synchronize with the first set of developments or with each other; and also to signal an attitude or position on these developments" (Selden et al, 1997:201).

Niall Lucy captures the basic ideological slant of postmodernist theorising this way: "The very idea of a 'central tenet' is precisely the kind of thing that the postmodern idea of texts rejects! In a postmodern world, nothing is central and everything is a paradox" (Lucy, 1997: ix). Tracing the postmodernist's obliteration of temporal specificity to European romanticism, Lucy argues that the whole logic implicit in the postmodernists' proclamations on 'the death of history' emanates from the language game of a totalizing speech-act', of which, he suggests: "one of the moves by which 'postmodernism' legitimates itself is through a totalizing 'dehistoricization' of the contexts in which signs acquire values, just as Wordsworth legitimated romantic poetry through its rejection of 'poetic' language and themes as defined historically" (Lucy, 1997:61-62). Where 'Modernism' is easily traced in such tropes as "elitism, sophisticated formal experimentation and tragic sense of alienation", in postmodernism, art is "communal,

optional, participational, anarchic, open, discontinuous, improvisational, indeterminate, or aleatory structures" (Selden et al, 202). Postmodernism is, perhaps, better defined by what Selden et al describe as its recourse to "the absent centre". In this sense, there is what Brian McHale calls "ontological uncertainty"—an experience in narratives that results finally in "a loss of fixed points of reference", and creates a narrative universe where "[N]either the world nor the self any longer possesses unity, coherence, meaning", since "[T]hey are radically 'decentred'" (Selden et al, 202). In a number of postmodernist writings, there is almost always a tendency towards "intertextuality and knowingness"—an engagement that makes the postmodernist's recourse to the historical a deliberate and systematic ploy to revisit "any historical moment with irony" (Selden et al, 203). The post-apartheid narratives of English expression provide numerous examples of this form of writing. Whether we view some of these novels as simply metafictional, fantastical narratives, or even as magical realist narrations, postmodernism still resonate in the new writings of André Brink, Zakes Mda, Mike Nicol, etc, especially at those aesthetical points of convergence where as Selden et al suggest, "writers break down conventional boundaries of discourse, between fiction and history, or autobiography, realism, and fantasy in a *bricolage* of forms and genres" (Selden et al, 203).

We have noted that by 1990, for instance, the question of what direction literary and cultural heritages were moving was becoming increasingly resonant in critical discourses. As M. Van Wyk Smith observes, where black writing was easily locatable given its "passionate energies of outrage and resistance, contemporary white authors are increasingly confronted with crises of purpose, relevance, and approach. What is one supposed to say, and how?" (Van Wyk Smith, 1990: 118) Van Wyk Smith writes of a 'White South African Writing Now', in which he sees in the fiction of white South African novelists an extreme readiness to explore "those symptoms of a thoroughly distorted world which most South Africans are increasingly willing to accept as normal". In this instance, he adds,

> Irony, satire, disoriented narratives, obsessive confessionals, fabulation, and metafictional speculation are some of the means to which contemporary white

> writers resort. Thus they translate the failure of the South African polity to come to humane and sane accommodations as a "failure" of traditional narrative modes, in which the author/narrator occupies a site of divine omniscience, authority and manipulation. Increasingly, therefore, modes of social realism, chronological narration and a detached point of view have been abandoned in favour of highly fragmented structures mediated by deeply destabilized mentalities (Smith 1990: 122)

It is important to observe, however, that the tendency to categorize South African fiction of English expression within the binaries of 'black realism' and 'white [post]-modernism' is likely to be deceptive, except through an authoritarian model of classification bent on dismissing the immense efforts of many of the writers across racial divide. For instance, there is nothing to indicate that Pamela Jooste, a white female writer, is post-modernist, or that Zoë Wicomb, a black female writer, is realist. In fact, Zoë Wicomb is far more experimental than many male writers of black and white extraction, while Pamela Jooste is far more realist in her style than most male writers of the same fascination, black or white. Jo-Anne Richards, a white female writer, one observes to this end, is certainly more accomplished in her first novel, ***The Innocence of Roast Chicken*** (1996), than we find in her later efforts in ***Touching the Lighthouse*** (1997) and ***Sad at the Edges*** (2003). Yet the first novel is a curious realist fiction despite the temporal juggling that tends to complicate its causal-chronological narrative identity, while the later novels are more given to postmodernist experimentation. Of the male writers, too, there is nothing to indicate that J. M. Coetzee's ***Disgrace*** is in any way more 'experimental' than Zakes Mda's ***The Heart of Redness*** and ***The Madonna of Excelsior***. Such discrepancies manifest in varying virtuosities among the writers and even within the work of individual writers. Instances and comparisons of narrative styles could be made in the work of other writers such as Mark Behr, Achmat Dangor, Gillian Slovo, Antjie Krog, Mike Nicol, Damond Galgut, Ivan Vladislavić, Jann Turner, Imraan Coovadia, Rayda Jacobs, and so on.

Many of these writers have explored areas as diverse as narratives of urbanities or what is often described as 'city novels', children's narratives, the mortality question in its many manifestations, a continuity with some previously recognized national issues such as the land question and, in particular, have demonstrated immense enthusiasm in the representation of the new South Africa in its admirable and repellent symbologies. The synthesis of the original reportorial narrative mode of realism and what has finally been accepted as postmodernism was to resurrect in an old tradition of writing found in most parts of the world, particularly in postcolonial writings and Orature as 'Magical Realism' or 'the Marvellous Real'. Many writers have adopted this tradition of narration through their evocation of real and imaginary mythologies common to the many peoples of South Africa.

VI.

The Post-Apartheid Imaginary, the problem of a National Language, and the HIV/AIDS Pandemic

If our notion of the transitional has any bearing on the narrative of the 'new' South Africa, it is quite, eloquently, evident at the linguistic front. Whereas parliamentary discussions are currently seen to be done in practically every identifiable language form common to South Africans, —precisely eleven official languages—, such debates are often times anything but 'communicative'. The deployment of eleven official languages, as plausible as it seems, constitutes a special problem: the crisis of *proclamations* without *receptions*. In spite of the presence of 'interpreters' and the obvious efforts made to get every speech translated, a peculiar awkwardness marks most of the 'speeches'. 'Poor communication' is often the case, rather than the exception. Where the indigenous black Africans of Zulu extraction constitute a clear majority with over eight million speakers, followed by the Xhosa of the Eastern Cape, the historical condition of colonialism had made it difficult for the colonized languages to find their bearing. Where the English language has remained the clear-choice language of most South Africans and post-apartheid sojourners to the country, the colonial condition that imposed the English language on the people at the turn of the 19th century should be noted.

Indigenous languages—like elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa—got derided, and English gradually emerged as the language of the enlightenment, of bureaucracy and for international communication. The accident of history, which temporarily saw the emergence to power of the Dutch descendants, soon left its mark. Their abuse of power was felt through their insistence on racial supremacy and outright injustice on the majority of the people. This was followed by an impulsive insult on the human intelligence when leaders of the Nationalist Party imposed the settler language—Afrikaans—on the black population. Again, the Youths' riot of 1976, among others, confirm the perception of Afrikaans as the language of oppression, and English language was embraced as a weapon not only for reaching the wider world, but also as the most potent medium of resisting colonialist mythologies about Africa. It is small wonder, therefore, that at the turn of the liberal order, the resistance to Afrikaans has become public secret (Pechey, 1994: 157-161; Chapman, 2003: x-xxiv; Mzamane, 2005: 214-229; Oliphant, 2005: 230-250). The English language has continued to enjoy a pride of place not only in daily businesses, official engagement, but also of the mass media. Whereas the major television stations provide news information in languages as diverse as isiZulu, isiXhosa, sePedi, siNdebele, Afrikaans, seTswana, siVenda, and English, annual popularity ratings have consistently placed the predominantly English language-based stations—SABC-3 and ETV at the topmost rungs of the popularity ladder.

The reality of post-apartheid South Africa as a major tourist destination has equally eventuated in the inflow of a large human population from every continent, a development that has consistently seen the English language as the ultimate communicative medium on this side of the planet. Whereas speculations are rife over the possible imminent dislodgement of the English language by the Mandarin—given the current dominant economic position of China, in practical terms, the Chinese language is likely to remain the most *popular* since it is being spoken by the largest number of people; but the English language will, most likely too, remain the most *international* of all languages of the world. Where there are obvious cultural nationalisms that persistently insist on the promotion of African indigenous languages and, in particular, the calls from bitter Afrikaner scholars for the resuscitation of the waning relevance of Afrikaans in

post-racialist South Africa, it need be noted that a great deal of writing is being published across these languages. More importantly, South African academics, it does seem, have shown some serious commitment to the business of translation than is likely to be found in most other African countries. Classic African narratives such as Chinua Achebe's ***Things Fall Apart***—among others—have appeared in a number of South African indigenous languages such as in isiZulu and isiXhosa. This is a major indictment of government attitude to educational and research funding in other African countries, especially in Nigeria where such classic novels are yet to be found in translated versions in major Nigerian languages. The translations into English of such narratives as Jeanne Goosen's ***Not All of Us*** (1990) by André Brink, and Marlene Van Niekerk's ***Triomf*** (1999) and ***Agaart*** (2006) by Leon de Kock and Michiel Heyns respectively, point to this seriousness in narrative translation and the desire of the academe to reach out to a wider audience[21].

The novels in English remain dominant in the 'new' South Africa. Major writers such as André Brink and Zakes Mda enjoy a pride of place in the emerging literary culture. Where Brink continues to write in English and Afrikaans, or have his Afrikaans novels translated into English, Mda's novels are being translated from the English language to a number of indigenous South African languages. Beyond translations, the continuity in narratives of the English language mode evident in the work of some of the most established writers—Nadine Gordimer, J.M. Coetzee, Zakes Mda, André Brink, Christopher Hope, Lewis Nkosi, Njabulo Ndebele, Zoë Wicomb, Elleke Boehmer, Achmat Dangor, Rayda Jacobs, etc—affirm what seems a collective embrace of the English language over Afrikaans and the indigenous African languages, in spite of the growing number of creative writing in these languages. As Graham Pechey observes about these developments, notwithstanding the fact that 'English is spoken as a native

[21] Jeanne Goosen's *Not All of Us* as translated by Andre Brink, was originally published in Afrikaans as *Ons Is Nie Almal So Nie* (Pretoria: Haum-Literér, 1990), while Niekerk's *Triomf* as translated by Leon de Kock (1999), also originally appeared in Afrikaans in the same title in 1994.

language by such a small minority of South Africans', it still remains 'the language of full sentences and of contexts that cannot be assumed' (Pechey, 157-8)[22].

Beyond the politics of language, the 'new' South Africa has been inundated with some social crisis especially at the domain of health. Where social anomie is very much visible in crime statistics, the rise in medical ailment amongst the population is one disturbing development that has bothered both government and citizens alike. In particular, the hype around the so-called HIV/AIDS pandemic is one that authorises a major investigation across disciplines with a view to locating the dynamics of the disease and its implication to life in the wider society. In literature, effort to articulate the catastrophic consequences of HIV/AIDS has been the concern of a number of writers. But the enormity of the ailment—at least as one observes through the many unending controversies that often eventuate in a request that government functionaries be disgraced out of office—anticipates a more rigorous engagement with the dynamics of the virus and the processes through which the society can best be alerted on its identity and modes of attack. So far, literary representations of the HIV/AIDS ailment have remained speculative, superficial, unscientific, un-researched, and populist. There are suspicions that multi-national pharmaceutical corporations sometimes connive with some local firms and their marketing agencies to control the minds of the population through their network of stupendously rich, well-funded white-controlled media. The politics of HIV/AIDS in South Africa, then, evokes what Njabulo Ndebele succinctly describes as "the complex interplay between global and local interests". Through a media that is blatantly afflicted with "the virus of bias and distrust", these mega-powerful multi-national firms manipulate the public, and this has culminated in "the mass condition of irrationality, where irrationality becomes its own logic, a perverse reality that feeds on itself" (Ndebele, 2004: 72, 73).

The efforts of, among others, Phaswane Mpe in ***Welcome to Our Hillbrow*** (2000) and K. Sello Duiker in ***The Quiet Violence of Dreams*** (2001) readily come to mind. But where

[22]For an interesting 'linguistic background' to the problematic of the *Lingua Franca* in South Africa, see Graham Pechey's 'Post-apartheid narratives', in Barker, Francis, et al (eds), *Colonial Discourse /Postcolonial Theory*. Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 1994:151-171.

Mpe's reportorial narrative hardly engages with the dynamics of the ailment through a more researched understanding of the disease, Duiker merely glosses over an ailment that, in his imagination, hardly afflicts a sexual constituency that thrives on its glamorisation of a degenerate life-style. One is persuaded to the conviction that HIV/AIDS as a thematic curiosity in the post-apartheid literary imagination needs to transcend its current populist affiliation[23]. It does seem to me that, in the final analysis, a novelist interested in this ailment might have to be more essentialist by deploying the science fictional narrative mode that could not only educate the reader on the phenomenon, but will do so with the zeal and commitment of a visionary artist inspired with a humanism of finding solutions to its final annihilation.

VII.

The Post-Apartheid Imaginary and the Problem of Land Dispossession

There is, however, the perennial problem associated with land ownership in South Africa. How has the novelist addressed the problem of land following the liberalism of the new order? The land question, one observes, has continued to resonate in the daily discourse of Southern Africa as a whole, and in South Africa in particular. Where Sol Plaatje had complained bitterly in the second decade of the 20th century over the strategic dispossession of the indigenous population of their land by the white settler communities, the intrigue and continued manipulation of the indigenous peoples never abated even at the dawn of non-racial capitalism. The specific case of the Namaqua of the North Western Cape comes to mind. It is instructive that a writer as ingenious as Zoë Wicomb could ably articulate the politics of land dispossession and the denigration of her people in a novel like ***David's Story***. These 'marginalized' people, like the rest of Africans, have

[23] In line with Njabulo Ndebele's reasoning, that AIDS and its related ailment "cannot be left to scientists alone" (2004:76), it does seem to me that even literary humanists, especially writers, can add invaluable insight in the search for its cure. Perennial chauvinists who claim the identity of 'experts' in science-related discourses may well be reminded that Philip Emeagwali, renowned scientist recently described by both the BBC and the CNN as "Father of the INTERNET" traced his inventive spirit that gave the modern Internet to the world to his reading of *Predicting the Weather*, a work published in 1922 by Lewis Frye Richardson, that he read several decades later. We are informed, for instance: "Emeagwali's vision was, in turn, inspired by the 1922 vision of Lewis Frye Richardson, who believed that 64, 000 human clerks would be needed to accurately forecast the weather". A true writer must remain true to the dictates of his profession as a visionary. For a more elaborate discussion, see: http://www.emeagwali.info/biography/movie/oscar-winner-denzel-washington-asked-to-star-as-philip-emeagwali.pdf. Downloaded from the Internet: October 24, 2006.

seen the sad side of European incursion into Africa, and it is sad that their humanity is continually 'defined' by outsiders. As Emile Boonzaier (1991: 155-162) puts it: "Their geographic isolation simply reinforced the marginal status accorded to them by outsiders and descriptions such as "primitive', "backward" and "simple" were common" (Boonzaier, 158).[24]

The question of land ownership has generated immense interest among writers; its recurrence in many post-apartheid novels of English expression is only indicative of its sensitive nature. Again, this takes us back in the first instance to—among other things—the arrival of the Europeans to Africa (not through slavery), the gradual and systematic extermination of several indigenous populations, the scramble for, and partitioning of the African continent and more importantly in the specific case of South Africa, in the systematic dispossession of Africans of their ancestral heritage, the land, by the settler population in the notorious Native Land Act (1913) which inform the agony so passionately documented by Sol Plaatje in ***Native Life in South Africa*** (1916). The tussle and conflict that emanate from the concept of ownership is then, perhaps, the most uncomfortable topic in the study of the post-apartheid imagination. For, indeed, ownership does not imply exactly the same thing for the largely dispossessed African population as it does for the white settler population. While the Afrikaner or the Boer descendants cling so romantically to their supposed "promised land" and the grand achievement of their great grandfathers, not a few of the indigenous population look forward to a restoration and repossession of their ancestral heritage even as they cry for justice for the settlers' extermination and denigration of their ancestors. It is land ownership, therefore, that opens up the perennial racial dilemma and hate crimes that resonate in many post-apartheid novels. Of the many writers who have shown remarkable concern to issues associated with land, J.M. Coetzee is outstanding in his presentation of the moral implications of ownership particularly given the historical conditions that led to the elaborate dispossession of Africans of their heritage by the settler communities. ***Boyhood*** and ***Disgrace*** – two novels written and partly situated in post apartheid South

[24] See Emile Boonzaier, 'People, Parks and Politics', in Ramphele, Mamphela and Chris Mcdowell (eds), *Restoring the Land: Environment and Change in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (London: The Panos Institute, 1991: 155-162).

Africa – are significant statements that evoke and explore his fascination with land and the politics of belonging.

It is the resonance of this theme in the fiction of the new South Africa that tends to authorise the return to memory as a basic paradigm in the discourse of the post-apartheid socio-cultural imaginary. The concern with land manifests in novels as diverse and varying as Zakes Mda's ***The Heart of Redness*** and ***She Plays with the Darkness*****,** Andre Brink's ***Imaginings of Sand***, K. Sello **Duiker's *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*****,** and Wicomb's ***David's Story***. It has equally attracted some brilliant discussions in a number of critical studies on South African literature after apartheid. What seems apparent, then, is that the land question will continue to be asked, ownership renegotiated, and the dispossessed be compensated. Land dispossession is easily the most important statement of colonial repression that successfully ensured social inequality within the social formation, and the fact of black poverty is one eloquent testimony of a history that was constructed through a systematic policy of dispossession, displacement, and enslavement. How has the novelist responded to this crisis since the dawn of democratic capitalism? As already indicated, Zakes Mda, J.M. Coetzee, André Brink, Zoë Wicomb, and Jo-Anne Richards provide fine instances of the crisis associated with land and the politics of 'belonging'.

VIII.

Women, Gender, and the Post-Apartheid Imaginary

Where the contribution of women in the development of South African letters is quite established and still very much on the rise, it equally tells the peculiar tale of the nation's criminal imbalance. Except for the campaign to recognize the role of black women through an acknowledgement of the oral narrative medium mounted by scholars as diverse as Isabel Hofmeyr and Liz Gunner, among others, black women writers have been largely invisible. The late entry of black women into writing in the 1970s and '80s only attest to this sense of historical deprivation of social justice which, one would expect, ought to have taken a more positive embrace in the liberal order. But this is not the case. The contribution of women writers in South Africa is long established in

history, and has remained sustained and animated by certain forms of writing. Among black women writers, for instance, the tendency, it has been noted, is toward self-inscription. Mbulelo V. Mzamane (1991) has acknowledged this interest in the purely autobiographical when he notes the immense efforts, through history, of women writers like Noni Jabavu, Joyce Sikakane, Winnie Mandela, Ellen Kuzwayo, Miriam Makeba, Caesarina Kona Makhoere, Sindiwe Magona, Maggie Resha, Fatima Dike, Gcina Mhlope, Bessie Head, Miriam Tlali, Gladys Thomas, Zoë Wicomb, Lauretta Ngcobo, Farida Karodia, Amelia House, Lindiwe Mabuza, Baleka Kgositsile, Rebecca Matlou, Christine Douts Qunta, Maud Motanyane, Nomavanda Mathiane, and Liseka Mda. My interest, though, is neither to merely recognize the presence of women as writers, nor simply to valorize their efforts on what has been described as 'solidarity criticism'[25]. One basic fact is that it was never by accident that a woman, Nadine Gordimer, emerged as the first Nobel Laureate in Literature from South Africa, a nation noted for its countless number of male writers.

The simple fact of women and writing after apartheid is that a number of the promising women writers simply 'vanished' from the scene; some simply continued with self-writing with its inescapable recourse to self-glorifications, and others simply took up more financially rewarding political appointments. The more engaging of the writers, apart from the 'Matriach', Nadine Gordimer, are Zoë Wicomb, Pamela Jooste, Jo-Anne Richards, Rayda Jacobs, and quite recently, Mary Watson. While Jacobs and Jooste are clearly more prolific and fascinated with aspects of growing up under the separatist regime, they also occasionally return to the earliest periods of colonial encounter. Women novelists are represented in this study, however, by Zoë Wicomb and Jo-Anne Richards: the former for her vibrant interest in feminism and the politics of Otherness, and the latter for women's interest told from the confessional perspective. I have, in line with my reading of these two South African women novelists, not only attempted to focus on the "broader questions of gender and culture", but more importantly have tried to "embed literary texts in the wider intellectual debates of which they form part and to see women's

[25] Often credited to Albie Sachs. See Wicomb's interview in *Between the Lines* 2. Ed. Eva Hunter and Craig Mackenzie (Grahamstown, South Africa: NELM Interviews Series, 6(1993): 84.

texts not as a generalized reflection of some historical subordination but as part of a specific politics that needs to be carefully charted" (Hofmeyr, 1992: 101)[26].

The nature of literary 'emergents', be it fiction, verse, literary drama, or even theoretical reflexions, then, is as embodied very much in the many imaginative texts that define the socio-cultural sensibility of the 'new' South Africa as it does in much of the theoretical and exegetical irruptions. To this end, the many prognostic views concerning the direction of literature that were expressed by members of the critical academe in the 1980s and 1990s are today being reviewed in major observations on the actual manifestations in the new letters.

Where some of the early scholarship on South African literature, especially literature by black South Africans were reduced to nothing more than mere documentary compositions, studies on the narratives of the new era are beginning to appreciate the immense diversity and creativity evident in the narratives of writers across racial divide. Lewis Nkosi, one recalls, had argued in ***Home and Exile,*** for instance, that: "What we get from South Africa is the journalistic fact parading outrageously as imaginative literature. We find a type of fiction which exploits the ready-made plots of racial violence, social apartheid, interracial love affairs which are doomed from the beginning, without any attempt to transcend or transform these "given social facts" into artistically persuasive works of fiction" (1983:132).[27] The post-apartheid novel, however, has presented a fresh picture that gives a knock to these earlier postulations. In fact, Lewis Nkosi's claims in the later section of that book that the South African black community has produced no writers who can match Nadine Gordimer or Doris Lessing (Nkosi, 163), takes a heavier knock. For, indeed, Zakes Mda has since emerged as the *infante terrible*

[26] In an earlier essay, 'The State of South African Literary Criticism', Isabel Hofmeyr had made a similar request to the effect that 'South African literary criticism needs to be a rigorous and exacting discipline, placed on a respectable theoretical footing and grounded in a truly interdisciplinary approach'. *English in Africa* 6.2(1979): 48.

[27] Nkosi's essay, 'Fiction by Black South Africans' appeared as early as 1965, though. See *Home and Exile*, (London: Longman, 1965): 125-136. His opening sentence says as much: "With the best will in the world it is impossible to detect in the fiction of black South Africans any significant and complex talent which responds with both the vigour of the imagination and sufficient technical resources, to the problems posed by conditions in South Africa" p.125.

of post-apartheid South African fiction of English expression. As a writer, Nkosi has also contributed quite positively in the growth of the post-apartheid South African novel of English expression. Since the earlier ***Mating Birds*** (1982), he has added two impressive narratives—***Underground People*** (2002) and ***Mandela's Ego*** (2006) to his bravura of literary idiosyncrasies that cut across literary journalism, play-writing and profound literary scholarship. Readings in the post-apartheid literary culture eloquently present a picture that is positively a step ahead of Nkosi's earlier postulations.

In his reflexions on the new writing from South Africa after apartheid, for instance, Es'kia Mphahlele (2005:210) returns to the nature and dimensions of thematic changes of South African literature through the course of history. In Mphahlele's accents, it is possible to easily identify this transition, or what he calls "the changing imperatives from one social-literary consciousness to the next", so much in his observation of "prose of a high quality in the novels and short stories of Mandla Langa, Zakes Mda, Arthur Maimane, and non-fiction of Mark Mathabane at the present time", as it is in the changing tone of the scholar-writer himself. The cultural nationalism so preponderant in ***The African Image*** (1974[1962]) immediately gives way to an apparently celebratory tone of a less bitter commentator who insists on the privileging of 'history'. "Art", he argues, "must refine history, which includes reality". Mphahlele is worried about the apologetic stance often taken by black South African writers. The overriding concern of his 'The Role of the Writer in the African Renaissance', is that writers of whatever racial or political orientation "must try harder to tell it right", and should be aware of "the awesome concourse of human mobility and activity that contains us" (Mphahlele 2005: 204, 205)[28].

Where a number of white commentators are urging for the effacement of history, as we have established earlier, many black scholars insist on the privileging of history. This new trend, it should be noted, constitutes a new level in the 'politics of writing' that could take several decades to thrash out in further research on post-apartheid cultural politics.

[28] See Mphahlele, Es'kia, 'The Role of the Writer in the African Renaissance', in Mbulelo V. Mzamane (ed), *Words Gone Too Soon: A Tribute to Phaswane Mpe and K. Sello Duiker* (Pretoria: Umgangatho, 2005): 204-213.

For Mbulelo V. Mzamane, though, "there can be no immediate rupture with the past". He writes of "a self-induced myopia mingled with amnesia" evident in the scholarships and theorising of members of the academe who often call for a collective disengagement with historicity. Given that "Former colonial subjects" often "emerge from the past scarred in ways of which they are not always conscious", Mzamane suggests that in the peculiar case of South Africa, "certain themes are bound to endure—old Apartheid themes, along with the lingering legacy of Apartheid" (Mzamane 2005: 222). Where Attwell would rather celebrate what he calls 'the experimental turn' in black writing—an apparent rejection of the documentary realism so manifest in the functionalist aesthetic of the anti-apartheid and Black Consciousness cultural nationalists, Mzamane (2005), Lewis Nkosi (1998), and Andries Walter Oliphant (1991; 2005), among others, continue to draw attention to 'recent' manifestations in post-apartheid narratives at the level of thematics. While Mzamane writes of 'Continuities and Discontinuities' as marking the apparent newness and inescapable recycling of peculiar narratives by some of the writers, then, Oliphant seems persuaded that the development in South African writing after apartheid constitutes 'a changing topography' (Oliphant, 2005:230-250).

Moreover, for a people as politically conscious as South Africans, it is not by error that the confessional mode, for instance, is preponderant in the altered state. The emergent, therefore, is evident in both the ethics and aesthetics of the fiction of transition and democratic South Africa. The resonance of the past in much of recent South African novel of English expression, the double encounter with colonialism – the colonial and the apartheid experiences, the immense efforts made by the leadership towards achieving reconciliation, the novelistic forms embraced by a number of the writers, the sensitivity and provocation which the land symbolism tends to evoke and the several emerging 'metaphors of transformation' – as Stuart Hall (1996:287-305)[29] would say, all tend to point to historical memory as fundamental in any serious critical engagement with the

[29] Borrowing immensely from M. Foucault and Mikhail Bakhtin, Stuart Hall in 'For Allon White: metaphors of transformation' suggests that: "Metaphors of transformation must do at least two things. They allow us to imagine what it would be like when prevailing cultural values are challenged and transformed, the old social hierarchies are overthrown, old standards and norms disappear or are consumed in the 'festival of revolution', and new meanings and values, social and cultural configurations, begin to appear. However, such metaphors must also have analytic value. They must somehow provide ways of thinking about the relation between the social and symbolic domains in this process of transformation" (1996:287).

novel form in an altered South African state. The implication for these developments, however, is that no singular theoretical model would be sufficient to deal with the many issues that have come to define the post-apartheid imaginary. The critic, should, therefore, draw upon models that present themselves as relevant to the specific issues raised by individual narratives

In his reaction to the relevance of the TRC, Njabulo Ndebele in 'Memory, metaphor and the triumph of narrative', says of the chilling testimonies at the sittings: "These stories may very well be some of the first steps in *the rewriting of South African history on the basis of validated mass experience"*. (Ndebele 1998:20)[30] His submission that "where oppression is no longer a major defining characteristic of the social environment, the different features of our society will now emerge as aspects of a more complex definition of that environment" (Ndebele 27) seems to have anticipated the many thematic blocs identified above in the novels from 'new' South Africa. Although he does not specify what constitutes these "different features" his celebration of the triumph of the positive humanism of justice and equality of all over and above "oppression" as the "major defining characteristic of the social environment" during the apartheid era tends to suggest that Ndebele recognizes the defining sensibilities and ethnic particularities of the peoples of South Africa. These particularities notwithstanding, however, the victory of narration would grossly be dependent on the collective recognition and possible embrace of the shared experiences of the liberated people. These experiences are located in their collective history (Memory) and in the many symbolic idioms of their repression (Metaphor). While André Brink is very much inclined to the return to memory, he is more particular, however, with the formalistic dimension of memory in the creative process. The writer in a democratic South African state, he suggests, should not be preoccupied with "solving a mystery but demonstrating how historical mysteries are constructed in the first place" (Brink 1998:29-42). In this instance, content might be deliberately undermined for the more challenging task of constructing an enduring art rather than recreating the journalese that mark pure content and propaganda fiction. Brink had embraced the magico-realistic tradition in his concern to present an imaginative

[30] My emphasis.

recreation of the past because as he says, "Memory alone cannot be the answer. Hence my argument in favour of an imagined rewriting of history or, more precisely, of the role of the imagination in the dialectic between past and present, individual and society" (Brink 37).[31]

The historical method has the invaluable advantage that it allows for several reading patterns which combines traditional, critical, aesthetic responsiveness with Postcolonial inquisitions. It inheres the cultural artifact with "resonance" and "wonder." As Stephen Greenblatt (1989:271)[32] would say, its "interest lies not in the abstract universal but in particular, contingent cases". In the context of transition politics and fiction in a democratic South Africa, historical criticism[33] becomes particularly relevant given that the critic must necessarily excavate the historical conditions that created the immense violence and reprisals that marked the transition; the critic must dig out the informing rationale for the establishment of such epochal and phenomenal body such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), and weigh its achievements and failures against the background of the general expectations of the many victims of apartheid policies across colour boundaries; the critic must establish a demonstrable understanding of the tensions generated by alterity and the struggle for political leadership in the new dispensation.

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[31] Brink appears in the essay, 'Stories of history: reimagining the past in post-apartheid narrative' to present a framework for the reading and appreciation of his post-apartheid novels, especially *Imaginings of Sand* (1996) and *Devil's Valley* (1998). Both novels are indeed imagined recreations of the past. While the novels capture the realistic socio-historical memory of racial relations, political transition, the pastoral farm settings and the Afrikaner sentimental attachment to the South African land, the narrative structures hinge wildly on the weird. Characterization is a blend of the fantastical and the quotidian. Ouma Kristina turns to several forms in *Imaginings of Sand*; names like Lukas Death, Gert Brush, Jurg Water, Ben Owl etc in *Devil's Valley* suggest some engagements undertaken by these figures. History is at once evoked and defaced in the new novels of Brink.

[32] See Greenblatt, Stephen. 'Resonance and Wonder', in Philip Rice and Patricia Waugh, *Modern Literary Theory: A Reader*. (London: Arnold, 1996): 268-288.

[33]Historical criticism is not to be confused with literary history. Whereas literary history, as distinguished from theoretical and practical or applied criticism has to do with the evolution of a given, or the whole of literature, historical criticism is concerned with the setting up of background/historical information. In actual literary interpretation of the type with which I am concerned, however, all these models are brought into play where and when necessary for a proper textual illumination. This might not necessarily include 'Biographical Criticism', which is interested in the background information on the history, development and aspirations of the author or the individual producers of literature.

The sensitivity of a material belonging to which a people have immense sentimental attachment such as 'land' should interest the critic who must establish the basis why it has generated so much anger and frustration amongst the people; the moral symbolizations of such narrative form as 'confession' should equally interest the critic whose exegesis must establish the reason(s) for the narrative form. Above all, the historical critic must illustrate how the writers have transmuted these concrete developments of transition into imaginative literature. Practitioners of the historical method, Greenblatt had added, "have been more interested in unresolved conflict and contradiction than in integration; they are as concerned with the margins as with the center; and they have turned from a celebration of achieved aesthetic order to an exploration of the ideological and material bases for the production of this order" (Greenblatt 1996:268-288). It is precisely this interest in the margin and the centre, this concern for "symbolic overhaul" and "reshaping of dominant meanings" – indeed, this crave to "undercut thematically and formally the discourses which supported … the myths of power, the race classifications, the imagery of subordination" (Elleke Boehmer, 1995:3) that unite the historical and postcolonial discourses, and provide the best theoretical model for the reading of imaginative writing in the 'new' South Africa.[34] In establishing the historical moment of transition, therefore, I have attempted to examine the implication of alterity on the South African social formation on the one hand, and on the other, I have illustrated its implication for aesthetic representation.

André Brink's narration of alterity and the events that marked democratic rule in 1994 is the concern of ***Imaginings of Sand***. Set within this moment of transition, the novel addresses the tripartite issues of historical memory, violence and change that engaged many of the novelists in the post-apartheid South Africa of the early 1990s. Yet it is not so much the novelist's recourse to the excavation of the mythological assumptions that surround 'land ownership' that enthrals the reader so much as it is his manipulative blend of the fantastical and quotidian realities through female characterization to achieve these motifs which are as historical as they are contemporary in South Africa's socio-historical

[34] For further discussion on the neo-historicist model, see also Jerome J. Mcgann, ''The Text, the Poem, and the Problem of Historical Method' in Philip Rice and Patricia Waugh, *Modern Literary Theory: A Reader*, 251-268.

milieu. Brink's novels interrogate the myth of white superiority on the one hand, and gender politics, especially with the basic concern of inscribing the immense achievements of women in the narratives of the 'new' nation.

The confessional, autobiographical mode gives credibility to what seems to be novels of personal involvement and psychological affectation of the artists. Of course, the claim to confessionality has been challenged by several scholars who perceive the concept as divine by insisting that true confession can only emanate from a genuine demonstration of remorse rather than the crave for political amnesty which propelled many "confessants" during the TRC sittings. The liturgical idiom of confession is often associated with Christian adherents who attempt to demonstrate a keen sense of repentance or remorse after what the confessant considers sinful to humanity and to his creator. It is generally inspired by a genuine search for a spiritual purgation, and has endured the tides of time with the Catholic institution to which this cleansing ritual is most visible. The presiding officer for this ritual is often a highly venerated 'Man of God' in the form of a 'Reverend Father' or even his superior(s). Whether the political leadership of South Africa in the early years of the nation's democratic rule deliberately embraced this Christian doctrine of confession and forgiveness by appointing the most senior member of the Anglican Church, the Rt. Rev. (Arch Bishop) Dr. Desmond Tutu to preside over the newly inaugurated Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and who was also deputized by yet another very senior leader of the Methodist Church, Alex Boraine, is beyond the scope of this investigation. The privileging of the confessants with the substantial *quid pro quo* of political 'forgiveness' or amnesty, however, opened up the narrative of South Africa's sordid past even though the genuineness and sincerity of the perpetrators remain questionable.

Anthony Holiday has observed in 'Forgiving and Forgetting: the Truth and Reconciliation Commission' that "[T] he formulae of forgiveness… are outward signs of alterations to situations which are essentially inward, so that the public utterance of them does not of itself guarantee that the alteration has occurred" (Holiday 1998:45). The implication for this kind of reasoning is that the search for truth through confession as

applied in the case of the TRC is a mere charade since the only motivating element for the perpetrators was the hope for amnesty. Moreover, the mission of the Commission was truncated by what has been described as fundamental contradictions and ambiguities since "forgiveness in the name of peace has been elevated above justice in the name of principle" (Attwell & Harlow, 2000:2), and since the ultimate "challenge for literature, as for the rest of non-literary South Africa, will be to erect habitable structures on the foundations of remorse" (Heyns, 2000:63). Such pessimisms notwithstanding, however, there is hardly a better concept that captures the mood, pathos and sense of 'guilt' that resonate in several novels by white South African writers since the enthronement of democratic rule in 1994. Jo-Anne Richards' ***The Innocence of Roast Chicken*** addresses this intense sense of guilt and embarrassment with a feminist candour.[35] Richards' ***The Innocence*** is, to a convincing measure, a novel of nostalgia that draws immensely from the aesthetic of the confessional. I have explored Jo-Anne Richards' novels along the theme of the confessional genre, as a significant offshoot of the South African fiction after apartheid.

Some of the writers are visibly shaken by the survivalist efforts of the citizenry in the new regime – probably interrogating the long quest for freedom and drawing attention to the mirage that now appears to confront the African. But whereas many of the writers of post-apartheid South Africa address themselves to a consideration of issues of the past in their attempts to recreate life in the regrettable era of the separatist regime, it is Zakes Mda, perhaps more than any other artist, whose efforts in the novelistic genre has attained an admirable symbolic significance. His sustained interest in excavating the relics of the dismantled apartheid legislation has taken him beyond the prime of the 20th century, as he has resourcefully achieved an aesthetic interfusion of certain historical realities and mythological assumptions of his Xhosa people in ***The Heart of Redness***. In ***The Madonna of Excelsior***, a similar interest in the fallen apartheid mythologies had propelled him into recreating an aesthetic whole that examines the issue of miscegenation by especially highlighting the hypocrisy, profligacy and concupiscence of the white

[35] Richards' *The Innocence* is only a representation of a form, which is dominant among white South African writers.

farmers of Excelsior who exploited helpless black women during the days of "The Sexual Immorality Acts" that frowned against inter-racial sexual involvements.

The result is an imaginative retrieval and preservation of the cultural memory and historic struggles of the amaXhosa at the period of colonial encounter in the 19th century (***Heart of Redness***), the recreation of the sordid reality of politically motivated violence at the moment of transition to majority rule and the resilience and sense of struggle for the ordinary citizenry (***Ways of Dying***), the fraud, corruption and manipulation of corporate facilities by the emergent elites (***She Plays with the Darkness***) and a parodic revaluation of the infamous kangaroo-trial and exploitation of helpless black women during the apartheid era (***The Madonna of Excelsior***). By oscillating between the past and the present in his narrative structures, Mda's novels, in a way, become allegorical. Social harmony as basis for future progress becomes dependant on a consciousness of historical realities so that memory is not simply preserved for its own sake but for its contemporaneous socio-political and cultural relevance.

Whereas many of the novelists appear to be fascinated with pastoral environments (Coetzee, Brink, Richards, Mda, Wicomb, etc), some of the new writers have been particularly concerned with the effect of the urban space on the psyche of a helpless population desperately in need of survival. It is not as if the interest in the South African urban space is a new development. For, indeed, much of South Africa's novels of the past are basically novels of urbanity. Emerging from the new urban novels, however, is a new sense of multiculturalism and multiracialism that appear easily delineated in the novelists' preoccupations with the themes of xenophobia, homophobia, survival, gangsterism, and schizophrenia.[36]

Many of the new novels, it might be argued, are basically from white South Africans. This is, of course, true. Although one may be hesitant to defend the indefensible, no better alibi may be given at this point beyond the excuse that many black South Africans

[36] K. Sello Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* and *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, as well as Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* are good instances of this form.

were deprived of quality education and that many, indeed, were busy fighting for the liberation of the dispossessed. As Rosemary Jane Jolly rightly puts it, "The legacy left by apartheid to generations of blacks in the form of faux-tribalism, poverty, and mal-education, and the consequence of the latter, no education at all —all of this will continue to have an impact long into the apartheid future" (Jolly 1996:151). The South Africa of the past was so mischievously structured that the black population was confined to a zone where their escape from poverty would never be conjectured by the less perceptive.[37]

The South African novelist at the moment of democracy—black or white—has been responsive to this request at varying degree, and to sustain the euphoria emanating from the new creative freedom and general liberation of the citizenry, the challenge by Njabulo Ndebele for "a creative point of convergence" through which writers could embark on the task of rehabilitating the mundane is both timely and idyllic. This point of convergence, I believe, is locatable in the ideals of a common humanity devoid of colour boundaries, in a common education for all, in job opportunities for all, in medical and social amenities for everyone, in respect for one another and for the ability to love in spite of all odds. These are utopias achievable, at least, in narrative fiction, in whatever idiom they are expressed. The sado-masochism implicit in the arrogant or diffident bifurcations of South African literature into racial divides, given such humanist ideals, should, in the new dispensation, be thrown into the graveyards of literary museums.

IX.

The Post-Apartheid Imaginary and the Subject of Memory

A common bond for the writers is their recourse to memory. It does seem that the novel in a democratic South Africa will for a long time continue to draw from the spring of history. It is in memory, or precisely *historical memory*, that the symbolism of land, the

[37]In 'Memory, metaphor and the triumph of narrative', Ndebele (1998:23) captures the prevailing sentiments of the time: "Where (…) the enforcement of apartheid degenerated into a science of torture and death, in the general society it informed social habit. It occurs to me that in this general situation, black people were not hated as such; in time they simply became objects at the receiving end of elaborate institutionalized processes of maintaining domination. For those dispensing oppression, their jobs became an official vehicle for their received prejudices. Social conditioning and the work process became two sides to the same coin".

confessional, counter-violence at certain quarters, imaging the mundane, the ethics and humanism of transition seem to locate their foundations. Michael Chapman has observed: "Apartheid should not be too easily be forgotten. For the task of reconstructing the post-apartheid society is going to involve acts of massive interpretation in which the historical memory will be a crucial factor. We cannot know where we should go, what we should avoid, unless we know what has shaped us" (Chapman 1996:412) and Michiel Heyns, following Chapman's line of reasoning, has equally noted that "like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings, what contemporary South African fiction is most concerned with is the past, that past with which all white writers have such a troubled relation" (Heyns 2000:58). The business of this "massive interpretation" would necessarily, therefore, cut across disciplines; it would harness every ramification of humanity, be it sociological, judicial, educational, psychological, military and political, or even literary and cultural. Above all, it must exploit historical memory if the injustice of the past must be avoided for a more harmonious future.

The subject of Memory, it needs be observed, has been a field of intimate concern to scholars and practitioners since antiquity. Often equated with the process of 'remembering', memory as a field of discourse is synonymous with mnemonic studies that are primarily focused on the mental recordings of significant incidents and the processes of remembering that affect individuals and nations across historical epochs. Memory, in this regard, could be understood from the perspectives of the individual's personal significant experiences, or from the point of view of the many narratives of nations. It is in this respect that the subject of memory has transcended the boundaries of psychology with its preoccupation with the human mind, to cover such immense fields of scholarship as philosophy, sociology and anthropology and, in particular, literature.

In our specific situation, it is safe to proclaim that studies on memory pose some fundamental challenges for the student of the mnemonic, namely: How do we represent historical memory? Do we substitute *places* for *times*? And do we make *history* an *art of memory*? It is worthy of note that these are some of the manifestations in postmodernist representations of memory and history. In the post-apartheid narratives of Zakes Mda,

especially in ***Heart of Redness***, ***The Madonna of Excelsior***, and even in ***Ways of Dying*** and ***The Whale Caller***, one locates an aesthetic interplay between history and memory, space and location, in a united mode of a national recollection. The past-ness of the past exerts an autonomy that gets easily communicated in the resonances of contemporary socio-historical incidents authorized by that past. History and recollection get entangled in incidents that insist on being remembered: culture, social norms, religion, and in particular, politics, colonial domination and its consequent dispossession of the indigenous peoples all resist annihilation as visible sites of mnemonic representation.

In most post-apartheid South African narratives of memory, there is often an implicit sense of revivification that finds complicity in the many rudimentary proclamations of both black and white writers and literary commentators alike. André Brink's now ubiquitous calls for a "re-visit", a "re-invention", a "re-creation", and a "re-imagining" of the historical[38] is in consonance with J.M. Coetzee's seminal re-positioning of the "confessional narrative" and "white mythologies" within the context of the *plaasroman* tradition.[39] It equally, even if seen within the context of the representationality of class and social status, finds an ally in Njabulo Ndebele's affective request for a "re-discovery" of the ordinary[40] in the construction of the 'emergent' narratives to cover the diverse experiences of the historically disadvantaged.

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[38] André Brink has consistently called for 're-invention' of the past. In 'Interrogating Silence: new possibilities faced by South African literature', he reiterates this view. In the specific need to recreate 'silenced' identities, he believes in the necessity to imagine the real, and a "rediscovery of African magic realism". Significantly, he submits: "I recognize the regenerative powers of South African literature: not simply to escape from the inhibitions of apartheid but to construct and deconstruct new possibilities; to activate the imagination in its exploration of those silences previously inaccessible; to play with the future on that needlepoint where it meets past and present; and to be willing to risk everything in the leaping flame of the word as it turns into world" (p. 27). See Brink's essay in Derek Attridge and Rosemary Jolly (Eds), *Writing South Africa*: *Literature, apartheid, and democracy, 1970-1995*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 14-28.

[39] See J.M. Coetzee, 'Farm Novel and Plaasroman'. *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa*. (New Haven & London: Yale University Press): 63-81

[40] Njabulo Ndebele's concern in the project of 'Rediscovering the Ordinary' is geared towards creating a new paradigm of narrative interpretation that leans less on the sublime tradition, but more importantly in the need for writers to show less fascination with the predominantly political narratives that have tended to represent the South African imaginary as essentially reportorial and spectacular in ethics and aesthetics. See Ndebele, *Toward the Rediscovery of the Ordinary: Essays In South African Literature and Culture* (Johannesburg: COSAW, 1991; and the reissued version, Scottsville (South Africa): University of Kwazulu-Natal Press, 2006). He has continued with this line of argument by calling for "a creative point of convergence" in the new narratives of democratic South Africa. See also his essay, 'Liberation and the

How, then, do the global politics of recollection impact on South Africa and, indeed, the rest of the African continent? It is significant to observe that the tragedy of British imperialism and colonial usurpations of the socio-cultural spaces of the indigenous peoples of Africa was propelled by a capitalist dogma. The disruption of ethnic particularisms was, therefore, a given: if human lives meant little or nothing to the imperialist conquerors as evidenced in the many decapitations of the indigenous dissidents, as well as in the subjection of many of the women to objects of curious biological investigation in metropolitan Europe, the claims in Western scholarship to a civilizing mission in Africa become superlatively dubious. The over three centuries of imperialism, apartheid, and denigration of blacks in Africa assume colossal spaces in forms of memory, monument and history in the social, economic, and political lives of the people.

Again, in the context of South Africa, one observes that where apartheid narratives combine the verbal and the semiotic in fictional narratives with the monumental structures of apartheid repression in forms of concrete locations such as the Robben Island prisons, as well as in temporally specific resistances like the 1962 Sharpeville massacre, the 1976 Soweto uprising, the forceful and painful 'removals' of many black peoples to dubious 'homelands', the insensitive name-change to locations such as Sophiatown to Triomf, etc, it is the metaphorization of these insurgencies and 'racisms' in narratives that would ultimately traverse its original sites to locate topographies of remembrances for the global humanity. In other words, while the monuments and museums remain inert until animated by visitors to their specific locations, verbalized and fictional narratives are, literally speaking, equipped with organs of flight and are easily available for readers everywhere in the world. And while pictorial reports might be said to perform similar functions, pictures are only as functional as possible in its visual

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Crisis of Culture', in Elleke Boehmer, Laura Chrisman, and Kenneth Parker (Eds), *Altered State? Writing and South Africa*. (Sydney: Dangaroo Press, 1994).

impacts—certainly not for the blind— but sometimes lack the pains made possible by good verbal elaborations.[41]

Eviatar Zerubavel (1991) has elaborated on the discourse of memory and the representation of every day life in terms of 'islands of meaning' or 'mental archipelagos'. Applied in the context of post-apartheid South Africa, its relevance is, perhaps, better seen in the context of the nation's quest for truth and reconciliation. But the quest for truth must necessarily provoke mappings and remembrances: for, indeed, South Africa may be a "Rainbow" or even "Rambo" nation, but, still, a nation with too many memories. *Reconciliation* might, of course, lean on very little remembrances, but *truth* will insist on fundamental historical memories. In Zakes Mda's post-apartheid narratives, for instance, these memories find resonance in the aesthetic excavation of the Xhosa mythical and legendary Prophetess Nongqawuse, the colonial encounter, the systematic dispossession and killings of the indigenous population that followed, the quest for liberation, and the actualisation of political emancipation, and demise of the apartheid legislation. It also resonates in the reconstruction and retrieval of histories of the abuse of black womanhood by the champions of racial separatism. Four successive novels — ***Ways of Dying, She Plays With the Darkness, Heart of Redness,*** and ***The Madonna of Excelsior*** tell stories of South Africa's past and present, as the nation's present is continually haunted by its historical memories.[42]

Recollections considered 'national' are entirely selective; it is never impartial, and seems always geared toward serving certain political goals. Again, Edward Said: "Memory and its representations touch very significantly upon questions of identity, of nationalism, of power and authority. Far from being a neutral exercise in facts and basic truths, the study

[41] Pictures are, perhaps, more accessible to the literate and the illiterate; while narratives are the reserves of the highly educated. But where a single picture provides a single visual perspective, the novel provides multiple perspectives that subsume the landscape, the people and the narrative incidents. But narratives, whether fictional or as archival monuments, are all instruments of cultural disquiet, and as James Young suggests in 'The Art of Memory', all "memorial sites ensure that present life is lived as a constant negotiation with memory of the past'. It is in this way, partly, that we have a sense of "the dialogical character of monuments" (1994: 31).

[42] Although *She Plays With the Darkness* is set in the land-locked Lesotho, South Africa resonates, and is grossly implicated, in the political developments of the country.

of history, which of course is the underpinning of memory, both in school and university, is to some considerable extent a nationalist effort premised on the need to construct a desirable loyalty to an insider's understanding of one's country, tradition, and faith" (Said, 42). Placed within the context of South Africa's post-apartheid imaginary, an engagement in the mechanism of recollection poses also some problems. For, indeed, South Africa is a nation with too many memories. Writers cannot afford the luxury of a holistic narrative in a single novelistic exercise; every writer, it does seem, must necessarily be selective. Only by so doing, it follows to reason, can the multicultural dimensions of the nation's history be meaningful in narratives that draw upon the earliest Euro-African contact, colonialism and slavery, the Anglo-Boer, Anglo-African, Boer-African wars, the Boer Trek, the Zulu heroic antecedents, the narratives of the goldfields, and of the labour that serviced them, the Xhosa experiences, and the Nongqawuse mythical prophecies, the birth and exploitation of the Coloured population, the institutionalisation of apartheid, the Sharpeville massacre, the Black Consciousness Movement, the Soweto Youth uprising, the dehumanisation and imprisonment of many black political activists, the many apartheid repressive laws— pass laws, permits, Immorality laws, the emergence of black political leadership elite, and so on.

The intellectual culture amongst Africans and Africanists on the project of Africa's socio-historical and cultural recollection has provided some vibrant debates and informed positions on the mnemonic representation of the continent. Recent studies of contemporary mappings of memory counter Halbwachs' theorizing of recollection as inadequate in constructions of community memories. Richard Werbner, in ***Memory and the Postcolony*** (1998), for instance, argues that historical approaches to memory studies should be necessitated by a desire to demonstrate "[that] intractable traces of the past are felt on people's bodies, known in their landscapes, landmarks, and souvenirs, and perceived as the tough moral fabric of their social relations — sometimes the stifling, utterly unwelcome fabric" (Werbner, 2-3). In Africa, Werbner observes, postcolonial memory must subsume the experiences of the many participants that include "state officials and their unofficial opponents, elites and subalterns, church followers and

leaders, members of new and old social movements, generations of young and old" (Werbner, 2).

Narratives of memory in contemporary Africa, then, could be distinguished in terms of "state collapse, endemic civil war, festering post-liberation war disaffection, multiparty electioneering, repressive political show trials, neotraditionalism, authoritarian gerontocracy, and the uncertain reproduction of elites" (Werbner, 2-3). It does seem, however, that Werbner's notion of memory discourse in Africa is tied uniquely to pessimisms, and a sneering at the imagined psychological unpreparedness of Africa's new leadership. Where it is taken for granted that "state collapse", or for that matter, "post-liberation disaffection" is often the lot of newly liberated African states, the questions do arise: is the manipulation of the African elites by Euro-American capitalist oligarchy and their systematic truncation of socio-economic progress in the 'new' Africa not worthy of mnemonic investigation? Does land seizure and distribution in certain parts of the Southern African sub-region not constitute a significant statement in historical memory? Taking Werbner's reading much further, he proclaims: "In many places, people bring powerful, sometimes intimately painful traces of the colonial as well as the postcolonial past to bear on their present politics" (Werbner, 2). What we find, then, is that in the construction of national heritages, individual experiences are brought to aggregate for collective and shared experiences. In particular, we locate the state's systematic appropriation of personal encounters in the construction of national memories. Where the TRC was to engage in the excavation of psychological traumas of hidden memories in South Africa, for instance, the Justice Oputa Panel in Nigeria was to reveal, amongst other things, the shenanigans that led to the genocide against the Igbo in the 1960s, just as the Catholic and Justice Commission was to engage with colonial atrocities in Zimbabwe.

In a rather engaging study, 'Smoke from the Barrel of a Gun: Postwars of the Dead, Memory and Reinscription in Zimbabwe', Richard Werbner notes that postcolonial nation-building in much of Southern African sub-region was founded on the barrel of the gun. Werbner's determination in presenting memory as public practice, confining his

analysis to developments in postcolonial Zimbabwe —and by extension the rest of the Southern African sub-region — is informed by what he described earlier as "unfinished narratives"[43] that come with systematic projects of forgetting. His discussion of the postliberation politics in the region as involving more of quasi-nationalism, or what he calls "the dark side of nationalism" (Werbner, 92-97), appears to interrogate the continued deployment of nationalist sentiments by the postcolonial leadership in the monumentalization of anti-colonial heroism.[44] But while he is vocal in the negative assessment of Mugabe and the so-called (?) post-colonial liberators, Werbner is mute in his sense of 'Memory as public practice', in illuminating memories of colonialist appropriation of land, and the conspiracy of Western capitalist oligarchies in aborting the socio-economic stability and progress of any of the newly liberated nations that show enormous interest in redressing the injustice of the colonialists' greed.

If memory construction in the new era is then seen by the indigenous peoples to be marked by, among other things, the post-liberation leaders' attitude and handling of the crisis of land appropriation and re-distribution, Werbner's notion of 'quasi-nationalism' might turn out to be 'progressive nationalism' to a large segment of the indigenous population who might wish to consider the very act of re-possession a site of memory[45]. Of immense relevance, however, is what Werbner describes as 'The cosmic trace' (Werbner, 98-99), where "the past looms large as violation". As he puts it: "The importance of cosmic trace for postcolonial nationhood is all the more striking when the comparison is drawn with other Southern African nations born virtually at the barrel of the anti-colonial gun. In Zimbabwe, as elsewhere in the region, the work of imagining the nation has been in great measure the memory work of coming to terms with past political

[43] "Unfinished narratives", he asserts, implies "popular history in which the past is perceived to be unfinished, festering in the present — these are narratives which motivate people to call again and again for a public resolution to their predicaments" (Werbner, 1998: 9).

[44] Werbner describes this as implicit in Robert Mugabe's "Moral High Ground" (ibid, 88-89).

[45] It is instructive that in spite of the Western media's continued demonization of the Mugabe regime since his embrace of the land re-possession and re-distribution policy, his popularity has continued to grow with astounding alacrity amongst the indigenous peoples wherever he visits within the region. The ululations and accolades he received during the second inauguration of Thabo Mbeki as President of South Africa in Pretoria (Tswane) in 2004 was unsurpassed; assessments of greatest African leaders of all times have continued to feature Mugabe amongst the first ten. Memory, therefore, only has meaning to what the memorabilia, action, monument, and the pronounced does to the memoree.

violence which is dual in nature— both anti-colonial, in a sense thus being external, and also internal, traumatically directed against a collective enemy within the nation". If Zimbabwe is exceptional in monumentalising anti-colonial heroism through its re-possession of landscapes and of the "land's human remains", as Werbner reasons, is there any guarantee that postcolonial leaderships in the rest of the region will not eventually follow the same pattern? For, in the final analysis, memory construction of the type vitiated in Werbner's theorizing is only a function of a political will.

The ethical, social, and cultural politics of remembering and forgetting — even for nations evolving from the barrel of the gun— would at the end, however, be greatly influenced by many external sites of power that subsume the electronic and print media, the multinational financial bodies, the CNN, BBC, World bank, and the IMF, as well as the dominant Western nations and their capitalist and neo-imperialist agencies who would always attempt to locate and create areas of internal dissidence within, otherwise, peaceful postcolonial African nations. Attempts to caution emerging subversive elements would ultimately ensure a recurrent cycle of internal violence, and construction of memories within the post-colonies.[46]

To take the argument further: in 'Africans' Memories and Contemporary History of Africa', Jewsiewicki and Mudimbe (1993) examine the nexus between the construction of Africa in the Western imaginary and what seems, from the surface, as a combatant, revolutionary responses from many African intellectuals in the decades following the second world war. Disturbed particularly by the fact that "oral and performative reconstructions of the past" are overwhelmingly displaced in the written historiographies of the continent, they contend that the performative should be taken as authentic forms of narrative since, *telling, painting, singing, sculpting,* etc, contribute some of the preservationist forms in postcolonial Africa, and more so because in its privileged chauvinism, the written narratives valorise academic empiricism over the normative and

[46] Recent developments in Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ivory Coast, etc (with raging wars) illustrate these claims. The destruction of the Ivorien Air Force by the nation's former colonial masters, France, is as good an example as similar instances in Zimbabwe, Rwanda, Liberia, Angola and Sierra Leone.

hereditary historiographies of the African peoples. "The scientific spirit", they argue, "the desire to conquer the world and submit to the logic of rational thought, tends to eliminate *magic, mythologies,* and the supposedly *irrational*" (Jewsiewicki & Mudimbe, 5). While observing the "chronological fluctuations of orality", they also reason that "[R]ecourse to oral tradition is obviously not specific to African historiography" (Jewsiewicki & Mudimbe, 2). The temporal dimension to the investigations of memory and historicity in postcolonial narratives, then, calls for a recognition not only of the many historiographies — oral and written — of the colonized subject, but also in the subject's recollection of the many interactions within time frames that project into a future humanity.

The past and the present are delineated in ways that recognize the implicit influence(s) of the past to the construction of the reality effects of the present. Jewsiewicki and Mudimbe theorize this temporal ramification in terms of the epistemological paradigms presented in western taxonomies of the African humanity, the challenges of building a universal humanity, and the alternative possibilities available to the subjects confronted with inclement and unbalanced competitive terrains. They reason: "The secularization of epistemology goes hand in hand with the affirmation of linear epistemology. Thus the seat of authority and the mechanisms for legitimating normality change. The time of history and of collective memory (culturally Judeo-Christian) provides the basis for the objectivization of the world, and thus for a new definition of alterity. It is no longer a question of including or translating the other in its subjectivity which characterizes Christian historiography. Western epistemology claims that it exclusively controls true knowledge, and thus is purportedly supported by the evidence of what exists and what has happened. Only such an epistemology is permitted to picture the future in terms of the present produced by the past in the right direction, the direction of progress" (Jewsiewicki & Mudimbe, 6). The notion of a-temporality often proclaimed in the western academe in the pronouncements on the ontological basis of the African humanity[47] is then counteracted by "African literary constructions of the historicity of human beings in Africa" which, as Jewsiewicki and Mudimbe observe, "is organized by several central factors" such as the quest for cultural identity through a return to Africa's

[47] They cite the Rev Placide Temple's *Bantu Philosophy* to support their claims.

cultural past, a delineation of the temporal space between traditionalism and modernism, the participation of the emergent elite class in the construction of a nexus between "these two temporalities", an embrace of an empirically verifiable framework in the making of the new narratives, and the recognition of the historical identity of Africa's collective memory[48].

The perception of a number of African scholars devoted to mnemonic retrievals in the continent has been particularly interesting. Unlike the Western notions of the mnemonic that tend to focus on abstract theorizing, the African contributions adopt a more pragmatic method of looking at the problem of recollection as it concerns the continent. To this extent, the emphasis is not so much on the ontological basis of memory as it is the question of agency. And in spite of the generational gap that mark their studies, three South African black scholars easily come to mind: Es'kia Mphahlele's ***The African Image*** (1974 [1962]), Njabulo Ndebele's ***The Rediscovery of the Ordinary*** (1991), and Bhekizizwe Peterson's ***Monarchs, Missionaries, and African Intellectuals: African Theatre and the Unmaking of Colonial Marginality*** (2000), provide some very interesting positions toward the understanding of the African mind, with respect to the historical and cultural memory of the black's humanity. As projects of national — and,

[48] Jewsiewicki and Mudimbe write of these factors to subsume "first, resurrection in returning to one's roots in Jerusalem, understood as a purification; second, a rupture between the original time of Africanism (*africanité*) and the time of African modernism (*modernité*); third, the central role of a socio-intellectual category of intermediaries, of quasi-apostles (not to say Messiahs) in the establishment of a link between these two temporalities; fourth, the role of the scientific construction of the historical narrative in order to re-establish this link; finally, the necessarily historical character of a collective consciousness" (p.8). There is, of course, an echo of Pierre Nora's theorizing of the 'Sites of Memory' in their submissions. Both contend that history, tradition, and memory are not entirely distinguishable from one another, just as history itself is susceptible to political manipulation. They observe the definitional difficulty in any serious theorizing of the concept of memory, especially as an idiom expressive of collective consciousness: "Indeed, it is difficult to define collective memory. Collective memory is not that of an organic group whose faculty of recall would be similar to the personal memory of an individual; rather, collective memory is a means of producing meanings which belong to a political field. Seen in this light, individual memory and collective memory are in dialogue. Collective memory does not signify facts about the past: it is above all a semantic code for retrieving memories, for making sense out of historical details in direct relation to political legitimacy. Recollection is neither an account nor a list, such as genealogy, but a meaningful configuration of selected, negotiated events around "Sites of memory" or "Les Lieux de memoire". While not necessarily producing an account, a site of memory— which might be, for instance, a hero, an image, a place— recollection organizes individual and collective memory, accords variable importance to events, especially to traumatic events, thus tying the past to the present in and for each person. In so doing, sites of memory construct a community, and dictate the categorical exclusion of those who do not participate in the recollection" (1990: 10).

certainly continental— commemorations, the three studies provide illuminating positions of the African encounter with the West on the one hand, and the experiences of the African as a racial *Other* in his own territory, as constructed and projected by the minority white-settler regimes.

In Es'kia Mphahlele's ***The African Image***, for instance, memory consists in the awareness by the African of the cultural life of the black peoples; their sense of pride derived by a sustained and systematic battle against all conniving elements that had denigrated their humanity since Africa's earliest contacts with Oriental and Western civilizations; slavery and slave trade, Christian evangelism, colonialism, apartheid's racism, and allied Western conspiracies against the black peoples of the world. Memory consists in an unflinching embrace of Africa, the celebration of "the African image" in our individual and collective efforts toward the psychological and political liberation of every African and the black peoples in the Diaspora. It involves a conscious return to Africa's historical and cultural pride, and would involve an excavation of what he calls "the basement of your personality" (Mphahlele 1974 [1962]: 39). For the African, it is a function of memory that not only does s/he have to assert his/her identity in the midst of hostile Western arrogance, but s/he also has "to cope with what *they* left on your mind" (Mphahlele 41). It is in this respect that Mphahlele's assessment of the influence of Islam and Christianity in colonizing the African mind urges a systematic and conscious effort in dismantling colonial marginality of Africans. For him, then, "[T]he question should not be whether we can go back to ancestral worship. It should be whether, in the genuine belief that our ancestors as part of history can, if we allow them, help us snap out of the trance into which we were thrown by Western education so that we can use it to advance the interests of a whole nation, not an elite" (Mphahlele 49). Implicit in Mphahlele's reasoning, however, is a cultural nationalism that, in spite of its plausibility at a moment of siege, does not project a progressive, post-crisis national sensibility at the levels of multiracialism and multiculturalism.[49]

[49] It is important to observe here, however, that Mphahlele's opinions have since changed. He has mellowed down significantly from his earlier firebrand rejection of Western thoughts that attempt to stifle African humanism in its various manifestations. See Lesibana Jacobus Rafapa's recent study, *The*

While Mphahlele focused on the originary and ontological complicities of Arabic and Christian religions with Western imperialism in dehumanising Africans, Njabulo Ndebele is more attuned to the implications of such complicities, especially with the later recourse to, and visitation of the Afrikaners' repressive apartheid violence on the contemporary African. Ndebele's isolation of what he describes as "the quintessence of obscene social exhibitionism" (Ndebele 1991:37)[50] amongst the white settler community in South Africa is the reason he poses a challenge to the 'emergent' South African writer passionately concerned with the aesthetic construction of the people's collective memory. This collective memory, for Ndebele, finds expression in the Afrikaner-led apartheid government's relationship with the black population— a memorable liaison which he so eloquently captures in ***The Rediscovery of the Ordinary***: "Everything in South Africa has been mind-bogglingly spectacular: the monstrous war machine developed over the years; the random massive pass raids; mass shootings and killings; mass economic exploitation the ultimate symbol of which is the mining industry; the mass removals of peoples; the spate of draconian laws passed with the spectacle of parliamentary promulgations; the luxurious life-styles of whites: servants, all encompassing privilege, swimming pools, and high commodity consumption; the sprawling monotony of architecture in African locations, which are the very picture of poverty and oppression" (Ndebele 37).

These features, naturally, constitute a fundamental part of the many memories of the black population of South Africa. And while Ndebele's aesthetic does not pretend to be specifically focused on the subject of 'Memory' as a theoretical paradigm, the pervasive manifestation of the history and politics of the South African social formation at the moment of siege indicate a conscious attempt to address what he calls "spectacular injustice" in apartheid South Africa, and the role of literature in redressing apartheid

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Representation of African Humanism in the Narrative Writings of Es'kia Mphahlele (Johannesburg: Stainbank Associates, 2006), for a discussion of Mphahlele's positions on this subject.

[50] Of course, while urging for more profundity in character delineation, Ndebele is evidently repulsed by the kind of narrative sensationalism that tends toward the spectacular. To this end, he suggests "an uncompromising toughminded creative will to build a new civilisation". For, after all, "no civilization worth the name will emerge without the payment of disciplined and rigorous attention to detail" (p. 37). See Njabulo Ndebele, *The Rediscovery of the Ordinary: Essays in South African Literature and Culture*. (Johannesburg: COSAW, 1991): 37-57.

brutality. The suggestion that cultural workers, and specifically writers should embrace 'the ordinary' against 'the spectacular' is then understood within the context of healing a troubled historical and cultural memory. The ordinary, he says, "is defined as the opposite of the spectacular. The ordinary is sobering rationality; it is the forcing of attention on necessary detail. Paying attention to the ordinary and its methods will result in a significant growth of consciousness" (Ndebele 50)[51]. But Ndebele, it does seem, is not entirely given to the espousal of a purely pragmatic theory of art and this, in a way, constitutes a fundamental contradiction in the project of rediscovering the ordinary. The entire basis and logic of rediscovering the ordinary is meant to *change* a social perception; construct a new social humanity, and explore every possibility in the process. But Ndebele's seminal contribution, here, is ambivalent. For, while he believes that literary and the rest of the cultural workers should take the task of constructing a new society, he is equally suspicious of such a possibility. "If it is a new society we seek to bring about in South Africa then that newness will be based on a direct concern with the way people actually live" (Ndebele 55), he writes, yet asserts: "Literature cannot give us lessons, but it can only provide a very compelling context to examine an infinite number of ethical issues which have a bearing on the satisfaction of people towards the development of the entire range of culture?" (Ndebele 53) The ambivalence of Ndebele's reasoning, here, is as eloquent as his termination of the assertion in the interrogative.

Elsewhere, in 'Liberation and the Crisis of Culture', Ndebele takes the challenges further. He writes of a 'crisis of culture' subsisting in 'the crisis of transition', a development, which, he suggests, should "culminate in the emergence of something new". Ndebele itemizes problem areas in a liberated South Africa to subsume those of "education, health, manpower, and the crucial area of the redistribution of land", and since, for him, writers are in a good stead to point to a direction of a progressive humanity, he calls for "a creative point of convergence such as would inspire a universal confidence that our strivings towards a viable national culture are based on as inclusive an understanding as

[51] As a representational strategy, the appeal for an embrace of 'the ordinary'— in spite of its popular appeal— is fundamentally problematic. I shall in the course of this chapter demonstrate this flaw in the reading of Mda's *Ways of Dying*.

possible" (Ndebele 1994:1-9)[52]. In 'Memory, Metaphor, and the Triumph of Narrative', however, Ndebele's interpretation of the operation of the TRC in a democratic South Africa clarifies his conception of the functional modes of memory. With time inhering on the "recall of memory the power of reflection associated with narrative", he suggests that "the stories of the TRC represent a ritualistic lifting of the veil and the validation of what was actually seen" (Ndebele 1998:20), with the implication that the transition process is seen to shift from "repression to expression" (Ndebele, 20). Memory, then, would consist in "the writing of South African history on the basis of validated mass experience". Like Mphahlele's, Ndebele's essays often highlight the racial dilemma in South Africa, especially on how the complicity of the two major white settler communities — Boer and Briton— have teamed up to truncate the psychological and socio-cultural identity of the indigenous people. But in spite of the fact that both scholars are often venomous and brutal in their condemnation of white racism, Ndebele, in 'Memory, Metaphor, and the Triumph of Narrative', appears more compassionate in pointing the way forward for a liberated South Africa. In his words, "We cannot afford to condone any aspect of racism at a time when racism should be permanently buried. Let all the stories be told. The gift of our freedom partly lies in our ability to ensure that where oppression is no longer a major defining characteristic of the social environment, the different features of our society will now emerge as aspects of a more complex definition of that environment"(Ndebele 1998: 27).

Mphahlele and Ndebele's essays pose unique challenges in locating the post-apartheid imaginary. What, for instance, does it mean to think 'newness' in the context of a liberated South Africa? How does the cultural worker, writer or critic alike, confronted with the challenges imposed by the liberalism of the new order respond to his new sense of freedom? What is the nature of responses to be anticipated from the violated *Other*? How should the black peoples of South Africa define themselves in the context of their altered identities from the previously disenfranchised *Other* to wielders of political authority? What are the new mannerisms deployed by the white bourgeoisie to retain

[52] Njabulo, Ndebele. 'Liberation and the Crisis of Culture', *Altered States? Writing and South Africa*, (Eds) Elleke Boehmer, Laura Chrisman, and Kenneth Parker (Sydney: Dangaroo Press, 1994): 1-9.

other kinds of power— 'economic and cultural control'— following the surrender of certain political privileges? It does seem that the location of the post-apartheid imaginary can only be meaningful from a totalising apprehension of the theoretical and analytical projections of our discourse, so far, as well as in a sensitive appraisal of apartheid's political imagination. In other words, it is implicit in an unsentimental consciousness of the historical imagination.

Memory, in this instance, assumes political and representational functions. It interrogates the many structures of domination and its sustenance, especially in the cultural instruments where language media remain paramount to the holders and wielders of authority. Bhekizizwe Peterson (1994) writes of a 'predominance of coercion' as instrument of sustenance of apartheid and colonial domination of the black peoples of South Africa. Aspects of this sense of "the historical predominance of coercion as the base of hegemony" manifest in the primal imposition of the settlers' languages for official engagements. This implies the compulsive privileging of 'English and Afrikaans'— which constitute the languages of the two settler white communities[53] over the African indigenous languages. Language remains, in this sense, a 'site' for power and control. While the liberalism of the new order allows for the deployment of eleven languages even at parliamentary discussions, the dilemma arising from the effort to please everyone is not lost to any perceptive observer: there is always a chance for conversational anarchy and semantic incoherence in a 'rainbow' dialogue. Equally important in this regard is the submission by Norman Fairclough (1994) that "those who hold power at a particular moment have to constantly reassert their power, and those who do not hold power are always liable to make a bid for power", an affirmation of the view that "language is both a site of and a stake in class struggle, and those who exercise power through language must constantly be involved in struggle with others to defend (or lose) their power" (Fairclough, 34-35)[54].

[53] See Bhekizizwe Peterson, 'Apartheid and the Political Imagination in Black South African Theatre', in Liz Gunner (Ed), *Politics and Performance: Theatre, Poetry and Song in Southern Africa*. (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1994): 35-54.
[54] Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power*. (London & New York: Longman).

If 'the political imagination' of apartheid in Black South African theatre, and, indeed, across the genres of literature subsumes a "predominance of coercion as the base of hegemony" as Peterson argues, then, the post-apartheid imagination would involve not only an aesthetic construction of the present, and the prognostication of the future; it would also fundamentally embrace a historical memory, especially in the 're-invention' of the apartheid imaginary in both its total contexts, and in its construction of the post-apartheid imaginary. Michael Chapman makes an important suggestion in this regard: "[a]partheid should not be too easily be forgotten. For the task of reconstructing the post-apartheid society is going to involve acts of massive interpretation, in which the historical memory will be a crucial factor. We cannot know where we should go, what we should avoid, unless we know what has shaped us" (Chapman 1996: 412). The temporal delineations of the present and the future would then be only as relevant and engaging to the extent that it builds on a tacit recognition and awareness of the experiences and manifestations of the past.

Whether it is in fictional narratives, poetry, or even the theatre, one observes, here, then, as Peterson suggests, that "[T]he representation of history has been an important preoccupation of black performance" (Peterson 1994: 44). In the context of the 'new' South Africa, the *representation* of historical memory constitutes the *presentation* of the collective and shared experiences of the entire community and, more importantly, the *recovery* and *retrieval* of the cultural, socio-economic, and political life of the oppressed peoples. Historical memory in this way serves as a 'mental stand' or a 'spatial order' as 'symbolic images' become, in the phraseology of Albert Hunter, "shared or collective representations" where "individuals must have the means, varying needs, and abilities to draw on ... local culture to define and delimit meaningful symbolic communities" (Hunter 1982:7).[55] But Peterson takes the argument further as he attempts to locate the responses of African intellectuals in the Eurocentric denigration of the African humanity. In his exploration of the theatrical externalizations of "the complicated ways in which African theatre was implicated in the contestation of colonial knowledge and authority, and in the

[55] Hunter, Albert. 1982 [1974]. *Symbolic Communities: The Persistence and Change of Chicago's Local Communities*. (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press).

creation of an African epistemology", Peterson draws attention to the unique persistence and drive demonstrated by the African peoples in the 'unmaking of colonial marginality'. Significantly, Peterson reasons that "the African monarch found himself more often than not in the middle of narrative development and denouement in most of the plays" he studied, as well as in "the novels written by the emergent Zulu intelligentsia before 1940" (Peterson 2000: 4, 7). He observes that "[E]ven where the King is absent or marginal, his interests are adequately represented by the many patriarchs who populate the stories" (Peterson, 7).

Emerging from Peterson's study is the place of representational strategy in this project of postcolonial responses. He locates what he calls "a seamles narrative by allegory" as a basic representational strategy deployed by a number of the writers, a form which, he admits, "tend to flourish in periods undergoing profound social transformation, when the certitudes of old beliefs and epochs are violently called into question" (Peterson, 19). The many contributions of African monarchs, missionaries, and intellectuals in the struggles against colonial domination and enslavement — aspects of the historical and cultural memories of the African peoples— is the concern of Peterson's ***Monarchs, Missionaries, and African Intellectuals*****,** and it is important to note that the 'emergent' writers at the time took it upon themselves to respond in essays, narratives, and plays, to the euro-centric perception of Africa as a historical and cultural void. Drawing upon bell hooks, he submits that "despite their small numbers and peripheral location, the African intelligentsia were cognisant of the margins as a space of resistance" (Peterson, 222)[56]. The relevance of Peterson's investigations to the post-apartheid black South African novel in general is evident in many ways. One way of looking at this is to establish the synthesis of the interplay between memories of oppression and the struggles for physical and socio-psychological liberation, the offshoot of which, in the context of the struggles for emancipation, leads to various ramifications of violence. In any case, the moments of political transition to South Africa's democratic non-racialism is, more than anything

[56] Like Dhlomo's, there is also, here, an "attempt to imagine a form of nationalism that while profoundly local in its form and elaboration, retains an internationalist dimension as an indispensable part of itself". See Bhekizizwe Peterson, *Monarchs, Missionaries, and African Intellectuals: African Theatre and the Unmaking of Colonial Marginality*. (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 2000): 227.

else, defined by patterns of violations. In several narrative representations after apartheid, we witness various forms of violations that transgress racial boundaries, and this is reason for our inquest into the aesthetic of violation in the next segment of this discussion.

X.

The Post-Apartheid Imaginary and the Discourse of Violence

In attempting to theorize 'Violence', one is equally engaged with the task of unveiling a most fruitful method of apprehending the historical and cultural personality of the African, whatever the region. We have already observed the many centuries of violations to which Africans were subjected, following the encounter with Arabic and European civilizations. In the specific context of South Africa, in particular, violence assumes an overwhelming presence.

Violence, it is important to observe, here, is "distinct from power, force, or strength"[57]. In a simple idiom, violence connotes a lack of willingness; it projects an image of a victim and a perpetrator; it evokes memories of sadism, and sometimes, of sado-masochism. Violence entails a displacement; an injury; a physical or mental agony inflicted on a person, animal, or even the environment. Violence could be verbal in crude and insensitive usages of dehumanizing and humiliating idioms; violence could be cultural in terms of specific ethnic identities founded on the basis of retaining control over the weak and helpless; it manifests in sexual attitudes to men and women across cultures; to certain kinds of revered animals; to property inheritance, and even in nature's implicitly unpredictable relationship with humankind in forms of draught, earth tremors, and tidal waves. Violence is a defining principle and, certainly one of the architects of human creation. In African discourses of memory, a recurrent decimal is the colonial violence against the colonized subjects: this form of violence— often associated with Christian evangelism, and the consequent dismissal of African mannerisms— is both political and cultural in its devastating effects on the colonial subjects.

[57] See, for instance, Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*. (Allen Lane: The Penguin Press, 1970).

It is this form of displacement arising from a calculated colonial domination that Hannah Arendt probably had in mind when she argues: "The very substance of violent action is ruled by the means-end category, whose chief characteristic, if applied to human affairs, has always been that the end is in danger of being overwhelmed by the means which it justifies and which are needed to reach it. Since the end of human action, as distinct from the end products of fabrication, can never be reliably predicted, the means used to achieve political goals are more often than not of greater relevance to the future world than the intended goals" (Arendt 1970:4). "Violence", she adds, "harbors within itself an additional element of arbitrariness".[58]

In fictional narratives, it has been suggested that the representations of violence sometimes terminate in a violence of representation. In what they describe as "the violence of the productive hypotheses", Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse observe the narratological device implicit in the construction of protagonists whose sense of identity finds location in their ability to dominate other actants. The process of actualising such an individual's ambition eventuates in "the violence of the productive hypotheses", or "the violence", so that the representation of violence, in the end, becomes "the violence of representation" best defined in the context of "the suppression of difference" (Armstrong & Tennenhouse 1989: 8). If the reasoning of Armstrong and Tennenhouse is a little clouded, it finds support and clarification in J.M. Coetzee's observation of the immense violence implicit in the representation of "the native" and "the boor" in early European travellers' narratives about Africa. In 'Idleness in South Africa', Coetzee (1989: 119-139) illuminates the force and arrogance with which Western anthropologists, travellers and chroniclers vitiated the pride and identity of the indigenous peoples of Africa in their process of finding justifications for their later enslavement and colonization of the people. 'Idleness' becomes a recurrent idiom amongst other negative classificatory paradigms that point to the native as lazy, infantile, promiscuous, unhygienic, and cannibalistic. That the Hottentot (and later the Boor) would be perceived in these ways in the Western imaginary, Coetzee notes, points to the

[58] Arendt suggests that Governments often use violence in maintaining power. To this end, violence becomes a medium. As she puts it, "violence is by nature instrumental; like all means, it always stands in need of guidance and justification through the end it pursues" (p. 51).

European's insensitivity and deluded sense of superiority in their obsession with defining *difference*, using euro-centric paradigms, without sparing a thought for the sensibilities of the *Other* as a possible statement to a humankind so desperate in its quest for the Edenic idyll.

In a way, South Africa provides fascinating paradigms in theorizing the nature, functions and typologies of violence. With a violence of representation that is as antiquarian as it is contemporaneous, the representation of violence in the historiography of the post-apartheid narratives resonate with a violence of representation that find eloquence in systematic suppressions of actual experiences by governmental agencies on the one hand, and, on the other, the deliberate manipulation of truth by some activists so as to promote the hype of the victim. In this context, the conflict is inherent in the propaganda that manifests in self-justifying civil codes and the social immorality of the edicts. Writing in 'The Context and Interpretation of Violence', Robert J. Thornton (1990: 217-236) examines how the attempt to commemorate the Sharpeville massacre in 1985 led to a unique form of 'violence' in the South African border town of Uitenhage. The government's paranoia and trepidation over any form of mass revolt led to an immoral banning of funeral ceremonies. But the dead must be buried, and in an attempt to bury the dead, the masses must necessarily defy the law. The shooting that followed led to the killing of 29 members of the public— mourners— by government's security agents. Thornton's recognition of "legitimate" and "illegitimate" forms of violence enables his theorizing of violence to seek the semantic turns of the concept beyond the explanatory: "Violence itself, raw and unthought, is meaningless. Whether or not violence is taken to be coercive, or the extent to which it can be seen as resistance, depends on the complex interplay of points of view, modes and metaphors of power and legitimation, and the narratives in which it is subsequently cast" (Thornton, 218).

The specific incident at Uitenhage, in spite of its symbolic significance to the many South Africa's rituals of political violence, Thornton suggests, "was not the consequence of conflict or caused by the direct intervention of political or administrative power. Violence was the very form of the social interaction itself. *Violence of this kind* like violence in

religious sacrifice, literature, dreams, sexual relationships, and friendship, *must be understood in relation to the representations of community, self, and identity with which it is linked in the daily habits of mind and body*" (Thornton, ibid, 229; emphasis added).

Read from the perspective of the ordinary citizenry as victim of state power, violence resonates with a tragic essence. Its representation in fictional narratives— however ornamented or aestheticized— constantly rekindles the victim's imagination as he traverses between memory and amnesia. In a chapter on tragedy and the ends of history in his ***The Culture of Violence*** (1993), Francis Barker draws attention to the crisis of memory in early modern tragedy, and suggests that as observers, we are virtually handicapped, except to "witness in tragedy a compelling sense of the ways in which the problematics of forgetfulness and paranoid recall invest the figuration of power, and those in which remembrance and amnesia traverse the forms of resistance" (Barker 212). Even while admitting that "historicism and its culturalist avatars and recensions have ever been symbiotes" (Barker, 211), Barker is of the view that culture plays fundamental roles in social domination and considers "political power and social inequality" as "seductive strategies" for inflicting violence upon the people (Barker 1993: x).

Barker's conceptualisation of culture, here, evokes, in a way, the Arnoldian notion of 'Culture and Anarchy'. For Matthew Arnold, one recalls, heterogeneity is somewhat synonymous with violence. As he puts it, "when people become acculturated, they are simultaneously subjected to rational control. Culture gives authority the ultimate justification— inherent value; in addition, by training subjects, it makes coercive subjection redundant".[59] In South Africa, violence developed to the level of being considered 'a culture', attracting immense humanistic scholarship as well as in imaginative writing. What Peterson earlier described as a 'predominance of coercion' now resonates in varying forms within civilian and regimented communities, and became the single most significant undoing of the transition era politics of the 1990s. So

[59] See, for instance, Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse's introduction to *The Violence of Representation: Literature and the History of Violence*. (London & New York: Routledge, 1989): 20. Observe also that while Arnold "aestheticizes the terms of domination and subordination", Barker contends that within these binaries are the very ingredients of anarchy: "the signs of crisis must be apprehended as the symptoms, the symptomisations, the very symptomatology, of crisis itself" (Barker, 1993): 214.

pervasive was violence during the period that it certainly constitutes a fundamental part of the nation's 'many memories'. In fictional representations, we witness ramifications of violations in narratives as varying as Zakes **Mda's *Ways of Dying***, André Brink's ***Imaginings of Sand*** and ***Devil's Valley***, Mike Nicol's ***The Ibis Tapestry***, Nadine Gordimer's ***The House-Gun***, J. M. Coetzee's ***Disgrace***, Jo-Anne Richards' ***The Innocence of Roast Chicken***, and ***Touching the Lighthouse*****,** Pamela **Jooste's *Dance With A Poor Man's Daughter***, amongst others. So resonant is the element of violations in many of the post-apartheid novels of English expression that it is safe to think of 'Violence' as constituting a significant paradigm in narratives of the 'new' South Africa even though the nature of these violations is nothing compared to the systematic forms of repressions that defined much of apartheid's 'protest' narratives.

In other words, while violence – whether physical or psychological – is still very much an issue in the new novels, it is nothing compared to the propagandist fiction that brought the shame of apartheid and the brutality of state's security agencies to the attention of the world. In the anti-apartheid novels of resistance, violence was easily predictable and had focused essentially on inter-racial conflicts, as well as the romanticization of the black experience as we find in Serote's ***To Every Birth***, for instance, or the brutality of the police and prison warders (***Robben Island, A Walk in the Night****, etc)*; In many of the new novels, violence in both its physical and psychological forms follow a discernible pattern: occasionally inter-racial, but predominantly intra-racial. The gory family tales that end the story, for instance, reduce the thuggery and political violence that mark the political transition to majority rule in Brink's ***Imaginings*** to nothingness; but the madness in Mda's ***Ways of Dying*** is intra-racial. Apart from the violence associated with political transition in works like ***The Innocence of Roast Chicken*****,** ***Imaginings of Sand*****,** ***David's Story****,* inter-racial conflicts in most of the novels appear as a function of long-bottled-up anger and vengeance against the perceived "oppressors" of the past (***Disgrace*****,** ***Imagining*****s,** etc). While it might be argued that the former supremacist regime had installed several structures in place to sustain intra-racial conflict especially the black-on-black violence, it should be held against the conflicting groups for their inability to discern such Machiavellian schemas.

XI.

Writers in Transition: Selecting Narratives of the 'new' Order

The writers whose selected work are examined in this study: André Brink, J.M. Coetzee, Zakes Mda, Zoë Wicomb, and Jo-Anne Richards have all made significant contributions in terms of the ethics and aesthetics of the 'new' writing from South Africa.[60] While effort has been made to compare the selected narratives with the wider developments in the works of several other novelists, a greater attention has been devoted to the exploration of the works of novelists that cut across race and gender affiliation. Of the many writers whose selected works are constantly evoked here, some are discussed in greater detail. This is by no means done with a view to constructing a new grand tradition. In fact, my encounter with a number of the new narratives affirms an admirable sense of creativity from South Africa's literary garden since the dawn of the liberal order.

In particular, Nadine Gordimer's ***The House Gun*** (1999), Mandla Langa's ***Memory of Stones*** (2000), K. Sello Duiker's ***Thirteen Cents*** (2000), ***The Quiet Violence of Dreams*** (2001), and the posthumously published ***The Hidden Star*** (2006), Njabulo Ndebele's ***The Cry of Winnie Mandela*** (2003), Pamela Jooste's ***Dance With a Poor Man's Daughter*** (1997), ***Like Water in Wild Places*** (2000), ***Frieda and Min*** (1998), and ***People Like Our Selves*** (2004), Lewis Nkosi's ***Underground People*** (2000), and ***Mandela's Ego*** (2006), Rayda Jacobs' ***Eyes of the Sky*** (1996), ***My Family's Orchard*** (2006) and Fred Khumalo's ***Bitches' Brew*** (2005) are some of the many new novels of English expression that are relevant in several ways. Writers as varying as Ivan Vladislavić, Mike Nicol, Michiel Heyns, Elleke Boehmer, Christopher Hope, Ahmed Essop, Imraad Coovadia, and Phaswane Mpe, among others, have also contributed in one way or the other in the making of the new South African novels of English expression.

[60] See 'Appendix' for a more comprehensive selection of post-apartheid South African novels of English expression, including a few translations from Afrikaans to English.

Managing a study of a limited scope of this nature, however, poses other challenges and limitations, and questions might be raised in some quarters on why certain writers' works are privileged over others. One response is that given the nature of the study, it is simply not possible to privilege all writers, and it is certainly not possible also to include all novels by any one writer. Some are likely to recur more than others in view of their numerous proclamations in the field of literature and the humanities. Nadine Gordimer, for instance, like André Brink and J.M. Coetzee, is 'everywhere' in the discourse of South African letters. In fact, she is far more established than all the writers, and has possibly written more than any South African writer. Her immense contributions in both creative writing and the debates on South African humanistic studies are such that she would always feature in major studies. Although a full chapter is not devoted to the exploration of her new novels, her presence remains ubiquitous in this study—both as thinker and writer. In addition, while Ivan Vladislavić, Michiel Heyns, Christopher Hope and Mike Nicol have made impressive contributions in the discourse of the 'new' order, an insistence on including every writer would have doubly defeated the original intention of this engagement: first, the scope of study certainly cannot accommodate every creative artist, and second: one would be making too obvious the impossibility of studying a 'Rainbow literature', in a post-apartheid South Africa, in spite of the liberalism of the new order. It is, in fact, for this reason, too, that some novelists as impressive as Rayda Jacobs, Achmat Dangor, Ahmed Essop and Imraam Coovadia, were painfully dropped at a stage. These are writers whose efforts require some critical attention, at least for us to be able to delineate the contributions of the Indian/Asian/Islamic voice in the discourse of the liberal order.

Some of the writers whose works are discussed are well established, while others are fairly known. The intention is to create a sense of balance in reading the 'new' nation from the views of both the 'old' and the 'emergent' artists. The selection is carefully made to cover male and female writers, as well as black and white writers. But it goes beyond these: the writers are picked either for the immense weight of the topical issues they address (Brink, Coetzee, Mda, Wicomb), or for the form that clearly distinguishes their writing (Brink, Mda, Richards, Wicomb). Coetzee, in particular cannot be missed

out in this study due to the highly cerebral nature of his ***Disgrace*** that always seems to leave the critic battling with what he calls the poetics of "the middle voice". At individual levels, my choice of the writers is further elaborated below.

André Brink (b.1935—), South Africa's novelist of unrivalled energy and imagination, has more than anyone else, embraced the fantastical narrative form in recent time in his abiding commitment to re-imagine self-evident historical realities. Perhaps the most prolific of South Africa's novelist of English expression, Brink has to his credit over twenty full-length novels, anthologies of essays that define his artistic philosophy, a critical study of the language of the novel from Cervantes' to Calvino, and innumerable essays on literature, as well as rudimentary statements and socio-political commentaries scattered in books and literary magazines all over the planet. His keen sense of alterity and experimentation is aptly demonstrated in his recourse to the medium of fantasy narratives following the dawn of a 'liberated' South Africa.

J.M. Coetzee (b.1940 —) is not only one of the most productive, but also indisputably one of the finest writers to come from the Southern African sub-region. His prolificacy as a novelist and essayist are exemplified in the many award-winning titles of his novels as well as his several anthologies of reflective and academic essays, some of which are: ***Dusklands*** (1974), ***In the Heart of the Country*** (1977), ***Waiting for the Barbarians*** (1980), ***Life & Times of Michael K*** (1983), ***Foe*** (1986), ***White Writing*** (1988), ***Age of Iron*** (1990), ***Doubling the Point*** (1992), ***The Master of Petersburg*** (1995), ***Giving Offence*** (1996), ***Boyhood*** (1997), ***Disgrace*** (1999), ***Stranger Shores*** (2001), **Youth** (2003), **Elizabeth Costello** (2004), **Slow Man** (2006), **Inner Life** (2007), ***The Lives of Animals***, etc. With his winning the Nobel Prize for literature in 2003, Coetzee has come to be established as one of the leading icons of contemporary world literatures in English.

Of all South African writers after apartheid, however, Zanemvula Kizito Gatyeni Mda, popularly known as Zakes Mda (b.1948—) has emerged as, perhaps, the most vibrant addition in novelistic composition in a nation so remarkable for its creativity and high productivity in fictional writing. Clearly, Mda is not a new name within the literary circle in Africa and beyond. He has written and directed over thirty plays amongst his so many

other creative engagements that include poetry, scholarly essays, and painting. As a novelist, however, Mda seriously engaged his fingers only after the demise of official apartheid, and it is salutary that he has come to join the most accomplished of South African novelists such as André Brink, Nadine Gordimer, J.M. Coetzee, etc, not only in terms of his prolific output, but more importantly in the nature of his narrative forms, thematic preoccupations, and the apparent experimentalism that necessarily deflates the charge of the journalistic imperative in black South African writing. So far, Mda has published seven novels: ***Ways of Dying*** (1995), ***She Plays With the Darkness*** (1995), ***The Heart of Redness*** (2000), ***Melville '67*** (1997), ***The Madonna of Excelsior*** (2002), ***The Whale Caller*** (2005) and ***Cion*** (2007).

Of the 'new' women novelists, the more engaging is arguably Zoë Wicomb (b.1948—). Starting with her anthology of stories, ***You Can't get Lost in Cape Town*** (1987), Wicomb has emerged in a liberated South Africa as a major voice which continues to resonate not only in her creative experiments, but also in social and cultural debates quite germane to South Africa in particular, and the continent in general. Her perspicacity finds evidence in a number of profound essays in literary journals and chapter-contributions in academic books. Yet, it is her engagement in the politics of otherness, especially within the confines of feminism and colouredism that marks her out as one of the most important writers of post-apartheid South Africa. Her major works of fiction since ***You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town*** (1987) are ***David's Story*** (2000) and ***Playing in the Light*** (2006).

Jo-Anne Richards (b.1957—) also attempts to transcend the simple realistic narrative mode by juggling temporal specificities in three successive novels: ***The Innocence of Roast Chicken*** (1996), ***Touching the Lighthouse*** (1997), and ***Sad at the Edges*** (2003). ***The Innocence of Roast Chicken***, her first novel, is however the more successful of her efforts as a novelist, and in this novel more than anywhere else, Richards explores the confessional narrative mode through a careful return to South Africa's historical memory, especially at a time when 'apartness' was deployed as a logic of racial oppression. In reading Richards', I have explored the concept of the confessional narrative as implicit in

sacramental vision, given the novelist's lyrical evocation and projection of the sacramental imperative in the novel as a genre.

At the level of analysis, I have explored the trope of memory not only by providing a theoretical excavation of the concept of memory as deployed in many disciplines in the humanities, but have also explored the narratives of these writers as mnemonic projections of South Africa's democratic non-racialism. Memory is counter-poised with violence and alterity, and in the process, the old tropes of *race, gender, ethnicity, class,* and *social justice* are systematically read in the spirit of a new order that insists on justice and equity across racial borders. Zakes Mda's novels and J.M. Coetzee's ***Disgrace*** and ***Boyhood*** provide aspects of the mnemonic, and the implications of national and continental commemorations in the construction of new identities.

Where 'crime' defines much of life in the 'new' South Africa, I have looked on this trope within the broad frame of violence—whether it is physical or psychological, class or gender-inspired. My reading indicates that 'crime' is basically a human reality which is not too different from the many other human behavioural patterns such as love, hatred, jealousy, etc—patterns long described by Vladimir Propp as 'units' or 'functions' in narrative discourse. Whether 'crime' originates from intra-racial or inter-racial violence as we find in Mda's ***Ways of Dying*** or Coetzee's ***Disgrace***, therefore, it constitutes aspects of the narratives of violation that, in the context of the new order, are tied to the mnemonic.

My reading of alterity is exemplified in Zoë Wicomb's ***David's Story***. In reading difference, I have traversed a number of theoretical terrains that range from the postcolonial to Derridean deconstructionism. Wicomb's creative effort is particularly relevant for the experimental nature of her fiction: a form enriched not only by her recourse to metafiction, but more so because she manages to transcend the previous discourse of South Africa's racial politics within the binaries of black and white, to her recognition of the more marginal identities, especially women and the minority Griqua people of Namaqualand.

Beyond politics and the visions of the novelists so selected, the narrative forms command attention. The recourse to the magical narrative mode by writers as diverse as Mda, Duiker, Mike Nicol etc, point to the immense energy of this mode in the novels of the 'new' South Africa. I have not only provided a theoretical base for the fantastical narrative mode as a significant manifestation of post-apartheid fiction of English expression, but have also used the novels of André Brink in illustrating this mode, especially Brink's ***Imaginings of Sand*** and ***Devil's Valley***. Both novels exemplify this novelist's fascination with the fantastical narrative form, just as his later novels: ***The Other Side of Silence*****,** ***Before I Forget*****,** and ***Praying Mantis*****.**

Given the immense output of South African writers more than ten years after apartheid, it will be unhealthy to locate all published novels within the fantastical and confessional tropes. Yet, they provide a significant coverage for many of the novels. What remains unexamined is left for purposes of academic continuity. To this end, writers such as Lewis Nkosi and Njabulo Ndebele need be revisited as major contributors as literary commentators and as creative artists. Nkosi's three published novels point to this writer-scholar's interest in creative dialogue. As social commentator, Ndebele has been more visible in developments in post-apartheid South Africa's cultural politics. As creative writer, however, his only addition to the short story anthology, ***Fools and Other Stories*** (1984) is the novel, ***The Cry of Winnie Mandela*** (2003)**.**

This research is structured into seven chapters that address issues as outlined below.
Chapter One, the introduction, covers the subject matter through a wide leap into the historical context for the study itself. It has also provided immense theoretical framework for understanding the many chapters that follow in terms of the specific themes they address. Thus, it is appropriately entitled 'The Movement of Transition: Trends in the Post-Apartheid South African Novels of English Expression'. In fore-grounding the research, I have cautiously selected representative texts from a black writer, Serote's ***To Every Birth its Blood,*** as well as a white's—Gordimer's ***July's People***. As I have shown, both writers addressed issues very germane to the South African socio-historical reality in

these texts, especially as it concerns the 'state of siege', 'the age of iron' or, indeed, what Gordimer calls 'the interregnum'. Among other things, both novels address issues of the emergency years such as arson and social displacement, police brutality, the apartheid regime's obsession with control through the 'pass' and 'permit' laws, the struggle for safety and for socio-psychological liberation, social tensions emanating from hate crimes, and the possibility of hope conveyed through characters who manage to show love in the face of all these crises.

Chapter two, 'The Fantasia and the Post-Apartheid Imagination: History, Narration and the 'new' Fiction of André Brink', examines how Brink has deployed the fantastical form in his representation of historical realities and mythological assumptions. In his effort to capture the events that brought in democratic rule in 1994, André Brink, in ***Imaginings of Sand*****,** combines a unique fascination with the magical, and the tripartite issues of historical memory, violence and change. In ***Devil's Valley***, too, the magic-realist form is further deployed, and history is at once exploited and defaced, as the novelist aesthetically challenges the supposed myth of white superiority.

In the third chapter, the subject of memory is explored through a reading of J.M. Coetzee's novels, ***Boyhood*** and ***Disgrace***. One observes here that whereas the recourse to historical memory is central to all the novelists, the deployment of expressive forms is idiosyncratic to the individual writers. Coetzee, like Mda in ***The Heart of Redness*****,** and ***She Plays with the Darkness***, and Wicomb, in ***David's Story***, addresses the issue of land ownership to such a level that it assumes a symbolic significance that implicates, amongst others, the morality of "ownership and belonging", as well as the historical memory that inform the policy of repression and dispossession. Of relevance, here, is how the moral implications of 'belongingness' intensify the subject of 'disgrace' in post-apartheid South Africa.

In chapter four, Zakes Mda's novels are read against the theoretical provisions of memory, violence, and alterity. The chapter, entitled 'Memory, Metaphor and Violence: Zakes Mda's Post-Apartheid Imagination', presents violence as a living phenomenon.

Again, violence emerges in the novelist's evocations of historical memory. We encounter this development in the allegorical novels, ***Heart of Redness*** and ***The Madonna of Excelsior*****,** for instance, where narration is essentially counter-logical in the movements between historical epochs. In this dislocation of chronological structures, narrative assumes an allegorical form and the stories of the past become a lesson for the present. This chapter on Mda's transmutation of history into novelistic forms notes the novelist's concern with the issues of survival and miscegenation, as well as with truth and reconciliation. It draws immensely upon six of his post-apartheid novels, giving at least four of the novels a close reading that combines ethics and aesthetic within the discourse of the post-apartheid's postcolony.

Chapter five, 'The Subject of the Other: Locating the 'Self' in Zoë Wicomb's Post-Apartheid Post-Colony', elaborates on a dimension of the post-apartheid imaginary by decoding the concept of otherness across theoretical models. The basic trick of Wicomb's ***David's Story*** is the transposition of what seems to be the story of David Dirksie into a feminist project through metafiction. This chapter looks at intertextuality in this novel by highlighting how colonial historiography of the Griqua has created a defensive attitude amongst the citizenry to the extent that even with the liberalism of the new order, the average Griqua is still at a loss on how to locate his/her racial identity since the citizens are confined within the realms of the 'interstices'.

In chapter six, the novels of Jo-Anne Richards are discussed within the frames of the confessional genre. As the title of the chapter indicates—'The Confessional Genre and the Liberal Order: Jo-Anne Richards' Post-Apartheid Imagination', it is established that the confessional mode is the predominant genre in the post-apartheid South African writing, especially as illustrated in the gamut of white South African writing. Where this might not be very explicit in the works of Coetzee and Brink, it nevertheless manifests in their novels. The confessional mode is more eloquent in works like Richards' ***The Innocence of Roast Chicken***, Jooste's ***Dance with a Poor Man's Daughter,*** Jeanne Goosen's ***Not All of Us*****,** etc. An important manifestation in novels of this form is the

seriousness with which many of the authors address consideration to the figuration of the female character and the child figure in nearly all the novels.

In the last chapter, seven, the discussion is concluded with a revisit to issues of postcolonial narratology. By highlighting the exciting developments that mark the bravura of literary idiosyncrasies in the Post-apartheid South African novels of English expression, it concludes on the appeal for research amongst writers before engaging in the creative process, with a view to understanding the subject they write about. It further calls for the possibility of reading the new fiction of South Africa with respect to African identity and the issues of form and originality in the modern African novel.

More than at any other time, then, it is now that one could legitimately engage in the project of constructing a South African national literary history. Previous efforts that lay claim to such a literary identity before the 1990s—while relevant to the literary historian of today—remain statements on an illegitimate national identity, or a once legitimate national literature. South Africa's true identity can only be located in its post-apartheid 'rainbow-ness'. In the final analysis, it could well be that a 'total history' of South Africa is a project too large to handle at this point. But the solution does not lie in resisting such a project. Attempts could be made in gradual assemblage and articulation of the many 'aspects' of South Africa's literary history as Gerard, Hofmeyr, Gunner, Msimang, Swanepoel, Ntuli, Serudu, Opland, Van Vuuren, Gray, Green, Chapman, and many others have attempted doing over the years. It may well be that what would eventually emerge as 'South African literary history' will be the aggregate of the many aspects of South Africa's divergent literary histories. Attempts, criticisms, revisions, and updating, appear to me to be reasonable ways of engaging such a daunting project: not by resisting the noble efforts at doing so. To insist on a total effacement of history and literary history at this point in South Africa's cultural life is, to say the least, criminally hypocritical.

Chapter Two

The Fantasia and the Post-Apartheid Imagination: History, Narration, and the 'new' Fiction of André Brink. [61]

> ... and again I have the impression that the more secrets are disclosed the more impenetrable the mystery becomes ...
>
> It seems that in the mysterious region of space-time one can travel into the future or into the past, and through the journey change what has been or may yet be. One can go back there and kill one's parents before one is even born, cancel oneself, switch roles, try out other possibilities.
>
> —André Brink, ***Imaginings of Sand***, 1996:292.

The fantastical narrative mode, as the name suggests, displays a unique fascination with the aesthetic blend of the real and the unreal; the logical and the illogical; the rural and the urbane; the possible and the impossible. It is a narrative form whose definitive identity resides very much in the writers' capacity to excite the readers through a dexterous manipulation of the resources of language in such a way that the beautiful and the ugly are united in the singular task of re-educating humanity through its parodic revaluations of hegemonic mythologies; it is a counter-hegemonic pattern of narration that calls for a proper interrogation of some dominant orthodoxies such as the Euro-centric notions of white racial superiority or even the chauvinist perception of the male

[61]I have had to qualify the concept 'new' in discussing Brink's post-apartheid novels for some obvious reasons: Brink is a very prolific and engaging novelist and essayist. Official apartheid, one notes here, was nullified on February 11th, 1990. Since this date, Brink has published an impressive output of scholarly books, essays and novels. Some of these are: *An Act of Terror* (1991), *The Life of Adamastor* (1993), *On the Contrary* (1993), *The Rights of Desire* (Secker & Warburg, 1996), *Imaginings of Sand* (Secker & Warburg, 1996), *Devil's Valley* (Secker & Warburg, 1998), *Reinventing a Continent* (Secker & Warburg, 2000), *The Other Side of Silence* (Secker & Warburg, 2002), *Before I Forget,* and *Praying Mantis,* amongst others. Although the two novels I have examined here are very strong statements published at a period following democratic non-racialism in 1994, and immensely relevant to the discourse of the new era, it will be misleading to simply conclude that all Brink's post-1990 narratives were informed by post-apartheid experiences. Brink admits that he got the inspiration for some of his post-apartheid novels (especially *The Other Side of Silence*) about twenty years earlier than the writing and its publication. I have simply limited my deployment of 'new', here, for chronological interest and convenience. The two novels in their succession are generous in their interest in the 're-invention of history' and recourse to the fantastical narrative mode.

child as superior to the female. It does this through the tropes of irony, repetition, and paradox. In the process, temporality assumes various manifestations; characterization defies any specific definition, while the actors very often operate within lycanthropic realms.

The fantastical mode, as post-colonial narrative, privileges marginalized subjectivities: women across the racial divide, the black humanity and the so-called racial Other. The fantastical narrative, in its modern sense as magical realism, attempts to transcend mere reportage: in this sense, experimentation becomes the guiding principle of the artist, and life is sought in the abstract, inorganic elements so that spirits and ghosts become inevitable members of the universe of mankind. Contrary to the claims of linearity in the description of human experiences through plot developments in realistic narratives, the representation of experience in the fantastical form shows finally that the development of human progress is not necessarily a lineal experience. The fantastical perceive pastiche and delay in human conducts and progress, and this probably explains the repetitiveness that often manifest in the narratives. Whether it is evoked as magical realism, marvellous realism, super-realism, animist realism, nightmarish realism, or simply as the bizarre, in the fantastical narrative "the operations of the supernatural are taken for real"; it operates within a "mythical framework" and "has the advantage of an in-built symbology that universalises its message or main ideas", and through this way, it "represents the perennial desire of the human soul for knowledge, understanding and power" (Vincent, 1986: 53).

This narrative form has a universal appeal, and transcends historical epochs and continental topographies: it was in Europe; it was in the Americas; it was in African folkloristic traditions and it is still very present in contemporary global narratives of resistance. Its sheer bulk in modern African literature of English expression is eloquent in its manifestations in the writings of Achebe, Soyinka, Okri, Armah, Head, Chukwuemeka Ike, Cheney-Coker, and very recently in post-apartheid South African narratives. That Zakes Mda, Mike Nicol, K. Sello Duiker, Zoë Wicomb and, above all, André Brink would embrace this narrative form in their efforts to re-invent history and ensure a harmonious South Africa's social humanity at the dawn of the new era makes this

narrative mode a very significant manifestation of the post-apartheid imagination. André Brink's tremendous achievement to this effect is particularly inspiring as one witnesses in two of his post-apartheid novels: ***Imaginings of Sand*** and ***Devil's Valley***.

I.

Apparently one of the most respected novelists from South Africa, André Brink's novelistic oeuvre exemplify experience and struggle for human freedom that has spanned over four decades. While he has an established reputation as the most iconoclastic of writers of Afrikaner extraction, Brink's anti-establishment position started very early in his career as scholar and writer, an undertaking that eventuated in his clashes with the apartheid regime in the 1960s and 1970s. He left South Africa in a self-imposed exile to France in the 1960s. While here, Brink's writing took a very politically partisan identity as he lampooned, parodied, attacked and denigrated the apartheid system from which many of his white compatriots benefited. Following the dawn of South Africa's non-racial capitalism, Brink's narrative form gets some invigoration in what the novelist described as an attempt to re-imagine history. In this instance, Brink adopts the fantastical, magical narrative mode with a view to injecting a fresher energy and identity to his writing rather than simply following the dictates of the documentary narrative mode. For Brink, history is relevant and must not be totally defaced in the aesthetic figuration of humankind. But mankind, too, must not be compelled to drown in the soporific beverage of tradition, especially when such embrace of 'tradition' emanates from an un-interrogated gerontocracy. The artist, in this sense, must be experimental, adventurous, and be ready to surprise his audience. What we witness, here, then, is what Brink calls 'stories of history' in which he suggests a total 're-imagining' of human experience so as to show ways of demystifying unfounded orthodoxies and mythological assumptions. This is the subject of a number of his rudimentary essays, novels, academic essays, and speeches at various fora.

If André Brink's post-apartheid novels were inspired by a novelist's desire to fashion new modes of fictionalising history—or indeed, historicizing fiction—it could be given to him, in his own words, that what emerges is "not solving a mystery, but demonstrating

how historical mysteries are constructed" ('Stories of History", 33). His embrace of the fantastical mode in three successive narratives immediately attests to this interest in constructing historical mysteries through his imaginative concatenations of the marvellous. But an understanding of Brink's artistic philosophy, especially an investigation of his numerous rudimentary essays since the collapse of official apartheid might help in illuminating what appears to be his love for, or recent obsession with the 're-invention of history'. This would not only highlight Brink's theory of the novel, but also the sense of commitment necessary for that re-imagining without suffocating the reader with factualities.

Two important positions that find unity in our claims here, so far, incidentally, were made nearly half-a-century of each other: the conceptions of the structural elements of the novelistic form by Dorothy Van Ghent and André Brink. While Van Ghent had worked at a moment when narrative was still primarily celebrated as mimesis, a sense of percipience that transcends her moralistic conception of the novel's subject-matter as "human relationships in which are shown the directions of men's souls", she was quick to distinguish the fictional narrative from narratives of historical facts, especially, "since some novels look very much like "real" history, like a factual social record". The novel, she argues, then, is a "hypothetical structure" which transgresses rational boundaries and "is able to give a leverage to the empirically known and push it into the dimension of the unknown, the possible. Its value lies less in confirming and interpreting the known than in forcing us to the supposition that something else might be the case. It is for this reason that the novel is a source of insight" (Van Ghent [1953] 1961: 3-4).

She takes her argument further by asserting the unique function of the novel:

> Fiction tries to isolate the principle of coherence in events, the active principle that holds together all the multitude of particular traits that an event has, and the more extensive principle that makes one event slide into another in human lives…. The novel's planetary orbit lies through different minds and different generations of minds, each exerting its special pushes and pulls upon the novel's substance, each interpreting it according to the spiritual constitution of each" (Van Ghent, 5-6).

In his ***The Novel: Language and Narrative From Cervantes to Calvino*** (1998), André Brink demonstrates immense fascination for a similar narrative theory as one finds in Van Ghent's ***The English Novel: Forms and Functions***, early in his pluralization of narrative modes as being encoded in "languages" ('Introduction'). One implication of his explorations of the dynamic nature of language as "the condition of story" is the implicit statement that much of what emerges in contemporary critical practice as the magical narrative mode, which many see as a fundamental manifestation of postmodernism is neither modern nor post-modern. Indeed, for Brink, 'Postmodernism' is "no more than an umbrella term for a staggering variety of forms, styles, experiments and manifestations […]. Postmodernism is—among so many other things—a snake swallowing its own tale, as it turns, playfully, ironically, and with lighthearted seriousness, to what once appeared to be its age of innocence" (1998: 3; 19).

While Van Ghent writes of the many manifestations of narratives within a specific work of fiction as determining its " formal existence at all" (Van Ghent, 4), Brink suggests that "it is in narrative language that one should look for the key to the full experience of engaging with the genre". After all in the novel, he argues, "there are no people or houses or trees or dogs between the pages, but only words, words, words" (Brink, 1998:5). In this regard, Brink is persuaded by the Bakhtinian dialogics, and insists that "for a genre in an unceasing process of becoming, there is no singular Great Tradition, no Ideal Form, no Definite Shape. Or, if tradition there be, it may just as well be approached as a series of texts rich in invention, humour and imaginative eruption, a legacy of 'testaments', (Brink, 6). Brink's project as a novelist in the light of the new era becomes more engaging in narrative experiments as he tries to transcend the narrative modes of protest and mimesis necessitated by a sense of social responsibility during the years of apartheid. His writings and readings of works by others show Brink's readiness to experiment with new forms. As he says, he deploys language "as a system, as a phenomenon, as a practice, as a process", with the essential truth that the only dynamic element in fictional narratives is language, "Not the flag, not the wind, language is moving" (Brink 1998:14).

It is instructive that both Dorothy Van Ghent and André Brink resume their studies with an explication of a fantastical narrative: ***Don Quixote***, by the Spaniard, Miguel de

Cervantes Saavedra. While Van Ghent's reading of the text was essentially influenced by the predominant critical expectations of her time to demonstrate the novelist's narrativization of 'the world', she readily acknowledges the fantastical elements in ***Don Quixote***, particularly the novelist's deployment of "a structure based upon a system of contrasts" (Van Ghent 9). It is no accident, therefore, that the protagonist is created as "a walking hybrid of antitheses: a man and a literary invention, a living character and an imaginary character, a book-man and a man-book" (Van Ghent 10). Van Ghent locates the central function of contrasts in the novel to the two related concepts of "paradox and parody", and while affirming that "Quixote's justice is an injustice", and the book "the paradox embodied in action, the ineluctable mixture that is at once ideal and corporeal, spirit and flesh" (Van Ghent 12), the "parodistic impulse" manifests in the "burlesque imitation" of the real, in "the felt time and the atemporal time of images", with the result that "[B]oth visual and spiritual perspective are phantasmagorically reversible" (Van Ghent 17).

André Brink's conception of the marvellous in the re-creation of the factual could equally be gleaned from his many readings of other novelists. His discussions of Cervantes's ***Don Quixote*** and Garcia Marquez's ***One Hundred Years of Solitude***, among others, testify to his recent fascination with the magical narrative mode. While his mission in ***The Novel*** (1998) is to demonstrate the immense possibilities to which 'language' could be deployed to narrate the real, he finds in the fantastical narrative a fluid medium where "what really happens" is that names, events and experiences "transform what is into what may be" (Brink 1998:21), with the implication that "images and perceptions are as suspect as translations". Brink observes the operative mode of language in marvellous narrative and, like Van Ghent's evocation of 'contrasts' he places the dual possibilities in a "pattern of binary thinking" (Brink, 27). For a novel that appealed to the audience for its claims to reality, Brink equally identifies what Van Ghent described earlier as the "parodistic impulse", and suggests that "the greatness of the text resides in the way in which it develops into a critique of the real itself" (Brink, 31). What emerges as Brink's notion of the marvellous, here, is the meticulous identification of plot patterns and language use where "Each story becomes a metaphoric intervention, a version of reality told with the

purpose of designating the real in other words, that is, finding a new language to represent reality" (Brink, 37-8). It is only through "the dialogic awareness of an event (specifically an event in language) as both real and unreal, mad and sane" (Brink, 43), that we are led to the revelation that "the quality of a story lies in its telling, not its veracity" (Brink, 38).

If Brink's title for his essay on Cervantes' novel, 'The Wrong Side of the Tapestry' does not immediately evoke a sense of his logic, his reading of Marquez's ***One Hundred Years***, is a direct pointer: 'Making and Unmaking'—an investigation that calls for an "awareness of difference" with respect to our decoding of "whatever in a given situation is perceived to be real and what as not-real, unreal, supra-real, imaginary, or magical, in terms of the identity, of Self and Other" (Brink, 235). "Metaphor", in this sense, "is turned into a narrative performance, theatrical and spectacular, which activates different levels of meaning in the text—most obviously those of the 'magical' and the 'real'" (Brink, 250).

For a writer who has been variously charged with crass opportunism[62] and overt politicality[63] in much of his narratives, it need be stated that the seemingly fresh fascination with the experimental, exploitation and deployment of the immense possibilities of language in reaching the *Self* and the *Other* is not an entirely new development for André Brink. If he ever betrayed any such inclination in his narratives, his poetics has always been engaged with the search for the truth. He had written in 'Mapmakers' at the peak of official apartheid and its censorial obsessions that the writer is eternally engaged with the task to "draw the map of his vision of truth. […]. The writer is not concerned only with 'reproducing' the real. What he does is to perceive, below the lines of the map he draws, the contours of another world, somehow a more 'essential' world" (Brink, 1983:167-9). Elsewhere, in 'Imagining the Real', Brink insistently calls for a more imaginative mythologization of reality. In a way, Brink's poetics is enduring

[62]Notwithstanding his nihilism, Michael Chapman charges Brink of engaging in creative opportunism. See, for instance, Chapman's assessment of 'The truth of fiction and the fiction of truth' in his influential *Southern African Literatures* (London: Longman, p.403).
[63]Sue Kossew appears irritated by what she describes as the "dogmatic quality" and politicality of Brink's artistic philosophy and engagement with social responsibility. See Sue Kossew, *Pen and Power,* (Amsterdam- Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1996, p. 25).

in his quest for excavating the "myth of history, myth and history, and history of myth" (Brink, 1998:231-252). While observing, therefore, that "the employment of ancient myths in modern guise has become one of the most characteristic narrative techniques of the twentieth century" (Brink, 1983:218), he suggests that it is through the rediscovery of such mythologies that "all important literature" revive "the abiding truths which determine the relationships among men and between man and the world". The writer should strive, therefore, to "deepen fact into mythical truth", for, it is through this process that "we recognize and acknowledge the existence both of ourselves and the world" (Brink, 1983:219).

Brink's theorizing of the novelistic technique of mythopoetic narratives raises a fundamental question in the context of the Post-Apartheid imagination. The cacophony of voices within the intellectual community in South Africa—if not elsewhere, is rather immense, and, like the narratives of the new era, falls within what David Attwell has described as "a field of ambiguities" (Attwell, 2003:6). But Brink as a novelist, it does seem, defies this charge of a tendency towards the ambiguous in its negative context. It could indeed be claimed that Brink's mythopoesis and post-apartheid narratives transit from a fascination with re-imagining, and embraces the past in a manner that could at best be described as Brinkian: a quest for an understanding of the present through an imagined recreation of the past—an 'imagining of the real', of "myth of history, myth and history and history of myth". The challenge for the writer, then, is to engage in an aesthetic manipulation of language for a synthesis—a narrative—borne of the narrational conflict in imagining the real, and realizing the imagined. It is in this respect that his post-apartheid novels could be understood within the binary limits of ambiguity and disambiguation.

The project of re-inventing the past, given his prolific statements to this effect, is then the preoccupation of André Brink after apartheid. In an interesting article, 'The Changing Priorities of South African Writers', he elaborates on the exciting developments and experimentations that move from the nostalgic to the fantastical. His voice:

> For one thing, there is much more variety than before; for another, there is more scope for a lighter touch, for humour and comedy (often, admittedly with a dark underbelly); there is, perhaps, a move away from the Manichean opposites imposed by any experience of dire oppression. Rather than being overtly political, many novelists appear to be turning inward more than before, to the private contortions of the soul, rather than the events which precipitate them….
>
> In a different way, this shift appears to send writers back into the territory of childhood to discover private complicities and culpabilities which were previously effaced by the large, glaring issues of public events....
>
> It seems to me as if this turn towards the imaginary—an acknowledgement of the fantastical deeply rooted in the real—is beginning to characterise a significant dimension of the new writing in South Africa. It is perhaps an authentically African version of magic realism, expressing itself in the wild and the wonderful construction of an ordinary house-of-many-mansions in Ivan Vladislavić's ***The Folly***; or in the overlapping stories and realities of Mike Nicol's ***The Ibis Tapestry***; or in Achmat Dangor's ***Kafka's Curse***, where the present is modelled on an ancient Arabic tale; or in Zakes Mda's masterful ***Ways of Dying***, in which a professional mourner leads the reader not only through the terrible realities of South Africa's recent past, but through tortuous and humorous journeys of the imagination; or in Anne Landman's ***The Devil's Chimney***, in which an Englishman attempts at the turn of the century to come to terms with the harsh African landscape prompt flights, both excessive and carefully controlled, into a story of sexuality, frustration, desire and revenge.
>
> All of this in a few short years. And the spectrum of possibilities still broadening. There is indeed life in the South African novel after the dismantling of apartheid; and already the old dog has learned a variety of exciting new tricks.[64]

Aspects of the "new tricks" for re-imagining the past are elaborated by Brink in yet another illuminating essay: 'Stories of History: Re-imagining the past in Post-Apartheid

[64] *The Post Express* (Nigeria), August, 29, 1998:16.

Narrative'. Here, he proposes "a transgression of the boundaries of an originary sensual perception", with the view of "infusing the ordinary with a sense of the extraordinary, the everyday with a sense of the fantastic, producing a result in which the whole is decidedly more than the sum of its parts" (Brink, 1998b: 31). Brink, in this regard, takes further his long dreamt narratological bent towards historical narratives. The overriding question of essentialism resurfaces in his apprehensiveness over the place of morality and socio-historical relevance should narrativity be confined to 'pure invention', and by consciously and totally eschewing historical realities. This would, he argues, restrict readership to "the irreducible fact of textuality" even though "textuality does not obviate historicity or morality". If the manifestations in Brink's post-apartheid narratives, particularly works like ***Imaginings of Sand, Devil's Valley***, or, indeed ***The Other Side of Silence***, or, for that matter, the manifestation of this narrational mode in Mike Nicol's ***The Ibis Tapestry*** and Zakes Mda's ***The Heart of Redness*** and ***Ways of Dying***, among others, are to sum the embrace of the fantastical mode as evidently found in much of post-apartheid South African fiction of English expression, it might then be argued that these writers have found affirmation in Brink's submission that "the best we can do is to fabricate metaphors—that is, tell stories—in which, not history, but imaginings of history are invented. Myth may have preceded history, but in the long run it may well be the only guarantee for the survival of history" (Brink, 1998b: 42). For, indeed, the new fiction is fundamentally a fabricated metaphor of historical memory, of the private and shared experiences of the South African social humanity across race, socio-economic status, gender, repression and of domination.

What emerges, as Brinkian aesthetic in the 'new' South Africa, however, is best exemplified in 'Interrogating Silence: New Possibilities Faced by South African Literature' (Brink, 1998a: 14-28). While he has always called for a re-imagining of the 'real',[65] Brink, here, insists that in the light of the new order, writers should try to revisit narratives of the past because, as he puts it, "History provides one of the most fertile

[65]In re-imagining the 'real', Brink's project of the historical narrative transcends mere fascination for socio-political factualities to the formalistic: 'how-ness' in constructing historical mysteries in fictional narratives must be seen to be basic, and should sometimes be given more priority than the 'what-ness' of that mystery. Most of Brink's essays on the developments in post-apartheid narratives harp on the need to 're-imagine' or 're-inventing' the past.

silences to be revisited by South African writers: not because no voices have traversed it before, but because the dominant discourse of white historiography (as well as temptations to replace it by a new dominant discourse of black historiography) has inevitably silenced, for too long, so many other possibilities" (Brink,1998a:22). As always, Brink's idiom points to his fascination with a re-fashioning of the factual past. He writes of 're-visit', 're-invent', and 're-imagine' in the quest for a new literary form that will locate its synthesis in the creative blend of historical realistic narratives and post-modern narrative techniques. "If stories are retold and reimagined", he argues, "the re- is of decisive importance: each new invention happens in the margin of the already-written, or against the background of the already-written" (Brink, 1998a: 22).

In terms of its mode of aesthetic realization and the expectations of the reader, Brink considers the reader a major participant in the creative process who must, inevitably, be left with the choice of a moral position only suggested by the re-invented narrative: "[T]he new text does not set itself up as a 'correction' of silence or of other versions of history; but the processes of intertextuality set in motion by its presentation it initiates (or resumes) strategies of interrogation which prompt the reader to assume a new (moral) responsibility for his/her own narrative, as well as for the narrative we habitually call the world" (Brink, 1998a:23). In dismantling the many walls of silence, marginal subjectivities should be the major focus of aesthetic investigation, and these subsume the women of South Africa—black and white— and the roles of blacks generally including the so-called 'Coloureds' in the historical evolution of contemporary South Africa. It is interesting to observe that the novels of Brink examined here—***Imaginings*** and ***Devil's Valley***, have in common this peculiar interest in the representation of subversive female figures as well as their contributions to the making of Afrikanerdom (***Imaginings*** and ***Devil's Valley***). Even ***The Other Side of Silence*****,** set beyond the shores of the 'new' South Africa, also centres on the psychological liberation of women who suffered various forms of colonialist violence, exploitation and denigration. Brink takes this pursuit as a personal credo in his post-apartheid narratives. He affirms:

> What interests me particularly at the moment is the link between woman and history: woman as a presence largely excluded from official South African discourses; and history as canon....
>
> And it seems to me that this kind of enterprise may serve as a starting point of a completely reinvented South African history: history, in fact, reimagined as herstory" (Brink, 1998a: 23).

In what he calls "the discovery of Africa", Brink addresses what has preoccupied the minds of very perceptive scholars of South Africa on how to resume proper critical dialogues between South Africa and the rest of the continent. In an era of continental or even global integrations, literary scholarship and creativity should embrace the singular task of a holistic apprehension of the African cosmology and cosmogony. While Michael Chapman has nobly suggested a "re-arranged relationships in literary education" in which African literary texts will fruitfully be studied comparatively with Western texts that address issues relevant to Africa's socio-historical and cultural life, André Brink in 'Interrogating Silence' (1998a: 25-27) is more eloquent not only in his calling for some seriousness in the study of black African writers, but more so in his recognition of the resonant magicality in the work of Achebe, Soyinka, Ngugi, Tutuola, Okri and Kunene. He considers this narrative mode a paradigm worthy of investigation in the new South Africa[66].

II.

Critical responses to the novels of André Brink vary as seen in some recent scholarship. With the enduring reputation as the South African novelist who "has most blatantly challenged Afrikaner power" (Chapman, 1996: 402), Brink is also perceived by Michael Chapman as engaging in "political and literary opportunism". As he puts it, "His usual practice is to grasp outside of his own literary structures, which in their frequent use of writer-narrators hint at their 'art', and attach his stories to the more sensational events of the times" (Chapman, 403). If account is taken of the fact that Brink's new interest in the

[66] It is strange, however, that not a single work of a black African writer appeared in his recent book-length study, *The Novel: Language and Narrative From Cervantes to Calvino*.

representation of the female voice coincides with current trend in global gender politics and the privileging of previously marginalized subjectivities, then Chapman's assessment of Brink's 'emergency' novels, remains true of his post-apartheid narratives.

In addition, it has been suggested that Brink's "status as a post-colonial writer… is problematical" (Kossew, 1996:5). But if this charge is true of his earlier fiction, it is doubtful whether any such claim would hold for his post-apartheid novels. For, indeed, his reconstruction of colonialist mythologies through a critical re-visitation of history within the dictates of the magical narrative mode places Brink as, perhaps, the most engaging in the new quest for a re-definition of South Africa's literary identity and paradigm shift. Going by Kossew's description of the post-colonial status of South African writing as belonging to that "aspect of the post-colonial (theory) that does not exist after colonialism but in constant engagement with, and resistance to, the hegemonic oppression of imperial power, whatever form that may take" (Kossew 7), it could be argued that Brink's post-apartheid novels clearly defines him as a counter-hegemonic novelist. And in spite of her charge of sexism and racial nostalgia against Brink, Jane Jolly in ***Colonization, Violence and Narration in White South African Writing*** (1996) captures Brink's historical narrative in her post-colonial explication of ***A Chain of Voices***. "The form of Brink's novel", argues Jolly, "works against the distinction between "fact" and fiction: the reader is encouraged not to recognize that the historical is always fictional, that the claim of originality is not a solution but an exercise in appropriation" (Jolly, 53).

Two commentators that draw perceptive attention to the mythopoetic dimensions of Brink's narratives, however, are Sandra Chait and Isidore Diala. While Chait's comparative reading of Brink's ***The Cape of Storms*** and Mike Nicol's ***Horseman*** interrogates the novelists' search for answers to whatever could have inspired and sustained the recurrent cycle of human stupidity in form of racial separatism, Diala attempts to locate answers in biblical parallels as part of the monumental structures of white mythologies. Writing in 'Mythology, Magic Realism and White Writing after Apartheid', Sandra Chait believes that the white South African writer has chosen to return to re-examination of mythology through the magical realistic narrative. This way,

the whole question of racism, and the violent repressions of apartheid South Africa were essentially sustained through a combination of white and biblical mythologies. In evoking the personality of the gods in the sustenance of the evils of racism and violence, however, Chait argues that in ***The Cape of Storms*****, and** ***Horseman***, respectively, Brink and Nicol have "unwittingly undercut their own criticism, exposing one evil while concealing society's real evil by making it seem natural" (Chait, 2000: 17-28).

In his investigations on "Brink's frequent depiction of characteristic Afrikaner reduction of the Bible to a white mythology that complements the materiality of apartheid", Isidore Diala (2000) equally observes: "Brink's insight (in fact) is that colonial myths harden into metaphysical facts and that their origins are imperceptibly obliterated in the colonizer's consciousness. If imperialism is usually associated with inhuman violence and appropriation, a basic reason is that the colonizer soon forgets that myths of the Other's subhumanity are his own creations taken as truths" (80, 82). As in his counter-hegemonic inscriptions of the apartheid era, Brink's post-apartheid narrative has continued with a reconstruction of Afrikaner hegemonic mythologies. This is as evident in his non-fictional writings as it is in ***Imaginings of Sand*** and ***Devil's Valley***. In fact, in ***Devil's Valley***, more than anywhere else, Brink's deployment of the magical narrative form unravels this observation to its bones. If the novel is essentially attuned to a parodic revaluation of the life of an arrogant blindman desperately in the quest to retain power and political domination over the so-called subhuman Other, it does so against the background of a strong persuasion that the dominant certainly needs more redemption than the dominated. Isidore Diala elegantly captures this vision of André Brink in his reading of Brink's anti-apartheid narratives where he argues that Brink "found clearer applicability of the virtues of asceticism", with the implication that "the oppressor, not the oppressed, was in dire need of spiritual purgation, of the cleansing of a guilty conscience, and even of liberation and redemption". (Diala, 85) I would add, here, that the persistence in the figuration of biblical mythologies in Brink's post-apartheid novels, especially in ***Devil's Valley*** is a deliberate ploy by the novelist to highlight the over-rated function of the clergy during the long struggle against racial separatism. For, in fact, the clergy, more than any one else, provided paraphernalia, using the instrument of the bible

to justify white domination and the enslavement of the marginal Other (***Devil's Valley***, 177-185 ff;).

Given this peculiar drive for a racially harmonious South African society, it is chastening that Brink, like Nadine Gordimer and J.M Coetzee, would address himself to a serious consideration, Diala argues in another essay, of the issues of 'Guilt, Expiation and the Reconciliation Process in Post-Apartheid South Africa' (Diala, 2002). In his reading of Gordimer's ***The House Gun***, J.M. Coetzee's ***Disgrace***, and André Brink's ***The Rights of Desire*** as postmodernist statements that attempt to show the way forward for a nation whose political history resonates with alarming levels of psychological injuries amongst the racial Other, Diala submits: "By their invocation of the past, they strive to exorcise the present of its enduring trauma. In the contexts of the epic drama of national reconstruction rooted in reconciliation, they affirm the substance of the entire transformation process in post-apartheid South Africa: that whites' guilt-consciousness and recrimination be transformed into the acceptance of responsibility and that blacks' recovery of marginalized histories be compassionate and exclude the old orthodoxies and chauvinism" (Diala, 2002:68).

III.

André Brink's ***Imaginings of Sand*** (1996) is a novel that probably would best have been written by a female feminist. It reads, in many ways, like a feminist project directed at inscribing the epic accomplishments of the womenfolk through the long history of Afrikanerdom in particular, and the geographical territory of South Africa in general. If the imperative of essentialism had inspired and doctored the novelist's imaginative horizons during the 'state of siege', Brink's post-apartheid imagination, in its vastness, carves out a new territory of aesthetic investigation that gives a merciless knock to the earlier charge against him of indulging in creative opportunism. For instance, the narrator could simply have focused on post-apartheid 'violence' in ***Imaginings of Sand,*** the supremacist antics of the agitators for the creation of Orania Republic in ***Devil's Valley,*** or the crisis of leadership succession in Namibia in ***The Other Side of Silence.*** But he does not. In the three narratives, he excavates history, and deploys aspects of Afrikaner

and white mythologies to make statements relevant to contemporary South Africa as a newly liberated zone. Indeed, there is no place in his new writing that Brink might fruitfully be charged with either engaging in documentary realism, nor overt politicality. While he is very much fascinated with contemporary post-apartheid experiences, there is ample evidence that through aesthetic experimentation in his deployment of the fantastical mode, he has since transcended the realistic narrative form with its overt appeal for utilitarianism.

Yet, in terms of thematic orientations, Brink's new novels are as relevant as they are aesthetically elevating. There is an unmistakeable authorial presence with respect to his awareness of the dilemmas of the marginalized. This is amply exemplified in his imaginative exploitation and parodic revaluation of the many inhumanities that have always stifled our common humanity through class, race, and gender imbalances, as well as in his satirically 're-visiting' the over-rated relevance of the clergy during the struggle against racial separatism. These imbalances are the major concerns of Brink in ***Imaginings of Sand*** and ***Devil's Valley***, although the novelist carefully twists the events, spatial, and temporal bases of the novels partly on the mnemonic structures of post-apartheid transitional politics, and partly on some never-never lands where spatio-temporal and actantial altercations are located. Both novels are statements of South Africa's transition *extraordinaire* that affirm Stephen Slemon's categorization of the magic realist text in terms of the recognition of 'transformational regionalism', in which " the site of the text, though described in familiar and local terms, is metonymic of the postcolonial culture as a whole"; 'the foreshortening of history', in which "the time scheme of the novel metaphorically contains the long process of colonization and its aftermath"; and 'the thematic foregrounding' of "those gaps, absences and silences produced by the colonial encounter and reflected in the text's disjunctive language of narration". What seems even more obvious here is that both novels, as magic realist texts, display "a preoccupation with images of both borders and centers" while working "toward destabilizing their fixity" (Slemon, 1997 [1995]: 411- 412). As major statements of an 'emancipated' South Africa, ***Imaginings of Sand*** and ***Devil's Valley*** will eventually

take their pride of place as some of the classics of the nation's new narratives of transition.

Set in the fictional, agricultural town of Outenequa, ***Imaginings*** is one narrative of the long struggles of the womenfolk that should have been written by a woman. Narrated in the first-person, it is the story of 'every woman', although there are variations in experiences of women across racial divides on the one hand, and across social status on the other. It is the story of the womenfolk, *told* quite eloquently by a rebel daughter who is disgusted by the hypocrisy of her parents and the society within which she grew up as a child. It is the story of 'Kristien', who takes an escapist route to London as a form of protest against racial injustices of apartheid South Africa on the one hand, but more seriously against the 'seeming' passivity of her 'mother' as well as the domineering sensibilities of her father who is a High Court-Judge. The narrative symbolizes the patriarchal community of Afrikanerdom in all its negative connotations.

With a narrative progression that combines a simple realistic self-narration of the female protagonist with very complex authorial twists that evoke history and myth through the mnemonic 'recordings' of her centenarian grandmother, Brink's ***Imaginings*** is, in its many layers of time and incidents, a narrative of the past, of the present and of the future. Kristien Muller gets a phone call while in London from her elder sister in South Africa, Anna, informing her that "Something terrible has happened". The period is April, 1994: the first general elections that would usher in democratic non-racialism is being prepared for by nearly every South African, especially those that were previously denied voting rights by virtue of their skin-colour. Expectations were high: freedom was in the air, waiting to be grabbed. But so also was the level of fear it generated amongst a great number of the white community, especially the Afrikaners. Many of them were not certain of what the new dispensation would bring forth, and some were so terrified of what their killer-agents, through the secretive Broederbond, classified as 'the impending doom' – that they threatened to disrupt the forthcoming elections. In addition, many young people among the black communities already wearied with their long years of suffering and dehumanisation, had taken the 'laws' into their hands and were on a vengeance mission against the privileged whites.

It was during one of such vengeance missions that 'Ouma Kristina', the narrator's grandmother, the centenarian, got terribly burnt in a fire-bomb that was meant to destroy her palatial home, as well as to kill all the inhabitants. While the incident was huge enough to kill a very healthy elephant on the spot, the novelist designs the narrative in such a way that Ouma Kristina emerges as a superhuman character who decides not to die, at least, not until she has narrated her family story/history to her favourite granddaughter, Kristien. She "appears" magically to Kristien in London even before Anna could speak with her on the phone. Thus when Anna announces that "A terrible thing has happened', Kristien knows that her long years of escape was over: it was time to return 'home' to the new South Africa to face the challenges ahead.

The complex developments and series of incidents that take place within the short period in South Africa become an educational experience for Kristien: she discovers that her only sister, Anna, is a very bitter woman in what ordinarily might be seen as a happy marriage with five lovely children. Anna does not have the courage to stand up in self-defence against a dictatorial husband who has dominated her life since her school days; the vigilante groups show their paranoia and childish fear through their attacks on presumably innocent black people; the coloured community—exemplified in 'Trui, Jeremiah and their only son, Jonnie', continue to show their distrust for a likely new black leadership even while showing no sign of leaving their conditioned status as servants and as 'God's step-children' to their white overlords. At the end, Kristien suffers a major tragic experience as she losses eight family members the same day: Ouma Kristina "dies" in her apartment, while at the other end of the farm, Anna kills herself in a family murder that begins with her killing her husband, Casper, and their five children.

In spite of this seemingly simple narrative progression, ***Imaginings*** is a very complex novel where the untrue is true, and the true, untrue. Built on the spirito-humanistic tapestry of 'trust', it proceeds from the binary locations of 'truth' and 'untruth'; and like the narrator, the reader is left with the inevitable choice of either accepting the narrative as historically fictional, or to reject it as fictionally historical. A narrative that resumes with the screaming unease that 'something terrible has happened' soon develops from the private anger of the rebel daughter to a narrative that weaves its being on the many

possibilities of women's humanity, their resilience, and struggle through the course of history. But rather than simply convey these struggles of individual women characters, we are confronted with the bizarre appropriation of narratives by the narrator's deployment of ornithological symbols.

In this cosmological space, we seem transported into the imagined temporal space of 'Years ago', when "birds are spirits of dead women" (***Imaginings***, 237). The immense presence of the birds, their spiritual communing with the centenarian grandmother, their implicit awareness of the private contours of the women's souls affirm the novelist's credo of a re-imagined narrative in which the "turn towards the imaginary—an acknowledgement of the fantastical deeply rooted in the real" now "characterise a significant dimension of the new writing in South Africa" as "an authentically African version of magic realism".[67] It is instructive that following the destruction of Ouma Kristina's mementoes of her womanhood, the birds all vanish into the thin air: "Even the owls that used to roost in here, I notice now, have gone" (***Imaginings***, 261). The symbolism of the bird becomes of immense relevance, here, because birds simply assume the unhealthy function of messengers. Left to the chauvinist male chroniclers of Afrikaner heroism, not many women will be remembered in the painful years of the Afrikaners' survivalist journeys through the interior hinterland, and it is only accidental that "Wilhelmina was the only woman in (our family) who actually played a part in recorded history" (***Imaginings***, 268). Luckily for the women, though, "there were birds flitting in through the doors and windows as if to monitor our progress, then darting out again to spread the message" (***Imaginings***, 345). Every object evokes a story, and every object associated with women becomes a narrative of womanhood: of a re-inscription of a defaced historical reality that never reckoned with the presence of womankind in the annals of the nation and the mythologies of its nationhood.

Kristien, the narrator, becomes at this point a listener who is only a step ahead of the reader by the fact that she jots down the central points of Ouma Kristina's stories of female accomplishments through the course of history. The realistic is defaced by the mythical, just as the marvellous is appropriated by the quotidian. An essential part of the

[67] See Brink's 'The Changing Priorities of South African Writers' (Brink, 1998d), cited above.

magicality of this narrative resides very much in Brink's characterization of the personality of Ouma Kristina. Here is one rebel woman who, from the outset, was determined to assert her individuality and femininity in whatever device she considers necessary. It is this mission of female assertiveness and sense of individuality that make her preserve for generations all the relics of her womanhood including such symbols of her femininity as her 'periods' or the mementoes of her monthly menstruation. Here is the experience of Kristien, the narrator, as she complies with the request of the centenarian Ouma Kristina who requests that she destroys the relics of her womanhood:

> All I can make out beyond any doubt are the piles of bulky objects I once spied as a child; for all I know they haven't been touched since then. No furniture; nothing. Only those shapes, covered, like the floor, in inches of dust and drab festoons of cobwebs.
>
> I have no choice but to lock up and go upstairs, skulking like a guilty child, to collect a kerosene lamp from the pantry. Armed with this, at last, I am ready for the Lord Carnarvon act. Scraping the mounds of dust from the objects, I bring to light a collection of bags, mostly brown paper, stacked in rows upon rows hefty as washerwomen. They turn out not to be heavy at all, only bulky; and my first thought as I plunge a hand into the nearest is that they're filled with nothing but crumpled newsprint. But each ball of paper contains something, a wad, a pad, something very old and dry and stained with what at first sight appears to be dark paint but then turns out to be, so help me God, browned and blackened blood. For they are all sanitary rags and towels, and gathered, and stowed. What on earth for? Ouma won't ever tell. A silent witness to – what? Her life, she said. Her femininity? Her rejection or affirmation of it? God knows; and he is unlikely to tell. Bags and bags and bags of them, years and years of bleeding, of "the curse", of moving with the cycles of time, once every twenty-eight or so days, thirteen times a year, how many years? Should I cry, or laugh, or shrug it off? No, it is not to be shrugged off. It is – nothing. It is a life.

> This, I think, is worse – both more eloquent and more dauntily mute – than that embroidered name and date on a piece of cloth left by a great-great-aunt from the Boer War. In its silence it becomes the testimony, not of the century marked by one woman's life, but of all women, all of us, since Eve first got the blame of seducing Adam. This is myth still; yet different. All those ancient myths of the frontier woman in the frontier country; all of them conceived and perpetuated by men. So what was there left for Ouma Kristina except to spit the pips of her forbidden fruit into the faces of the myth-makers? (***Imaginings***, 218-9).

Notwithstanding the severity of the burns she suffers, she does not die. She waits for Kristien to arrive from London to 'record' the 'history' and 'story' of women of her lineage. For an Afrikaner nation that perennially celebrates the immense achievement of the race during the long struggles with the British, the indigenous population of the Zulu and the Xhosa, Ouma Kristina recreates the immense contribution of the Afrikaner women through the struggle that included the Great Trek and the many battles that took the Afrikaner to the hinterland. It is, from the recordings of Ouma Kristina's 'oral narrative' that we imagine the misfortune in the narratives of the chauvinist, Afrikaner male-chroniclers who sidelined the contributions of the women fictionally represented here as Kamma/Maria, Lottie, woman-Samuel, Wilhelmina, Petronela and Rachel, among others. Ouma Kristina herself displays such legendary roles that she plays the 'idiot', by falling in love with 'the much loathed Jew', Jethro, through his uncle, Moishe, and elopes to Baghdad, "*where camels sing hymns in Latin*" (my emphasis). Her great-grand ancestor, Kamma/Maria, had not 'died'. Instead, she "became a tree", just as another member of her lineage, Lottie, "vanished in search of the shadow". Even then, the woman-Samuel did not die too: she "disappeared, presumed drowned". Ouma Kristina tells the stories of these women in her deathbed. Kristien is elated that Ouma Kristina is willing to tell her "the family history" (***Imaginings***, 129). But she soon realizes that there are different layers, and many versions of the history. She begins to believe what she had always thought were folktales, as she confesses:

> Well, for one thing, what I used to take for stories she'd made up now turns out to be --" I hesitate. I meant to say "real", but that is not true. The mere memory of the

> trip to Baghdad makes me smile. Yet even as I smile I feel found out: Ouma was trying to tell me something and if I failed to understand, the fault was not hers, but mine. Anna's gaze exacerbates my dilemma. How can I defend Ouma's stories against this levelheaded woman who is my sister and who comes from a world where blood and violence and fear are everyday realities, not fantasies or nightmares? Is this what it is about – that the fabric of our fictions betrays the predicament of a culture? "She held me spellbound", I protest, not very convincingly. "But her mind is wandering. How do you know she's to be trusted?"
>
> "I have to trust her, Anna. This is the last chance" (***Imaginings***, 130).

Fantasy is built, here, on the complex tapestry of trust. How does the narrator, Kristien, trust the stories and family history as told by Ouma Kristina? How does she persuade her later/would-be listeners/readers that the stories/ histories have elements of facts? Here, Brink collapses the dichotomy between stories and histories. While Anna does not trust any 'sentence' emanating from Ouma, much more so now that her mind is 'wandering', Kristien is adamant: "Anna, I'm sure Ouma told the truth" (***Imaginings***, 132). While she has never trusted stories from Ouma, her perception of the centenarian soon changes because, as she says, "Ouma suddenly made me realize that there was another side to it. She had a whole secret life of her own which we knew nothing about" (***Imaginings,*** 132). The secret life, for which she now takes interest, becomes hers, and indeed the secret life of women of all ages. Kristien gradually begins to understand her rebel spirit since her childhood days and the motivation for the journey that took her beyond the shores of Africa. It is during this period, she affirms, that:

> The limit of one space was simply the beginning of another; it was possible to go beyond. I knew then, yes, that I should go. I would leave the margin and move onto another territory. Its name was history....
>
> For the first few months in London I was on a high. I was driven by the compulsion to "make it work", to "show them', to get involved – as I had so recklessly

> presumed – in history, above all to prove to myself that I could succeed (***Imaginings,*** 149).

As a statement in female accomplishments and assertiveness, an interesting narratological device in ***Imaginings of Sand***, then, is the narratorial conspiracy between Brink, the novelist, Ouma Kristina, the storyteller, and Kristien, the narrator. While the novelist carefully withdraws from the *narrated* incidents and the occasional commentaries, the 'storyteller', Ouma Kristina, is careful not to presume awareness of every incidental development in the long years of women struggle (***Imaginings***, 180); while the narrator, Kristien, suddenly becomes a careful listener who must believe the stories from her grandmother, in order to be able to convince her later/would-be listeners/readers. Brink's stylistic 'conspiracy' in this narrative mode, particularly with respect to achieving believability is probably the reason for his deployment and evocation of the phantasmagoria: Ouma Kristina again and again withdraws from her revelations of the epical accomplishments of women, only to invite a ghost to continue with the narration: Wilhelmina, in this case, "appears" in the room, even though she is only seen by Ouma Kristina. The emerging scenario, and the unending imaginative possibilities of her grandmother for the first time, visibly shakes Kristien: "I pull over the nurse's low chair. In spite of myself I glance at the empty bed; to my dismay it does seem to be sagging, as if straining under a heavy weight. I turn the chair sideways to shut the bed from my field of vision, and yield to the swell of Ouma's new tale" (***Imaginings*** 268; 280). Through patterns of metafictionality, the past and the present combine in fascinating layers of the mundane and the mysterious.

Part of the narrational conspiracy for the valorisation of women, is the novelist's attitude to heroism and male characterization. One observes, for instance, the indignation and lack of vision associated with "being only a man" (***Imaginings*** 205; 214). Ouma Kristina is quick to remind Kristien: "Surnames are not important" (***Imaginings*** 174); 'surname', it is then suggested, is one of the many patriarchal symbols of male chauvinism devised to ensure domestic and cultural dominance. Ouma Kristina does not tell the stories of men, but of women, and if heroism is to be celebrated at all, it is women that constitute

the significant lot. Listen to an earlier dialogue between Ouma Kristina and her grand daughter, Kristien, as she relates her "testament":

> "The surnames are of no importance. Those have all been added on, you can't rely on them. Every time a man becomes a father he's all too eager to get his surname into the picture. But how can he be sure that what he put in is the same as what comes out? We're the only ones who can tell for certain, and sometimes we prefer to keep it secret. It's us I'm talking about. The womenfolk. I told you it's my testament. And now that I'm getting close to death this is all that really matters"
>
> "How far back do you know the story?"
>
> "Far enough….
>
> "So Maria-Kamma was the first?"
>
> "Of course not. Aren't you listening? (***Imaginings*** 174)

And just as Kristien is beginning to make sense of the stories, Ouma Kristina readily reminds her: "nothing is just a story" (***Imaginings*** 174). Of the many women she valorises, mystery is their common, collective identity. Maria-Kamma was not expected to survive, but she does by virtue of some strange concoctions made available to her in form of medication (***Imaginings*** 180). Her exceptional physical beauty is presented as mysterious in her unnaturalness and avarice: nearly everyman that tried to make love to her dies in some weird incident: attacked by dangerous black ants; attacked with a 'tortoise', or by 'a rabid meerkat', or gets a deflated scrotum. Given her stubbornness, she was constantly flagellated with a 'sjambok' made from "the penis of a buffalo", and to save her skin, "she changed the sheep into stones when she felt like wandering about by herself" (***Imaginings*** 181-2).

It is important to observe, too, that Maria-Kamma was not Afrikaner: she was of the indigenous population of the Khoikhoi, and it is not by accident that her beauty would attract men of the invading Afrikaner community. If the narrative in its experiment in

historical re-evaluation is meant to draw attention to the genesis of miscegenation in South Africa and the 'birth' of the 'Coloured' community, then Brink would have made a point through the deployment of this Khoikhoi woman – Kamma who features prominently in Ouma Kristina's narration. Yet as a project in the magical narrative mode, it is a historical non-history. For, indeed, an altercation with her husband, Adam Oosthuizen, presents not a historical figure, but a supernatural character with lycanthropic powers:

> And then, all of a sudden, she changed into a tree, a small thorn tree, with ample space for birds in her branches, and shadow below for her two mahems.
>
> Adam raced towards her as fast as he could. Beside himself, and most likely without realizing what he was doing, he started flagellating the tree with his sjambok. The tree began to cry, its tears running down the trunk like gum. Then all the birds in the widespread branches started flapping their wings, and in front of Adam's eyes they flew off with the tree, past the horizon, gone; the two mahems followed on the ground, racing on their spindly legs. And Adam, too, followed, on the back of his ox, but he didn't get very far.
>
> His skeleton was found many years later, bleached on the plains. It was only through the mirror in his knapsack that he could be identified.
>
> And then an elephant came and blew the story away (***Imaginings*** 192; 217)

While Ouma Kristina's narratives of the lives of the many women in her lineage provide significant clues through which we read the many manifestations of women's struggles, her 'testament' of the exemplary roles of Wilhelmina become relevant not merely because of her many transformations, but more so because Wilhelmina is the only member of the maternal lineage who featured in 'recorded history' (***Imaginings*** 268). Her exploits transcend the private 'battles' of the connubial chambers, and reach the heart of the social formation at the earliest stages. As a symbolic character, she plays immense roles that could be taken, perhaps, as the foremost practical engagement in anti-colonialism. The anti-colonial adventures of the women find expression in 'the

conspiracy', and her mobilization of over four-hundred women, and with Susanna Smit, -- the wife of the clergy, Rev. Erasmus Smit—whose repressed anger over the years against the generally perceived weakness of the male folk finally exploded during the invasion by the British: the women took it upon themselves to defend the Afrikaner honour and ancestral dignity where the men failed: it is at this point that, "led by Susanna Smit with Wilhelmina and her twins right at her heels in formidable support, nearly four-hundred women marched on the hall where Henry Cloete was waiting to hear the outcome of the Assembly's decisive vote". It was at this point, too, that 'they announced their "fixed determination never to yield to British authority" (***Imaginings*** 285-6). As Ouma Kristina reports:

> They were painfully aware, they said, that resistance might be of no avail; but they wanted to make it clear "that they were ready to walk across the Drakensberg barefoot, to die in freedom, as death was dearer to them than the loss of liberty" (***Imaginings*** 286; 291).

Imaginings of Sand provides a fascinating interest in what could be described, here, as the Brinkian sense of place. In this regard, we return once again to the spatial topography of Outenequa that we identified earlier as a fictional aggregation of the contemporary South Africa's agricultural town of Oudtshoorn. The immediate place of the many revelations of female accomplishments is the family home of Kristina Basson, a family farmyard named 'Sinai', but sentimentally recalled in the narrative as 'The Birdplace'. Oudtshorn, it is worthy of note, is famous as an agricultural territory in South Africa, particularly associated with the production of ostriches. In the narrative of Ouma Kristina, however, Outenequa assumes a territorial space larger than a mere agricultural town, as the many ornithological creatures for which the name 'The Birdplace' is suggested, transcend mere creatures that generate wealth and livelihood for the farmers. The unusual intimacy between Ouma Kristina and the birds point to an animist culture, and one locates this presence through the entire narrative. On her arrival from London, Kristien is taken to the hospital. Ouma Kristina asks her to open the windows, and almost immediately the birds arrive to accord respect to the convalescing centenarian. She consistently tells Kristien of the eternal spiritual bond between womenfolk and the birds:

"Birds are spirits of dead women" (***Imaginings*** 237). If this belief is true of the Afrikaner, it equally tells of the experience in many indigenous African communities where, unfortunately, this aspect of animism evokes a negative perception of witchcraft and sorcery, especially where it is often claimed that witches engage in their nocturnal activities through their lycanthropic transmutations to some kinds of birds.

It is part of Brink's experiment in the fantastical that a casket is provided for Ouma Kristina while the patient is still very much alive – both physically and mentally—even though medically seen to be expiring. It is even more so that Ouma Kristina insists, through blackmails and outright obduracy, on being eased into the coffin to the displeasure of the medical personnel (***Imaginings*** 238). Yet, when it is time for her burial, she simply "disappears", like the rest of the other women in her tales: an empty coffin is buried, while she appears to Kristien as a "Bird".

'Place', then, easily evokes memories of 'Time', and the narrator is eloquent about this conception of 'temporality' and 'spatiality' as over-lapping. It is: "[A] space impervious to chronology—or, rather, tuned in to a different kind of time, not that of days or weeks or years, appointments or contingencies, but a cyclic motion, summers that blend and merge, that repeat one another without ever being exactly the same, the kind of time that sculpts contours and moulds hills and gnaws away at ridges. Ouma Kristina's landscape. This expanse, this spare beauty, this deceptive emptiness, […], the place where history began". (***Imaginings*** 227)

As a narrative of transition, Brink's ***Imaginings of Sand*** is, perhaps, that of an endless transition that leans heavily on the historical and the mythological. A narrative of the present that tries to find bearing in the fantastical narratives of the past suddenly diminishes the bizarre tales of the past into nothingness. The utter confusion of the narrator to hold on to a memory of feminist identity through the immense but unrecorded accomplishments of her matrilineal heritages is tragically defaced by the explosive incidents of the present. Temporality, in this way, defies location since the many layers of time assume what Fredric Jameson calls 'multiple temporality', just as the many layers of narrative incidents cohere with Achille Mbembe's 'simultaneous multiplicities'. In the

final analysis, it is neither the 'novelist', nor the 'storyteller', but the 'narrator', Kristien, who defines this feeling following the shock she suffers after her sister, Anna, kills her husband, children, and finally herself: "I didn't flip or run around. […]. Nothing I could imagine could outdo this. *Reality had cancelled itself. That surge within the real towards the unreal, which has fascinated me for so long, had fulfilled itself. There was no temptation to betray what I couldn't change" (*my emphasis*, **Imaginings** 330).*

Brink's ***Imaginings of Sand*** is eloquently an aesthetic archive of the present, of the past and of the future. It is above all, a narrative of the re-evaluation and projection of the identity of mostly unappreciated roles of many white women in South Africa's long years of lop-sided national historiography. That Brink would simulate the violence of transition through the violence of gender and social status as constituting aspects of the memory of South Africa's national narratives is an enormous aesthetic engagement best conveyed through the fantastical narrative mode. In this way, the mundane and the mysterious, the quotidian and the quixotic are successfully immersed in a single tale of a nation where the imperative of essentialism had led hitherto to pure mimesis in the creative imagination. And it is instructive that Brink adopts the multiple points of view to show the many worlds of the novel. André Brink's commitment to exploring this aesthetic mode is boosted by his later marvellous efforts in ***Devil's Valley*** and ***The Other Side of Silence***.

IV.

But while in ***Imaginings of Sand*** temporality constitutes a significant aspect of Brink's narrative of alterity and the post-apartheid imagination, in ***Devil's Valley*** the 'time' element is less obvious. Yet, we are aware that a strange set of humanity called 'the blacks' has finally taken over political power in the 'outside world'. The sheer disgust expressed by a number of the citizens of this 'inside world' over the bizarre development is Brink's narrative device of drawing attention to the spatial location of a blind set of humanity who, unfortunately, have continued to live in ignorance, incest, gerontocratic despotism, diffidence, and in the process have visited untold injustice against her own people. If ***Devil's Valley*** is a post-apartheid satire on the primitivism and inadequacies of

apartheid as a system of separate development, it is a very eloquent one for the reasons that it ensures a recycling of human stupidity, impedes on the citizens' right of desire, arrogantly gerontocratic, and generally non-progressive. It is, indeed, defined by the enormity of hypocrisy prevalent in the community: a valley presided over by devils.

More than anywhere else, perhaps, it is in ***Devil's Valley*** that Brink shows how the dominant certainly needs more salvation than the dominated. But like ***Imaginings of Sand*** and ***The Other Side of Silence, Devil's Valley*** is also a narrative of the reconstruction and re-evaluation of the place of marginal subjectivities—the indigenous population, and the roles of the Afrikaner women in the making or unmaking of the Afrikaner nationhood. It is equally a daring representation of South Africa's transitional era to democratic non-racialism but distinguished by the novelist's unpretentious recourse to, and adoption of nightmarish realism. The entire narrative has an aura of the supernatural and the mythical. Repetitions, contradictions, reality and fantasy, sympathy and satire, truths and deceptions are all united in a marvellous narrative that originally sets out as a project of excavations of a people's history, by an apparently frustrated crime-journalist who, at 59, is determined to make "a contribution to society" (***Devil's Valley***, 11).

As an 'investigation' by a crime reporter, then, it is little wonder that ***Devil's Valley*** appears in the first-person narrative, given the personal involvement of the narrator to much of the incidents within the two weeks of his trip to the bizarre, never-never land of Devil's Valley. The motivation is 'the recent appearance' of some citizens of the Valley to the outside world after "the War". Their appearance gives credence to what was originally a mere speculation: "a legend took root about a community of physically and mentally handicapped people in the mountains, the sad outcome of generations of inbreeding" (***Devil's Valley***, 14). Brink, it does seem, here, is begging the question: if apartheid were such a noble project, why did it lead to self-destruction, including social, economic and spiritual aridity?

The central figure, here, is the journalist, Flip Lochner. The choice of the investigative reporter taking on the role of embracing his life-long dream of becoming a historian of

repute appears to be a deliberate narrative ploy of novelist Brink whose interest in the nexus between historical narratives and narratives of history has led to his utilization of the magical narrative form through the mobilization of the many mythologies of the peoples of South Africa. And in spite of the many repetitions and contradictions that mark the narration, it is possible to map the narrative progression: stirred by the bug of life's struggles, of the pleasures and disappointments of a once ambitious young man now gradually approaching his dusk, Flip Lochner, 59, crime-reporter, is given the privilege of attending a history seminar at South Africa's Stellenbosch University. He arrives at the scene, and is immediately reminded that a former classmate of his, Twinkletoes Van Tonder, is now one of the nation's most respected historians and academics. He contrasts the feeling of Van Tonder's accomplishments to his personal experiences. The realization that he has failed as a journalist and, worse still, as a husband and father, rekindles his desire to make a contribution to scholarship—a dream that inspires his master's degree dissertation. Following his presentation at the seminar, a young man, Little Lukas Lermiet, accosted him, and they soon develop a friendship that ends tragically almost immediately when Little Lukas gets killed in a road accident.

The young man, however, had succeeded in arousing Flip Lochner's curiosity about life and humanity in his homeland: Devil's Valley. Flip Lochner takes a trip to this weird territory, and in ten days, he is able to excavate not just the history of Devil's Valley in its diverse manifestations, but also manages to draw attention to the psychology governing events and customs amongst the inhabitants. These range from a sense of contentment defined by a primitive closure against all kinds of invasions by "outsiders", to the sustenance of their values through beliefs in superstition, violence, and a perverted sense of justice where it is possible to face public execution for stealing a cup of water, and yet escape ordinary trial for offences as severe as murder and incest.

We get an idea of the concept of power, of religion, of health, gender, education, justice dispensation, class and racial [in]tolerance through the many interactions of this central figure with the inhabitants of the Valley. Central to the understanding of this society is the place of 'name' and 'naming'. Individuals are defined either by their profession, physical attributes, or their mannerisms. The presiding Vicar of the local church, for

instance, is called ‘Brother Holy’; the agent in charge of invocation of water during draught is ‘Jurg Water’; the painter that attempts to keep public memory through his art is ‘Gert Brush’; the judge that presides over cases including sentencing convicted persons to death, and who attends to all dead persons is ‘Lukas Death’; the lady who has the gift of a fine dancer is ‘Talita Lightfoot’. Some of the women are defined by their affiliations to marriage: Dalena-of-Lukas Death, Hanna-of-Jurg-Water, Annie-of-Anwyn, and so on.

Flip Lochner encounters these developments, but also tries to participate in the running of the community within the period of his investigation. This angers many privileged male members of the community; some plan for his death, and majority of the inhabitants were persuaded into believing that the ‘unholy liaison’ of Flip Lochner and the much loathed Emma was responsible for the many tragic incidents at Devil’s Valley. The sequence of incidents that follow Flip Lochner’s many attempts to dig up the past are better seen in the series of tragic deaths that follow: in less than two weeks, the small community where everybody knows everybody witnesses the deaths of Anwyn, Ouma Lisbet Prune, Ben Owl, Prickhead, Piet Snot, Jos Joseph, Tall Fransina, Jurg Water, Emma, Lukas Death, among others. Flip Lochner is finally able to return to the outside world, from where he develops his story in a manner reminiscent of a remembered dream.

But ***Devil’s Valley*** is not a simple story. It is a loaded narrative that is at once symbolical, analogical and parabolical. It is in practically every respect an allegory, and it is in the blending of the real and the fantastical— in the believable and the delusional—that the narrative assumes its basic metaphorical function. In terms of temporality, the moment is as suggestive of the period immediately following South Africa’s successful transition to democracy as it is now, or was yesterday. What readily emerges from this reading, then, would include the many centuries of Boer perception of South Africa as ‘the promised land’ on the one hand, and on the other, the *modus operandi* of the ‘Broederbond’—the unit entrusted with the task of ensuring racial purity— which was known to be notorious during the apartheid days by the secrecy of its modes of operation and its rightwing ethic.

The very first encounter of the journalist with the ‘legendary’, or perhaps, mythical old man, Lukas (Seer) Lermiet, the founding father of the ‘town’ of Devil’s Valley, is met

with suspicion and hostility. It might be immaterial to perceive Lukas Lermiet as a fictional figuration of Jan Van Riebeeck; yet, it is interesting that Brink distances the population, or any of the many South Africa's ethnic groups from the concern of journalist Lochner. It is possible, however, to decode and place the weird and fictional characters and the population within the linguistic circles and ancestry of the dominant South African languages. The old man, we are certain, at least, spoke with a typical antiquarian 'Dutch accent' (***Devil's Valley***, 4), just like most of his descendants; and one could easily have located—within the context of blood and belonging in South Africa—, his community of whites had he spoken in a typical 'antiquarian British accent'.

As metaphor, therefore, ***Devil's Valley*** could be read as Brink's fictional aggregation and parodic revaluation of the Afrikaner Broederbond and 'primitive closure' that was sustained for so long a time through the then fanciful idiom—at least to the initiators—of 'apartheid'. With a legalistic structure that frowned seriously against the 'rights of desire', contact amongst racial groups was met with brutal punishment, and the 'Immorality Act' was at hand to provide authority to presiding judges. The implication is the condoning of greater immoralities and social aberrations like 'incest', 'child-abuse', 'wife-battering', and murderous engagements. Within this society, the human mind is then subjected to irrational fears and diffidence through the sustaining structures of superstition. It is in the exploration of these larger social aberrations through the efforts of the investigating journalist that the novelist applies himself to an aesthetic reconstruction of the more fundamental issues of marginality in ***Devil's Valley***.

With a passionate commitment to ensuring racial purity, the patriarchal oral traditionalists of Devil's Valley are careful not to include the indigenous population in their narratives at the time of their founding father. This deliberate defacement of the black's humanity is then paralleled to the systematic subjugation of the women whom, we are told, "are not allowed to speak in church, except to address the Lord in prayer (***Devil's Valley***, 356). As part of the narrative reversal, Brink does not shield the apparent hypocrisy of the inhabitants of the Valley who are always in a hurry to locate evil/sin in the sub-human *Other*. Whereas the many magical tales that sustain the narrative are drawn variously from the mythologies of the so-called 'Bushmen', 'the Hottentots', 'the Afrikaners', and

'the Biblical, ***Devil's Valley*** could be read satisfactorily as a mythical aggregation of the many Afrikaner settlements in South Africa: one arrives at this persuasion given the persistent echoes in the narrative of what seems like the nationalist ethic of the 'Broederbond' in their crude and unpretentious recourse to white racial protectionism and a warped sense of white racial superiority. In the context of a 'liberated' South Africa, the novel could be said to have satirized the continuing agitation by a minority segment of the white Afrikaner community for the endorsement of an 'Orania Republic'. Whereas the journalist uncovers the immense space occupied by legendary and mythical narratives of the inhabitants, one curious manifestation is that in Devil's Valley, oral tradition excludes the indigenous population. All the tales are of the Boers. The blacks, the servants, and, indeed, the Khoikhoi are all invisible or even non-existent (***Devil's Valley***, 117).

In spite of the prevailing incest, adulterous life, and truncated morality very much inconsistent with their Calvinist ethos, dishonesty remains, for them, a function of any illicit association with the outside world. Thus Isac Smous' family "have always been too lazy to do an honest day's work" (***Devil's Valley***, 242), and the reason given for this charge is not that as business men/women they are entitled to generating some profit, but because they have "Jewish blood in them" (***Devil's Valley***, 185). Isak Smous' grandmother, 'Bilah', is said to be Jewish, even though we are later to learn from Lukas Death that she was from the indigenous population of the Hottentots. There is, therefore, it does seem, an unwritten constitution by these settlers to phase out the existence of the black's humanity from public memory. History becomes a lie, and the historian, a liar: and what emerges as South African history as narrated by the inhabitants of Devil's Valley remains essentially monumental structures of white mythologies—history as written by white settlers—since the Zulu, the Xhosa, the Sotho and the many indigenous black South Africans would have to reconstruct public memory by excavating hidden truths. Part of these truths, the crime reporter tells us, would involve the excavation of the numerous mass graves as evidence of the genocide committed against the indigenous peoples in the settlers' hypocritical ambition of maintaining racial purity.

It is through Brink's authorial intrusiveness as a ventriloquist adorning the mask of a journalist, however, that basic questions about the representation of the black's humanity, or the place of the indigenous population is narrated in ***Devil's Valley***. Myth is deployed, here, to offer a pseudo-scientific explanation for the deformity of Lukas Lermiet who had battled with, and conquered the Devil in an epic, and memorable fight that lasted for a period none could remember. Yet, the family relishes in his victory since there is a memento—"the black spot on the floor, from deep down where the Devil is still smothering away" (***Devil's Valley***, 184). And in evoking Biblical mythologies to account for the absence of the black's humanity in the narratives of the settler, the journalist prods his interlocutor, Lukas Death, to explain the sudden appearance of Biliah—a black woman—at the Valley. His response:

> Why should that surprise you? The scriptures themselves do not give us every verse and chapter. For example, they don't tell us about other people made by God at the time as Adam and Eve, but when Cain arrived in the land of Nod he took himself a wife, so we know there must have been others around (***Devil's Valley***, 185).

The latent interrogation of Biblical mythologies is to reveal several other historical realities and possibilities: the observation that Adam and Eve were the first human creations, and the fact that one of their sons, Cain, later returns from Nod to take a wife is indicative that there were human inhabitants in other parts of the globe for which the Bible is silent. The parallel, here, is as vocal as the many Afrikaner mythologies that picture South Africa as 'a promised land'. Brink's narrative flash, then, is the selective amnesia that conveniently defaces the existence of the indigenous population at the time of the Boer invasion in the mid-17th century. Flip Lochner, the crime reporter, is able to resolve this conflict in the mass graves at the local church's cemetery, where children of 'wrong colour' or 'throwbacks' were murdered and buried (***Devil's Valley***, 185-6; 192; 228-230).

Devil's Valley, as a tale of 'the oppressed', is however more assertive in the cultural battlefield of gender and power. As a narrative of the Afrikaner 'closure' and refusal to relate openly with the larger humanity in South Africa's recent history, the novel is a

metaphor for a social formation that is perennially sunk in the abyss of its stupidity, and yet celebrates this foolhardiness and primitivism through her inexplicable arrogance. Brink's narrative intention in this allegory, it does seem, is to ridicule through irony and satire: a nation that clings so sentimentally to racial purity tries to sustain this sense of Puritanism through a plethora— as noted earlier—of social aberrations that subsume incest, adultery, high profile hypocrisy, cultural repression of the womenfolk, and a blatant display of gerontocracy: the elder is assumed to be always 'right' in every aspect of the peoples' lives, and the population is psychologically conditioned, through primitive superstition and fear, into believing that a humiliating death awaits any dissenter as punishment. Emma complains bitterly: "The old men have all the say in this place" (***Devil's Valley***, 161), and to the question regarding their refusal to associate with the rest of humanity, she clarifies:

> They think it'll be the end of the Valley if people start coming and going as they want to. It's a bit easier for the men. From time to time one of them even goes out to get married, and brings his wife back here. The women never, it's out of the question. No outsider may lay a hand on their womenfolk. They are jealous of their possessions…. Can you imagine anyone being jealous in a place like this? (***Devil's Valley***, 162).

Devil's Valley proceeds from here to become a project in feminist protestations. As latent as it usually appears, there is a flood of resistance emanating from embittered women who try to find expression within a repressive white culture. Again, it is the male chauvinist chroniclers that appropriate history, and there is need to locate the place of women's immense achievements both in sustaining life in the Valley in the past and in the present. Brink adopts an intriguing narrative style and, for a while, there is a distancing of the novelist and the reporter. Flip Lochner's aggressive approach to investigative reporting is submerged, as he achieves little or no success in his attempts to excavate the past in ***Devil's Valley***. But the women soon gain confidence in him and decide to take on the challenge of narrating their stories. Dalena, the wife of Lukas Death, proceeds to narrate aspects of their history with a feminist candour. She reveals to the journalist: "If I hadn't come to you tonight they'd have stopped me again. They take

everything. They took our whole history" (***Devil's Valley,*** 232 ff). It is through Dalena's protestations that we are made aware of the many roles women played, and still play, in the stabilization of life in the Valley. The tribute is as compelling as the sheer size of the number of women who try to gain and assert their voice at the Valley: Mina, Sanna, Mooi-Janna—who uses her sexuality as a weapon in the battle for the control of the Valley (***Devil's Valley***, 226 ff), Dalena, who later kills her husband—Lukas Death—for noble reasons, Maria, Emma, Annie, Talita Lightfoot, the mesmerizing dancer, Tant Poppie (Fullmoon)—the medical consultant—and Katarina Sweetmeat, among others. Protestations from the women equally find expression in the attitude to the responsibility of the woman as a childbearing machine.

It is instructive to note, here, that while a woman might love her children as a natural obligation, she is not necessarily happy to be a mother, ***Devil's Valley*** seems to suggest. At the death of her husband, Alwyn, Annie, becomes hysterical and could not hide her frustration and anger in the society's definition of the woman as a daughter, wife and mother. She complains, for instance: "It's always others who take the decisions and give the orders in this place. What must be done, who must do it, why, when, where. Who must live, who must die. And all I'm expected to do is to scrape and bow and praise God, my Lord and Master!". (***Devil's Valley***, 293-5) The constraints against female self-definition are severe within the confines of the Valley's white culture, and progress for the woman is systematically stifled by their denial of educational advancement (***Devil's Valley***, 296-7; 354-6; 359). Akin to this are the persistence of child molestation and the enforcement of a patriarchal policy where "Women are not allowed to speak in church, except to address the lord in prayer" (***Devil's Valley***, 256). The sheer display of the women in challenging aspects of these socially constricting values (***Devil's Valley,*** *357*-362) is summarized by Jurg Water's wife's insistence that "The only thing that suffering has taught me is the uselessness of suffering. And now I've had enough" (***Devil's Valley***, 359).

In the final analysis, however, it is not necessarily Brink's interest in the marginalized groups such as white women and the indigenous Africans that gives ***Devil's Valley*** its enthralling quality. It is in his marvellous juggling of realism and supernaturalism, of

history and story, of truths and deceptions in a united narrative mode of the fantastical. In this form, place and temporality find location in the bizarre, just as character and characterization oscillate between the mundane and the lycanthropic. For all its patriarchal arrogance, the community of 'Devil's Valley' is one stupendous mass of a very unnatural environment where there are no birds, and where adultery is permissible as long as the perpetrators are never caught. The legalistic structures are as truncated as the moral sensibilities of the inhabitants are superlatively hypocritical. For instance, for bringing pregnancy from 'outside', Maria is stoned to death; yet, Jurg Water and the rest of the revered old men often engage in incestuous liaisons with their own daughters; for refusing to compromise to the sexual advances of some odd, very elderly characters like Hans Magic and Ben Owl, and especially for being a child of Maria, Emma is subjected to all kinds of psychological traumas: she is afraid that she, too, like her mother, might be stoned to death. This is more so since she is cursed with "the devil's mark".

The magicality of the narrative, like in ***Imaginings of Sand***, finds assertion in the macabre and the incredible. Through the course of the narration, there is an intermingling of the dead amongst the living: Lukas (Seer) Lermiet died over a century ago, yet he constantly participates in most of the important decision-takings in the Valley, especially at the Prayer meetings—the Nagmaal; Ouma Lisbet Prune was buried, but she waits for Flip in the upper chamber of her building where the angels will take her to heaven; Little-Lukas too: Flip Lochner sees him while trying to hand over 'the ash' to his mother, Dalena. As Dalena leaves with the 'ash box', Flip sees Little Lukas walking by her side. Even as a dead young man, Little Lukas tries to make love to Emma. She leaves Little Lukas' room to join Flip in the larger 'Coffin'. She confides in him: "You don't understand Flip. Little Lukas is in there. He wanted to get into bed with me all the time. He never pestered me like that when he was still alive, but he isn't shy any longer" (***Devil's Valley***, 371).

The reference to the 'coffin' as a wedding present for the couple, and the revelation that the consummation of every marriage is to be done in a coffin re-echoes this theme as we find in Ouma Kristina's narrative in ***Imaginings of Sand***. Tales of this form, it would seem, appear dominant in the narrative, and every character is linked in one way, or the

other. This sense of magicality and mythopoeia is as explicit in the present with Hans Magic invoking his powers over Brother Holy and Ben Owl, as it was in the past with Katarina Sweetmeat: "The one who married Lukas Bigballs and who changed into a white nanny goat when the moon was full" (***Devil's Valley***, 241), and later gave birth to a baby with "two goat's feet" (***Devil's Valley***, 243).

For a crime reporter who at 59 is already counting his disappointments and failures as a journalist, husband, and father, it is not much surprise that the sheer incredibility of Flip Lochner's excavations of the archives of a demented people in an unnatural location would sustain his recourse to the use of gutter language and unnecessary vulgarity—in spite of his sworn determination of "making a contribution".

Although ***The Other Side of Silence*** has been excluded from this analysis for purposes of space, one observes that even here, Brink continues with his mission of re-examining and reconstructing recorded factualities with a peculiar interest in gender politics and aesthetic representations. Like in ***Imaginings of Sand*** and ***Devil's Valley***, the approach is still within the mythical framework, only that this time, Brink attempts to 'discover' other parts of Africa to show the various colours of colonial domination and inhumanity. While it is possible to identify the narrators in ***Imaginings,*** and ***Devil's Valley***, Brink's narrator in ***The Other Side of Silence*** operates from the background throughout the entire narration. In ***Imaginings,*** Kristien can only convey her frustrations with the connivance of her visionary and nihilist grandmother, Ouma Kristina; in ***Devil's Valley*****,** it is through the efforts of a determined crime reporter, Flip Lochner, that history is challenged and found to be a biased fabulation by patriarchal myth-makers. In ***Silence***, however, we are only aware that there is a historian who is on a mission of investigating the hidden segments of the narratives of German colonial occupation in South West Africa (now Namibia). We never get to meet him or her. In all these novels, Brink copiously deploys the first-person narrator, and in the course of the investigation, other characters are invited to testify by narrating their personal experiences. Each narrator is so passionately immersed in the project of unearthing buried historical facts that one readily recognizes, before long, that the many hidden truths of the past constitute the many "silences" that we

finally confront through the narrative progression in the life of the representative female protagonist, Hanna X, who dies several deaths and subjected to several silences.

V.

André Brink's aesthetic reconstruction of history thus locates in colonialism and colonialist repression a fertile space for gender politics and domination of the indigenous population in general. Even within the same domineering white constituency, evidence manifest of implicit silencing of the weak at the level of gender. That white women were subjected to varying degrees of molestation and abuse almost at par with the arrogant dismissal of the black's humanity during the empire days in Africa presents a new perspective towards the discourse of marginality in South Africa's post-colonial scholarship. Yet, the narratives are essentially stories of white women as the indigenous black population rarely feature in the stories. In spite of the dominant black population, narratives of Afrikaner heroism and counter-heroism are almost always silent on the black's humanity irrespective of centuries of 'neighbourliness'. Brink's deployment of the fantastical narrative mode to explore these 'silences' of history in a number of his post-apartheid novels—***Imaginings of Sand, Devil's Valley,*** and ***The Other Side of Silence***—, as we equally find in Mike Nicol's ***The Ibis Tapestry***, Mda's ***Heart of Redness*** and ***Madonna of Excelsior***, Sello Duiker's ***Thirteen Cents*** and ***The Quiet Violence of Dreams*** among others, make this narrative mode a significant manifestation in the aesthetic representations of the post-apartheid imagination.

The degree of the deployment of the fantastical form varies, however, among individual writers. Where Duiker's approach is essentially 'hallucinatory', perhaps, to convey the level of pathology and contradictions incited by the liberalism of the new order, Mike Nicol draws fundamentally from the finest traditions of literature to establish a parallel between the cultures of violence across two estranged historical epochs; Mda's creative experiments remain enormously refreshing, and in his deployment of the magical form, there is an eloquent attempt to regionalize the experience in a manner evocative of similar experiences of the indigenous peoples in the rest of the continent. In this way, the magical narrative emerges in the idiom of Stephen Slemon (1997[1995]: 411-412) as a

project in 'transformational regionalism' or, even better, in the description of Beatrice Amaryll Chanady (1997[1995]: 125-144) as 'the territorialization of the imaginary'. In the novels of André Brink, however, it becomes a totalising phenomenon deliberately deployed to at once capture and truncate the present, the past and the future. Temporality becomes easily obliterated even though it easily resurfaces at the rarest of moments; actions are recorded and defaced at the whims and caprices of the narrator, and the characters are best delineated within the realms of the lycanthropic: in Brink's narratives, characters are as human as they are easily transformed to flora and fauna. Yet they tell stories that we know, remember, identify with, and interrogate.

But the recourse to fantasy raises some basic questions concerning the ethical, philosophical, and political significances of the dilemma it imposes on narrative as a site for the contestation of power. It would seem that the fantastical, magical form is an escapist approach that shields the novelist from the imperatives of essentialism. Writers who are looked upon as flag-bearers of human freedom deliberately obfuscate communication at the realms of the illogical by thus redirecting the imagination of the deprived from a basic human materialist culture into inanities. History is then distorted to protect the privileged chronicler who presides over narratives of the nation. In other words, the dictates of class, race, gender, and such allied spaces of disenchanted humanity are carefully distorted so that the reader merely concentrates on decoding highfalutin symbologies. Magical realism, to this extent, emerges as a political instrument that only pretends to be interested in the dilemma of the deprived, while protecting the territory of the privileged; magical realism, then, poses ideological and moral challenges to the reader and writer alike. As an aesthetic form, however, its capacity to "re-enchant" (Garuba, 2003:271) is incontrovertible. In the narratives of Brink, especially ***Imaginings of Sand*** and ***Devil's Valley,*** this narrative form is as engaging in the writer's interest in topical issues as it is elevating in the narrator's manipulation of language, irony, satire, and the marvellous in the 're-invention' of life.

Chapter Three

Memory, Metaphor and the Post-Apartheid Imagination: J.M. Coetzee's Novels of the Farm.

I.

In the post-apartheid novels of J. M. Coetzee (1940-), memory and metaphor cohere in fascinating narrations that blend the past and the present in a single narrative of the 'new' nation. In ***Disgrace***, for instance, the configuration of what seems a simple story of a disgraced academic emerges quite eloquently as a story of the fall of apartheid's repressive establishment, and the aftermath of its collapse in defining race relations in 'the new South Africa'. Memory, conceived here in the phraseology of Richard Terdiman as "the modality of our relation to the past" (Terdiman, 1993: 7), becomes a fundamental agent in the construction of narratives of the past and the present. Coetzee is aware of the implications of reportorial narrative modes that lean too heavily on historical accuracy, and opts for a narrative form that partly leans on, and partly defies the factual in fictional composition. In ***Boyhood*** and ***Disgrace***, the transitional South Africa emerges as reminiscences —as recollections of shared national memories. The mnemonic assumes a representational immediacy as "rememoration" so that "experience *is* always *other* than it *was*: inevitably and constitutively *historical*". Coetzee's success in this project of 'rememoration' is built on his deployment of "the referential world as a universe of signs" (Terdiman, 70). In other words, Coetzee consistently constricts and expands his deployment of language to *blur* and at the same time *elaborate* on his chosen subjects. In what he calls the middle voice (Coetzee, [1984] 1992: 94-95), then, metaphor appears to transcend all boundaries since readers and writers alike can always aspire toward unearthing new meanings in any given fictional narrative.

Boyhood and ***Disgrace*** present challenges in the discourse of postcolonial narratology especially when read against the background of Coetzee's paradigm of 'writing the middle'. The politics of actantial figuration, silence, names and naming, land ownership, the ethics of repression and counter-violence are some of the disturbing manifestations of these novels of Coetzee after apartheid. One way of arresting a possible misreading,

however, is to *follow the narrator/author*. How, for instance, does one 'judge' an academic so prone to self-destruction as David Lurie in ***Disgrace***? What further antics are to be perceived in the figuration of Lurie's daughter, Lucy and her long time 'neighbour', Petrus? How does the emerging assault on the dignity of an innocent Lucy tell on the politics of land ownership and the politics of land expropriation in the 'new' South Africa? How do we locate the place of the *narrator* in the uneasy narratives of the 'new' nation?

Gerald Prince has recently suggested that beyond its concern to "trace explicitly the definitional boundaries of narrative", narratology also "tries to account for narrative diversity" (Prince, 2005: 374). Drawing support in Monika Flaudernik and Marion Gymnich, Prince is persuaded that, among other things, in reading the postcolonial narrative, certain narrational elements must be explored: "the kinds of languages used by the narrator and by the characters constitute a fruitful area of narratological inquiry" (Prince 374). For Coetzee, these 'languages' are implicit in his notion of 'writing the middle'. It would seem that, for Coetzee, the process of writing is one that requires a conscious self-abandonment since the writer does not necessarily preside over the logic of thematizing. As he suggests: "It barely needs to be said that a writing is possible in which the reasoning imagination is deceived from beginning to end (or deceives itself), in which the themes it discovers are not the themes the reader will find, or indeed the themes the writer may find on a later rereading. This may be a part of the cunning of the work, as it works its way past the defenses of the hand writing it" (Coetzee, 1993: 289). Thematic construction and elaboration in fictional narratives appear, therefore, as a consequence of a free process of narration that shuns premeditated efforts at arriving at narrative intentionality.

The over-riding concern of his writing — by general consensus — is his untiring determination to examine the relationship that exists between 'master and slave', or between 'the colonizer' and 'the colonized' in the global tussles "with power and torsions

of power" (Coetzee 1987[1992]: 98)[68]. This fascination with the paradoxes and complexities that surround the global psychology of domination has appeared consistently not only in a number of his fictional work, but even more infectiously in his essays and speeches[69]. Writing about South Africa in his 1987 'Jerusalem Prize Acceptance Speech', for instance, he had argued: "In a society of masters and slaves, no one is free. The slave is not free, because he is not his own master; the master is not free, because he cannot do without the slave. For centuries South Africa was a society of masters and serfs; now it is a land where the serfs are in open rebellion and the masters are in disarray" (Coetzee 1999:96). Coetzee intended to capture the prevailing socio-political sentiments in South Africa in the last days of official apartheid, and in spite of the symbolical suggestiveness of the quest for liberation, he was prepared to go the extra mile in bringing the pains of apartheid's repressiveness closer. He quotes from the novel of one of his predecessors, Alan Paton's ***Cry, The beloved Country***: "I have one great fear in my heart", says one of Paton's black characters: "that one day when they are turned to loving, we will find we are turned to hating" (Coetzee 1999:97).

But it is not so much Coetzee's interest in the whole business of power and patterns of colonial domination that enthral — or infuriate — his readers, as it is his modes of aesthetic representation. Many commentators on Coetzee's novels have dwelt on his

[68] Some of the finest scholars of Coetzee have looked at his novels from the perspective of his fascination with the postcolonial imagination, especially his representation of the experiences of the colonized. There is also interest in Coetzee's narratives from the point of view of his untiring concern to intellectualise his themes at every level. David Attwell's numerous essays on Coetzee, and his *J.M. Coetzee*: *South Africa and the Politics of Writing*, Dick Penner's *Countries of the Mind*: *The Fiction of J.M. Coetzee*, Sue Kossew's *Pen and Power*: *A Post-Colonial Reading of J. M. Coetzee and André Brink*, and the more recent Rosemary Jane Jolly's *Colonization, Violence, and Narration in White South African Writing: Andre Brink, Breten Bretenbach, and J. M. Coetzee* amongst others, are all agreed in their reading of the postcolony in the early works of Coetzee. In Coetzee's fiction, then, time, art, and ethics all cohere in a writer's liberal approach to finding his thematic focus, thus presenting the postcolonial imagination as an open territory that asserts its presence by extracting vital statements of the past and the present.

[69]The claims in some quarters that Coetzee is better understood as "the colonizer who refuses" could, of course, be challenged. But Coetzee's efforts are not simply to tell historical truths. After all, as he eloquently submits, 'we have art so that we may not die of truth'. What emerges here, however, is that critics and average readers of his fiction should be allowed to have their interpretations and 'meanings' as suggested by their experience of his novels. It does seem to me that Coetzee's iconoclasm is better read in his essays and brilliant scholarship and, certainly, not in his fiction. In fact, his '1987 Jerusalem Prize Acceptance Speech' and the more recent 'Nobel Prize lecture: He and His Man' amongst his numerous essays assembled in *Stranger Shores*: *Essays* 1986 – 1999', *Giving offence*: *Essays on Censorship*, *Doubling the Point*: *Essays and Interviews* tell us more of his artistic philosophy than we read in most of his fictional writings.

Euro-modernism and postmodernist inclinations, part of the reasons being 'the fact of his bio-bibliography'. In a number of his essays, Coetzee himself has impugned the modes of narration that have generally made the South African writer a very predictable chronicler. In the essay earlier referred, the 'Jerusalem Prize Acceptance Speech (1987)' (1992:96-99), Coetzee is disturbed by the soporific production of documentary realism with its manifest politicality in South African writing. He quarrels with the suffocation of readers in a number of the writers' over-deployment of this aesthetic mode in representing the realities that mark South Africa during the 1980s. Drawing support in Nietzsche, he submits: "We have art so that we shall not die of the truth. In South Africa there is now too much truth for art to hold, truth by the bucketful, truth that overwhelms and swamps every act of the imagination" (Coetzee 1992:99). But how must truth be narrated?

It is, perhaps, this singular question of *method*, of modes of aesthetic representation that has come to distinguish J.M. Coetzee in South African writing. His interest is with the enduring narrative, — a national metaphor that is suggestive without being simplistic, and emotive without being banal. He takes the subject of the aesthetic ideal very seriously, and in the essay, 'What is a Classic?' Coetzee's novelistic oeuvre finds its most eloquent defence. For, indeed, he returns to T. S. Eliot in a symbolic quest for "a claiming of identity in which a new and hitherto unsuspected paternity is asserted" (Coetzee 2001:7). Coetzee had grown in a South African society where the white settlers had, until recently, mostly identified themselves on the basis of their European ancestry.

He has made, and continues to make some very profound statements that enable our understanding of global developments in contemporary letters. The classical aesthetic tradition that defies temporal limitations as well as the modernist ethic that allows for linguistic manipulation through the combined formulae of authorial presence and detachment help in projecting his paradigm of the inter-medial voice. It is partly for this reason that he occasionally returns to the germane issue of the timeless art and the question of historicity and historical understanding:

> Historical understanding is understanding of the past as a shaping force upon the present. Insofar as that shaping force is tangibly felt upon our lives, historical understanding is part of the present. Our historical being is part of our present. It is that part of our present — namely the part that belongs to history — that we cannot fully understand, since it requires us to understand ourselves not only as objects of historical forces but as subjects of our historical self-understanding (Coetzee, 'What is a Classic?', 2001:15).

The ability of a literary work to transcend historical epochs, to live in the eternal register of humankind — indeed, to "define itself by surviving" (Coetzee 2001:19), sums Coetzee's notion of the classic. Again, in his 'Nobel Prize Lecture: He and His Man', he suggests that the classic sense of narrative accomplishment is a function of metaphor — of private and collective memories couched in sublime allegories[70].

This chapter, devoted to exploring how J.M. Coetzee has articulated an issue considered quite germane to the South African shared memory: matters of land ownership, also looks at the politics of racial representation in two of his post-apartheid narratives. This should be understood within the context of the systematic dispossession that was 'the Native land Act' of 1913, the forceful removals that followed legal apartheid since 1948, and the post-apartheid reprisals. This becomes particularly relevant since Coetzee has consistently focussed on the dilemma of the colonizer and the colonized. He has expressed revulsion against the early white settler writers in South Africa who never recognized the African humanity, but instead got overtly fascinated with the African

[70] For Coetzee, criticism is fundamental in the construction of the classical; every work of the imagination should be subjected to continual interrogation for its refinement, apprehension and survival. In one of his numerous erudite speeches, 'J. M. Coetzee — Nobel Lecture: He and His Man', he returns to the allegory of ' the colonizer' and 'the colonized', by drawing upon Daniel Defoe's *Robison Crusoe*: "And decoy ducks, or duckoys: What did he, Robinson, know of decoy ducks? Nothing at all, until this man of his began sending in reports". See www.nobel.se/literature/laureates/2003/coetzee-lecture-e.html. Thus with *his* man "sending in reports", in other words, with the colonized 'writing back' to the master, the colonizer is being compelled to listen to the colonized; he (the colonizer) is consequently learning new idioms from the 'slave'. In concluding his lecture, Coetzee, like Achebe, harps on the continuing impediments to dialogue between North and South when he writes of the sojourner's attitude to his man: "But he fears there will be no meeting, not in this life. If he must settle on a likeness for the pair of them, his man and he, he would write that they are like two ships sailing in contrary directions, one west, the other east".

landscape. In the essay, 'Farm Novel and Plaasroman', for instance, he condemns the myopic representation of the South African landscape by white writers including the most celebrated of them all, Olive Schreiner who, he suggests, "does not take on the task of comprehensively representing a South African sheepfarm". "Nevertheless", he continues, "the story that emerges from her pen is slanted, one sided" (Coetzee, 1988: 65). To this end, Coetzee has since carved for himself the image of "a colonizer who refuses"[71].

In ***Disgrace*** and ***Boyhood***, we witness a crafty interplay between *narrative* and *narration* in the representation of not only life in the new South Africa and the politics of land ownership, but also in the aesthetic representation of the blacks' humanity. His politics, and figuration of the principal characters in these novels, it is being suggested, here, can best be understood by loyally following the *narrator*.

Early studies on Coetzee have elaborated on his attitude to history and historicity[72], on his interest in the politics of writing[73] and of domination, on his fascination with the subject of language and truth[74] and on his unusual creation of mentalized spaces[75] — both temporal and spatial — in his fiction. In 'The Problem of History in the Fiction of J. M.

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[71] Stephen Watson has used the phrase in line with the brilliant argument of Albert Memmi in *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (London: Souvenir P, 1974:20).

[72] The most elaborate of this angle to Coetzee's scholarship is David Attwell's 'The Problem of History in the Fiction of J. M. Coetzee', *Poetics Today* 11:3 (Fall, 1990).

[73] See also D. Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing* (Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press/Cape Town: David Philips (1993). In fact Attwell argues that "The basic narrative of Coetzee's oeuvre is indeed that of colonialism and decolonisation" (1993:4), and tries to establish the nexus between textuality and historicity in the fiction of Coetzee. He speaks of "situational metafiction", — which he defines as "a mode of fiction that draws attention to the historicity of discourses, to the way subjects are positioned within and by them, and, finally, to the interpretive process, with its acts of contestation and appropriation. Of course, all these things have a regional and temporal specificity" (1993:20).

[74] See, for instance, Attwell's edited, *Doubling the Point*; Sue Kossew's *Pen and Power*; and Rosemary Jane Jolly's *Colonization, Violence, and Narration in White South African Writing*.

[75] The most obvious of this image of psychological nationalities in Coetzee's scholarship is Dick Penner's *Countries of the Mind: The Fiction of J. M. Coetzee*. (N. Y. & London: Greenwood Press, 1989). Penner draws attention to Coetzee's fascination with a teleological fiction that retains its aesthetic authenticity without relying on the burdens of historical pillars when he observes: "J.M. Coetzee the teller of tales, the illusionist, fabulist, and wordsmith, creates countries of the mind, where the imagination reigns and refuses to be subservient to history's incessant voices. This is not to say that his fictional works do not convey an ethical vision: they do, but their lack of polemics and the ways in which their forms subvert traditional fictional genres disturb some of Coetzee's readers" (20).

Coetzee', for instance, David Attwell has observed that "there is more to historical discourse, obviously, than the construction or projection of a sequential narrative" (Attwell 1990:584).[76] In this reaction to the many charges against Coetzee's reluctance to embrace the realistic aesthetic mode in line with the general expectations of the African audience and literary intelligentsia during the separatist regime, Attwell's defence of Coetzee's narrative stance, particularly with respect to the representation of the historical imagination is seminal in its muscular logic. For, indeed, as he argues, "to decline the politics of historical discourses does not necessarily involve ahistoricism" (Attwell 1990:587). Stephen Watson writes of the ambivalence that defines Coetzee's attitude to history as one that is both engaging and disavowing at the same time: "On the face of it, Coetzee would seem to be a writer obsessed with history to a degree scarcely matched by any other author in South Africa today", even though there is evidence that in "his conflation of historical moments, in his metaphysical preoccupations, his modernist leanings, he cannot help striking one as the most ahistorical of writers at the same time" (Watson 1986: 377).

Following this ambiguity is a second question: during the moment of siege[77], the many peoples of South Africa and indeed the rest of the continent yearned desperately for a revolutionary ethos in cultural representations. It was a period which, as Attwell has acknowledged: "it is axiomatic in South Africa that the relationships of culture that Coetzee finds to hand, both through personal history and in institutionalised scholarship, are predominantly non-African". Coetzee, like most whites under the apartheid system, had enjoyed the security of his racial privileges and could afford to 'withdraw' from any direct interest in the politically motivated racial crisis that enveloped the nation at the

[76] Attwell suggests that readers of Coetzee's fiction could do well by noting the basic influences on Coetzee as a novelist. These influences are essentially those of transformational linguistics of Noam Chomsky's persuasion, as well as those of continental structuralism. He concludes: "Coetzee's caution about political association translates into a caution about the notion of community. In the South Africa of the 1970s and 1980s, the only community that a writer like Coetzee could envisage would be a community-to-be-erected. If some of his readers do not sense in Coetzee's fiction the possibility of his sharing, as an authorial presence, in the work of construction or reconstruction that is required by such a prospect, then it is still incumbent on them to follow Coetzee into the break with the filiative colonial structure, to understand the terms of that break, to grasp the historical cogency of the fiction that is produced, and to examine the affiliative connections that follow from it in light of the historical pressures to which they are both a response and a judgment" (Attwell, 1990: 611).

[77] Used also in line with André Brink's usage of the term in his *Mapmakers: Writing in a State of Siege.*

time. While we might excuse Attwell's observation that "Coetzee's choice has been not to test the waters" (Attwell 602), in the context of the politically charged South Africa at the time, with its Stalinist censorial provisions, the 'liberalism of the new order' most certainly calls for other challenges. This is significant since Coetzee is reputed to have devoted immense energy in attacking the notions of *agency* and the basis for the *canonization* of white South African writing[78].

In ***Boyhood*** and ***Disgrace***, the present is thoroughly colonized by the past: South Africa has only recently joined the comity of nations following the abolishment of official apartheid, the release of political prisoners from the many South African prisons and, above all, the embrace of a widely-accepted democratic rule and the emergence to power of a new black political leadership. But a number of policies imposed on the black peoples of South Africa about a century ago such as the notorious 'Native land Act, 1913' have not really vanished into the thin air. Land ownership is still largely in the hands of the minority white population, just as the privilege provided them by the separatist system has left economic power largely within the white population. In the same way, the advantage gained by the white population in terms of their dominance of the educational structures, especially the tertiary sector has meant that knowledge production is still largely within the domain of the minority. The challenge for the new administration becomes in many ways the challenge for the writer: how does one confront the historical reality of the nation; the injustices of the past, the question of repression and dispossession that constitute the experience of the predominantly black population for several centuries? In trying to represent the present, therefore, the writer is at task to demonstrate an unfailing capacity to remember the past.

[78] The bulk of the essays in Coetzee's *White Writing* frowns at the specific cases of imaginative myopia and hyperopia that define the literary output of white settlers of South Africa both in their poetry and fiction in issues of agency, especially of the blacks' humanity. On the *Plaasroman* tradition, for instance, he writes: "The constraints of the genre therefore make silence about the black man the easiest of an uneasy set of options. If the work of hands on a particular patch of earth, digging, ploughing, planting, building, is what inscribes it as the property of its occupiers *by right*, then the hands of black serfs doing the work had better not be seen. Blindness to the colour black is built into South African pastoral. As its central issue the genre prefers to identify the preservation of a (Dutch) peasant rural order, or at least the preservation of the values of that order. In (British) capitalism it identifies the principal enemy of the old ways. Locating the historically significant conflict as between Boer and Briton, it shifts black-white conflict out of sight into a forgotten past or an obscure future" (5-6).

Perhaps, more than any other contemporary South African writer, Coetzee has shown immense interest in matters associated with the South African land. In ***Boyhood*** and ***Disgrace,*** the issue of land ownership assumes a symbolic significance that implicates, amongst others, the morality of "ownership and belonging" as well as the historical memory that inform the policy of repression and dispossession. Tom Lebert, writing about the many ways in which blacks were dispossessed during the apartheid regime in 'Tinkering at the Edges: Land Reform in South Africa — 1994 to 2001', puts it succinctly: "The list of legislation to impose (this) dispossession is lengthy and complex, yet served to ensure that indigenous peoples were tied into an emerging economy as labourers and nothing else" (Lebert, 2001:2). To maintain the *status quo* after the collapse of official apartheid, however, the New National Party (NNP), the 'transformed' party of the apartheid regime vowed continued support for the new black leadership with the promise that Afrikaner farmers would not be alienated in the new dispensation. The implication is that after ten years of the ANC's promise of "re/distributing 30% of agricultural land over five years", only "1% of land had been re/distributed" (Braeckman, 3).

Land ownership and land re/distribution has, therefore, remained a major issue in defining the level of progress made by the leadership of the ANC in democratic South Africa. The government's official position that "land is an important and sensitive issue to all South Africans" (Wenzel, 2000: 97), and the negligible progress made so far in ensuring equity in its ownership and fruitful use, becomes a mockery to its earlier promise to the majority of the historically disadvantaged population. It is against these prevailing sentiments as well as the general historical conditions that inform imbalance in land ownership that many writers have responded to the socio-economic and cultural significance of 'land' following the liberal order. Zakes Mda's ***The Heart of Redness*** and ***She Plays with the Darkness***, André Bink's ***Imaginings of Sand*** and ***Devil's Valley***, K. Sello Duiker's ***The Quiet Violence of Dreams***, Zoë Wicomb's ***David's Story***, among others, all address the land question in one way or the other. How has J M Coetzee responded to these pressing problems in ***Boyhood*** and ***Disgrace***? Although the two

novels are different in terms of genre, the author's unmistakeable evocation of the politics of land ownership and the morality associated with 'belongingness' has inspired interest to a return to the more than a century of narratives that present this aspect of South Africa's memory in what has come to be known as 'the farm novel'.

II.

In more ways than one, South African fiction since the period of conscious establishment of the so-called tribally structured development models through its 1948 final ratification, had presented to its Western readers an African topography lacking in human agencies beyond the Western settlers. And where the African humanity was reluctantly acknowledged, it was done with derision and mischief as Michael Chapman has illustrated with the works of Blackburn and Roy Campbell (Chapman, 2003: 179-187). In fact, as Chapman rightly asserts, the settler writers cultivated a literary culture that sustained the crisis that was to last for nearly a century — "of rural dignity signifying also proletarian dispossession, and proletarian possession signifying at the same time a rupture with tradition" (Chapman, 181). The dominant novelistic genre through which this capitalist gambit was entrenched is the 'farm novel', commonly referred to as 'the *plaasroman* tradition'. Often associated with the white settler communities, it dates back to some of the earliest writers whose primary concern, evidence show, was to feed the enthusiastic imaginations of the European metropolitan audience whose conditioned perception of the African cosmology and socio-cultural personality was a limbo. The implication is that the blacks' humanity is generally denied agency and volubility and, where they feature, it was only to massage the ego of the 'colonising master' in his 'civilising mission'.

Where Coetzee's imaginative writing might for many remain apparently non-partisan in his narrative experiments, his scholarly works appear, in large measure, to be directly attuned with a concern for the revelation of the intrigues and intricacies deployed by the most visible farm novelists in propagating the exploitative desires of the colonising nations. In ***White Writing,*** for instance, he argues: "pastoral in South Africa (therefore)

has a double tribute to pay. To satisfy the critics of rural retreat, it must portray labour; to satisfy the critics of colonialism, it must portray white labour. What inevitably follows is the occlusion of black labour from the scene: the black man becomes a shadowy presence flitting across the stage now and then to hold a horse or serve a meal" (Coetzee, 1988: 5).

For Coetzee, then, the *plaasroman* is "a literature of empty space", a failed literary form, especially with respect to "the failure of the historical imagination" (Coetzee, 3). For after all, he asks, "Was there no time before the time of the forefathers, and whose was the land then? Do white hands truly pick the fruit, reap the grain, milk the cows, shear the sheep in these bucolic retreats? Who truly creates wealth? (Coetzee11). It is significant that Coetzee names this his early book of essays, ***White Writing***, a work which has helped several literary commentators in their hermeneutic engagements with his novels. It is equally important that he clarifies his conception of whiteness which, according to him, does not "imply the existence of a body of writing different in nature from black writing. White writing is white only insofar as it is generated by the concerns of people no longer European, not yet African" (Coetzee, 11).

Such radical rhetoric of empathy might be interrogated with a view to examining the tradition of the farm novel within the context of post-apartheid reprisals. The farm novel is marked by its peculiar fascination with the bucolic. This form is idiosyncratically self-definitive in its near disinterest in the urbane, in its fascination with the rural space, the natural and the natured, in its narration of the ordinary, the farmyard, the daily events of human struggle and the pastoral temper of the human and animal population that inhabit the province. The *plaasroman* is not an entirely new form in the South Africa's literary discourse. The spatial location of many of the post-apartheid novels that embrace this form is, therefore, simply a continuation of a tradition that was built way back in the second and third decades of the 20th century, of which Chapman says: "most of the early fiction finds its locality in the country region" (Chapman 2003:187).

Often associated with some of the earliest Afrikaans writers (and to an impressive level the white English South African writers), the farm novel, as the name suggests, is set

within a provincial, pastoral vicinity; it typifies the sensibility and mythological assumptions of the average white family whose sense of heroism in their ancestral adventures and accomplishments are cast in the biblical imagination of a chosen people that finally locate their promised land. In such bloated assumptions and persuasions, every effort is made to develop and sustain a mythology of their psychological superiority over and above the indigenous population who, in most parts, hardly find agency let-alone seen to be voluble in the experiential altercations of the narratives. Writer after writer presents a pastoral universe of a romanticised farmyard that dramatizes the unity and consanguinity of the white family trying very hard to sustain a bond of their nuclear and tribal unity and, in doing so, other economic adventurists — even survivalists — are often written off as morally inconsequential: the Jew, the 'Coloured', and especially the indigenous black Africans get placed in certain cadres of the lower rungs of the social ladder when they appear at all. While Olive Schreiner's ***Story of an African Farm*** (1882) made this agrarian interest prominent in the earliest South African "national" narrative, Afrikaner writers such as D.F. Malherbe, Jochem Van Bruggen, Johannes Van Melle, Mikro and C.M. Van den Heever got the *plaasroman* properly established as a genre in the South African literary oeuvre of the 1950s and '60s (Chapman, 192).

The farm novel has persisted in an interesting way in post-apartheid South Africa. Where the earliest novels of the farm were naively romantic and embarrassingly targeted toward sustaining a mythology of the racial and intellectual superiority of the white settler, the *plaasroman* in the post-apartheid ambience is more cautious and contemplative about the institutionalised deceptions of the whites'—Afrikaner and English—ancestral heroism; the narrative voices often condemn the divisive legacy that has pitted the white descendants against the resilient and uncontrollably rebellious indigenous population who, it does seem, are determined as always to right the wrongs of the past, avenge the humiliation meted out on their ancestors, and reclaim their rights and heritages long possessed by the colonizers whom many of the indigenous black population still see as settlers.

It is instructive that Coetzee's ***Boyhood*** (1997) and ***Disgrace*** (1999) are significantly set in the farmyard; André Brink's ***Imaginings of Sand*** (1996), Jo-Anne Richards' ***The Innocence of Roast Chicken*** (1996) amongst others, are attuned to these forms. Topographical descriptions are usually eminent in novels of the farm. The example of Schreiner's ***African Farm*** with its bent toward 'realistic' narrative remains a classic instance. As Stephen Gray observes, "Schreiner discovered it, and her successors have followed her. She is the literature's fountainhead, and, one must hasten to add, its limits" (Gray, 1979:152). If the dilemma of the earliest South African writers is located in the task of describing a so-called topographical ambience totally alien to the sensibilities of an adventurer chronicler in the 19th century through the long years of racial separatism, the challenge for the writer in post-apartheid South Africa is apparently less daunting.

Some segments of the white communities in South Africa, especially the Afrikaners, are not limited by the imagined "tyranny of South Africa as a landscape" that defies lexis. The Afrikaner, like any other South African, is psychologically attuned to South Africa as a promised land, and in the context of a liberated and democratic South Africa, the indigenous population see him as a national. "***The Story of an African Farm****",* Gray had argued, "remains pre-eminently a colonial novel. Its characters may be born in Africa, and are put to death by Africa, but that is not the same thing as being African" (Gray, 153). In the new dispensation, however, a white African also owes certain responsibilities to his African environment, and should read the *plaasroman* as a novel of Africa that must capture the diverse experiences of not only the privileged farm-owner, but also the traumatic sides of farm-workers and other residents. The white writer in the new South Africa is certainly not justified to make any such claims to a European homeland. For, indeed, his real home is Africa, his nationality South African — a geopolitical territory riveting in the African tropical sun, a nation whose contemporary global embrace is tirelessly sustained by the blood and sweat of a people whose energy and crave for social equality and justice is often crystallized in the person of Nelson Mandela, the nation's first democratically elected President. This becomes very relevant in the critical dissection of Coetzee's ***Boyhood*** and ***Disgrace***, given that authorial interventions in his

narratives often times challenge wrongheaded positions implicit in actantial dialogues and dispositions.

III.

Coetzee's ***Boyhood***, a narrativized autobiography of the Nobel Laureate is sub-titled 'Scenes from Provincial Life, A Memoir'. The essence of provinciality does not only draw a definitive attention to the psychology of a writer generally perceived as a recluse of no mean dimension, a keen observer of the minutest of details but, more importantly, it also highlights the writer's sentimental attachment to the novelistic tradition of the *plaasroman.* If Coetzee's earlier fiction, particularly ***Waiting for the Barbarians, Life and Times of Michael K*** or even ***Foe*** for that matter express the novelist's aversion for violence and human enslavement by the privileged, what emerges as his post-apartheid narrative is painfully introspective, often daringly cynical, sometimes humorous, but certainly more readerly fraternal than his earlier fiction. ***Boyhood*** and ***Disgrace*** proceed from a reminiscence that seem at once personal, familial, communal, and national. The eloquent presentation of the provincial space, especially Coetzee's narration and memories of the farm as a child in ***Boyhood*** during the apartheid era, and the reprisal that mark farm ownership in ***Disgrace—***arguably Coetzee's finest novel to date — make his 'Scenes from a Provincial Life' an interesting development of the post-apartheid imagination. While ***Boyhood*** takes us to the past to enable us remember the process of growth and the gradual development of a rebelling attitude in the life of the narrator, ***Disgrace*** moves from the present to the past and returns, again, to the present. The evocation of the past in ***Disgrace*** is for a totally different reason: memory emerges in the first narrative as a disturbing 'foreign country' that, nevertheless, is kind to kids whose social status is guaranteed as children of a white middle-class parents, while in the second narrative history is presented as an unforgiving ghost that has come to haunt down both the guilty and the innocent.

In ***Boyhood*** and ***Disgrace***, the farm fiction which, as we have observed, is marked by a tendency to annihilate the indigenous African population and ridiculing of the so-called 'coloured population' — where they feature — remains essentially a type. In ***Boyhood***, in

particular, we find that the narrator is not born into a nuclear family of farmers: his father is an unsuccessful legal practitioner who takes to drinking after several unsavoury experiences that include job-loss and loss of substantial revenue to gambling; he displays from childhood an inexplicable dislike for his father whose life's experiences subsume a brief encounter with death at the war front during the second world war. The narrator's father is certainly no farmer and could not have made a successful career in the military since his skill, as hunter was less than satisfactory. His mother, too, is not a farmer: she is a teacher, a lovable and homely 'mother' who would devote extra energy to ensure the happiness of her family, and especially her children. She could not even successfully run a mere poultry farm. By inheritance, however, the family acquires a massive expanse of land in Worcester where they return on occasions.

The child is, however, perceptive enough to observe the apparent contradictions in his mother's reasoning, and it is through the oscillations in the narrative that we get an idea of the family's attitude to land. The narrator tells of the child:

> He loves to listen to his mother and his uncles going for the thousandth time over the events of their childhood on the farm. He is never happier than when listening to these stories, to the teasing and the laughter that go with them. His friends do not come from families with stories like these. That is what sets him apart: the two farms behind him, his mother's farm, his father's farm, and the stories of those farms. Through the farms he is rooted in the past; through the farms he has substance.
>
> There is a third farm too: Skipperskloof, near Williston. His family has no roots there, it is a farm they have married into. Nevertheless, Skipperskloof is important too. All farms are important. Farms are places of freedom, of life. (***Boyhood***, 22).

With such declaration of a dogmatic consciousness towards the energising and liberating powers of the farm, Coetzee implicitly excavates the painful angle to every South African in matters associated with farm-ownership and, consequently, of land-ownership. If the

young narrator, with his inexplicable disdain for the ethnic idiosyncrasies of his Afrikaner community — "these merciless people" (***Boyhood,*** 127) — could be so spiritually attuned to the farm, the life of the average Afrikaner whose ancestral lineage is centrally linked to agricultural identity could, for more or less, be entirely devoted to the 'life of the farm'. The farm, it is safe to proclaim, here, has for long emerged as a defining paradigm of the Afrikaner whose resourcefulness as farmers enabled the establishment of South Africa as a major Agricultural site in the continent. Over the centuries, the Afrikaners' immeasurable commitment to farm development has partly led to their being labelled as 'Boers', a name that readily evokes envy and disdain, depending on what side of the lane the analyst situates himself. To the early colonizing Briton, the Boer represented filth and crudity; while to the indigenous black population, the Boer evokes love and hatred at the same time: hated because like all white colonialists, the Boer connotes the suppression and dispossession of the black 'native'; but loved because unlike the Briton, the Boer is perceived as being more honest: brutal and crude, yet committed to the development of the environment. Their love for 'farming' naturally led to their aggressive acquisition of land to the extent that farming, greed for land, and their nationalist spirit combine as markers of the identity of the Afrikaner in the imagination of their indigenous black African hosts. Unfortunately, the apartheid system had given legitimacy to the avarice of the minority white population, with the Afrikaners as major beneficiaries.

At the dawn of the liberal order, however, the dilemma of the individual becomes, in a way, the dilemma of the nation: how does the *privileged* individual *retain* ownership of the land, the farm and all the memories surrounding its ownership since childhood? How does the *dispossessed* individual *reclaim* the land, his ancestral heritage from a people who had derided his people for centuries? How does such an individual cope with the avarice of the *settlers* who had humiliated and killed his ancestors? How does the new administration *re/distribute* land without offending the white supporters who had, through history, rebelled against the oppressive dictates of their relatives? How does the government *empower* the historically disadvantaged population without overtly creating an impression of unnecessary favouritism and neo-apartheid?

Again, the narrator's idiom that captures this difficult situation in ***Boyhood*** is 'belong'. *Does the farm belong* to the individual, or *does the individual belong* to the farm? The narrator clarifies:

> The secret and sacred word that binds him to the farm is *belong.* Out in the veld by himself he can breathe the word allowed: *I belong on the farm.* What he really believes but does not utter, what he keeps to himself for fear that the spell will end, is a different form of the word: *I belong to the farm.*
>
> He tells no one because the word is misunderstood so easily into its inverse: *The farm belongs to me.* The farm will never belong to him, he will never be more than a visitor: he accepts that. The thought of actually living on Voelfontein, of calling the great old house his home, of no longer having to ask permission to do what he wants to do, turns him giddy; he thrusts it away. *I belong to the farm*: that is the furthest he is prepared to go, even in his most secret heart. But in his secret heart he knows what the farm in its way knows too: that Voelfontein belongs to no one. The farm is greater than any of them. The farm exists from eternity to eternity. When they are all dead, when even the farmhouse has fallen into ruin like the kraals on the hillside, the farm will still be here.
>
> Once, out in the veld far from the house, he bends down and rubs his palms in the dust as if washing them. It is ritual. He is making up a ritual. He does not know yet what the ritual means, but he is relieved there is no one to see and report him (***Boyhood****,* 95-6).

If Coetzee's novelistic oeuvre is ahistorical as perceived in some influential circles, the passion with which he embraces the germane issue of land possession and land ownership in both his scholarly essays and in his imaginative writing gives a knock to this charge. Where the realist mode would probably clarify his intention, Coetzee jettisons the reportorial narrative form in the reading of his fiction for the aesthetic of 'the

middle voice'. The implied suggestion that 'the land belongs to no-one' presents the narrator's craft in persuading the reader to follow a narrative skein that goes beyond the superficial: what emerges here is either a deliberate attempt to insult the intelligence of the indigenous African population, or a systematic attempt by the novelist to create a transcendental temporality in which humankind is diminished to an ephemeral being whose vanity is perennially held at the mercy of nature and the environment. Whether it is at the symbolic level or at the approximate point of social representation, land is not only central to the historical evolution of life in contemporary South Africa, it is also the most sensitive issue for a people so desperate to create an integrated post-apartheid social humanity appropriately labelled 'the rainbow coalition'. It is in the ownership of land that the politics of colonialist dispossession becomes so embarrassingly eloquent that it resonates in the over 350 years of white settlement in the Southern African sub-region. To proclaim that 'the land belongs to no-one', even as a metaphorical construct, sounds too politically indecent even within the poetics of the inter-medial voice.

The sense of 'belonging' to which the narrator pretends not to care about readily scorns Sol Plaatje's ***Native Life in South Africa*** (1916)—a most important statement that explores the patterns of the dispossession of, and injustice against the black peoples of South Africa in the second decade of the 20th century. The politics of ***Boyhood*** is to *remember* a moment in the mid-20th century: the moment of the narrator's growth, and the figuration of the boy-character's experiences and idiosyncrasies. The bravado of the narrative as the story of an adolescent implicitly locates it as a rite of passage: a transitional stage in the life of the young man whose inability to comprehend why the many human constructs of his society were designed to frustrate, rather than enhance humanity. ***Boyhood*** becomes not just a narrative of transition, but also one that generates a unique conflict between the narrator's avowed love for land and his failure to follow the injustice that made it possible for him to own many large expanses of farms. Transitionality, at the level of land ownership and its re/distribution, becomes problematical in what has been described as a conflict between "pastoral promise and the political imperative" (Jennifer Wenzel, 2000: 90-113).

But this raises another interesting question: If the representation of the blacks' humanity must of necessity be relevant in the realistic appraisal of novels of the farm, what sense of justice has the writer in a post-apartheid, liberated South Africa demonstrated in his creative enterprise? In her ***Colonization, Violence and Narration in White South African Writing*** (1996), Rosemary Jane Jolly expresses concern about the insatiable fascination by literary scholars and commentators with "the spectacular in matters South African" (Jolly, 1996:155). Her views, premised on the established tradition of literary and cultural scholarship informed by the nation's history of colonialism, apartheid and systematic repression, draws attention not only to the predictability of the commentaries, but also to the gamut of imaginative literature from this side of the African continent. Violence — whether it be physical or psychological — has so much defined this social formation that at the era of the 'interregnum', narrative was widely perceived to be utilitarian: narrators who deployed narrative modes that were less assertive in their rejection of political and social decadence infuriated many critics. Given the sense of freedom that marks democratic South Africa, Jolly wonders whether there is wisdom in allowing a novelist like J.M Coetzee "his narrative self-consciousness without regarding it as an unassailable defense on all counts, since even careful defensibility on ethical grounds is no guarantee of ethical effectiveness" (Jolly, 156).

To this end, it need be noted that ***Boyhood*** is less concerned with developments in the emergent democratic state. But it does follow a rhythm of narrative progression that points to a moment of psychological liberation for the writer as well as the narrator. It is *nostalgia* for, rather than *excitement* about the new social formation that informs the narrative recount of the young man who traverses from city to countryside and all the way round during the early years of official apartheid in South Africa. Whether it is in the narration of his eccentricity in his relationship with his fellow pupils, his avowed childhood dislike of his father and his sometimes inability to understand his mother's dispositions, the narrator's memories of 'childhood' in ***Boyhood*** reads like a self-confession that highlights, more than anything else, his fascination with the farm novel, the *plaasroman* tradition in South African literary scholarship. It is, in fact, his mode of imaginatively articulating the land question.

Where ***Boyhood*** is a narrative of the past, however, ***Disgrace*** is a narrative of the present: ***Boyhood*** is the story of a child's indulgence in a society that protects children of his racial belonging from all the traumas of the elements, even as he rebels against social norms that made little or no sense to him; ***Disgrace*** on the hand, is unabashedly a narrative of race and racism: it is, in a way, a narrative of white pessimism in the supposed post-apocalyptic South Africa. But if ***Disgrace*** is an artistic statement on the dilemma of the new South Africa, particularly in matters of farm violence and land ownership, it is, to put it mildly, creatively miserly in its representation of post-apartheid South Africa's social humanity; and if it is an imaginative response to the cravings of the global literary intelligentsia with the insatiable appetite for "the spectacular in matters South Africa" (Jolly, 155), then it is irreparably opportunistic: it creatively pronounces the visitation of opprobrium on the narrator's community for the simple reason of the transfer of political power to the *Other* racial group. The very title of the novel, ***Disgrace,*** as well as the narrator's choice of a white academic as the symbolic figure of white humiliation in the new South Africa calls for a need to interrogate the artistic intentionalities of the author. For, indeed, the subject of 'disgrace' transcends the social descent of David Lurie from the professorial chair to being a volunteer as a mere help-mate to an illiterate 'veterinary surgeon'; it transcends the learned professor's insistence on his rights of desire, his illicit sexual entanglements with prostitutes, with his students and co-workers alike; it also goes beyond the vandalization of his car by the vindictive Ryan, the boyfriend of his erstwhile lover, Melanie Isaacs.

Read against the background of Coetzee's notion of 'writing the middle', however, we encounter a complex display of thematic foci. The interplay between 'the narration' and 'the narrating' in ***Disgrace*** presents aspects of Coetzee's 'free' narrative style in which writer and reader alike are urged to seek meaning beyond the mundane. The subject of humiliation that evolves in the realization of the central character, David Lurie, immediately dissipates any suspicion of ornamented racism in the novel. The paradigm of the middle voice which Coetzee clarifies in 'Notes on Writing' emerges very significantly as a basic pattern of interpretation since even the imaginative writer is

equally invited to *listen*, especially in the deployment of the three narrative voices—'the active, middle, and the passive' (Coetzee, 1992:95). Where ***Disgrace*** presents a peculiar dilemma in postcolonial narratology due to the *narrator's* representations of blackness, it does seem that Coetzee's specific fascination is not so much with the figuration of blackness as it is the parodic revaluation of a white privileged elite whose concupiscence is challenged in every possible way by the liberalism of the new order. In this respect, ***Disgrace*** is apparently more the story of David Lurie than it is the story of his daughter, Lucy, and her 'neighbours' in a pastoral village in South Africa's Eastern Cape province.

Early in the novel, we are informed of David Lurie's loss of control in his sexual attitude: "He existed in an anxious flurry of promiscuity" (***Disgrace,*** 7). Where memory is deployed as metaphor in ***Disgrace***, then, the realizations of the principal characters find instances through the logic of the middle voice. Here, authorial interventions are found in several parallel presentations of dialogues and actions. David Lurie's impudence is counterpoised with his personal humiliation. The many contacts between David Lurie and the entire human and animal population become the signposts through which the subject of 'disgrace' is finally thematized at several levels. His many encounters with a diverse class of humankind—David Lurie and Soraya; David Lurie and Soraya's children; David Lurie and Soraya's unseen husband; David Lurie and Melanie Isaacs; David Lurie and Melanie Isaacs' boyfriend, Ryan; David Lurie and Melanie Isaacs' parents (father and mother); David Lurie and Melanie Isaacs' sibling, Desiree; David Lurie and his professional colleagues at the university; David Lurie and the Shaws (Bill and Bev); David Lurie and his previous wives (Eveline and Rosalind); David Lurie and daughter, Lucy; David Lurie and Petrus (as well as with Pollux and his 'black' thieving accomplices), etc—all point to the less than the admirable conduct of an otherwise brilliant academic whose moral turpitude constitutes the subject of opprobrium in ***Disgrace***.

One way of arriving at this complex nexus between memory and metaphor in ***Disgrace*** as I have noted earlier, then, is by *following the author*. Where memory and amnesia collide at the local space of the liberal order, it is the function of narratorial neutrality that we are

able to locate a troubled learned professor leaning on a philosophy of silence in what apparently inspires a sense of moral panic to any average parent. The sustained evocation of the 'encounter' between David Lurie and the principal characters in his ongoing research—Byron and Teresa Gucciolli—is a constant reminder that the spiritual agony of this learned professor of applied linguistics is a human dilemma long established in the annals of the noblest of men. Byron had aspired to die a romantic war hero; but David Lurie is no hero. He is, instead, a despicable identity whose arrogance does not allow him the humility to distinguish between survivalism and the grandiose insistence on his so-called rights of desire.

Coetzee's clever transposition of the narrative sites from a highbrow ivory tower to a bucolic environment where Professor Lurie descends to a mere 'unpaid' volunteer "playing right-hand man to a woman who specializes in sterilization and euthanasia" (***Disgrace*** 91) to 'unwanted' animals reveals another affirmation of David Lurie's want of moral sanity. A "life lived in promiscuity", it does seem, should anticipate a form of poetic justice, just as a life defined by adultery—whether within the university community or in the animal slaughter-house—finally shows the metaphysical barrenness of David Lurie's self-adoration.

At another level, though, it could be claimed that rather than being merely a novel about university life and the humiliation of an academic whose uncontrolled concupiscence results in his descent in the social ladder, Coetzee's ***Disgrace*** is more of the 'new' *plaasroman,* the new farm novel in South Africa at a moment of democratic non-racialism and black leadership. While ***Boyhood*** sets the pace for this new form by *remembering* the nation during the period of racial separatism — when the indigenous population were neither *visible* nor *voluble* —, the new novel of the farm attempts to address this angle of the post-apartheid literary imagination. In both novels, the obvious sentimental attachment of the white farmer to the South African land becomes not only highly pronounced, but also eloquently lineal: every child looks forward to inheriting a farm either from the paternal or maternal homesteads.

From the narrative progression, it would seem that Coetzee is determined to eschew the perennially ubiquitous dilemmas of race and socio-economic status: in spite of his privileged position as an academic in a South African University, David Lurie, a professor of Communications Studies and Linguistics, succumbs to the lower pleasure principle by indulging in a professional misconduct: he exploits his position and — wittingly or otherwise — engages in sexual escapades with one of his female students. The encounter backfires as the said-student, Melanie Isaacs, begins to have problems with her boyfriend, Ryan, who vandalizes Lurie's car. Her parents get to know, and reports the development to the University's ethics' committee. David Lurie faces a panel, and after what seems a pre-determined, kangaroo-trial, he loses his job as a university professor. Following this unsavoury experience, he leaves the university town to join his daughter, Lucy, in her farmyard in the countryside. Some criminals attack him, and also rape his daughter. He believes that this is the final statement in his humiliation and insists that the assault on his person as well as the molestation of his daughter were carried out by some African savages who have suddenly gone on rampage since the emergence of the new order. He ends up joining Bill and Bev Shaw as helpmate in animal-care services.

But this simple narrative development also generates a conflict in the nexus between narrative and its hermeneutics in ***Disgrace***. Is the novel simply a statement in white pessimism? Is the author's intention properly realized, or is there a major crisis between artistic intentionality and the accomplished impacts? If racial consciousness and conflict remain irrepressible in the new South Africa, Coetzee's attitude to its representation is largely uneven: the kangaroo-trial by the university's ethics' committee — a trial often equated with the 'Truth and Reconciliation' trials of apartheid offenders — does not really reflect any racial bias in its sittings. We only get to know of David Lurie's racial belonging when his daughter gets raped. The female student, too, Melanie Isaacs, we are told, "is small and thin, with close-cropped black hair, wide, almost Chinese cheekbones, large, dark eyes" (***Disgrace,*** 11); we are not sure whether she is white or black. In addition, in spite of his vandalization of Lurie's car and his personal confrontation with David Lurie at the auditorium, Melanie's boyfriend, Ryan, does not have any racial

identity: he is simply "tall and wiry; he has a thin goatee and an ear-ring; he wears black leather jacket and black leather trousers. He looks older than most students; he looks like trouble" (***Disgrace*** 30); even 'Soraya', the sex-hospitality 'worker' lacks any racial placement except having "long black hair and dark liquid eyes" (***Disgrace*** 1). As we look forward to meeting a 'Mr Isaacs' through whom we can map the racial identity of Melanie and her cousin, Pauline, we only find the man as "small, thin, stoop-shouldered" (***Disgrace*** 37). But when David Lurie is attacked and his daughter raped at the farmyard, the narrator is quick to draw attention to the racial identity of their attackers: they are blacks from the lunatic fringes of darkest Africa.

Whether it is through actantial dialogues or by authorial reticence, the recourse to naming and careful descriptions of space and characters provides basis for the classification of ***Disgrace*** as an immensely "disturbing work of the post-apartheid era thus far" (Attwell, 2003:12). While mapping the racial identity of the characters might not be the most graceful thing to do here, however, Lucy's ordeals, her interpretations of her violations as essentially emanating from 'personal hatred' and her father's counsel that such interpretations could never have arisen were her violators 'white thugs' all inspire the need for a hermeneutic decoding drawn from the complex but unpleasant tapestries of racial politics. In any case, for David Lurie, such savagery can only take place at this time in history in "darkest Africa" or the "old Kaffraria"[79] (***Disgrace*** 121-122; 158-159). Locating the place of 'names' and 'naming' becomes quite pivotal in following the narrator in ***Disgrace***. Where the authorial fascination with the middle voice paradigm limits our apprehension of the uneasy narrative, the recourse to careful 'naming' allows for a critical complexity as well as provide further space for interpretive democracy.

The danger, though, is to perceive ***Disgrace*** as a simple reportorial narrative since this pattern of reading could portray the 'author' more as a cynic to the African predicament

[79] The name Kaffraria is derived from 'Kaffir', a pejorative appellation suggestive of monkeys. It is one of the many colonial taxonomies of race descriptions designed to make the indigenous peoples lose confidence in themselves as human beings.

than as a sympathetic patriot.[80] ***Disgrace***, in this context, could emerge as a novel of anarchy where, for the simple fact of the relocation of political power, the sense of decorum previously enjoyed by white South Africans suddenly disappears. For a writer who has written extensively on the question of agency, particularly on the near absence of the blacks' humanity in white South African writing, it is curious that Petrus, the most visible black figure in ***Disgrace*** will be presented as a very complacent figure who knows nothing beyond his displays of physical prowess in the farm. Attacks on white farmers suddenly become an issue that "happens every day, every hour, every minute, in every quarter of the country" (***Disgrace*** 98); security for the white person becomes a thing of the past: the police becomes completely irrelevant since "The best is, you save yourself, because the police are not going to save you, *not any more*, you can be sure" (***Disgrace*** 100); when the police are notified on any such attack at all, it is only "for the sake of insurance", or else "the insurance would not pay out" (***Disgrace*** 134).

Yet in spite of the narrator's strong persuasion that Petrus is not completely innocent in the charge of assault on the Luries — since his brother-in-law, Pollux, was supposedly part of the raiding team — he lacks articulation. Ettinger tells David Lurie: "Not one of them you can trust" (***Disgrace*** 109). So, given the lack of trust for the indigenous population "in a country where dogs are bred to snarl at the mere smell of a black man" (***Disgrace*** 110), Petrus can neither successfully plead his innocence nor defend his 'idiot' brother-in-law. His tongue becomes 'deformed' because his stories cannot properly be narrated in English. Listen to the narrator:

> Petrus is a man of his generation. Doubtless Petrus has been through a lot, doubtless he has a story to tell. He would not mind hearing Petrus's story one day. But preferably not reduced to English. More and more he is convinced that English is an unfit medium for the truth of South Africa. Stretches of English code whole sentences long have thickened, lost their articulations, their articulateness, their articulatedness. Like a dinosaur

[80] It is, of course, safer to describe Coetzee as 'an intellectual patriot' if we accept the image already established of him as 'the colonizer who refuses'. Many black African scholars of South African letters will likely, for long, challenge the designation of 'a sympathetic patriot' to the African predicament.

> expiring and settling in the mud, the language has stiffened. Pressed into the mould of English, Petrus's story would come out arthritic, bygone (***Disgrace*** 117).

If 'English' cannot express the story of Petrus, and if such experiences could lose their "articulations, articulateness and their articulatedness" when expressed in 'English', what language will? Coetzee probably would want us to understand this inability to the lack of western education or perhaps the poor quality of education made available to the black population in the past, and which has created immense communication barrier amongst the various racial groups. National dialogue, given this anomaly, is abandoned for some forms of counter-violence. The reprisals that follow the liberalism of the new order, especially as it affects farm owners, are reduced to a culmination of a stifled communication. But this, too, does not really stand since Petrus is quite capable of expressing himself even if in his own variety of the English language. For, indeed, he is a man of his generation. He might be poor, but certainly not stupid. He has "borrowed a tractor", and barely a few hours, "he has ploughed the whole of his land. All very swift and businesslike; all very unlike Africa. In olden times, that is to say ten years ago, it would have taken him days with a hand-plough and oxen" (***Disgrace*** 151). Silence is, in the context of South Africa's post-apartheid non-racialism, therefore, a statement in itself: a man who has shown so much resilience in the past and who is trying so hard to find his bearing in the newly found freedom must be ready to announce to the world in the face of fresh provocations: "it is finish"— let the by-gone be by-gone (***Disgrace*** 201). If he could borrow *western technology* to advance his output, he could equally borrow *western tongue* not only to defend himself, but also to assert his personality to a world that continually expropriates his property and yet mercilessly interrogates his humanity.

Typical of the new farm-novel, the pathos is located not on the seemingly harsh fate of the 'disgraced' father, but on the undeserved violation and bleak future of the child. In Lucy's pains, there is a resonance of Paton's artistic prophecy of a liberated South Africa where Kumalo had vowed, "One day when the white man has turned to loving, we will find that we have turned to hating". In trying to come to terms with the reality of her violation, Lucy had wondered: "It was so personal. It was done with such personal

hatred. That was what stunned me more than anything. The rest was... expected. But why did they hate me so? I had never set eyes on them". The narrator does not linger; he does not slur. We do not have to task our imaginations to find answer to Lucy's worries. We have an enlightened scholar, David Lurie, in the vicinity to educate us on the most profound reason for her rape: "It was history speaking through them. A history of wrong. Think of it that way, if it helps. It may have seemed personal, but it wasn't. It came down from the ancestors" (***Disgrace*** 156).

While many commentators on the farm-related crisis in post-apartheid South Africa barely acknowledge the historical reality of compulsive seizures of the past as determinants, it is an irony of fate that a personal experience of such acts of violence would set in motion David Lurie's deep thoughts on man's tendency to change. While the 'Native Land Act' was for many not a reasonable excuse to delimit the social and psychological advancement of the deprived, an attack on his daughter's farmhouse was enough to catalyse his deep sense of the humane. For as the narrator says of him following the attack, "He tells himself that he must be patient, that Lucy is still living in the shadow of the attack, that time needs to pass before she will be herself. But what if he is wrong? What if, after an attack like that, one is never oneself again? What if an attack like that turns one into a different and darker person altogether?" (***Disgrace*** 124). Again, it is strange that David Lurie's solutions to this painful experience would be to suggest an escapist route to his daughter: she must leave for Europe: she should join her mother, and her other relatives who are excitedly waiting for their 'disgraced' relatives from the darkest Africa.

The historical imagination to which readers of Coetzee's fiction of post-apartheid South Africa might do well to scrutinize for the immense feeling of disenchantment in ***Disgrace*** is not the immediate historical past of democratic non-racialism in South Africa. It is a historical consciousness that transcends European colonial occupation, and subsumes centuries of the many dispossessions of Africans since the slave trade era through the phase of official segregation during which period Africans were diminished to "dog-men", "dig-men", "carrier men" and "water-men" (***Disgrace*** 151). While the narrator of

Disgrace might confine this history to "olden days, that is to say ten years ago", mythologists and historians of the post-colonialist persuasions need be reminded that in the context of Africa or precisely the sub-region, that history of injustice which marked the genesis of physical and psychological "rape" — even at the level of metaphor, or the aesthetic representation of the blacks' humanity — did not start in the "olden days" of "ten years ago": it could, in fact, subsume the settler's myth of the Adamastor. It would seem, here, that Coetzee's novelistic impressions of the blacks' humanity in a democratic South Africa — in spite of his apparent empathy in his many non-fictional essays — inspires a perception that as a novelist, some of his novels, especially ***Disgrace***, are not too removed from those of the imaginary 'Calibans' carved by his predecessors of the *plaasroman* tradition.

A mimetic decoding of narratives of the 'new' South Africa could, however, do some injustice not only to the writer, but also to the text and the reader. Yet, it is more honest to admit that there is no full-proof theoretical model that can intelligibly dissect the post-apartheid imaginary without necessarily invoking the *representational* as *rememoration*. ***Disgrace***, to this end, is as much the story of David Lurie as it is by a most profound metaphorical extension a narrative of transitional South Africa. If David Lurie's catastrophic socio-ethical liquidation sums the tragic end of the privilege previously accorded the white minority elite in apartheid South Africa, there is a sense in which his fall and the dubious invisibility of the black characters toward the end of the novel presents some problems: what seems clear, here, is the possible variant of interpretations that are likely to emerge from readers of different racial groups, as well as scholars of arts versus reality/history dichotomies. When ***Disgrace*** was released in 1999, some members of the South African parliament reacted angrily to the author's figuration of blackness. Many of the black readers perceived it as a racist novel for reasons that appear quite obvious to any first-time reading. The questions emanating from this feeling are two folds: First, suppose a black African wrote ***Disgrace***, how would the white literary intelligentsia respond to it? Second, is the claim that the novel is racist in its figuration of blackness entirely unfounded? It is questions of this nature that probably made Attwell to

rightfully consider ***Disgrace*** to be "perhaps the most compelling and disturbing work of the post-apartheid era thus far", as indicated earlier in this discussion.

Coetzee already has an established reputation as a postcolonial novelist genuinely concerned with the politics of domination and dispossession of weaker identities. That ***Disgrace*** would generate quite some ripples within the political and academic circles is an affirmation of the novelist's insistence that the process of thematizing is not as simple as we often presume, since even the writer continues to discover new themes in his/her fiction long after its publication. One way of resolving the hermeneutic impasse, I believe, therefore, is by faithfully following the *narrator* in the process of creating and thematizing. In ***Disgrace*** and ***Boyhood***, then, one remarkable approach is to locate 'the narrative rhythm': the pausal or 'caesural' sites where authorial interventions are carefully carved through narratorial descriptions of actantial discrepancies. We could in ***Disgrace***, for instance, return to the beginning of the narrative and *listen* as the cautious, narratorial voice conspiratorially 'whispers' to us about Professor Lurie's immeasurable concupiscence: "He existed in an anxious flurry of promiscuity". (***Disgrace,*** 7)

The evocations of the adventures of the English romantic poet, Lord Byron and especially his liaison with Lady Teresa Guiccioli serve as the pivot upon which the personality of David Lurie takes its irremediable sexual escapades. We are aware that he had had numerous liaisons with wives of colleagues. Yet when we first encounter him, he is paying prostitutes to satisfy his urges. He descends on female students, and on married and unmarried women alike. He also has two failed marriages in his profile. When he makes a move on one of his students, Melanie Isaacs, however, we encounter a narratorial retreat, a pausal element in the narrative at what point the narratorial middle voice warns: "That is where he ought to end it. But he does not...." (***Disgrace*** 18) We observe here that there is no rape case levelled against David Lurie—not even of the statutory sub-category. After all, Melanie is not totally an innocent victim: she encouraged the old Professor in ways that matter: "She does not resist. All she does is avert herself: even her lips, avert her eyes. She lets him lay her out on the bed and undress her: she even helps him, raising her arms and then her hips (...)" (***Disgrace*** 25).

In following the *narrator* till the end, then, the personalities of the principal figures of ***Boyhood*** and ***Disgrace*** are presented to us, even as the reader is at task to comprehend their eccentricities. The child figure of ***Boyhood*** is not insensible of his privileges as the scion of a middle class family whose possessions and inheritances ensure his present and future security in an environment where his age mates of the *Other* racial affiliations lack basic needs for their survival. In ***Disgrace***, David Lurie is intricately projected as one occupying a position of power, but abuses that office over trivia. The obsession with the erotic becomes the defining identity of an otherwise brilliant academic whose moral sensibility is pitiably compromised by his apparent lack of self-control. Extended metaphorically, David Lurie emerges as the summation of that man-in-power— perhaps the authoritarian apartheid racist, or simply a beneficiary of the old system— who only a few years back, used his position of authority to dominate the very weak in apartheid South Africa. Petrus, on the other hand, is the new man of power who must make the best of the privileges provided him by the liberalism of the new order. Whether he forgives, forgets, or avenges the injustices of the past is only dependent on how much pains he *remembers* and feels. His dismissal as intellectually porous by some mischievous white racist detractors who think he is incapable of articulating his opinions becomes totally inconsequential.

Chapter Four

Memory, Violence, and Alterity: Zakes Mda's Post-Apartheid Imagination.

> The only way to real reconciliation is through memory so we can ensure that terrible things do not recur. More importantly, we must make sure that the liberators do not become the new oppressors. We must be vigilant. We see that this has happened not only all over Africa and in Europe, the Balkans, etcetera"
>
> — Zakes Mda (2005. 02.28)[81]

> The sufferings of the Middle Generations are only whispered. It is because of the insistence: *Forget the past. Don't only forgive it. Forget it as well. The past did not happen. You only dreamt it. It is a figment of your rich collective imagination. It did not happen. Banish your memory. It is a sin to have a memory. There is virtue in amnesia. The past. It did not happen. It did not happen. It did not happen.*
>
> John Dalton's friends think that memory is being used to torment them for the sins of their fathers. Sins committed in good faith. (My emphasis)
>
> — Zakes Mda, ***The Heart of Redness****,* 157

I.

One fundamental thrust of Mda's novelistic oeuvre is his fascination with a developmental aesthetic that has engaged much of his career as academic and dramatist: this is implicit in his sustained interest in the politics of national memories especially since the dawn of democratic capitalism in what is now referred to as non-racial South Africa. The national dream of constructing a 'Rainbow nation' devoid of the apartheid injustices of the past appears however to present problems across the racial divide since

[81]In Maureen Isaacson, 'The Free State Madonnas Prevail in Mda's Novel'. Interview, downloaded from the Internet on February 28, 2005. <http://www.theconnection.org/features/zakesarticle.asp>.

the possibility of pleasing every member of the society is as impracticable as the idea is utopian. Places considered heritage sites certainly do not mean the same thing to everyone. 'Robin Island', for instance, could be remembered as a site of oppression to some members of the previously oppressed racial groups just as it reminds others of the oppressive system in which their racial groups benefited immensely. To this end, Robben Island as a site of national commemoration will always present a moral dilemma since it will be a source of shame to some racial categories while serving as a reminder to the triumph of the human spirit to some other groups. For Mda, the project of national reconciliation should transcend any simplistic attempt at effacing the socio-historical and cultural experiences of the people. The process of national healing must take into account the many distortions of the cultural sensibilities of the indigenous population who suffered immense violence since the period of colonialism. It should also recognize the politics of racial separatism and its systematic destruction of the humane values of the indigenous population. Memory emerges in the narratives of Mda as a patriotic project of remembering a past in which the weaker communities were robbed of their material possession in the form of European land grab in Africa, the patterns of the representation of the black peoples in the Western imaginary, the Western notion of *Otherness* in which Africans were reduced to 'Kaffirs', the trope of the body in its encounter with the colonial regime and the attempts to reconfigure it, and the trope of violence in its many manifestations.

To this end, Mda's interest in the mundane is eloquent in his sustained engagement with the pastoral, rather than the superficially urbane; an engagement with a narrative form that draws attention to the dilemma of the rural communities, and that will challenge "the rural population" to the possibilities of engaging with its problems. If drama addresses these dilemmas by its peculiar function of 'conscientization' (Mda 1993: 1, 178), the novel should be embraced even more by its peculiar subtlety and detail, even at its most allegorical. Except for the adolescent narrative, ***Melville '67***, that takes off in the city of Johannesburg before the magical transposition of narrative space to the empire days of Timbuktu, the stories of all the major novels of Mda are set in a pastoral environment

from where the narrative incidents are 'moved' to the urban centres, and they quite often oscillate within spatio-temporal spaces.

Interestingly, Mda's narrative strategy leans essentially on the oral performative forms: in ***Ways of Dying***, Toloki is purely an 'actor' who is determined to make sense out of a meaningless society; in ***She Plays with the Darkness***, it is 'song' and 'dance' that he deploys to restate a cultural injustice at the realm of gender imbalance even while apparently concerned with the colonial legacies of dictatorship and the postcolonial issues of the dethronement from power of such dictators; in ***Heart of Redness,*** Mda is at his best in his blending of the oral narrative form and the conveyance of the mythological narratives of Nonqawuse among the Xhosa communities of the Eastern Cape province. 'Redness' becomes a symbol of heathenism from which the so-called 'civilized' *Other* must abstain: in this universe of 'redness; the land and the people who inhabit it become the same entity who emerges in the European imaginary as 'primitive'; in ***The Madonna of Excelsior***, Mda does not only deploy 'painting', 'dance' and 'song' to commemorate aspects of the criminal legacies of apartheid in what used to be called the Sexual Immorality Act: he also uses the narrative to remind the universe of mankind that the explosion of the 'Coloured population' the world over is the result of European concupiscence and lack of moral qualms in their relationships with the colonized peoples of the world; and in ***The Whale Caller***, Mda's interest in the lives of 'lower' animals is sustained and animated by his immense deployment of the performance modes of 'song' and 'dance'.

More importantly, however, Mda's narratives find immense relevance in his engagements with issues of historical and contemporary relevance, whether the issue so dominant is colonial, post-colonial, segregation, gender, culture, religious, metaphysical, or simply the comic. In other words, it seems to me that the most eloquent spatial and experiential presence in Mda's many novels are the many historical, cultural and political experiences that have come to define South Africa and, indeed, the whole of the African continent, as a postcolonial 'community' whose population suffered varying degrees of colonial subjugation. And while Mda's narratives are stimulating in his experiment with style, the

topical nature of the themes are even more compelling, particularly in his provision of humour and detail in such issues of universal concern as memory, violence and alterity. These are issues so resonant in post-apartheid South African writing that the freshness with which they appear in Mda's fiction makes the novelist an impressive contributor in the construction of new paradigms in the discourse of the post-apartheid fiction of English expression.

Zakes Mda's artistic range is quite impressive. Known to be very versatile in the frontiers of the arts, Mda built his reputation as a dramatist, literary scholar, and painter. Following the collapse of official apartheid and the installation of non-racial democratic ideals in the 'new' South Africa, Mda took his talents to experimenting in fictional narratives. The publications in 1995 of ***Ways of Dying*** and ***She Plays with the Darkness*** mark this significant transition in narrative medium, and he has since established himself as, perhaps, the single most important voice in the novelistic genre by black South African writers, having published five full-length novels, and a sixth, the novella, ***Melville'67***. While he has continued to write plays, his success in the genre of the novel has been acclaimed in scholarly circles. This ranges from Margaret Mervis's positive assessment of Mda's deployment of the magical narrative mode[82], Grant Farred's repulsion at the thematic thrusts of his transitional narrative[83], David Attwell's celebration of Mda's experimentalism[84], and Bheki Peterson's recognition of Mda's retrieval of the historical memory of the amaXhosa[85] in the allegorical appeal for a developmental plan tied to the people's cultural sensibilities.

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[82] Margaret Mervis, 'Fiction for Development: Zakes Mda's *Ways of Dying*'. *Current Writing* 10.1(1998): 39-56.

[83] Grant Farred, 'Mourning the Post-Apartheid State Already? The Poetics of Loss in Zakes Mda's *Ways of* Dying'. *Modern Fiction Studies*, 46.1(2000): 183-206

[84] David Attwell. 'Apartheid and Post-Apartheid'. *Encyclopedia of African Literature*, Ed. Simon Gikandi. (London & New York: Routledge, 2003): 25-27. More importantly, David Attwell has in a recent study investigated Mda's *The Heart of Redness*, among others, within the framework of what he calls 'The Experimental Turn in Black South African Fiction'. See Attwell's discussion in *South Africa in the Global Imaginary*, (Eds) Leon de Kock, Louise Bethlehem, and Sonja Laden. (Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, and Leiden: Koninklike Brill NV, 2004: 154-179).

[85] Bhekizizwe Peterson. 'Mda, Zakes'. *Encyclopedia of African Literature*. Ed. Simon Gikandi. (London & New York: Routledge, 2003): 323-4.

II.

In ***Ways of Dying***, a funereal complex overwhelms the 'new' order, and the existential oscillate between mortality and eternity. In a way, the interregnum of Nadine Gordimer's fame is evoked, but in a manner best captured by Michael Chapman: 'living and dying refuse(d) separate considerations' (Chapman 1996:411). Responses to Mda's ***Ways of Dying*** have been mixed. It moves from the optimally optimistic to a suspicion of an outright pessimism and post-apartheid decadence. While Margaret Mervis, for instance, reads ***Ways of Dying*** within the tenets of Mda's developmental aesthetic in which the central protagonist, Toloki, emerges as "[A] symbol of the transformative power of creativity" who " assists Noria in coming to terms with her grief over the 'necklacing' of her five-year old son, Vutha, by the young Tigers, and the burning down of her home by unknown members of her own community in a bout of senseless violence engendered by the power struggles which characterize the transition between the dying regime and a new dispensation" (Mervis 1998: 46), Grant Farred identifies the novel's pessimistic slant, especially its seeming disenchantment with the idiom of violence that is beginning to define the newly-liberated society. Mda's ***Ways of Dying*****,** for Farred, then, presents the predominant thematic thrust of obsequies for the post-apartheid state.

Mda admits in an interview that his novels are inspired by 'real life incidents'[86], and if the spatio-temporal suggestiveness of the novel is to be relied upon, then it is fairly safe to conclude that the narrative echoes a significant moment in the annals of South Africa's transition to a liberal order. Constructed on the mnemonic tapestries of the traumatic, ***Ways of Dying*** exemplifies South Africa's transitional narrative at its most mimetic symbology. In this sense, there is no third global war; not even the indiscretion and cruelty of the elements. But a fatality and bestiality that attend man's lowest ebb predominate the present, and life is rendered worthless in a recurrent cycle of human

[86] For Mda, history must be evoked for proper reconciliation to take place. In what seems a consistent flash on the indescrepancies of the new black leadership, he reasons that "the willingness to be critical shows a deep love for country. Patriotism is not synonymous with political sycophancy". "My view of patriotism", he says, "is not love for politicians but love of a country". See 'The Free State Madonnas Prevail in Mda's Novel', an interview he granted Maureen Isaacson. http://www.theconnection.org/features/zakesarticle.asp, and 'The Africana QA: Zakes Mda', an interview he granted Rebecca L. Weber. http://archive.blackvoices.com/articles/qa/bk20040525zakesmda.asp. Downloaded from the Internet on February 28, 2005.

stupidity that supports its violent actions with a psychology of vengeance and counter-vengeance. Although the collapse of the apartheid state was already a foregone conclusion by 1990, the Nationalist Government did not relinquish power to majority rule until April 1994. Governmental affairs were still essentially being run by the minority white supremacists, and, so, in practical terms, even where 'official apartheid' was already jettisoned, indications of the manifestations of its much-loathed policies were still prevalent through the provinces of the country. The much-trumpeted return to 'civil majority rule' was thwarted at every frontier by a team of ethnic militia fully armed and sponsored by the Nationalist government. The implication was a bitter rivalry for power and domination among the black communities, leading to brutal confrontations between the Mangosuthu Buthelezi-led Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), and the United Democratic Front (UDF), supported by the Youth Wing of the African National Congress (ANC).

There were many incidents of political violence all over the country during this period, and in KwaZulu-Natal alone, the number of killings arising from such political violence has been put at the loss of 20,000 lives[87]. With the so many killings that include the massacres at Shobashobane, the Richmond killings, the Nongoma assassinations among others, it is little wonder that the funereal complex that pervade ***Ways of Dying*** would, as the novelist confesses, be inspired by 'real life incidents'. Grant Farred has noted in what he describes as a "poetics of loss", the essential flaws of Mda's ***Ways of Dying*** as a transitional novel. Farred's contention derives from the novelist's fascination with the spectacular. As he puts it, "Preoccupied with the staging of spectacle(s), the novel evacuates itself of historical meaning" (Farred 2000: 203). While the interest in the fantastical, or perhaps, the spectacular might be the case, here, it is doubtful whether Farred's dismissal of the novel as 'flawed' is entirely true. Indeed, while the level of violence in the novel is very much reminiscent of apartheid violence, the new rhythm of violence is best understood in the context of the transition to democratic rule at a moment of siege and counter-siege, of power contestation that pervaded the South African socio-political imaginary between, and beyond racial constituencies and ethnic locations. It was

[87] For a very concise discussion of the politically motivated violence during the transition to democratic non-racialism, see in particular Rupert Taylor, 'Justice Denied: Political Violence in KwaZulu-Natal after 1994'. *Violence & Transition*, Series 6.

a period in which, as Rupert Taylor writes, "a culture of impunity and a lust for revenge have outweighed the rule of law" (Taylor 2002: 22). The enormity of violence at the era of transition to general rule is the reason Gary Kynoch describes South Africa, first, as a "post-conflict society" that continues to "suffer horrific rates of violence", and, second, as one whose "endemic urban violence is not a post-conflict affair, but rather a continuation of generations of violence" (Kynoch 2004: 2, 3).[88]

The aesthetic representation of violence in post-apartheid narratives seem to confirm Kynoch's and Taylor's studies since violence, it does seem, is one representational paradigm that resonates in fictional narratives across racial divide. For instance, we have noted that André Brink's ***Imaginings of Sand***, ***Devil's Valley***, and ***The Other Side of Silence*** are all constructed on various ramifications of violation in spite of the novelist's peculiar fascination with a historical 're-imagining'. J. M. Coetzee's ***Disgrace*** derives its pungency in the representation of racial violence against the white Professor, David Lurie, and his daughter. In ***The Ibis Tapestry,*** Mike Nicol's postmodernism does not vitiate the spectacular violence of the narrative. Even Nadine Gordimer's ***The House Gun***, Jo-Anne Richard's ***The Innocence of Roast Chicken*** and ***Touching the Light House***, Pamela Jooste's ***Dance With a Poor Man's Daughter*** all present the subject of violation in varying degree. In the novels of Zakes Mda, violence manifests in some interesting modes that are, at once, both physical and metaphorical.

The mimetic dimension to the fatalistic vision implicit in Mda's narrative, it seems, does not, however, suggest a 'mourning of the post-apartheid state' as Grant Farred has insinuated. For, indeed, the absurdity reflected in the mortality question in ***Ways of Dying*** is one informed by a "violence of transition", and certainly not by a post-apartheid angst and disenchantment. Derivable from the narrative is the recognition that the colossal nature of political violence and the associative trauma inflicted on ordinary people at the moment of transition to a non-racial order was alarming enough to constitute a site for

[88] Of course, while focussing on the criminal dimensions of violence and conflict during the transition era, Gary Kynoch observes that in various contexts, "politicized rivalries overlapped with and were often secondary to gender, generational, territorial, ethnic and other identities". See Gary Kynoch, 'Crime, Conflict and Politics: An Historical Account of Township Violence in Transition Era South Africa'. WISER Lecture Series, 3rd May, 2004, p. 3.

national memory. It is this recognition that informs Mda's task of aesthetically 're-inventing' the many ways of human extinction suggested by the violence of transition.

The narrative track is a fairly simple one: the stories revolve around the tragic incidents of death, dying, pain, sorrow, and the search for life and continuity. The futility of life and the ubiquity of death as man's daily companion combine to create an eccentric, idiosyncratic character, Toloki, a 'self-contented visionary' who takes to the noble engagement of serving the universe of humankind as a 'Professional Mourner'. If the violence of transition has created a situation of more deaths than births, there is need to offer the dead the only worthy sense of dignity in the form of proper mourning so as to ease their transition into the spirit-world of the ancestors. It is the story of Toloki and Noria, — two fascinating friends through whom the novelist explores the human virtues of *compassion, selflessness,* and *resilience* in the midst of poverty and unprovoked hostility. As kids, Toloki and Noria had grown in the same pastoral vicinity, attended the same primary school, and had the familial consciousness provided by provinćial life. In their separate ways, too, they suffered various forms of hostility and inhumanity from their fathers, and were later to leave for an unnamed city in search of their self-fulfilment, fame, and fortune. But this was not to be. Noria loses her first son, Vutha. After the loss of her second son, also curiously named Vutha, she is psychologically broken, and needed nothing short of a saviour to revive her from the immeasurable trauma. She retires into a 'private orphanage' called 'the Dumping Ground', where she helps bring up abandoned and orphaned children. But that salvation was to arrive in that delicate moment of her life in form of her old school friend and 'home boy', Toloki. Toloki, on the other hand, becomes the founder of what he calls 'the noble Profession of Mourning'. The two were to be united by fate several years later during the burial of Noria's second son, Vutha the second. They soon take to each other, and decided to live together, and teach each other 'how to live' in a city best defined by its too many recorded deaths.

In advancing this simple narrative plot, however, Zakes Mda cautiously ventures into an experimental aesthetic, and it soon reveals that although we are presented a *topography* and a *historical moment*, yet there is no specific identifiable location beyond a *coastal*

territory, and within a *turbulent December month*. While Margaret Mervis would simply point to Cape Town as the geographical location of the incidents, this is not entirely suggested by the narrative. In fact, the only locatable territory is the coastal space, which could as well suggest any of the coastal sites of Cape Town, Durban, or even Port Elizabeth. This sense of place is confirmed by the resonance of coastal images: we are aware, for instance, that Toloki is 'armed with a thick blanket that he keeps in his shopping trolley' during winter "when the icy winds blow from the ocean" (***Ways of Dying,*** 11); at 'the quayside', too, "he has watched *the cargo ships* clumsily disembark *sailors* into the arms of eager prostitutes" (***Ways of Dying,*** 44); a place where *the salty winds* have ravaged his face" (***Ways of Dying,*** 45), and where he has made "connections with *dockworkers*" (***Ways of Dying,*** 50). Within this marine space, Toloki "goes to the *beach*", and, given his personal antics and codes of dressing, or non-dressing, "The *dockworkers*, the *sailors*, and their prostitutes think that he has finally snapped" (***Ways of Dying,*** 91). He takes a rest at 'the bus shelter' after a long walk all the way from *the docklands*" (***Ways of Dying,*** 109). These marine images are certainly not without foundation: For, indeed, long before his arrival at the city, he had heard that most people work as labourers at the *harbour*, and 'on fishing trawlers', "men told stories of sea adventures"— an experience that inspired him. He arrives the city and, on discovering 'how he could get to *the ships*', he finally takes 'part-time jobs *loading ships*" (***Ways of Dying,*** 112).

Beyond marine images that point to the coastal spaces of the un-locatable city, Mda attempts a further cautious placing of a temporal mapping, so that Grant Farred's identification of the narrative's temporal location in the specific historicisms of 'post-apartheid' and future South Africa appears rather too meticulous. While the narrative is confidently prognostic of a 'post-apartheid' freedom, the temporal space is evidently a transitional moment that looks forward for a liberated civil order. It is no surprise, then, that women are perceived 'singing' in ways that confirm their political consciousness: "*Their song is about the freedom that is surely coming tomorrow*. They also sing about the enemy that will be defeated, and about the tribal chief who will die like a dog one day" (***Ways of Dying,*** 159). It is at this moment, too, that the youthful 'Young Tigers', a

militant group so passionate about their emancipation from minority rule would embark on the mission of psychologizing and educating mere infants on "why the tribal chief was doing such dirty things to the people, and how the government had been forced to un-ban the political movement of the people and to negotiate with its leaders" (***Ways of Dying,*** 170). The education of the young, it needs be stressed, here, was necessitated by what many had seen as unnecessary massacres arising from the conspiracy of the reigning government and the constituency of the unnamed 'tribal chief'. The most recent incident in the narrative is the killing of 52 innocent citizens perceived as supporters of the rival, more nationally attuned political movement. In a way, ***Ways of Dying***, as suggested in this temporal space, incites a perception of the narrative as a *rom å na~clẽf*: a fictional narrative that easily suggests living characters and incidents in the perceptual world.[89] There is no betrayal of this aesthetic transparency in the novel, however. The 'dramatized' pains and anguish of the 'Professional Mourner', in their enormity, clearly blur the possibility of identifying living characters in the narrative.

And while nowhere in the narrative do we encounter a 'Nelson Mandela', a 'Mangosuthu Buthulezi', an 'F. W. de Klerk', or the 'National Party', it is in the temporal space of the transitional moment with its many negotiations, betrayals, violations and counter-violence that the novel assumes its identity as an 'emergent' narrative. The many ways of dying indicate the many levels of anguish: children are orphaned, just as parents are rendered childless. This aesthetic transparency is further revealing, as we observe that the National Party was still in power. The implication is that we might — just may— be within a 'post-apartheid' space, but not a democratic South Africa. The minority white supremacists are still holding on to political power. The narrator presents a familiar picture at the burial of the 52 murdered citizens:

> The funeral was the biggest that had ever been seen in those parts. The president of the political movement was there in person, together with

[89] Generally defined as 'a novel with a key', this narrative form "can be 'unlocked' given the right 'key'— in other words one which refers to real people, places, or events in disguised form so that once one realizes what the work is about the hidden references all become apparent". See Jeremy Hawthorn, *Studying the Novel: An Introduction*, 2nd edition. (London & New York: Edward Arnold, 1993): 27-37.

> the rest of his national executive. He, the consummate statesman as always, made a conciliatory speech, in which he called upon the people to lay down their arms and work towards building a new future of peace and freedom. He called those who had died martyrs whose blood would, in the standard metaphor of all those who had fallen in the liberation struggle, water the tree of freedom. He called upon the government to stop its double agenda of negotiating for a new order with the leaders of the political movement, while destabilizing the communities by killing their residents, and by assassinating political leaders. He further called upon the tribal chief to stop his gory activities, and to walk the democratic path (***Ways of Dying,*** 171).

The narrators equally inform the reader of the dogged determination of the citizenry and residents of the settlement to rebuild their shacks after the burial: "The people were determined to show the tribal chief, and the dirty tricks department of the government, that they would not be destroyed. *Their will to survive, and to live to see the freedom that was surely coming soon,* was too strong to be destroyed by any massacre" (***Ways of Dying,*** 172; my emphasis). This confirmation of the temporal space of the transitional moment to democratic rule in recent South African history presents Mda's narrative as a rationalized aesthetic reconstruction of transition era violence.

If 'death' and 'dying' constitute the defining criteria of South Africa's transition to democratic non-racialism, the success of its adaptation into fictional narrative does not reside in the narrative accuracy of its representation. In this way, Grant Farred's dismissal of ***Ways of Dying*** as a fundamentally flawed narrative finds support not necessarily in his reading of the novel as a 'mourning of the post-apartheid state'. In fact, while the narrative is basically of the post-apartheid category, its limitation is more akin to its spectacular representation of transition era violence, and what seems like the narrator's comic celebration of social buffoonery. While a characterological dissection of the narrative's actants might present cause for our collective sympathy for the nobility of the mundane in terms of their innate compassion and resilience, the reduction of human

existence to an inherently senseless violent vocations vitiates the promise of hope that the narrative espouses. Mda's specific fascination with exploring modes of human extinction does not reckon with the implicit absurdity of its concomitance. Thus, whether it is in his relativization of the manner of execution— 'necklacing' and barbaric abandonment— of Noria's two sons, Vutha 1 & 2; the frustration of Jwara and the domestic violence that ends in his beating up his wife; the verbal violence of Noria's mother, 'That Mountain Woman'; the racial violence seen in the deliberate and neurotic killing of black labourers at the Flour Mill or the many politically-motivated killings associated with ethnic rivalries and governmental intrigues, Mda's figuration of transition era violence rests on the appallingly spectacular. Here, once more, is one of the many passages of Mda's conveyance of the massacre of 52 residents of the settlement:

> One night, when the settlement was deep in sleep, Battalion 77, supported by migrants from a near-by hostel, invaded. They attacked at random, burning the shacks. When the residents ran out, sometimes naked, the hostel inmates, uttering their famous war-cry, chopped them down with their pangas and stabbed them with their spears. The soldiers of Battalion 77 opened fire. They entered some shacks, and raped the women. They cut the men down after forcing them to watch their wives and daughters being raped. In one shack, a woman who was nine months pregnant was stabbed with a spear. As she lay there dying, she went into labour. Only the head of the baby had appeared, when it was hacked off with a panga by yet another warrior (***Ways of Dying,*** 170)

The everywhere-ness of the multiple narrator voice only contributes to the quest for a representational accuracy, so that the task of 'remembering' the violence of transition as a collective traumatic experience is eased by a sense of physical presence and the possibility of a witness. While the place of alterity in the instance of a transition to democratic governance is in itself of a progressive global interest, it constitutes a dilemma that, in the case of South Africa's unique historical experiences, paved the way for all kinds of scheming, political manipulation and struggles for ethnic supremacy. The fatalism that defines South Africa's moment of transition, therefore, was enough to

inspire an aesthetic adventure into modes of human extinction. Mda's choice of society's underdogs as the experiential summation of the memorable in transition era violence, however, presents a different set of challenges. Toloki's sojourn to an unnamed South African coastal city is to reveal the many shades of a funereal complex that pervade Mda's transitional narrative. The choice of the coastal city provides a sense of place, which also resonates in ***The Heart of Redness*** and ***The Whale Caller.*** But while we are not certain whether the location is Cape Town, Durban, or Port Elizabeth, we are re-assured by the evocative images that rekindle the aura of the sea, just as we are constantly confronted with the irritable loquacity and self-glorifications of the 'Nurses' who preside over the funeral orations.

Two suggestions could be offered here: First is the implicit evidence that, for Mda, the centrality of the redemptive role and power of art must not be taken for granted. Literature and the whole constituencies of the arts must be deployed positively, at least, in South Africa's peculiar situation to heal the wounds of the past. In this instance, memory emerges as a pivot upon which the arts should be used to reconnect the contemporary moral emptiness of the society to a sense of values, ideas and resources provided by a past in which Africans lived with a more humane consciousness. It would seem here that there is no way of transcending the trauma of violence except by embodying it. Toloki's job, then, is to live with violence: he deals with violence everyday, and this is one experience that is vital to the existence of blacks in the 'townships' and other designated black communities. Reconciliation, therefore, is not necessarily an ideal that must be embraced in the discourse of black and white inter-racial relations, but even more importantly, an intra-racial project to be emphasized within black communities since there are too many cases that need to be resolved between black families. How does the society resolve such internal scars by members of the same families, or even of same racial communities? This seems to be the primary concern of the novelist in ***Ways of Dying*** and, to this extent, his primary characters—Toloki and Noria—present exemplary alternatives to patterns of adjusting from a socially violent, morally arid, and politically charged environment in which they find themselves. They emerge as 'victors' who insist on being socially responsible by being useful to their

community in spite of society's denigration and destruction of their humanity. Mda's refusal to adopt a romantic paradigm in the 'new' order, in a way, points to his commitment to true reconciliation as its denial will lead to pathologies and complications.

On a second level, however, it could be argued that if ***Ways of Dying*** signals Mda's embrace of Njabulo Ndebele's appeal for an aesthetic consideration of the mundane, then the request for 'a rediscovery of the ordinary' could signal a commitment to a rather catastrophic proposition. While the human essences of compassion, perceptiveness, and optimism, might be worthy of cultivation, its reduction to a representational aporia in Toloki, the eccentric dreamer of an absurd 'noble profession of mourning', vitiates the virtues of the more practical challenges of man's quotidian existence in terms of the individual's life fulfilment, as well as the communal notions and anticipations of such accomplishment. Family life, for instance, is sacrificed at the altar of social buffoonery, and the man that flaunts his spiritual discipline and recourse to celibacy is suddenly locked up in suppressed desire for a coital expression— a natural experience made even more embarrassing, even if understandably so, in Toloki's nightly ejaculations and wet dreams. It is sad enough that his childhood was not one of summer, given his many sordid memories of village life; it is even more so that his late father, Jwara, was all but a parent. But in spite of his resentment of his father's psychological distance, Toloki does not build a family of his own to show a superior social personality and a dignified progression from his father's universe. In a way, his father dies a sad family man; but Toloki never succeeds in building one at all.[90]

The novelist's salvational proviso for the Tolokis and Norias of the new generation resides in the spiritual openness and readiness to receive and adopt new modes of perception and ideals. In the context of his two central characters, it is dependent on their capacity to adjust to a positive match into the future. For Toloki, we find, is "willing to learn new ways of living", just as "Noria herself was quite willing to learn how to walk in

[90] This observation is true, at least, till the end of the novel. If Mda follows up this narrative to show 'the end' of his protagonists, it should be seen in that light simply as continuity and a completion at the same time. In other words, the narrative of Toloki calls for a more expansive imaginative horizon.

the garden with him, to the extent that she is now a garden enthusiast in her own right" (***Ways of Dying,*** 179). Toloki's humanity is finally resuscitated by Noria: "And Toloki, don't be ashamed to have dreams about me. It is not dirty to have dreams. It is beautiful. It shows that you are human. We are both human" (***Ways of Dying,*** 188). She provides for Toloki the same inspiration she gave his father several years earlier. Their friendship is defined by a creative principle aptly captured by Shadrack as 'Creative partnership'.

This notwithstanding, Mda's projection of mundane representative figures as his protagonists seems to present emptiness as virtue. The 'noble profession of mourning' to which Toloki so much clings upon is an aberration as socially unacceptable as the experience of the transition's brutality that inspires it. While Mda's artistic intentionality might well be the desire to explore and project the mortality question, "Death lives with us everyday. Indeed our ways of dying are our ways of living. Or should I say our ways of living are our ways of dying" (***Ways of Dying,*** 89), as *narratorially* suggested in the protagonist's dialogue, identification with these characters does not allow for any ambitious socio-economic aspiration, even though they provide instances of that sense of 'personal healing' so germane in the national quest for reconciliation. Toloki's eccentricity alienates him from his roots, and his resistance to his father's craft and economic drive tells on his personal failures. Born in an African culture where the home-front holds a peculiar primacy, Toloki's failure is not only seen in his inability to build a home, but also in his inability to hold on to his late father's accomplishments, and to further extend the household.[91] At a very old age, his mother moves in with Xesibe, while his father's compound dilapidates. Nefolovdwe's visit to late Jwara's homestead signals this sense of Toloki's alienation and loafiness. In his late father's compound, 'all the houses were in ruins, as no one had lived there for years. Grass and shrubs had grown all over, and it was impossible to tell that a proud homestead had stood there once upon a time' (***Ways of Dying,*** 190).

[91] Even if most of Jwara's creative genius rested on his superlative construction of "worthless iron monsters"— the figurines— instead of "making things that will support (his) family" (p.195), Toloki's resistance to his father's insensitivity would have made a difference had he turned such failures to his own advantage.

To sum up this segment of our discussion, it could be reasoned that while Nefolovdwe's arrogance and insensitivity might appear harsh, the cultural position of Toloki as an only son— and even in situations where there are several children— as first son, his absconding from the village as a form of resistance had some odd implications. Such detachment and passivity pave way for 'failure'. His austere choice to be a monk of the new order is a professional calling alien to his cultural sensibility, and further smacks of a cowardly path of escape from the challenges of life. If 'professional mourning' is a symbology of life's violence, then the violence of transition is not entirely unharmed by the violence of representation. For, in the final analysis, a characterological dissection of Toloki does not provide much for emulation for the impressionable reader eager for socio-economic and psychological advancement. To this end, a life of 'the ordinary' seems almost tantamount to embarking on a trip to no destination.

III.

In the more subtle, but equally hilarious narrative, ***She Plays With the Darkness,*** Mda takes further the project of historical retrieval of colonial encounters and post-colonial responses in the Southern African sub-region. Although the novel is not specifically set in the topographical space of South Africa, it is a function of memory that Mda manages to explore the implications of racial separatism at the peak of apartheid to relations between South Africa and the neighbouring countries. Set in Lesotho's capital city, Maseru, and in the many villages that include Ha Samane and Ha Sache, among others, Mda's ***Darkness*** is technically a non-South African novel and, yet, technically, South African. Lesotho, a small, land-locked kingdom within South Africa, was home to many South African refugees during the apartheid years. Its peculiar dilemma as a poor, land-locked nation within South Africa made it vulnerable to attack by South Africa's Security Forces who hovered the small nation's air space, unchallenged, with reckless abandon. In a way, ***Darkness*** explores aspects of South Africa's historical memory, especially in its recent histories of 'emergencies'. In the relations between South Africa and Lesotho, therefore, Mda articulates how countries that share borders with South Africa were manipulated by the more powerful apartheid government and, by so doing, succeeded in prolonging the divisive system for as long as it lasted.

Ordinarily, ***Darkness*** is a narrative that interrogates the ethic of capitalist acquisition and the deification of material wealth in 'an emergent' post-colonial African state. In doing this, however, Mda carefully places a parallel narrative of a bucolic, 'village' people, with all the trappings of pastoral existence. Taking off in the mountain village of Ha Samane, ***Darkness*** tells the story of two kids, (Joseph) Radisane and his sister, Dikosha. Born barely of a year's difference, Radisane is given more privilege by the society simply because of his gender as male. In spite of his less impressive performance at the junior school, the Catholic Church sponsors him through college over his sister, Dikosha, who emerged in the more impressive record of a First Class. Dikosha becomes despondent, and for much of the narrative, totally reticent and taciturn. Radisane leaves for the capital of Maseru, and we witness, almost pictorially, the transition in the life of the young Radisane what seems like the story of the continent: a transition from innocence to a monumental monstrosity of a morally degenerate capitalist who loses everything at the end. In less than three decades, the 'Independent' state of Lesotho suffers three military *coup de' tat*, leaving in the trail of each attempt, a tale of destruction, violence, and bestiality.

Radisane not only loses his job as teacher; he also loses some of his colleagues, and gets battered by a team of over-zealous security men. He later builds a career as a fraudulent insurance agent after an initial training with a more fraudulent, failed legal practitioner, A.C. Malibu. Radisane exploits the pain of families who lost their breadwinners in car-crash. His transformation from a poor, wretch of a teacher to one of the wealthiest 'lawyers' in Maseru is the narrative plot Mda stretches to capture the complacence of political leadership in Africa toward the installation of social infrastructure, such as quality road networks. It also serves as his parodic revaluation of the emergent elites who exploit these inadequacies for their personal aggrandizement. A. C. Malibu, and his 'protégé', Joseph Radisane, become the finest examples of 'scavengers' who are prepared to make a fortune out of the national tragedy of road mishaps.

The 1970's *coup de'tat* that nearly led to the dethronement of Prime Minister Jonathan Leabua from power is the earliest pointer to the vulnerability of the small, land-locked nation. Leabua's ascendancy to power was made possible by a complex interplay of international power blocs that include the United Sates of America and the apartheid regime of South Africa. Leabua was loyal to South Africa, and the USA from his ascendancy to power in 1965. When he lost in the 1970's election, he was encouraged by these nations not to relinquish power to the conservative party. By 1986, however, Leabua had 'grown wings', and literally dined with the Communist enemies that include China, North Korea, and Cuba. "Worst of all evils, he was harbouring South African refugees" (***Darkness*** 82). His dethronement in the 1986 *coup de'tat* was, therefore, a forgone conclusion. For much of the mid-1980s, South Africa was under 'a state of emergency'. Neighbouring countries that harboured black 'freedom fighters', who were then classified as 'Terrorists' by the apartheid regime, were thus in the bad records of the supremacist government of South Africa, and constantly got intimidated by the South African government. In the case of Lesotho, "[T]he South African government grew tired of playing games with Leabua. They sealed the borders and embargoed all goods entering and leaving Lesotho. After a few days there was no petrol in the country, and there was no cabbage" (***Darkness*** 82).

The dethronement of Leabua in 1986 was not without some devastating consequences for South African refugees in Lesotho. While "Lekhanya became the Chairman of the Ruling Military Council", "King Moshoeshoe the Second" emerged as an executive monarch. The liaison that transpired between the new government of Lesotho and the more powerful South African neighbour under white minority rule eventuated in a compulsive witch-hunt of all dissenters to the new regime. To this end, "South African refugees were deported and flown to Zambia. And all was happy and peaceful again with the Boer neighbours" (***Darkness*** 88). Mda's ***Darkness*** reads like the true *exile narrative* with an impulsive dramatization of the trans-national implications of racial separatism to citizenries of affected countries during the troublesome years of apartheid in Southern Africa. Yet, the privileging of the local ambience of Lesotho, and a narrative universe populated by the baSotho makes it an autonomous Sotho novel. The peculiar evocation of

political developments in South Africa points to the interest that the divisive system in the then South Africa was able to attract globally. The baSotho, like the rest of Africans and, indeed, the whole world, showed enormous concern for a politics of race with which the architects of apartheid were identified. Mda's retrieval of this aspect of South Africa's past is, then, part of his larger narrative canvass of Africa's historical and cultural retrieval.

It is the task of such a commemorative narrative to consistently insist on a sense of belonging, and consequent lamentation of colonial dispossession. The many dialogues between Radisane and his 'father-in-law', Father-of-the-Daughters, demonstrate a resonant political consciousness that waited for the release of Nelson Mandela from prison before proclaiming its presence. Radisane responds to the old man's inquiry following the apartheid government's gesture:

> "They have no choice, father. Why do you think they released him after twenty-seven years in jail? It is because they can't contain the situation any more. The people are tired, father. They want to be free. The Boers cannot rule any more now; their government is in a mess. And the countries of the world are pushing them to talk with the blacks" (***Darkness*** 132).

It is interesting that the ordinary citizenry would invoke memories of colonial dispossession even at the most absurd of moments: criminal acts of theft are easily justified at such moments if only to shift blame to the white settler communities of South Africa, even when the settlers are evidently contributing immensely to social (in)stability of the neighbouring countries. At periods of natural hostilities such as 'the great snow' or 'the great rain', or 'the great drought', the South African government is often called upon to come to their rescue by supplying food with helicopters. Mda's narrator seems blurred in his attitude to the Boer's kindness at this point. But when the Boer insists that his government should protect Boer cattle and livestock from the encroaching baSotho, the narrator quickly remembers: "[T]here were already South African helicopters flying over

the mountains of Lesotho without anyone's permission, scouting the area for cattle rustlers" (***Darkness*** 134).

It does seem that theft of this sort is a common occurrence at the boundary sections of Lesotho and South Africa. But a particularly illuminating incident arose when some thieves were 'arrested' by the Ha Samane villagers. Their request for shelter was denied by the majority of the population; but some community members were quite disposed to protecting the thieves, so long as they steal only from the Boers. Impressions of colonialist violations and dispossession of the indigenous population reverberate at a meeting — 'Kgotla' — of the community. At least a member of the Ha Samane community eloquently reminds others: "*After all, they are running away from the Boers. The Boers stole our land. If you see that whole Orange Free State, then you know that in the days of Moshoeshoe it used to belong to Lesotho. And the Boers stole it from us. It is only right that we should steal their cattle*" (***Darkness*** 136; my emphasis).

Mda's commemorative engagement in ***Darkness*** is, here, merged with a hilarious notion of *Otherness*. The Boer emerges as the Othered identity that suddenly deserves to suffer a sense of injustice by virtue of his ancestor's violation and dispossession of the indigenous population. But in ***Darkness***, the writer equally emerges as *the righter*[92], and since injustice wears the apron of a universal opprobrium, the Ha Samane villagers chose the path of truth and honour by expelling the criminals. Arising from the authorial dispositions and interventions, however, is that whether set in Lesotho or South Africa, ***Darkness*** is as much of Africa's narrative of the past as it is of the present. It is as much the story of dispossessions of the past, as it is of the crude dispositions of Intelligence units of more powerful nations of today. Lesotho is an independent postcolonial African state. But it is landlocked within South Africa. Mda appears to be saying that an understanding of the lives of the ordinary baSotho is a key to the relationship between the small country and South Africa. The recurrence of military *coups d' état* in Lesotho is indicative of the level of vulnerability orchestrated by South African government to rout

[92] Understood in the functionalist deployment of the phraseology by Niyi Osundare in his monograph, *The Writer as Righter*. (Ile-Ife: O. A. U. Press, 1986).

out black South African migrants who were perceived as threats to the National Party government of South Africa. In ***Darkness***, Mda resurrects this fundamental angle of South Africa's socio-historical memory.

IV.

Mda's ***Heart of Redness*** immediately evokes memory of Joseph Conrad's ***Heart of Darkness***, and in its preoccupation with an audacious exploration of Africa's socio-historical and cultural continuum, ***Redness*** is at one with such classic narratives of transition as Chinua Achebe's ***Things Fall Apart***, ***No Longer at Ease,*** and ***Arrow of God***, John Munonye's ***The Only Son*** and ***Obi***, A. C. Jordan's ***The Wrath of the Ancestors***, Sol Plaatje's ***Mhudi***, and the many narratives that explore colonial encounter with the African mores and sensibilities. 'Redness', here, is symbolically deployed in the Conradian notion of 'Darkness', with the only difference being authorial intentionalities: the images of Africa in African narratives do not mean exactly the same thing as they do in Western narratives of Africa. As Theo Vincent recently noted on the question of whether both views concentrate on violence and other negative features of the continent and her people: "Although there may seem to be continuities, there are important differences in attitude and intent in the presentation. Western image of Africa is derisive, humiliating and unrelieved. If Africans record violence and instability in the continent, it is with a view to cleansing the land of such unwholesomeness" (Vincent 2004: 12-13).[93] Mda explores this notion of 'barbarism' and 'primitivism' that 'Redness' connotes, but this time not from Western eyes, but from the shallow imagination of a semi-literate generation best concretized in Xoliswa Ximiya, the village school Principal of the Community School in Qolorha-by-Sea.

The Heart of Redness is, by every sensible reading, a narrative of national and continental commemorations. Through a careful gurgling of temporal spaces, Mda weaves the historical and the quotidian in a single narrative that explores the collective memory of the amaXhosa on the one hand, and the pains implicit in colonial conquest,

[93] See Theo Vincent, 'The Mirror of Minds: Keeping the Records Straight'. *Journal of Cultural Studies*, 6.1 (2004): 1-13, and Chinua Achebe's 'An Image of Africa: Racism in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*'. *Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays, 1965-87*. (London: Heinemann, 1988, p. 1-13).

and the consequent domination of the indigenous peoples of Southern Africa. The narrative progression is consistently marked with a transposition of sequence so that events that took place within a time frame of a century and a half are located within two temporal narrative sites: the mid-19th century, and the post-1994 democratic South Africa. The narrative plot is constructed on the mythical stories of the 19th century amaXhosa prophets and prophetesses: Mlanjeni, Nongqawuse, Nonbamda, Nonkosi, and Nxele. But the dominant plot is the Nongqawuse prophecies of the 1850s. The Xhosa girl had prophesied the emergence of a new set of humanity, the resurrection of the ancestors, and the abundance of material wealth for the amaXhosa. For the prophecies to be effected, however, there was need for an enormous sacrifice: every Xhosa is expected to slaughter all cattle in their possession as well as destroy their farm fields. The antithesis implicit in this visionary appeal for a regeneration derived from a collective destruction of the people's wealth form the essential kernel through which Mda explores South Africa's national memory through a powerful interrogation of colonialist engagements in Africa and, in particular, the curious position of religion— both Western and indigenous— in the lives of the people. The prophecies of Nogqawuse, Nombanda, and Nonkosi, and even those of Mlanjeni and Nxele before them, are built on a spiritual attenuation of the people to an animist culture and religion that propagates the spirituality of matter and a reincarnation of the dead.[94]

In ***Redness***, as in real life, the prophecies ignited so much division and malice amongst the population that individuals— even at their most neutral and innocent— were often pressured to take sides with either the Believers and Unbelievers of the prophecies. Not one of the predictions ever got fulfilled in the literal sense of the prognostications, with the tragic consequence that accidents and failures of any kind were seen as deriving from the failures of the Unbelievers to heed the advise of the 'Divine' messengers. In the Marxian notion of religion as 'the opium of the masses', Mda illuminates the stupidity of embracing an irrational prediction, and the tragedy evident in the madness of its collective embrace. Religion becomes the culprit in a people's national suicide in which unverifiable thousands of people were starved to death. Mda's recreation of this national

[94] See Harry Garuba, 'Explorations in Animist Materialism'.

tragedy through the lens of a family, the descendants of the legendary Xikixa, is instructive. His twin children, Twin and Twin-twin are placed antithetically to each other. One is dogmatically placed to defend the visions of the prophets, while the later, Twin-twin is apparently more intellectually endowed, and in spite of his lack of facility with Western education, he still persistently challenged the stupidity of the predictions.

While Mda's ***Redness*** would appear as a mere historical narrative, it is significant in its symbolic focus on the efforts of the democratic government of South Africa in healing the wounds of the past. If the TRC were, therefore, inaugurated to excavate the inhumanities of the past, Mda, it does seem, would opt for a past that transcends the half-a-century of South Africa's dark years of racial separatism. It necessarily must subsume an excavation of colonialism and ethnic chauvinism that lasted over a century in the Eastern Cape. The visions of Nongqawuse: "The new people will come only when you have killed your cattle.... You cannot talk with them now. Only I can talk with them" (***Redness*** 91), and, before her, by other legendary soothsayers such as Ntsikana, Nxele, Mdalidephu, and Mlanjeni among others, provide a spiritual foundation for an African cultural and religious sensibility so zealously impeached in the preaching of the later disgruntled evangelist, Mhlakaza.

If the coming of the strangers would create a massive social conflict that involves destruction and regeneration, then colonialism and Christianity constitute the bulk of the conflict that truncated the social harmony of a contented population of indigenous Africans who spend another century and a half trying to apprehend their humanity. Christianity, at its initial contact with Africans, was presented in a most arrogant form that denigrated Africa's cultural mores as essentially demonic. The language of the people, dress codes, traditional African brew, African cuisine, and even etiquette were seen to belong to the uncivilized. Christian evangelists had urged Africans to embrace Western values, and in the unique case of the amaXhosa, like the Igbo, and indeed the rest of the so-called third-world peoples, the presence of such despotic colonial administrators like George Grey, John Cartcart, and their cronies such as John Dalton, helped to enforce a policy that privileged the colonialist idiosyncrasies over African

social etiquette. The visions of the 'confused' teenager, Nongqawuse, at such an auspicious time could only generate the kind of spiritual and social anarchy that enabled the further dissemination of Christianity and, consequently, the success of British colonial domination. Again, she speaks to the Xhosa chiefs:

> The strangers said I must tell the nation that all cattle now living must be slaughtered. They have been reared by contaminated hands because there are people who deal in witchcraft. The fields must not be cultivated, but great new grain must be dug, new houses must be built, and great strong cattle kraals must be erected. Cut out new milk sacks and weave many doors from buka roots. The Strangers say that the whole community of the dead will arise. When the time is ripe they will arise from the dead, and new cattle will fill the kraals. The people must leave their witchcraft, for soon they will be examined by diviners (***Redness*** 60).

Mda's aesthetic interrogation of these proclamations within the context of a democratic South Africa locates Nongqawuse's legendary visions as a *les lieux de mémoire*, a site of memory in the new social formation. While the prophecy already created two combatant groups of Believers and Unbelievers best exemplified in the perennial altercations between the two brothers, Twin and Twin-twin, their quarrels remain unabated, as it continued in the visible enmity between five generations of their descendants in Zim and Bhonco respectively. For a liberated South Africa so desperate for truth and reconciliation, however, Mda's narrator only manages to locate several other truths in the process of verifying the veracity of the prophecies. It is not accidental, therefore, that the novelist would construct his authorial voice in a Dr Camagu Cesane, a culture and communications scholar, and cleverly anchors him in debates that places the female school principal, Xoliswa Ximiya (Bhonco's daughter) against a history teacher in her school who is often timeously evoked to clarify thorny issues. While the history teacher suffers the irrational anger of a *chef* who must not be called *a cook*, he remains relevant, as he later clarifies the functioning of the democratic system even within traditional institutions where "chiefs cannot just issue orders" since "they had councillors who

would go out to get the views of the people first". He adds, of course, "[T]hat is why they held imbhizos which all the men were obliged to attend. Things were spoilt during the Middle Generations when the white man imposed a new system on us and created his own petty chiefs who became little despots on behalf of their masters" (***Redness*** 108).

But it is through Dr Camagu Cesane, Mda's narrative voice, that the subject of collective national commemorations is seriously brought to the fore amidst the quarrels between the cults of Believers and those of Unbelievers. Camagu shelves his plans to return to the USA after several failed attempts to secure a decent job in the new South Africa after over three decades in exile. He decides to establish himself in the village of Qolorha-by-sea. He buys a house, establishes a Cooperative Society run essentially by the women, and partakes in matters of community development. It was during his house-warming ceremony that he innocently pulled 'the trigger' that set fire in the minds of the descendants of Xikiza. Camagu relays the experience of his visit to London Museum of Natural History, where he discovers that several skulls of conquered peoples of the world were displayed as trophies. Particularly, "[H]e was shocked to discover that there were five dried-out heads of the so-called Bushmen stored in boxes in some back room of the museum" (***Redness*** 193). Camagu's story, inspired by John Dalton's snide remark that Zim and Bhonco's continued bickering would be irritating to their common ancestor, immediately got the two warring brothers united in their common quest for justice: they remember immediately that Xikiza's — their grandfather's— head was decapitated by the colonial soldiers led by John Dalton's grandfather, and immediately descended on the younger Dalton for the crimes of his great grandfather. Implicit in the narrative, here, is the challenge for historical and cultural retrieval: what is the place of memory in a new South Africa so desperate for national reconciliation?

Colonial encounters created for the indigenous population such painful memories as the decapitation of Xikiza, and the savage mutilation of Saartje Baartman's genitalia. It equally leaves so much of its mark on the historical and cultural memory of the amaXhosa. Dalton is to remind Camagu of the foolishness implicit in unearthing aspects of South Africa's historical past. If this is Mda's response to the obligations of the TRC,

it might well be a reasonable concern. For, indeed, the perennial conflict between the Believers and Unbelievers, and especially between the two brothers, Twin and Twin-twin provide a unique mental construct of the amaXhosa in terms of their feelings and attitudes to the scars of colonial encounters. In spite of the resonance of their feud, the battle for vengeance was to wait for another century and a half: the period is the present, in a democratic South Africa: John Dalton, a-several-generations-descendant of the British colonial soldier known to have visited untold hardship and dehumanization on the indigenous people, has long settled as citizen of the village of Qolorha, and shows unrivalled interest in the welfare of the community. Zim, the son of Twin and a descendant of Xikiza, has since died, just like his wife, NoEngland, and their son, Twin. But his cousin, Bhonco, of the Unbeliever's cult and descendant of the intellectually vibrant Twin-twin vows to avenge the decapitation of his great grandfather's head over a century and a half ago by the British colonialists. Notwithstanding his long friendship with the younger Dalton, he pays John Dalton a visit that immediately interrogates the basis of the TRC, and the whole question of historical retrieval amongst a people so brutally battered by the combined team of colonialism and apartheid repression. The narrator presents a picturesque view of the encounter in the dialogue that ensued:

> Bhonco demands to see John Dalton. NoManage tells him that he has left for his store. Bhonco climbs the hill to Vulindlela Trading Store. He finds Dalton arranging the black books in readiness for the nkamnkam day tomorrow, when old-age pensioners come to cash their cheques. When he sees Bhonco he assumes that the elder has come for more ityala, more credit.
>
> 'There cannot be any ityala for you today', says Dalton.
>
> 'Who says I want ityala?' replies Bhonco.
>
> But Dalton is not listening. He just prattles on, 'I know your daughter sends you money regularly. She has a very good job, that Xoliswa Ximiya. A deputy directorship in the national Department of Education is not to be sneezed at. You must be proud of her. But I will only give more credit to people after nkamnkam day'.

> 'I do not want ityala, Dalton', says Bhonco calmly. 'I want you to ask your forefather to restore the head of my forefather'.
> 'The head of your forefather? Have you gone crazy?'
> 'Give me the head of Xikiza, Dalton!'
> Before Dalton can answer, Bhonco hits him with his knobkierie on the head. The trader falls down, unconscious. Bhonco gives him two whacks with his panga. Blood spurts out and sprays the walls. Missis runs from her tiny office wailing. Screaming clerks and salespeople join her. Bhonco lashes out at every one. He is foaming at the mouth as he screeches something about the head that has caused him misery. Customers and passers-by finally grab him and disarm him. Dalton is unconscious on the floor. He is bleeding profusely from a gaping wound on the head and another one on the arm (***Redness*** 315-316).

David Attwell has described Mda's ***The Heart of Redness*** as "The most ambitious and successful work of fiction by a black writer to appear on the post-apartheid scene to date"[95] and, as Peterson observes, in ***Redness***, Mda establishes links between the legend of Nongqawuse and contemporary struggles around questions of heritage, culture, the environment, and development'[96]. One could conveniently submit at this point that in ***The Heart of Redness***, then, memory is historical and contemporaneous; cultural and socio-political; ethnically particularized and nationally mongrelized; indeed, it is both pre-colonial and post-colonial.

If the representation of Nongqawuse's prophecy thematizes a historical memory, the narrative focus on "Clothing" draws upon a fascination with a cultural symbolism that generates a conflict between pre-colonial conventions and post-colonial antecedents in all its subtle ambivalences. 'Clothing' or 'Clothes' as projected in ***The Heart of Redness*** becomes a site of memory. It is bad enough that colonialism would denigrate the cultural

[95] Attwell, David. 'Apartheid and Post-Apartheid'. Also in 'The Experimental Turn in Black South African Fiction', Attwell has observed the essential link between Achebe's earliest fiction, *Things Fall Apart*, and Mda's *The Heart of Redness*. Both novels appear largely inspired by the desire to respond to the imperialist writings of Joseph Conrad and the early Eurocentric representations of the African humanity in the Western imaginary.
[96] Peterson, Bekhizizwe. 'Mda, Zakes'.

symbols of Africa; but it is worse that the craving for Westernism would be the preoccupation of the 'emergent', black elites. In this sense, it would appear, the refusal and outright rejection of traditional attire is akin to a sheepish Europeanization that supersedes the European. Mda's subtle sarcasm on the female-teacher-turned-administrator is eloquent enough: the rejection of one's cultural symbols amounts to cultural illiteracy, for, nothing better attests to a people's spatial and cultural belonging than their "Clothing". "Clothes", as Peter Stallybrass writes, "have a life of their own; they both *are* material and immaterial presences. In the transfer of clothes, identities are transferred from a mother to a daughter, from an aristocrat to an actor, from a master to an apprentice" (Stallybrass 1999: 38). This cultural symbolism has the semantic extension of causing every aspect of the many influences of the colonial encounter to the African peoples. In fact, to continue with the analogy of Peter Stallybrass, the political, social, economic, and cultural impositions on the native population amount to a eurocentric, compulsive, clothing of the indigenous peoples that insisted on "inhabiting" the "habits" of the post-colonial subjects (Stallybrass 42).[97]

But memory is not confined to the incidental and extra-literary encumbrances that inform Mda's narrative. To this end, the conveyance of Nongqawuse's prophecy and the relativization of colonialist fantasies through their 'infantile' recourse to the de-humanization of Saartje Baartman, and the African womanhood are simply aesthetic re-imaginings of history that evoke memory as a functional medium. Beyond this notion of memory as an agent of history, or more appropriately, as a "hypostatized agent of history" (Spiegel, 2002: 149), in Mda's ***Redness***, memory is alive in the characterization of the modern woman. Women, in this context, constitute a living, participational presence, even if with ambivalent responsibilities.

Investigating the nature of commemorations in Mda's ***The Heart of Redness*** naturally provokes a need for a sleuth engagement with the nature of violations that mark this 'ubiquitous' narrative. If the nature of violence in ***Redness*** is catalysed by crass

[97] Stallybrass, Peter. 'Worn Worlds: Clothes, Mourning, and the Life of Things'. *Cultural Memory and the Construction of Identity*, Ed. Dan Ben-Amos & Liliane Weissberg. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999: 27-44).

ignorance, and the fraudulent recourse to religion and spirituality as seen from the fatalistic implications of the prophecies, the claims could even be further be made that such recourse to spiritualism was only one of the many strategies deployed by the British colonists to maintain imperial dominance. The tragic demise of several thousands of the amaXhosa as a result of their dogmatic and unquestioned acceptance of Nongqawuse's 'suicide' prophecy is, as Twin-twin suggests, perhaps, a deliberate ploy of 'The Man Who Named Ten Rivers' (Sir George Grey), to set the amaXhosa up against one another, with the devastating consequence that in many families, "Believing brothers fought against Unbelieving brothers. Unbelieving spouses turned against believing spouses. Unbelieving fathers kicked believing sons out of their homesteads. Unbelieving sons plotted the demise of believing fathers. Unbelieving fathers attempted to kill believing sons. Siblings stared at each other with eyes full of blood. Many amaXhosa killed their cattle in other to facilitate the resurrection. Many others killed them unwillingly under the threat of their believing natives" (***Redness***, 97-98). At moments of transition, however, it is not strange that this level of confusion would consume the minds of the population to ease the entrenchment of the emerging tradition.

The experience of the Igbo as projected in Chinua Achebe's ***Things Fall Apart, Arrow of God***, and John Munonye's ***The Only Son***, among several other African narratives of the colonial encounter attest to this position. In the peculiar case of the amaXhosa, colonial violence found the apparent conflict within the socio-cultural formation a fecund space for the development of imperial policies and the imposition— on the people— of colonial laws and magistrates. In Mda's ***Redness***, in spite of the protestations of the Unbelievers, and especially Twin-twin: "The white man does not know our law', 'whose law is he going to apply? He does not respect our law. He will apply the law of the English people. As for the colonial money, The Man Who Named Ten Rivers is buying our chiefs. When they are paid by him, they will owe their loyalty to him, and not to the amaXhosa people, and not to our laws and customs and traditions" (***Redness***, 154), the colonial administrator, George Grey, displays the peculiar Eurocentric arrogance on several fronts. In his policies and general dispositions, colonial violence manifests in the rejection of the indigenous cultural practices and beliefs, as it does in the deliberate and

systematic extermination of the indigenous population. In response to the observation by one of his lieutenants that 'The natives are dying in their hundreds from starvation', George Grey demonstrates no qualms to the colossal calamity. Instead, he devotes his energy on how to ensure effective colonial dominance of the surviving casualties. He undertakes to understand the customary law of the people, and boasts accordingly:

> You know, in Australia and New Zealand, I did the same thing…. I built an important collection of the languages, customs and religions of the natives. It is important to record these because they are destined to disappear along with the savages who hold them.
>
> …
>
> The advance of Christian civilization will sweep away ancient races. Antique laws and customs will moulder into oblivion.
>
> …
>
> The strongholds of murder and superstition shall be cleansed, as the gospel is preached among ignorant and savage men. The ruder languages shall disappear, and the tongue of England alone shall be heard all around. So you see, my friends, this cattle-killing nonsense augurs the dawn of a new era (***Redness*** 236-7).

George Grey and his predecessors and successors in the colonial regime had a defined mission in the African continent: the subjugation of the indigenous population to imperial suzerainty. If the capitalist gambits of manipulating, and the deliberate extermination of, the people would help attain Her Majesty's imperialist aspirations, then, no amount of pain inflicted on the 'savage' population was considered too much for the project. In the dispositions of the colonial administrators, the amaXhosa, like most colonized African subjects, emerge as that *Other* aptly captured, as Rosemary Jane Jolly puts it, "when that identity is perceived as fixed image to which the oppressed either conform, or be punished" (Jolly 1996: xiii-iv). The amaXhosa are diminished to the infantile, curious humanity, whose 'primitive' customs needed urgent effacement with 'superior' Eurocentric sensibilities. The violation of the people was, therefore, as much in its physical presence in the decapitation of Xikiza, the mutilation of Saartjie Baartman's

genitalia, and in their display in European museums, as it is in the intrigues that led to the deployment of fraudulent religious predictions to set 'ablaze' the moral and social fabrics of the amaXhosa humanity. It is even worse in the systematic destruction of the cultural essences of the people, concretized in the loss of pride and confidence in indigenous values, dress codes, and self-definition. A triumphant George Grey— The Man Who Named Ten Rivers— would proclaim to his lieutenants, amidst the immeasurable tragedy of the amaXhosa: "We are achieving what we set out to do. The Xhosa are becoming useful servants, consumers of our foods, contributors to our revenue. Like the Maori of New Zealand, these people are not irreclaimable savages. We should make them a part of ourselves, with a common faith and common interests" (***Redness*** 296).

If memory and violence form the essential thematic kernels of Mda's ***The Heart of Redness***, it could reasonably be claimed that they provide the fundamental basis for the decoding of alterity in the narrative. But 'Otherness' in ***Redness*** is not confined to the colonialists' perceptions, and denigration of the colonized subjects. Indeed colonialism, in the unique case of Southern Africa, with the later increased population of the settler-communities, created different forms of otherness. The conflicts that mark the relations between the Afrikaner settler community, and the British colonizer, for instance, present an interesting mode for the apprehension of Otherness in South Africa. While Zakes Mda does not explicitly explore this conflict in ***Redness***, the implications of their settler-ship as it affects the indigenous peoples are significant. In the combined conspiracy of the two-settler white groups, the indigenous peoples are consistently seen as subjects of the British Kaffirland.

This prepares the ground and basis for national identification of the citizenry. An interesting twist to the narrative is to occur in a post-apartheid social space: the white settler communities, we observe, here, are not only coming to terms with their identity as Africans. Mda transcends the familiar mode of inferring and interrogating the basis of their African-ness to aesthetically presenting a white agency that is indisputably more Xhosa, and who speaks better 'isiXhosa' than most 'amaXhosa' through the length and breathe of 'kwaXhosa'. John Dalton, a descendant of the British colonialist-soldier-

turned magistrate whose regiment was reputed to have decapitated Xikiza, is by every standard Xhosa. Belonging to the generation of colonialist descendants that witnessed a democratic, non-racial South Africa, Dalton not only considers himself a *bona fide* son of Qolorha-by-sea; he also contributes to the development of the community far more than most of the indigenous peoples. He is accepted by the people as one of them. He had grown up with men of his generation, and was initiated into 'manhood' by circumcision in the culturally-accepted standards. Zim, an unbeliever by birth and by inclination, had cause to remind his cousin, Bhonco, during an argument: "Dalton is not really white. It is just an aberration of his skin. He is more of an umXhosa than most of us. He was circumcised like all amaXhosa men. He speaks isiXhosa better than most of you here" (***Redness*** 169).

John Dalton's immense contributions, given the liberalism of the new order, ordinarily should outweigh whatever misgivings five generations of his ancestors may have inflicted on the indigenes. As an astute businessman, Dalton has made life very comfortable for the citizens of Qolorha-by-sea, and had gone the extra mile of providing *ityala*, credit facilities, for the citizens. Yet, his acceptance by the indigenous population remains shaky and marginal: he is only one of them at their convenience, depending on his demonstrated positions on the politics of the Believers and the Unbelievers. John Dalton is also instrumental to the provision of pipe-borne-water to the villagers, and emerged as the 'messiah' of the community when, at the last minute, he single-handedly stops the exploitative intrigues of the new elites who, in connivance with corrupt government officials, are bent on 'stealing' from the people by attempting to appropriate choice beach-land for the purpose of establishing gambling centres. In his very pragmatic ways, John Dalton had secured a court injunction, stopping the dubious appropriation of the beach. But he takes his selfless efforts too far when he openly and insensitively castigates the stupidity of the Believers who died of starvation due to "their foolish mission of killing their cattle" (***Redness*** 281). His 'whiteness' and privileged position as member of the community is immediately impugned: The wheel of memory is triggered off, and Dalton is reminded that unlike the white man who killed the son of his God, the blackman never killed anyone.

Even worse, he is reminded that he is the grandson of the 'colonialist headhunters', who not only killed Africans, but also cooked, and possibly ate some black men. His sense of patriotism and developmental virtuoso notwithstanding, therefore, the rekindling of historical and cultural memory locates John Dalton as a privileged descendant of the culprits and violators of the sacred essence of the amaXhosa. Bhonco, a major beneficiary of Dalton's friendship and business acumen, attacks him at the end of the narrative in a symbolic quest to avenge the injustice done to his decapitated great grandfather, Xikiza. The newness of the 'new' South Africa is then called into question when he tells John Dalton: *"I do not want ityala. I want you to ask your forefather to restore the head of my forefather"* (***Redness***, 316; my emphasis). John Dalton is confronted here by what he had since taken for granted: a socially and culturally accepted personality constantly at odds with the painful reality of his *Otherness* in a democratic South Africa desperately at pains to efface the possible manifestations of the recalcitrant echoes of historical memory.

Interestingly, however, *Otherness* is not confined to eugenics: clannishness, and the politics of Belief and Unbelief, create a sense of alterity that pushes Mda's authorial delegate, Dr Camagu Cesane, in a less dignifying social space than even the white man, John Dalton. Like Dalton, however, he is occasionally loved or hated, depending on the whims and caprices of the Believers and Unbelievers in the village of Qolorha-by-sea. When he shows friendship to Xoliswa Ximiya, the daughter of Bhonco, he is castigated by the Believers, but when he finally marries Qukezwa, Zim's daughter, he falls into the bad books of the Unbelievers. A man of great learning, Camagu represents the educated African so willing to contribute to the development of the continent, only to be frustrated and alienated by a system that anchors on corruption and nepotism. As Mda's authorial voice, Camagu demonstrates a desired fascination with his cultural sensibilities, and is particularly thrilled to have had the honour and privilege to be visited by the 'Majola'—his clan's totemic snake. He establishes a Cooperative society for the local women, and shows them how to have pride in themselves through their embrace of the amaXhosa 'clothing' patterns.

But Camagu's long absence from his motherland is not without its consequences. In the final analysis, he emerges like a character in the early European image of Africa. He does not understand the procedures for engaging in marriage negotiations. A white man— John Dalton— comes to his rescue to teach him the cultural requirements for taking a bride. When he tries to take Qukezwa for wife, he invites John Dalton to accompany him, and was quickly reminded: "This is highly irregular, Camagu. I am not your relative. Normally, three of your relatives would go to ask for the woman's hand" (***Redness*** 271). Earlier, at the trial of Qukezwa who was charged for cutting down trees against tradition, Camagu tries to intervene after listening to the intelligent argument advanced by the accused. His intervention was seen as an aberration. He was not expected to participate in the trial, nor contribute his opinion, however enlightened. He is once more seen as ***an/other*** and, as the narrator informs the reader:

> They look at him as if he is something a naughty puppy has just dragged into the house from the garbage heap. No one thought he would have the audacity to contribute his say in this matter. After all, everyone now knows that he was fed a powerful potion by the Believers, which turned him against a well-mannered and educated woman of the Unbelievers, only to run like a puppy after this tree-cutting siren (***Redness*** 250).

The Heart of Redness is implicitly a narrative of 'Otherness' heightened by the confusions immanent in moments of transition and alterity. Where colonialism had taken its authority and sustenance in violence, and in a codified philosophy of belittlement of the colonized subjects, the arrogance of power created by the colonizing conditions necessitated other forms of alterity since the colonized begun to establish new modes of *holding on* to his castigated values or *uprooting any* perceived threat to his new sense of individuation. John Dalton and Camagu Cesane were both, at various times, victims of this mode of perception in spite of their patriotism and identification with the challenges of developing the village of Qolorha-by-sea, a village that immediately suggests a fictional aggregation of the new South Africa.

V.

If the many catastrophes implicit in the violence of transition constitute sites of collective national commemoration as Mda indicates in ***Ways of Dying***, the traumas of apartheid legislation particularly with respect to miscegenation[98], and the Immorality Act, are no less imposing in terms of the psychological and physical injuries inflicted on the sexually exploited black women, and the evidentiary consequences of white hypocrisy. Zakes Mda's excavation of this aspect of the apartheid policies is a function of memory that authorizes the divisive policies as a '*Les Lieux de Memoire'*, — a site of collective national memory that urges both aesthetic and political commemoration by the very insensitivity of their original abandonment. The Immorality Act, one of the most notorious policies of the apartheid regime under the National Party, had stipulated severe penalties for sexual offences across racial boundaries. The effectuation of residential boundaries on the basis of racial groupings was part of the policy designed to maintain 'sexual sanity', and to avoid the evils of 'miscegenation'. In one rather pathetic incident, André Brink (Brink 1983: 140) narrates how an Italian who naturalized as South African after arriving the country in 1902, had fallen in love with an indigenous African woman. They got married, settled in the Johannesburg area of Sophiatown, and were soon blessed with a daughter who was categorized as 'Coloured'. His wife died much later, and he lived with his daughter. Following the declaration of Sophiatown as a 'Whites Only' suburbia, they moved to another 'mixed' suburb which, unfortunately, was later declared a 'Coloured' area. The old man died a destitute in his old age as the separatist policies made it impossible for him to live with his daughter. With the Immorality Act, and the forceful evacuation of persons to 'areas of their racial belonging' in the early 1950s, many families were totally disintegrated.[99]

Such violence on the family front was common during the apartheid era, and the abandonment of memory and history in the post-apartheid stage as a step towards

[98] It is significant to observe that with the liberalism of the new order, the term 'miscegenation' is becoming virtually obsolete. But it remains a historical reality especially since, even in the institutions, individuals are still identified on the basis of their categorizations by the apartheid legislation as 'Africans', 'Coloured', 'Indian', and 'White'. See, for instance, the 'Students' Registration Form' of the University of the Witwatersrand.

[99] See André Brink, 'After Soweto'. *Mapmakers: Writing in a State of Siege*. (London: Faber & Faber, 1983: 128-153).

reconciliation appears to constitute a greater form of violence against the new generation of young South Africans who might never be aware of "where the rains started beating them", as Chinua Achebe would say. Zakes Mda's aesthetic evocation of this angle of South Africa's national memory is then well situated as a site of immense relevance in its presentational alertness of the experiences of black women under apartheid, the hypocrisy of the privileged Afrikaner men, the chicanery, vindictiveness, and mischief of some Afrikaner women, and, in particular, the crisis of identity and the location of the Coloured imaginary. ***The Madonna of Excelsior*** is Zakes Mda's another very important contribution in this project of constructing national memories, and there is enough evidence that, for Mda, the subject of miscegenation as a historical reality unaided by the Immorality Act will always remain a timeless statement on the hypocrisy and [ig]noble conscience of the leadership of the white settler population in South Africa.

The immorality of the subject finds enormous eloquence not only in the continued rise in the population of the South African 'Coloured' peoples—an indication of the prevalence of sexual liaisons across racial boundaries—it also implicitly parodies the so-called 'superior' racial groups that throw caution to the winds in their hypocrisy and concupiscence as they sexually 'exploit' the weaker members of the indigenous population who attempt to survive poverty and the repressive system of apartheid. Mda's exploratory inquest into narratives of the past provides him with resources with which to address the emerging dilemmas of the liberal order. As a painter himself, it is understandable that he is able to locate good paintings that portray issues relevant to South Africa's social humanity since colonialism to the post-apartheid era. His unfettered fascination with the arts — specifically in 'painting'— is the reason he discovers the paintings of 'the Madonnas' during a visit to the venerable Reverend Frans Claerhout, who appears in the novel as 'the trinity'. It is not without reason that nearly every episode of Mda's narrative is inspired by one specific painting, or the other. Each narrative incident takes its cue from the suggested theme of a painted subject. Mda admits, of course, that most of his novels are informed by real life's experiences. In an interview he granted Rebecca L. Weber on ***The Madonna of Excelsior***, Mda clarifies: "This is the only novel where a memory of the events was the starting point". In other words, for

Mda, there is always a sense of place in his narratives. It is place that often inspires this writer, and he is reputed for his random drive around South Africa in his quest to retrieve issues of historical and national interests. As he eloquently asserts in the interview, "Place is key. To me place is not just background for my cast of characters. The place in fact is so important that many of my novels are suggested by the place. I ask, what kind of character would be in a place like this? And what would they be doing here? What happens is determined by who that character is and what that place is all about".[100]

The Madonna of Excelsior is a loaded narrative in spite of its seemingly simple causa-chronological narrative sequence. In one simple narration, memory, violence, and alterity are explored in a manner that locates sexual exploitation over-lapping with apartheid oppression, poverty, 'Coloured-ness', and the crisis of identifying a *lingua franca* for the 'nation' after apartheid. The spatio-temporal mapping is a fairly locatable one, as the narrated incidents span a generation that commenced with the moment of rape and sexual exploitation of black women in '1970', to the manifestations of a liberated order three decades later. Whether this textual figuration is reflective of actual historical incidents is really not the issue, though: one is satisfied with Mda's acknowledgement of the source of the narrative events to have been derived from real life incidents in the township of Excelsior in South Africa's province of the Free State. The many thematic blocs realized through a cadence of characteriological constructs indicate at every turn Mda's unique interest in sites of national memory currently being 'repressed' by the post-apartheid ethos of reconciliation and forgiveness. A post-apartheid generation of young adults unfamiliar with the denigration of humankind implicit in apartheid legislation are rescued in a re-invented narrative. The apartheid imaginary emerges in ***The Madonna of Excelsior*** as a memorial statement on violence and perceptions of Otherness built on ill-informed conditioned imagination.

The narrative ordering presents a fascinating coda: sometime in 1970, during the years of the Immorality Act in apartheid South Africa, a number of black South African women

[100]See Rebecca L. Weber, 'The Africana QA: Zakes Mda'. http://archive.blackvoices.com/articles/qa/bk20040525zakesmda.asp, downloaded from the Internet on February 2nd, 2005.

working in farm fields owned and controlled by some Afrikaner farmers found themselves at the mercy of their white employers who not only raped and de-flowered them, but were also consistently subjected to sexual molestation and exploitation by the team of old men. Some of these women are fictionally aggregated as Mmampe, Maria, and Niki. The men, too, include Johannes Smith, Stephanie Cronje, Klein-Jan Lombard, Groot-Jan Lombard, Reverend François Bornman, among others. The result was that a number of these women got impregnated, and were soon delivered of an impressive number of children of mixed parentage. This means that what is often referred to as 'the Coloured population' got larger in the little town of Excelsior in the Free Sate province.

By 1971, however, the government was compelled to evoke the Immorality Act in a scandalous trial that, more than anything else, ridiculed the very immorality of the legislation itself, as well as the hypocrisy of its propagators. The culprits were 19, made up of 12 black women and 7 white men. This was made popular in the local media, and the case was then globally projected as 'The Excelsior 19' trial. Adam de Vries, a fictional prominent Afrikaner lawyer was to represent the white men, while the black women could not afford legal representation, and were subsequently incarcerated for several weeks along with their infant babies, some of whom were just a few weeks old. Following the global interest which the trial generated, the government strategically stopped the trial on the ground of its lacking in evidence— the many 'Coloured' children that were born as a consequence of the inter-racial intercourse notwithstanding. The men were freed, while the women spent sometime in gaol.

In fictional terms, Niki is the most visible of these women. Through her characterization, Mda explores the experiences of the women in the hands of the white farmers. He succeeds in *re-presenting* the subject of miscegenation through his figuration of the 'Coloured' children best represented in the narrative by Niki's daughter, Popi. In a way, then, ***The Madonna of Excelsior*** explores, among other things, the relationship that existed between the racial groups in Excelsior during apartheid; the struggle for liberation through Niki's son, Viliki; the subject of black labour as seen in the traumatic experiences of the black men— best represented in the narrative, too, in Niki's husband,

Pule. In Niki, therefore, the transition of South Africa is perceived from an innocent, unexplored topography to the moment of colonial capitalism during which period its many treasured wholeness gets exploited and depleted: Johannes Smith's forceful rape of the innocent Niki is paralleled to the discovery of gold and diamond in most parts of South Africa for which the competing white settlers bicker and fight each other in the same way Johannes Smith and Stephanie Cronje fight over the natural treasures of Niki. The 'conspiracy' of the Afrikaner farmers, and the debauchery evident in their reckless swapping of poor black women signal a peculiar display of gluttony in their partitioning and appropriation of the South African topographical spaces for their private interests.

The symbology of the Immorality Act finds eloquence and concretization in the immorality of the law itself, and in the hypocrisy of its implementation: black women, in this case, totalize the African continent of which Excelsior is only a microcosm of a representative spatial topography. And, like the scramble for, and partitioning of Africa by Western colonists in the late 19th century, the black women of Excelsior are appropriated, swapped, and sexually exploited by the same team of curious white settlers who, in spite of their depravity, feel no qualms about their moral turpitude. Yet, like the 'cannibalizing' colonists, they questioned the humanity of these poor, vulnerable women. Niki, the innocent black woman around whom the narrative revolves, grew up, like her friends (Mmampe and Maria), in the Mahlatsweta location— a shantie section of Excelsior. Like the rest of the teenage girls of her age, she goes to work in the farms of the Boer. Johannes Smith deflowers her on one such incident. She later gets married to a very responsible and resourceful black man, Pule, who works at the mines of Welkom. Just when she thought that her problems with the white farmers are over, she discovers that it was just the beginning. She takes up a job at a butchery run by a white woman, Cornelia Cronje, who takes pride in humiliating her workers who show sign of gaining weight at the end of each day's work. Her humiliation of Niki on one such occasion planted the seed of vengeance in the black woman's mind, and she vowed to return the shame back to Cornelia in a more devastating way.

In the process, she sleeps repeatedly with Cornelia's husband, Stephanus Cronje, an engagement that results in pregnancy. She later gives birth to Popi who was close to being a 'carbon copy' of Mr Cronje. Unable to live with the shame, Stephanus Cronje commits suicide rather than face trial in the Court of law for Immorality offences. Niki's retaliation appears complete, but she was never happy for three decades, as her daughter's 'Coloured-ness' was to be a subject for derision amongst both black and white citizens of Excelsior. Popi, and the rest of the 'Coloured' children who were products of the-Excelsior-19 days became sources of pain, anger, and embarrassment to most of the families. This way, Mda redirects the narrative progression from 'sexual offences' to the problematics of colouredism or miscegenation, and the crisis of identity attendant upon having offsprings of racially mixed parentage in South Africa.

Popi, the beautiful 'product' of the 'illegal' delinquency of Niki and Stephanus Cronje, grows into a sad, but dutiful young woman. Loved by her brother, Viliki, and ridiculed by the rest of society, Popi shows a rare sense of humanity for a child that grew up as an *Othered* identity. Her sense of blood and belonging becomes truncated early in life when children of her age made jests of her. She becomes withdrawn and alienated from all, but her mother. Growing up as a child, the pains of her 'coloured-ness' appear to follow her to all her destinations. At birth, Tjaart, who ironically is Popi's biological brother from the father's side, had insensitively told her mother: "Your little girl? This can't be your child! She looks like a *hotnot* child. Like a *boesman*. You must have stolen her" (***Madonna*** 9). Rather than her most cherished identity as Popi Pule, the young beautiful lady is trailed through her first thirty years of existence with a categorization that locates her as 'Coloured' when the addresser shows some politeness, and, at other times, as 'hotnot', 'boesman', 'bushman', 'morwa towe', amongst others (***Madonna*** 9, 113). Another 'product' of the 'Excelsior 19' days, Maria's daughter, only manages to retain the less dignifying identity of the communal clown who sings at public places. This function defines her as a 'singer of songs', and it was the personal quality of Viliki, Niki's son, that he finds in 'the singer of songs', rare qualities that were never appreciated by many. Her only 'crime' is her 'Coloured-ness'.

It is significant that the women of the 'Excelsior 19' days were not entirely proud of their early life. If Niki represents this group of women, their sense of shame, which resonates in their memory of the 'Immorality' days, is expressed most visibly in the psychological impact of the society's response to their so-called 'immorality' and concupiscence. Niki withdraws from the rest of the world, and, for a very long time, remained morose and taciturn. Such impact of shame resonating in the commemorations of her life's experiences is partly the reason she could not muster enough courage to tell her daughter, Popi, of the circumstances of her birth.

Mda's systematic reversal of Niki's moodiness into a sunnier future, incidentally, is built on the humorous manipulation of 'Coloured-ness' as a marginal racial category. Following the dawn of a democratic order, it is Niki that complains that corruption is beginning to usurp the throne of the local council at Excelsior. Her friends, Maria and Mmampe, have since assumed functions at the Council as 'Secretary' and 'Tea Server' respectively, in spite of their apparent illiteracy. Niki tells Popi of her earlier chat with her two former friends: "Maria and Mmampe always come with strange stories of how they eat. They say now the spout of the kettle is facing their direction. It is their turn to eat. They say my children were foolish not to eat when the spout of the kettle was facing in their direction" (***Madonna*** 259). The moodiness of Niki, for the many years her children were involved politically in the running of the council was, however, not associated with the quest for material acquisition. She chose to remain apolitical; she has been battered by life's experiences, and every event had remained for her a futility and vanity that needed to be shunned at every point.

Mda evokes the peripheral identity of South Africa's 'Coloureds' to restate the fact that the politics of national commemorations is one that transcends the location of physical memorial sites such as museums and monuments. Memory, in this instance, is as ideological in the policies designed to sustain racial separatism, as it is evident in the presence of the coloured population—a presence that concretely tells of the hypocrisy of the colonizing settlers whose professed intention was to 'civilize' the indigenous *other*. In the figuration of Popi, we encounter a 'jest' that immediately resuscitates the alienated

psyche of a woman who had since capitulated to the cruelty of racial separatism. The 'civilizing master' appears finally as a shameless hypocrite whose unrivalled bestiality and inhumanity find its fictional illustration in the privileged 'Boers': Johanness Smith and Cornelia Cronje. The project of personal and collective reconciliation at the dawn of the liberal order finally locates Popi as the primary agent whose sense of humour enables the possibility of healing the pains of the past by sincerely laughing at the stupidities of the racially denigrating policies.

Popi jokingly asks her mother, Niki, why she has not joined her friends, Maria and Mmampe, in "eating" from the Council since the fall of the apartheid regime. She observes that her mother is black, like the other women. She smartly elucidates on why she is not a very qualified candidate to benefit from the new regime, as was also the case in the apartheid order: "At least as a coloured person I can complain that in the old apartheid days I was not white enough, and now in the new dispensation I am not black enough" (***Madonna*** 259). In spite of the seeming assault on the psyche of the coloured person, here, it is this apparently innocent remark that restores the sunnier humanity of a battered Niki, Popi's mother, as she rejoices: "You are free, Popi, and you have made me free too. For a long time, I felt guilty that I had failed you, ... that I had made you coloured! Every time they mocked and insulted you, it ate my heart and increased my guilt" (***Madonna*** 260). Mda's figuration of colouredism in the context of post-apartheid South Africa is, in a way, an indictment of both the white minority settler communities as well as the dominant black population who are not entirely innocent in the creation of the South African coloured population. The beauty of spirit, diligence, and responsibility with which Popi applies herself in the realization of an ideal South Africa tend to suggest that it is, perhaps, from the South African coloureds, more than anywhere else, that the emergent 'nation' can finally locate its patriotic 'messiahs'.

Ironically, the politics of Otherness in ***The Madonna of Excelsior*** is not the preoccupation of the black and coloured peoples who had suffered centuries of colonial dispossession and apartheid repression; the politics of alterity in the narrative is totally embraced by the minority whites who had held on to economic and political domination

since their earliest settler-ship days in the region. Adam de Vries, Stephanus and Cornelia Cronje, Johannes Smith, Guys Uys, and a number of the prominent Afrikaner fictional citizens of Excelsior continually provoke situations that would authorize the perception of the Afrikaner as a messiah come to salvage the barbarians of Africa who are totally unaccustomed to the benefit of political administration, economic adventurism and social etiquette. This sense of superiority is practically inhered on the psyche of the young and impressionable Afrikaner youths who end up displaying hatred against the black peoples without really understanding why they do so. The conditioned imagination of the Afrikaner youth is best illustrated in the pathetic reactions of Mda's less admirable character, Tjaart Cronje, who, ordinarily, should embrace a common humanistic ethos, given his childhood encounter with Niki and her children. Beyond the personal frustrations of these Afrikaner nationalists, however, Mda creatively echoes a fundamental issue of alterity in the politics of *lingua franca* in a democratic South Africa.

One observes here that the place of the Afrikaans language in the new South Africa has been a source of concern to many Afrikaner nationalists since the dawn of non-racial democracy. Although the language has remained relevant in administration, economics, and education, it no longer enjoys the sole privilege accorded it by the apartheid system. The new government of South Africa embraced what Desmond Tutu described as a 'Rainbow nation', and instead of adopting 'English', 'Zulu', or 'Xhosa' as the official language, the constitution recognizes eleven official languages even though minutes in parliamentary discussions are recorded in the English language. Some Afrikaner nationalists have not been entirely happy with this development in spite of the general perception of Afrikaans as 'the language of oppression'. As Njabulo Ndebele suggests: "The ordinary Afrikaner family, lost in the illusion of the historic heroism of the group, has to find its moral identity within a national community in which it is freed from the burden of being special" (Ndebele, 1998: 24). For a novel set in a largely Afrikaans-speaking province of the Free State, it is little or no wonder that the narrator carefully presents the dilemma associated with identifying a national language after a long period of Afrikaans domination of the many vibrant indigenous languages.

In ***The Madonna of Excelsior***, Mda explores this sense of 'superiority' and 'Otherness' in the many Council sittings and, especially, in the altercations between Popi and her 'brother', Tjaart Cronje. While 'the burden of being special' is lifted off the shoulders of the likes of Johannes Smith who "was no longer getting easy loans from the Land Bank for which he had previously qualified solely by virtue of being an Afrikaner farmer" (***Madonna*** 23), it is in the language question that the politics of domination and subversion manifest even more ferociously. Popi suggests that minutes at the sittings be recorded in the English language, a motion that infuriates Tjaart Cronje who insists that very few people in Excelsior speak and understand the English language. He suggests instead that only Afrikaans and Sesotho be recognized. The immediate reaction of most members of the Council was that the Afrikaner representatives had chosen the venue to re-launch the 'Anglo-Boer War'. The *narrator* quickly indicates an authorial alertness by intervening in the language crisis through Viliki who enlightens Council members:

> Afrikaans cannot be the language of the oppressor. It is the language of many people of different colours who were themselves oppressed. Even in its origins it was not the language of the oppressor. It is the language of many people of different colours who were themselves oppressed. The oppressor appropriated it and misused it. The slave masters' language was Dutch. The slaves took that Dutch and used it in their own way, adding structures and words from their own original languages… the languages of the Malay people… of the Khoikhoi people… of many other people. Afrikaans was a hybrid… a Creole spoken by the slaves. The slave masters took it and made it their own. As far as I am concerned, today's coloured people have more right to the Afrikaans language than the people who call themselves Afrikaans. The true Afrikaners are the coloured people (***Madonna*** 179-180).

It does seem, though, that the politics of domination through the cultural medium of language will, for long, continue to generate immense interest. That the South African constitution approves eleven official languages as often demonstrated in Parliamentary discussions is a step toward achieving a sense of balance, especially given the marginal

position to which many of the indigenous languages were subjected since the days of colonialism and apartheid. But such ambitious experiments also generate their own dilemma: the desperation to attain social equipoise in recognizing practically every language in the country has often created a dissonance and communicative anarchy in areas where some indigenous peoples often assume that every black African must be capable of speaking other South African indigenous languages. Be this as it may, it does seem that the English language will, with time, emerge the sole official language in a democratic South Africa, especially given the repulsion with which a great many of the black population view Afrikaans as 'a language of oppression'.[101] Popi's motion that the English language be adopted as the Council's official language in ***The Madonna of Excelsior***, and the bitter argument that ensued between her and Tjaart Cronje could be understood as Mda's aesthetic 'appropriation' of the feelings of the new citizenry who insist that the English language be adopted in teaching their children in schools since the language's international reach makes it more 'marketable' in the work and commercial places. To this end, the English language emerges in fiction as in real life as a site of power so thoroughly entrenched in the individuals and 'nation's' psyche as part of the legacies of colonialism.

A basic manifestation of Mda's post-apartheid imagination in ***The Madonna of Excelsior*****,** as in ***Ways of Dying***, is the peculiar fascination with the mundane: the materially privileged are consistently ridiculed, whatever their racial belonging. While in ***Ways of Dying*** Nefolovdwe is a little less than a noble clown in his manifest insensitivity, in ***The Madonna of Excelsior*** the materially privileged are generally the white Afrikaner Boer. Where the 'emergent' black figure belongs to the 'wealthy class' as we find of Sekhatle in ***The Madonna of Excelsior***, he is consistently presented as a pathetic element immersed in strategic, crass opportunism. The more admirable characters are drawn from the ordinary people: the black women of Excelsior are generally helpless victims who laugh at their existence as mere survivalists. Niki and

[101] It is important to recall that one of the primary factors that triggered off the 1976 Soweto Youth Uprising was the frustration emanating from the apartheid regime's notorious determination to impose Afrikaans on the black population as the language of education.

Popi, Toloki and Noria, all come to roost in the bucolic simplicity and ordinariness to which colonial and apartheid histories have confined them.

Mda's recourse to the immortality of art, in his painting of the essential humanity of the mundane, signals a perception of a mankind at one with historical continuum. Toloki's only gifted craft beyond his later professed vocation as a 'Mourner' was noted earlier in his life as a primary school pupil where he won accolades as a fine artist. His father, Jwara, finds life and eternity in his artistic constructions, and when he suffers a brief 'mental block', he invites 'a singer', Noria, to chant him into action and creative energy. The very profession of mourning is presented as a performative engagement that derives respectability only when handled by the gifted performer like Toloki. In ***The Madonna of Excelsior***, it is from the paintings of Reverend Frans Claerhout that the novelist draws his creative inspiration. It is 'painting' and 'song' that are deployed to defeat the pains inflicted on the common people. In these arts, the time element is reduced to its most insubstantial, and while the exploiters of the women all die in less than three decades, the impressions of the women as 'Madonna' appear to have just started its existence, just as Jwara's demise does not affect the eternity of his figurines.

The symbology of the painter is, then, well-advised: the pains of apartheid legislations have assumed an immortal presence in the creation of the coloured identity in South Africa. Like the immortal art, the consequences of white hypocrisy, and the Boer's exploitative intercourse with the black women is embalmed in the eternal register of humankind, and would forever resurface in the endless flowing river of colonial and apartheid histories. Yet, the future of humankind, Mda seems to be saying, is dependent on the outcome of multicultural investments and diversities. Popi represents this new set of humanity who would sacrifice their personal comfort for the good of all. Multiculturalism, without chauvinism and stereotypes, might well be the only way forward for the creation of the Popis of the new South Africa and beyond.

But where 'the Ordinary' seems akin to retrogression in ***Ways of Dying*****,** in ***The Madonna of Excelsior***, the mundane is transformed to an admirable social sublimity:

while we still encounter characters of peripheral constituencies, a sense of aesthetic transcendence underscores the entire narrative. Where ***Ways of Dying*** provides a fast-tempo for the readership, ***The Madonna of Excelsior*** slows down such attempts, and in the process draws attention to basic issues of apartheid legacies, and the hypocrisy of our common humanity in a post-apartheid liberal order. Where Toloki in ***Ways of Dying*** does not imagine a material universe where his humanity is admired by a profound sense of accomplishment that is socio-culturally acceptable, in ***The Madonna of Excelsior*** Popi eschews bitterness and manages to transcend the primordial liminality of her detractors' social interiority. Above all, where the spectacular undermines narrative complexity in ***Ways of Dying***, in ***The Madonna of Excelsior***, the narrative interfusion of the past and the present impressively signals the implications of temporal mobility in the narrative of the 'new' nation as a significant phase in the narratives of the postcolony. Historical memory moves from the violence of transition in ***Ways of Dying***, therefore, to a *remembering* that necessarily restores the values of humanity across racial divides, just as it delineates the fallibilities of everyone in a position of power. Corruption, then, is not the sole preserve of the Afrikaner who previously enjoyed the privilege of being 'special'. Even a black leadership is capable of graft, and if the Afrikaner expresses disgust at the choice of the English language over Afrikaans, it is only part of man's defining attributes of always scheming to perpetuate his comforts and privileges at the expense of the powerless *Other*. Zakes Mda's humorous explorations of the violence implicit in these sites of contestation is only a function of memory that considers South Africa's recent experience of 'Immorality Act' a strategic topography for national preservation and commemoration, or, indeed, a *les lieux de mémoire*.[102]

Mda's aesthetic project in national and continental commemorations is not, however, confined to his more accomplished adult narratives. There is a significant way in which memory in all its manifestations could be said to have a peculiar hold on Zakes Mda.

[102] In 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire', Pierre Nora makes an interesting suggestion that seems to capture the dilemma presented by the Excelsior-19 trial: "The passage from memory to history has required every social group to redefine its identity through the revitalization of its own history. The task of remembering makes everyone his own historian. Those who have long been marginalized in traditional society are not the only ones haunted by the need to recover their buried pasts" (15). See Nora's essay in *Representations*, 26 (1989): 7-25.

Like his predecessors from West and East Africa, especially Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa 'Thiongo, Mda seems strongly persuaded of the truism that "a man who does not know where the rain started beating him, certainly cannot tell where his body got dried", as the Igbo would say. It could be right to say that one of the finest efforts in this project of cultural and historical retrieval is found in Mda's story for children, specifically in the novella, ***Melville '67*.** This position is informed by a globally tested and accepted principle in the arduous task of the construction and development of the mind of the child. Mda, in ***Melville '67***, appears to be saying that the best way to educate the African child is to open his universe to his identity and heritage as African. If the politics of racial separatism had created a generation of diffident South African adults who appear lost to a sense of Africanity and Africanness, it is still timely for a reassessment of the legacies of apartheid and the need to ensure a purposeful African renaissance. ***Melville '67***, a novella, tells the story of Thabang, a precocious black lad who experienced poverty from birth. His mother worked as a cleaner to a white family. He and his mother live in the cottage, and he, too, worked as a gardener to his mother's employer, in order to have his tuition fees paid. He completes his primary school education with admirable brilliance, and secures a scholarship to college.

Mda presents Thabang in two separate narrative spaces: the real world, and a dream world. The reader is transposed at random from the perceptual to the imaginary, and what emerges at the end is the effort of the precocious young boy to apprehend his African humanity in historical context. He dreams about the many civilizations of ancient Africa from the Soninkes to the empires of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai. When he finally secures a scholarship in the perceptual world for college education with the additional option of touring any part of the world, he chooses West Africa in spite of the many suggestions of the *more* romantic places like New York and Paris. When reminded that the present is superior to the past, Thabang responds quite confidently: "I am concerned about the present and the future too (...). That is why I am going to use my gift in mathematics to study to be a civil engineer... so that I can build great structures for the development of South Africa. But the past is important too, for it is from the past that we can build a solid future" (***Melville*** 84). Mda's novella for the young thus presents a similar teleology as

projected in the more ambitious narratives like ***The Heart of Redness*** and ***The Madonna of Excelsior*.** But ***Melville '67*** is of a particularly symbolic significance because of its blend of a complex narrative style, and the complex-simplicity of its authorial intention. Above all, however, its pedagogical interest makes this adolescent narrative an eloquent statement in the project of African renaissance and historical memory.

VI.

We have attempted, so far, to establish the immense contributions of Zakes Mda in the construction of the new paradigms in post-apartheid South African fiction of English expression. These range from his unique interest in the retrieval of the historical and cultural memories of the many peoples of South Africa to the aesthetic responsiveness to the dilemmas of the 'new' nation since the moment of transition and after. To these ends, Mda has applied himself to the re-invention of a past that has stubbornly refused to elapse, and a present that insists on taking sustenance from that past. In Mda's South Africa, the past is anything but a 'foreign country', as it consistently colonizes the socio-historical and political lives of individuals and the peoples. It is in this respect that memory remains, perhaps, the most functional agency in the apprehension of that historical and cultural pasts. It is the business of aesthetic recollections that a past defined principally by its human violations and dubious constructions of 'difference' would 'emerge' as the collective and private statements of the many constituencies of the nation. Mda has eloquently articulated these many violations and, more importantly, has drawn attention to the uniting elements that define the cohesive identity of many indigenous ethnic communities of South Africa before the 'double colonialism'— British and 'Boer' colonisations— that followed the incursion of European adventurers. The externalisation of white racism that found expression in the notorious apartheid policies and their implementation presents itself as a profound site of South Africa's collective commemorations.

But Mda is not in any way a one-track writer. The immense versatility that he has demonstrated across genres of the arts and humanities, especially his deployment of these forms for the service of humankind, is an indication of his commitment to a

developmental aesthetic that has remained his preoccupation as a cultural theorist and scholar. His adventure into the novelistic form is a decision that has added an intensity of passion to his quest for a totalising retrieval and preservation of African memories in the detailed cultural medium of literature. That he embarks on personal investigation and research of the many incidents of the past attest to this commitment to a trip into a future defined by a consciousness of the past. In the final analysis, Mda's narratives are as personal as they are collective; as national as they are continental; and, as ethnically inspired as they are globally relevant in the contemporary interest in the discourse of the postcolony. Whether it is in ***Ways of Dying***, ***She Plays with the Darkness***, ***Melville '67***, ***The Heart of Redness***, ***The Madonna of Excelsior***, or even ***The Whale Caller***, Mda has made invaluable contributions in the growth and development of modern African literature in particular, and in the construction of new modes of perception for South African fiction of English expression after apartheid. It is on this note, therefore, that I conclude this chapter the way I started it. Pierre Nora, in 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire', captures the thrust of our discourse. While acknowledging the immense contributions of Sigmund Freud and Marcel Proust to the modern understanding of the psychology of remembering, Nora submits:

> The transformation of memory implies a decisive shift from the historical to the psychological, from the social to the individual, from the objective message to its subjective reception, from repetition to rememoration. The total psychologization of contemporary memory entails a completely new economy of the identity of the self, the mechanics of memory, and the relevance of the past (Nora 1989: 15).

The preceding analysis has explored the post-apartheid novels of Zakes Mda. In doing so, I have tried to look at the novels through the thrusts of recollection, violation and difference. Of immense significance is that although Mda has explored issues common to most South Africans, his peculiar narrative modes of deploying multiple points of view, his evocations of fantasy and myth, the ease of his temporal juggling, his revivification of history through performative protagonists, and his re-invigoration of the resources of language to appropriate the cultural nuances of traditional amaXhosa speech and dress

codes place Mda among the very best of story-tellers of post-apartheid South Africa in particular and the continent at large. Mda's contributions to the construction of new paradigms for the understanding of the post-apartheid imaginary thus transcend any simplistic decoding confined to his revaluations of the political developments in the new nation. More than anything else, it is his style of narration that rolls the monumental structures of memory, violence and alterity into an aesthetic project of national commemorations, thus defining Mda as a major voice in the emergent narratives of the new South Africa. If the theoretical and analytical procedures employed in the process of arriving at these positions help in illuminating the novels of Mda within the context of the post-apartheid postcolony, then, I rest my case.

Chapter Five

The Subject of the Other: Locating the Self in Zoë Wicomb's Post-Apartheid-Post-Colony.

> I never cease to be surprised by critics who see my work as a declaration that there is nothing beyond language, that we are imprisoned in language; it is, in fact, saying the exact opposite. The critique of logocentrism is above all else the search for the 'other' and the 'other of language'.
>
> —Jacques Derrida, 'Deconstruction and the Other' (1992:20)[103]

> ... to experience and authentically credit Otherness and difference, means that our whole complex of moral conduct and expectation may need to be transformed quite as much as our epistemological activity.
>
> — Richard Terdiman, 'The Subject of the Other' (2006:20)[104]

> If we want to engage with history, and much of post-Apartheid writing does precisely that, then we can produce nothing other than a mediated account, mediated not only by our sources, but also by the nature of the aesthetic project and by the very process of writing.
>
> — Zoë Wicomb, **'On *David's Story*'** (2004:132)[105]

I.

[103]See Derek Attridge (ed), 'Introduction', *Jacques Derrida: Acts of Literature* (New York & London: Routledge, 1992: 1-29) and, especially, Derrida's 'Invention of the Other', pp. 310-343.

[104]Although I am reliably informed that Richard Terdiman's essay has appeared in a number of journals, the present version is drawn from my personal communication with the author due to my inability to locate the journal versions at the time.

[105] See the interview Ms Wicomb granted Thomas Oliver and Stephen Meyer, *Current Writing* 16.2 (2004): 131-141.

With three impressive novels, as well as numerous academic essays behind her, Zoë Wicomb is gradually emerging as a very significant voice in the new fiction of South Africa. She published ***You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town*** in 1987 to impugn the general perception of black South African female writing as one essentially attuned to the purely auto/biographical. Instead, she highlights the 'collaborative' nature of such a narratorial imperative by projecting the multiple visions of some previously 'marginalized' identities. The publications of ***David's Story*** (2000) and ***Playing in the Light*** (2006) affirm a visionary continuity that seems initially blurred by her postmodernist experiments.

Indications of Wicomb's fascination with the politics of eugenics and Otherness appeared as early in her creative efforts as it has remained sustained in her scholarship. In the title story of her collection of short fiction, 'You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town', for instance, we follow the narrator as she carefully weaves the delicate story of inter-racial relationships at a time when it was very dangerous to even contemplate such liaisons. For the innocent female narrator who falls in love with a white man—Michael—it was not so much a matter of how to beat the criminal policies of apartheid as it is on how to secure acceptance from her Coloured community, especially when family members could not see beyond racial pride or its denigration. In this context, the quest for self-definition finds resonance in the desperate identification and stigmatising of the inferior *Other*. Michael and the rest of his white compatriots are diminished to a mere "white trash" of which no self-respecting 'Coloured person' should engage in any serious liaison. For a "beautiful Coloured" girl, Mange, to subject her family to such a mighty humiliation (***Can't Get Lost,*** 66), then, is unpardonable. Yet the hypocrisy of the era is not confined to its criminal policies.

The narrator's intimate liaisons with persons of *other* colour are already outlawed by the separatist system. But the crime of separatism transcends the mere truncations of the individuals' dreams and aspirations. Beyond the oddity implicit in the systematic frustration of the rights of desire is one that could be considered the many unaccounted

'murders' arising from the abortions of foetuses in the escapist attempts to avoid prosecutions under the sexual immorality act. It is ironical that the midwife, Mrs Coetzee who undertakes the task of 'aborting' the foetuses would pretend not to attend to pregnant girls from the 'Coloured' communities for being "very forward, terrible types" (***Can't Get Lost,*** 79). Two perceptions of racial stereotyping are here counterpoised: for the average coloured family, the whites are no better than 'trash'; for the average white family, the coloured is simply a very irresponsible lot. The *Other*, in this case, is not confined to the dominant or the dominated. Racial profiling is embodied in the personal and collective worldviews of every speaker. But the writer does not seem to affirm this tendency to define humanity on the basis of pigmentation. The only guilty party, she seems to be suggesting, is the institutionalised racism founded on the basis of separatism, and sustained over the years through coercion and with all the arsenals of the State.

In ***David's Story***, too, Wicomb returns to history to make an aesthetic statement quite germane to the post-apartheid cultural discourses of power. Essentially, Wicomb has demonstrated a peculiar interest in the post-colonial projects of dominance and marginality and has, in the process, drawn attention to the peculiar instance of women and the dilemma of a humanity confined to the psychological and social spaces of the interstices. To this end, Wicomb's contribution in the construction of emergent paradigms in post-apartheid South African fiction of English expression is as eloquent in her resourceful retrieval and appropriation of history as it is in her determined mission of transmuting that history in the reconfiguration of certain conditioned imaginations: in simple idiom, she is concerned with the task of correcting the perception of the coloured person in European imperialist taxonomies as the inferior *Other*, a classification that seems to have been accepted and sustained in the writing of other black and white South Africans alike. In the process, then, what emerges as the post-apartheid fiction of Wicomb appears to be a unique attempt to redirect attention from the dominant racial discourse of South Africa from its earlier addiction with the 'black' and 'white' binaries to what she perceives as the more marginal identities within these poles.

In this instance, 'marginal identities' include women in particular, as it does all black South Africans. But it also shows the specific dilemma of these women within a polarised society in which the 'Griqua-Coloureds'[106] emerge as the most marginal of the marginalized, or the Other's Other. Wicomb succeeds in her new novels in pointing to a new form of 'feminism' and 'colouredism'. In the final analysis, Wicomb's mission, it does appear, is an eloquent search for self-apprehension. First, she is concerned with understanding the place of women in the struggle for racial equality in South Africa and, second, she is fascinated with the project of defining a common humanity in a nation long defined by its tradition of constructing and enforcing difference. In this chapter devoted to the contribution of Zoë Wicomb in the construction of new paradigms for the reading of post-apartheid fiction of English expression, therefore, I hope to examine the concept of Otherness first as a significant theoretical idiom in the discourse of the post-colony and, second, as it applies to the South African social formation. Of major interest is how Zoë Wicomb has attempted to retrieve her past through characterization and narration in ***David's Story***.

David's Story tells the story of David Dirksee, the freedom fighter who found racial separatism and apartheid repression demeaning to 'people of colour', especially to his minority Griqua, as well as to the 'dominant' indigenous black Africans. We find in David an embittered young man who returns from 'the struggle' to confront, yet, another kind of struggle. Following a successful dethronement of the racist system, his efforts to gain recognition at the dawn of the liberal order do not materialise. He becomes a teacher, and in the course of his several trainings and research, he discovers the hidden stories of his ancestors in the fight against white domination. He is especially fascinated with the struggle by his forebears in a matter as intense as land dispossession of the indigenous peoples by the white settler communities.

[106] Dorothy Driver has observed the many struggles of self-assertion by the Griqua: "Recent Griqua nationalism distinguishes itself from the more general coloured grouping by being more ethnically understood". For more on this, see Dorothy Driver, 'Afterword', in Zoë Wicomb, *David's Story*. (New York: The Feminist Press & The City of New York, 2000: 257).

It is important to observe, here, that the novel does not narrate incidents at the war front as a quotidian experience. The 'war', it does seem, has ended. There is a glimmer of hope that racial oppression is becoming a thing of the past; political leaders such as Nelson Mandela and Govan Mbeki who were formerly incarcerated in the Robben Island prisons by the supremacist 'Nationalist' government are being released; political parties previously banned on the basis of their being considered 'terrorists' and 'communists' are also being un-banned. Many of the narrative incidents happen in the temporal space of 1991 at Cape Town and Kokstad, but equally anchored in periods as evocative as 1922 and 1865. These are periods of great historical relevance to the Griqua in particular, and to the rest of South Africans in general. The periods mark the many movements of the people as they settle in different parts of today's South Africa. About 1865, for instance, the Boer had migrated and fully established themselves in what is now the Free State. By 1867 diamonds were already discovered in the Griqualand section of the region, but the discovery did not stop the migrations. In 1922, for instance, it is recorded that "Andrew le Fleur led about eight hundred Griqua to the South-western Cape"(Driver 2000:221).[107]

In *telling* the story of David, however, Wicomb carefully withdraws from bearing witness to nearly all the incidents. She creates a 'scribe' or secretary who listens to David's dictations, but manages to truncate the narratives to suite her feminist agenda. We are denied a better awareness of this scribe since we only listen to her complain occasionally about the 'impossibility' of David's story. Of course, her subtle resistance and, sometimes, audacious manipulation of the direction of the story has led Kenneth Harrow into suggesting that David's scribe is probably his wife, Dulcie (Harrow, 2006:61)[108].

But ***David's Story*** is not a simple narrative that tells the simple story of a young man in search of identity per se; it is also not the stereotypical kind of feminist narrative that simply presents depressed women characters that complain to no ends about their subjugations. It is, instead, a complex story that authorizes a special hermeneutic

[107] For a more elaborate discussion of the various migrations see, in particular, Dorothy Driver's 'Afterword', *David's Story*, pp. 215-271.
[108] Kenneth W. Harrow, 'The Marks Left on the Surface: Zoë Wicomb's *David's Story*'. In Ernest N. Emenyonu (ed). 'New Directions in African Literature', *African Literature Today* 25 (2006): 53-66.

engagement following the metafictional pattern where the novelist, the narrator, and his female secretary are trapped in very complex narrations that continually challenge its own methodology. Wicomb, David, and his unnamed female secretary are caught in a very idiosyncratic intrigue that compels the reader to search for tools across theoretical models with a view to decoding the narrative. For a novel as varied and convoluted in themes as ***David's Story***, a location of the dominant thrust of the narrative might provoke the neo-historicist insistence on decoding the basic critical structures of context and form.

In what ordinarily seems like the story of a man, Wicomb carefully creates a 'de tour' that finally presents ***David's Story*** as a feminist project in her attempts at historicizing the many experiences that touch on the Griqua humanity and repression. The specific evocation of Saartjie Baartman[109] and the historic agitations of Andrew Le Fleur point to a long tradition of oppression that interrogated the humanity of the Griqua on the one hand, but equally point to a resistance that was both active in its physical engagements, and intellectual in its vision and philosophy. The prognostic proclamations of 'the Great Griqua Agitator', Andrew Le Fleur in the 19th century about his vision of a liberated South Africa, and especially the place of the Griquas in such a free socio-political topography become an obsession for David Dirksee, Le Fleur's great grandchild. David, now a teacher and 'historian' of a sort, takes it upon himself to retrieve the historical identity of his people.

But the patterns of this humanistic engagement require a sound awareness of the functioning of the creative imagination and modes of documentation. Unfortunately, David is not much of a writer, and certainly does not have much patience for literary finesse. He recruits a female scribe to help out with the writing of his stories. The recruitment of a female scribe presents its peculiar problem, because she takes advantage of David's poor facility with writing skills, and ends up making ***David's Story*** a feminist

[109] It is significant to observe that the story of Saartjie Baartman, the Hottentot woman captured by Europeans and displayed as Steatopygia in European museum as object of curiosity has continued to re-emerge in post-apartheid narratives. This seems like a conscious effort at historical retrieval. Andre Brink's *Imaginings of Sand* is particularly given to the excavation of women in history. It is in Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness*, however, that the unearthing of colonial history, especially the story of Baartman, leads to a more dramatic vengeance from the descendants of the colonized.

narrative. In doing this, however, she feigns disinterestedness, and continually reminds the reader about the impossibility of the narrative itself. This way, her peculiar space as scribe is then limited to her many comments about the story, which makes ***David's Story*** a classic instance of a postmodernist's recourse to a convoluted, metafictional narrative. In other words, ***David's Story*** is a story about a story. We shall return to a further elaboration of this issue later in this discussion.

Given the complexity of the stories, a strait-jacket reading of the novel might not be 'healthy' since a decoding of the contextual underpinnings of the narrative could be the only way of apprehending the several sub-texts that point to a fine set of humanity portrayed as 'curios' in the imagination of many colonialist and imperialist observers. "Contextualism", derived in this sense from the neo-historicist's application of Hayden White, for instance, proclaims that events can be explained by being set within the "context" of their occurrence. By this is meant that the informing rationale for the shape of events are best decoded in terms of "the revelation of the specific relationships they bore to other events occurring in their circumambient historical space" (White, 1973: 18). This dimension of contextual hermeneutics, it should be noted, is the primary projection of a number of neo-historicism theorists. Stephen Greenblatt, for instance, calls for "a more cultural and or anthropological criticism" that is "conscious of its own status as interpretation and intent upon understanding literature as a part of the system of signs that constitutes a given culture". For Greenblatt, *social actions* and *the language* of literary texts, therefore, are:

> Always embedded in systems of public signification ... our interpretive task must be to grasp more sensitively the consequences of this fact by investigating both the social presence to the world of the literary text and the social presence of the world in the literary text.[110]

[110] See Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*. (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1980): 5; see also K.M. Newton, *Interpreting the Text*: *A Critical Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Literary Interpretation*. (New York & London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990): 125.

This request for the intra- and extra-literary constituencies of the literary text is the basis for Greenblatt's perception of literature as revolving round the three basic functions as "a manifestation of the concrete behaviour of its particular author", "as itself the expression of the codes by which behaviour is shaped", and "as a reflection upon these codes" (Greenblatt, 4). For Jerome J. Mcgann, in ***The Beauty of Inflections***[111], "[M]ost imperative is the need to reintegrate the entire range of socio-historical and philological methods with an aesthetic and ideological criticism of individual works" (Mcgann, 1985: 3). His programme of re-integration identifies a historical method of reading that subsumes both the history of the text and the history of criticism — essential paradigms that accommodate Mcgann's three sub-units of literary investigation, namely, "the work at its point of origin", "the work through its subsequent transmission", and "the work situated in the immediate field of a present investigation" (Mcgann 1985: 3-5). For the purpose of this discussion, I have elected to adopt Mcgann's third thesis, i.e., "the immediate moment of textual criticism" which calls for "a critical analysis of the immediate critic's own programmatic goals and purposes", and which "involves a critical presentation of events which do not lie in a completed form of pastness, but which are coincident with the entire act of analysis itself" (Mcgann, 82-83). This is in line not only with Hayden White's metahistorical notion of contextualism, Stephen Greenblatt's poetics of 'Inflection', but also falls within the tenets of the post-colonialists' fascination with historicism and the challenge of theory[112]. To this end, the two most fundamental

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[111] Jerome J. Mcgann, *The Beauty of Inflections: Literary Imaginations in Historical Method and Theory*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985). The overriding concern of Mcgann is to locate the basis of the aesthetic uniqueness of a poetic/imaginative work from the intimacies of the socio-historical, aesthetic and ideological conditions that generate such a work. He reasons: "The enabling principle is that if a literary work arrives to our view as a unique order of unique appearances, then a grid of the poem's social and historical filiations, both intra- and extra-textual, should help to elucidate the poem's orders of uniqueness. The poem, whether viewed as an experience or as an event, is a nexus of various concrete social determinations, and these can be critically specified as an aesthetic order. Indeed, if the poetic work is understood either as a cultural experience or a cultural event, *its special structures of uniqueness must be consciously graphed, at some level, in socio-historical terms*" (p.5; emphasis mine).

[112] See, for instance, Janet Levarie Smarr (Ed), *Historical Criticism and the Challenge of Theory* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993). In particular, see Sanda Cohen's contribution to the book, 'Toward Events Without History' (pp. 94-119). The overriding thrust of most of the contributions to this book is that if history becomes systematically paralysed, and the many socio-historical ingredients that inform the semantic imports of literary products are surgically invalidated in our interpretations, then humanity might well be on its way to becoming robots. As Janet Levarie Smarr suggests: "history and literature help to explain each other and share the common field of our experience. Rather than a sharp demarcation between the study of history and the study of literature, one sees more and more a gradual merging across their common spaces, for which *culture* seems to be the favorite composite term" (4). See

thrusts of ***David's Story***— Otherness and '[F]eminism— will be explored in Wicomb's fiction because they represent the peculiar nature of the novelist's post-coloniality within a post-apartheid context. Wicomb's theorizing and writing are weighed against the general background of African feminisms to enable us understand her point of departure. My deployment of a blend of the models of postcoloniality, neo-historicism, deconstructionism etc, become particularly useful since Zoë Wicomb's complex narrative is better understood within this complex theoretical frame: primarily because Wicomb draws upon history as an allegorical formula to make an artistic statement relevant to a South Africa's post-apartheid's postcolonial situation.

II.

A focus on 'Otherness' is ultimately an engagement with the discourse of power and its contestation. That post-colonial scholarship is inundated with the politics of domination and the challenge of authority is a position that finds immense support in much of the 'so-called' third world economies, particularly in Africa. The manifestation of these contestations in aesthetic representations is, however, another matter. Where colonial marginality of African subjectivities had necessitated a unified black resistance in much of sub-Saharan Africa with the culmination of anti-colonialist narratives that do not necessarily present a combatant front, in much of Southern African narratives, anti-coloniality is complicated by a simultaneous struggle for liberation from the double colonialisms of Western imperialism and the Afrikaner instituted apartheid. Where, for instance, Chinua Achebe felt no qualms in presenting a totalizing Igbo cosmology with all its cultural imperfections in ***Things Fall Apart***, ***No Longer at Ease***, and ***Arrow of God***, or even John Munonye in ***The Only Son*** and ***Obi***, post-coloniality in much of the

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also W.J.T. Mitchell (Ed), *The Politics of Interpretation* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), especially Edward Said's essay, 'Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies, and Community'. Said argues: "all ideas, philosophies, views and texts aspire to the consent of their consumers ... Ideas aspire to the condition of acceptance, which is to say that one can interpret the meaning of a text by virtue of what in its mode of social presence enables its consent by either a small or a wide group of people" (p. 17); See also Hayden White's essay, 'The Politics of Historical Interpretation: Discipline and De-Sublimation', in W.J.T. Mitchell (ed), ibid. White submits: "one of the things you learn from the study of history is that such study is never innocent, ideologically or otherwise, whether launched from the political perspective of the Left, Right or Centre..." (p.143).

narratives from South Africa, in particular, presents challenges on how to speak of the post-ness of a 'post' that eloquently locates its identity in the present.

'Coloniality', it is safe to proclaim at this point, is doubly entrenched in South Africa: the 'settler' presence is not only overwhelming, but also evident in the ownership of capital, and the continued exploitation of black labour. To speak of a post-colonial Otherness in the context of the 'new' South Africa is, therefore, quite problematic since it might be an attempt to scratch at the surface of the dilemmas. It is even more so because nearly every racial category, ranging from the black, white, Indian, and Coloured communities, all claim some degree of the marginal 'Other' within ten years of the nation's extrication from the shackles of apartheid repression. Where the majority of the indigenous Africans still largely live below the poverty line or, in the near-analogy of Henry Louis Gates Jr,[113] in that tiny space between the 'post' and the 'apartheid'. The Indian though seemed favoured by the liberalism of the new order— given their immense presence at leadership positions— still claim some level of marginality; the white South African, especially of the Afrikaner stock scream abandonment and a consuming wave of poverty, while the Coloured community present the most ambivalent claims of self and neglect *during* and *after* apartheid.

But, how does one locate difference given the cacophonous claims by the many racial categories in a liberated South Africa? What is the nature of difference when applied to the demands of a people long subjected to psychological and physical repression? What is the implication of alterity given the transfer of political authority from white minority to a black majority leadership? What is the place of aesthetic representation of Otherness in the new narratives of South Africa? The point that seems to manifest here is that although Otherness is often perceived in terms of the racial relationships between Europeans and the so-called imagined racial Other, it seems to acquire an entirely new meaning in South Africa where colonial legacies appear to be not only entrenched, but

[113] While situating 'Elegbara' within the confines of what he calls 'A myth of origins' in his theory of 'the signifying monkey', Henry Louis Gates, Jr argues that the black vernacular tradition not only emanates from, but also "stands as its signpost, at that liminal crossroads of culture contact and ensuing difference of which Africa meets Afro-America". See Gates Jr, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism*. (New York & London: O.U.P, 1988): 4.

also deployed by the various racial categories to assert their imagined sense of superiority while denigrating those outside their groups.

In 'The Scene of the Other', Rainer Någele attempts to decode difference in the Western imaginary through a reading of Theodor W. Adorno's ***Negative Dialectic***. Emerging from his study is a sense of otherness so totally immersed in its quest for self-definition that it unconsciously negates its principles of assertion. "Adorno's thinking", writes Någele, "from its beginnings has been concerned with the analysis and critique of power, domination, and violence. To end domination is the utopian motive that permeates all of critical theory. It is the magnetic force that arranges the constellations of negation and affirmation and also assigns the double role of the subject. Subjectivity, for Adorno, is both the resistance against and the principle of domination" (Någele, 1989: 102). The ***Negative Dialectic*** of Adorno's persuasion affirms the many ambivalent developments in the politics of domination in a liberated South Africa. Where the struggle against white racism was the preoccupation of the many black communities so mercilessly conditioned in the European imaginary as the inferior Other, the liberalism of the new order allows for a participational, democratic non-racialism— one which, interestingly, has given voice to the dominant, and the dominated in negotiating for wider spaces in the political chess games of the day. It does seem, in the final analysis, that what would emerge is what Paul A. Bové calls 'the ineluctability of difference' where, he suggests, "The critical mind must address the politics of the moment, but must also avoid being bound merely to the rhetoric and concepts of the narrowly defined present" (Bové, 1989: 22).[114]

Within the tenets of Derridean deconstructionism, an engagement with Otherness becomes necessarily an adventure into the impossible. Otherness, here, transcends the purely linguistic, and assumes an identity of the textual, the cultural, the academic, the philosophical and, in particular, the literary. Otherness is constructed as 'invention': a self-reflexive engagement that is nullified by the very impossibility of the inventor to find a totalizing affinity with the invented. Focus on alterity has grown with the evolutionary

[114] Paul A. Bové, 'The Ineluctability of Difference: Scientific Pluralism and the Critical Intelligence', in Jonathan Arac (Ed), *Postmodernism and Politics*: Theory and History of Literature, Volume 28. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, [1989] 1986): 3-25.

ethos that the weak is always vulnerable to the machinations of the mighty and the strong. Citing the French scholar, Christian Delacampagne's ***L'invention du racisme*** (Paris: Fayard, 1983), Derrida observes: "Delacampagne's book reminds us that the invention of evil, like all inventions, is a matter of culture, language, institutions, history and technology. In the case of racism in the strict sense, it is doubtless a very recent invention in spite of its ancient roots…" (Derrida, 1992:336).

For Derrida, then, Otherness is a making of the 'we' who are yet to be invented by the 'other' whom we have *invented, discovered*, and yet not *created*. "The Other", he argues, "is always another origin of the world and we are (always) (still) to be invented (Derrida, 1992: 342). He concludes: [T]he call of the Other is a call to come, and that happens only in multiple voices" (Derrida 343). If the concern of deconstructive theorizing is to locate the odd freshness derived from rigorous and meticulous interrogation of norms and conventions through the scrutiny of the *allegorical* and *tautegorical* ramifications of the familiar; if such scrutiny necessarily inheres the quality of the new, of the *invented* on the 'Other', then "Deconstruction is inventive or it is nothing at all". In fact, Otherness assumes a primacy only made possible by a certain degree of 'fashioning'. To this end, then, deconstruction becomes relevant, as Derrida argues, because it allows for a "conceptual and institutional structure of invention that would neutralize by putting the stamp of reason on some aspect of invention, of inventive power" (Derrida 337). Racial alterity, to this end, only merely reinforces itself; alterity should be identified on the basis of its potentials of displacing what Derek Attridge describes as "the very opposition of same and other, inside and outside, old and new" (Attridge, 1992: 311)[115].

In redressing the dilemma imposed on contemporary humanity by the architects of *difference*, however, Richard Terdiman opts for a poetics of *toleration*. Following his analysis of what he describes as 'theory wars', Terdiman highlights the inadequacy of any singular theoretical model in the apprehension of the complex realities of our time. What emerges in postmodernism as 'epochal inflections' becomes part of the

[115] See Editor's note to 'From Psyche: Invention of the Other', *Jacques Derrida: Acts of Literature*. Ed. Derek Attridge. (New York and London: Routledge, 1992): 311.

"chronological chauvinism" with its pretensions of indicating the uniqueness of each privileged time. Terdiman's insistence on materiality and *ethical* relevance of any given system is the reason he insists on hermeneutical models that must acknowledge its failures through its awareness of difference within the paradigms of *agency* and *pragmatics*. 'Toleration' emerges as the fundamental ethic of Terdiman's "science of Otherness in a world of ubiquitous alterities" (Terdiman 2006: 14). To this end, he submits:

> There is no trick in tolerating positions with which we agree or toward which we are indifferent. Toleration involves a harder discipline and a more exacting self-restraint. Minimally, it means permitting expression of beliefs, attitudes, or practices that the person tolerating would prefer did not exist. Toleration must thus be more than mere acquiescence or resignation. It involves a principled refusal to countenance prohibition of conduct *despite* our conviction that such conduct is wrong. If we credit the reality of consequential difference, if we believe that the conditions of the contemporary world suggest that it will be an ever more frequent experience then such situations will regularly challenge us (Terdiman 20).

But what does 'Otherness' mean in the context of the 'new' South Africa, particularly in the aesthetics of Zoë Wicomb? It is important to observe, here, that 'newness' becomes an ambiguous concept as what seems 'new' could mean 'old' or even a repetition of existing forms. In practical terms, where the architects of 'Apartheid' had opted for a divide-and-rule policy that defined South Africa on the pigmentation formula of 'Black', 'White', 'Indian' and 'Coloured', the inner structures of these paradigms present underlying minoritarian resistances that tend to challenge existing structures of dominance. In addition, such categorizations become bare in their dubious crafting since there are historical resonances in South Africa where colour lines are simply marked on the basis of the binaries of 'European' and 'Non-European', 'European' and 'Native', 'White' and 'Bantu', and sometimes recognitions are grudgingly made of the 'so-called' [C]oloured' people(s). It is little surprise, therefore, that what is currently being projected as 'Coloured' literature and culture might meet with some bizarre stares since some of the

writers from this constituency have since inscribed 'Blackness' into their writing. The unique instances of Peter Abraham (***Tell Freedom*, *Mine Boy*** etc), Alex La Guma (***A Walk in the Night*, *Time of the Butcherbird*** etc), Bessie Head (***A Question of Power, Maru*** etc), and Dennis Brutus (***Letters to Martha,*** etc) remain eternal testimonies to this persuasion.

It is interesting that Zoë Wicomb who had severally written on her 'blackness' would at the dawn of the liberal order attempt to renegotiate her sense of racial belonging and gender positioning. Her writing, theorising and creativity gradually move from a fascination with social equality on the basis of 'white/black' divisions to the 'marginal identities' residing in what has been described as the "interstices"[116]. In this regard, Otherness in the 'new' South Africa gets defined by a peculiar kind of politics that is evoked to negotiate political offices, and to attract attention to a minoritarian discourse that insists on *difference* because it is probably convenient and fashionable to now do so. It is in this respect that 'Colouredism' emerges as a significant paradigm in the reading and understanding of the post-Apartheid imagination. The intellectual 'culture' that has recently focussed on this dimension of South Africa's Post-Apartheid imaginary, however, does present some interesting issues that illuminate this fascination with the "Politics of the Impure"[117]. Be these as they may, it seems apparent that 'Otherness' in Wicomb's ***David's Story*** goes beyond coloured-ness as a generalising category. 'Otherness' is, at the level of racial classification, confined more to the smaller community of the Griqua and, at the level of gender, restricted to the peripheral position of women within this small communal space in spite of the immense roles that women played through the course of history.

Grant Farred, for instance, has observed in a very interesting study, ***Midfielder's Moment*** (2000) that "occupying the interstices" constitutes a special "problematic". In the unique experience of South Africa, he argues, the 'interstices' is that middle space perennially haunted by the history of its construction, and the occupants of the middle space, more

[116] The idiom is borrowed from Grant Farred, *Midfielder's Moment: Coloured Literature and Culture in Contemporary South Africa.* (Colorado & Oxford: Westview Press, 2000:8.
[117] The phraseology of Grant Farred, *Midfielder's Moment*.

than anyone else, "is better versed in the vagaries and contradictions of the politics of the impure" (Farred, 2000: 8). In his project of locating the occupants of the racial interstices, Farred is quite eloquent in his presentation of the ambivalent position of the South African 'Coloured' community. Thus, in theorising the identity of the 'Midfielders', Farred clings very elaborately on the construction of 'hybrid identities', the making of 'Coloured-ness', or what he defines as "the Othered, liminally black subject" which "is a condition that has to be overcome for national belonging to be possible; here, self-affirmation is predicated on self-negation— the historically willed "black" self-ideologically liquidates the "hybrid" self" (Farred, 2)[118]. Arising from the elaborations of Farred is the issue of marginality in the 'new' South Africa, particularly as it concerns the 'hybrid' population commonly referred to as 'Coloureds' in the designation of the Apartheid regime. Using the creative efforts of three 'Coloured' writers — Richard Rive, Arthur Notje, and Jennifer Davids— to illustrate the diverse and ambivalent attitudes to Colouredness and the coloured identity, the extent to which being coloured depends on its acceptance, what paradigms to adopt in the appreciation of colouredness given the ambivalent attitude to its peculiarity, and, in particular, whether the rejection of colouredness amounts to its total annihilation, among others (Farred, 17).

One observes, here, that the novels of South Africa after Apartheid are resonant with varying degree of the dilemma of a humankind confined to the psychological spaces of the interstices. Jeanne Goosen's ***Not All Of Us*****,** even though published in 1990, addresses the latent bitterness of a family compelled by the apartheid system to vacate their place of residence due to the forceful removal of black, coloured, and Indians to specific locations outside the residential spaces of the privileged whites; in André Brink's ***Imaginings of Sand*** and ***Devil's Valley*****,** echoes of the coloured peoples as 'God's step-children' are often evoked; in J.M. Coetzee's ***Disgrace***, the coloured person remains the marginal 'Other' who gets sexually exploited by a randy old Professor David Lurie. In narratives as diverse as Pamela Jooste's ***Dance With a Poor Man's Daughter***, K. Sello Duiker's

[118] Referring to the Coloureds as members of "the interstitial constituency", Farred locates the peculiar problematic of Colouredism in the inevitable politics of 'alignment'. In his words, "Partial enfranchisement, is frequently the apogee of national belonging for those who are mixed" (2), and "When the white — or black— body does acknowledge itself within its coloured counterpart, it is frequently for expedient political purposes" (4).

Thirteen Cents, Jo-Anne Richards' ***Touching the Lighthouse*****,** Zakes Mda's ***The Madonna of Excelsior***, etc, impressions of colouredism and 'Coloured' experiences are painted to present a 'side' of Colouredness. Zoë Wicomb, an experimental novelist, whose ***David's Story*** and, more recently, ***Playing in the Light*** present unique explorations of the many dimensions of marginality that combine the politics of eugenics with that of gender, has added in her meta-narratives a voice that certainly cannot be ignored in the discourse of the irrupting paradigms of the post-Apartheid imagination.

III.

How, then, does one decode the politics of 'Colouredism' and its real/imagined evocations in a 'newly independent' polity like South Africa? How was the coloured identity constructed within the South African social formation, and why is the evocation of Colouredness so pervasive in the negotiation of scarce national resources in the new liberal order? Some of the questions might sound banal given the common awareness that hybridity was the ultimate concomitance of the violent encounters between Europe and Africa some five centuries gone. In the idiom of Farred, "[T]he hybrid body speaks a historic entanglement that does not allow the easy dissociation of black from white" (Farred 3).

The arrival of Portuguese merchants and explorers at the Cape Coast in the late 15th and early 16th centuries was the first major contact between Europe and the Southern-most tip of Africa. The result of European concupiscence in this part of the continent, and especially their later systematic attempts to dominate their new environment—efforts that possibly include the decimation of the indigenous African male population through unprovoked warfare and deliberate emasculation of the men folk—left indelible marks which we locate quite easily in the construction of new identities of the African mixed race population. But the actual or imagined dilemma of the 'mixed' people of Africa was not necessarily a making of the European merchants and colonialists as such. For, indeed, while slavery and colonialism could have led to the decimation of the indigenous black male population while exploiting the vulnerability of the womenfolk, 'Coloured-ness', in

its symbolical form—denoting "the hybridity of the postcolonial condition"—is indicative of that humanity whose "very existence depends on someone else" (Farred, 7). 'Coloured-ness' certainly could not have constituted a problem had the 'minority' apartheid government not exploited racial separatism by conditioning the imagination of the 'Coloured population' into believing that they are 'remotely' superior to the indigenous black peoples by virtue of their 'lighter' skin.

Many among the South African 'Coloured', it does seem, clung to this fancy of superiority in spite of the apparent rejection they experience from the white communities that perceive colouredness as a fundamental source of embarrassment to white presence in South Africa. Again, as Farred suggests, a large percentage of the Coloured community had enjoyed immense privileges from the apartheid system, and nothing best illustrates their sense of nostalgia than the patterns of votes in the parliamentary elections where they had voted for the supremacist party in 1994, an unfortunate development that has created a perception of 'Coloureds' as "a swing constituency" (Farred, 10). The coloured identity in South Africa brings to mind what Stuart Hall conceptualises as "ethnicity of the margins, of the periphery" (Hall 1996: 447), and although Hall is specifically drawing upon the unique experience of minoritarian identities in Thatcherist Britain, there is a sense in which racial discourse in South Africa evokes memories of his notions of "cultural diasporization" (Hall 447)[119], suggesting on the moment the essential fact that contemporary humanity is "ethnically located" and, therefore, equity and social justice authorize more sensitivity across cultural and political zones of power.

In other words, he suggests, cultural hegemony should be concerned (with) "always about shifting culture; it is always about changing the dispositions and the configurations of cultural power, not getting out of it" (Hall 468)[120]. In the context of South Africa, Farred insists that the coloured community shares more affinity with the Afrikaner white population with whom they share a common language, *Afrikaans*, and culture, such as

[119] Hall, Stuart, 'New Ethnicities'. In *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*. Eds. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen. (London and New York: Routledge, 1996): 441-449.
[120] See Hall, Stuart, "What is this 'black' in black popular culture?" in David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (Eds), ibid. 465-475.

sport (for instance, Rugby). Whether Farred is right or wrong, here, is not the issue: what seems disturbing is his *oversight* in not being able to establish or rubbish the basis for the jaundiced perception of the coloured person in the white settler's imaginary since time immemorial as a fundamental source of white shame.

The representations of colouredness in a number of post-Apartheid fiction of English expression, unfortunately, neither present a harmonious existence, nor a community of white and coloured identities united in a common resentment of the indigenous African population, in spite of the pattern of "swing" in the parliamentary elections in the Western Cape. While ***David's Story***, for instance, explores colouredness and coloured marginality in the new South Africa, it equally presents the additional burden of interrogating hybridity in the South African context. For, indeed, the affinity with whiteness is effaced by the quest for 'Coloured' recognition in anti-apartheid heroism. In addition, the sustained privileging of women as robust players in the struggle for the nation's collective liberation points to Wicomb's femininistic intentionality. As I observed earlier, Wicomb has been quite ubiquitous, as writer and scholar, in debates on aspects of African life especially as it concerns her 'Coloured' Griqua people in particular, as well as the societal stationing of women in general.

The most obvious contribution of Zoë Wicomb in the discourse of paradigms of the post-apartheid fiction of English expression, Dorothy Driver observes, then, is in the thematic shift in focus from the conventional fascination with the binaries of 'white' and 'black' subjectivities to the often ignored ethnic minorities in South Africa's literary and cultural discourse. To this end, ***David's Story*****,** in a way, falls within another category of emergent paradigms in post-Apartheid writing aptly described by Attwell and Harlow as "attempts at retrieving previously marginalized identities" (Attwell & Harlow 2000:3). So deceptive is the novel's title as a story of a young male suddenly returned from the battle front that ***David's Story*** emerges eloquently as a multi-layered tale that combines its peculiar interest in the revolutionary narratives of the anti-apartheid combatants with a unique interest in the minority Griqua people of South Africa, the politics of sex, the retrieval and 're-invention' of history, the history of the struggle, the memory of women,

as well as the postcolonial obsession with anti-colonial aesthetic response, and the politics of writing (Driver, "Afterword", 215-271).

One dominant manifestation arising from a reading of ***David's Story*** is the unpretentious concern to weave women's experiences around the patriarchal personality of David Dirksie. The novel is evidently a feminist project in its very political retrieval and rendition of the historic efforts of the Griqua women through the course of colonial and apartheid histories, and the immense efforts by these women in the anti-apartheid and anti-colonial struggles. After a twenty-year sojourn in Europe during the apartheid years, Zoë Wicomb had returned to South Africa in 1990, a time of significant political development in South Africa. Debates in the literary and cultural circles were also quite optimistic. In particular, debates on women liberation as part of the whole struggle for collective political emancipation of the black race was making the rounds. A conference on feminism, women and writing, and gender-associated matters were to be the focus of the 1990's special issue of a leading South African literary journal, ***Current Writing***. How these developments impacted on the scholarship and creativity of Wicomb need not be over-emphasized, although it will not be out of place to have a glance at some of the arguments at the time, in order to understand the nature of Wicomb's feminism—a theme that is subtly eloquent in ***David's Story***—notwithstanding the novelist's ironic focalisation of a male protagonist in the narrative.

IV.

Wicomb's feminism, in a way, has been shaped and sustained by global debates on the rights and privileges of women. It is demonstrated in her responses to the debates within the African continent, the specific instance of the dilemma of South African women, and her observations in Europe and elsewhere during her many years of sojourning outside the shores of the African continent. It is inspired by, among other things, the insensitive 'obliteration' of women in the annals of the heroic struggles of the South African peoples during the over three centuries of white domination, and the collective humiliation of the indigenous peoples of Africa by the settlers through the ideological mediums of

colonialism and apartheid. Wicomb's feminism also finds instance in her implicit repudiation of aspects of African cultural sensibilities as they apply to women, especially in the modes of 'dance' and the payment of 'lobola'.[121]

But how does Zoë Wicomb as scholar and writer respond to the politics of sex, and the location of woman as a marginal subjectivity in the 'new' South Africa? In what does her feminism anchor, and how are these demonstrated in her imaginative out-put? As literary scholar, Zoë Wicomb has consistently addressed herself to a serious consideration of her doubly marginal position in South Africa, past and present. She has contributed excellently in literary and cultural debates that help in defining the intellectual culture in the 'new' South Africa. A glimpse at some of her scholarly essays points to her personal persuasions with respect to the aesthetic ideal, ideological convictions, and mapping of humanistic directions.

Wicomb suggests a privileging of a 'Variety of Discourses'[122]. In her response to what she perceives as a poorly theorised womanist ideal that seems immune to the nexus between gender and race, Wicomb argues that 'Womanism' as presented by Chikwenye Okonjo-Ogunyemi, is indirectly supportive of patriarchy. Okonjo-Ogunyemi's request for black unity in a common goal to defeat white patriarchy is thus flawed. For, as Wicomb notes, "[T]o suppress commonality is as dishonest as Euro-feminism's denial of difference" (Wicomb, 1990: 36). To this end, "divergence and conflict centred around the material reality of women's oppression" must not be suppressed in the quest for black unity. The insistence on the recognition of 'divergences and conflicts' is, of course, understandable, given the peculiar structure of the South African society in terms of racial, gender, and class expectations. It is for this reason, therefore, that she suggests: "[T]he search for a literary/cultural theory to suit the South African situation must surely take as point of departure a conflictual model of society where a variety of discourses

[121] 'Lobola' (Zulu: 'lobolo') is Xhosa word for the payment of 'bride price', a cultural requirement that is very common in sub-Saharan African communities.

[122] See Wicomb, Zoë, 'To Hear the Variety of Discourses', *Current Writing*, 2.1(1990): 35-44. She submits here: "A possible approach (then) to South African women's writing would be to examine discursive strategies by which the orthodox tendency of hierarchising the evils of our society — racism, sexism, classicism — is resisted, or the ways in which the conflicting demands of representing these are textually articulated" (p. 14).

will always render problematic the demands of one in relation to others and where discursive formations admit of cracks and fissures that will not permit monolithic ideological constructs" (Wicomb, 1990: 36).

In 'Nation, Race, and Ethnicity: Beyond the Legacy of Victims', Wicomb reflects on how to transform the racial stereotypes in South Africa, or what she calls "the fixed syntagms" of subjectivity as victims, or subjectivity as liberators often encoded in racialist discourses. There is evidence in her scholarship that rather than dwell insensitively to a fruitless positioning of racial discourses implicit in the definition of nationhood and ethnicity, it might be more rewarding to focus more attention on how to address oneself to a consideration of the more serious issue of how to narrow the gap between the poor and the wealthy; how to speak for the voiceless, or rather, how to properly represent the *silenced* in narrative fiction with a view to mobilizing sympathy for the Othered personality of the victim. Class, rather than race, manifests more in the bourgeois propositions of many cultural commentators at the dawn of democratic liberalism in the new South Africa. This way, Wicomb expresses her discomfort over the enormous amount of time often devoted to the cultural and political discourses of race, nation, and nationhood. Instead, she opts for a redirection of focus on the silenced poor as victim, the unprivileged, the uneducated, and the deprived[123].

In what she describes as "our condition of postcoloniality", Wicomb, in 'Shame and Identity', undertakes to explore "the textual construction, ethnographic self-fashioning, and political behaviour of coloureds in South Africa" (Wicomb 1998:93). If her attempts were to explore the nexus between postmodernism and postcoloniality, then, they remain very eloquent statements that anticipate the writing, and imminent publication of ***David's Story***. For, indeed, 'Shame and Identity' constitute the most resonant aesthetic in Wicomb's creativity and scholarship. She arms herself with some consummate

[123] In her words: "I have no grand statements to make about the writer and her writing; all I have arrived at is a set of questions: How do liberal humanist assumptions about the function of art, of writing, relate to those who cannot read? What place could the dispossessed decently occupy in our schemes of representation? Mindful of the popular and indecent practice of objectifying and Othering the poor in documentary realism (...), is there really a case for privileging representational art? Is there a case at all for giving writing a central position in our culture?" *Current Writing*, 4 (1992): 19-20.

preoccupations of postmodernism such as the inscription of power in narratives, woman as racialized and sexualized Other, the appropriation and abuse of the body, the conspiracy of scientific discourses and, in particular, the postmodernist politics of representation in which *silence* and the systematic *refusal to name*, constitute fundamental paradigms in the construction of opprobrium. In the case of the South African Coloured, therefore, we are confronted with the resonant concerns that we encounter more copiously in the investigations of Grant Farred (2000), and in the poetry of Arthur Nortje.

Colouredness, here, implies several things to different people. Where the inscription of Colouredness in much of colonialist narratives were basically pejorative, Wicomb appears to be saying that not much has really changed, so that where, for Sarah Gertrude Millin, the Coloureds are nothing more than 'God's Step-Children', for Nadine Gordimer, the representation of colouredness constitutes a special problematics[124]. Self-representations of colouredness amongst the 'Coloured' community also appear in quite discordant tunes that range from identification with indigenous black Africans to a curious assertion of brownness as inspired by the operators of apartheid in South Africa's recent history. But self-fashioning amongst the Cape Coloured is not solely represented in imaginative fiction since there is evidence of their support for apartheid racialism[125]. 'Shame and Identity' in a way, therefore, is Wicomb's 'proword' that anticipates her publication of ***David's Story***. It is in this essay, more than anywhere else, that she provides basic historical and identitarian pieces of information that enables her female narrator to appropriate David's 'imagined' narratives.

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[124] Wicomb cites Gordimer as saying that representing Coloured-ness is a very tasking business and constitutes a special problematic. See Wicomb's essay, 'Shame and Identity'.

[125] A number of South African 'Coloured' scholars continue to explore the embarrassment implicit in the overwhelming support for the National Party government in 1994, a source of shame, which lends credence to the general suspicion that South African blacks have against the coloureds. While it seems plausible to believe that the Cape coloureds simply bought to the propaganda of the architects of apartheid who had them conditioned into believing that they are 'superior' to the indigenous people— a mental tragedy constructed by apartheid inventors to sustain their authority through a divide-and-rule policy, Wicomb's dissection of the development is even more persuasive. She suggests, for instance, that the NP had better political promise for the coloured: "What the ANC had not predicted was that the NP, with its superior resources, would mobilize working class coloured communities around issues like housing, and, with propaganda about alien concepts like affirmative action, would lead them to believe that Africanization necessarily meant depriving them of their homes, schools, and jobs, and ultimately their culture" (1998: 99). For an interesting and engaging discussion of this issue, see Grant Farred's *Midfielder's Moment*.

For a writer that was variously influenced by 'Black Consciousness' and 'Feminist' Movements, Wicomb is unpretentious in the expression of her mental anguish, and the deprivation she suffered even as "a privileged"[126] South African under apartheid: "Like most South Africans, I didn't even know of the existence of black South African writing until I left the country, had no idea of Alex La Guma, or Bessie Head or Mphahlele, which made me very angry" (Wicomb 1993:82). Beyond Black Consciousness and Feminism[127], there is also evidence that Wicomb draws upon several sources in her narratives. It does seem that Wicomb's experimental novel, ***David's Story*****,** takes its form from the 1990 novel by Nadine Gordimer, ***My Son's Story***. In Wicomb's reading of Gordimer's novel, long before her publication of ***David's Story***, we are informed: "The narrative is of Sonny, the coloured teacher turned political activist, who has an illicit affair with a white woman. It is his son, Will, consumed with disgust and anger on his mother's behalf, who writes the story of his father's infidelity and his mother's subsequent adoption of the struggle as a gun-runner. The final words of the novel, 'I am a writer and this is my first book — that I can never publish', present a deictic complexity that points to the displacement of the 'my' in the title, where the pronoun in the phrase 'my son's story' refers to Will's father, the man who cannot represent his own shameful story" (Wicomb 1998: 103).

Just as the representation of Sonny's flirtations with the ANC "proves problematic", in ***David's Story***, David's commitment to ANC and his devotion to black liberation equally prove to be quite problematical. We observe, for instance, that in spite of his personal drive and unique fascination with the retrieval of his historical and cultural past, David could not also represent himself: this, in spite of his post-struggle identification as a

[126] She admits in an interview: "Well I have been an immense advantage, certainly at junior school where I was surrounded by people who were barely literate (…), (we) had the advantage of both my parents being literate. My father was the school teacher and my parents were able to teach themselves English — because, again, they'd identified English as a way out of the oppression" (1993: 89).

[127] Again, admits Wicomb to the question, 'Are you conscious of yourself as a woman writer?': "I couldn't be anything else. But I am also conscious of myself as a black woman writer, which is why I can't simply say I am a feminist — I have to qualify that. Which says something interesting about the term feminist: clearly, if we have to always qualify it to be saying, I am a black feminist or I'm a lesbian feminist, then it must suggest that feminism is the business of white, heterosexual women" (1993: 90). Wicomb granted the interview so quoted to Eva Hunter in June 1990, with Craig Mackenzie as the transcriber.

teacher. From this narrational point of view, Wicomb certainly owes much to Gordimer. The only point of departure is that while in Gordimer's narrative "the unidentified speakers, represented through ellipsis, express through their own enunciation their political identity as lack" (Wicomb, 1998: 105), in Wicomb's ***David's Story*** there is a deliberate and conscious effort to establish a long tradition of struggle amongst the coloured communities that goes back to the earliest encounter between Africa and Europe, and the consequent 'construction' of mixed identities. Wicomb's humanism of resonant diversities should be understood, therefore, from her personal commitment to inscribe and assert through her novels the minoritarian presence in South Africa's post-apartheid post-colony. She argues, for instance:

> (This) failure or inability to represent our history in popular forms and consequently the total erasure of slavery from the folk memory presumably has its roots in shame: shame for our origins of slavery, shame for the miscegenation, and shame, as colonial racism became institutionalized, for being black, so that with the help of our European names we have lost all knowledge of our Xhosa, Indonesian, East African, or Khoi origins. Significantly the reference to slavery in our self-naming as *Gam* originates not in memory but rather in apartheid's legitimizing reference to the Old Testament narrative of Noa's son, Ham, who looked upon his father's nakedness and so earned the curse of slavery. It is no coincidence that the very word *shame* has acquired a peculiar semantic attenuation into an utterance of tenderness, sympathy, or empathy so that we would exclaim 'Shame!' on seeing a baby or a beggar, or whilst the meaning of disgrace has been excised in common usage. (Wicomb 1998: 100).

The problem of Colouredism is evidently very titanic, if Wicomb's resonant symbologies are anything to go by. The dubious politicization of what apparently defies genetic ontology to a mere chessboard of power manipulations by the apartheid regime makes the matter even more complicated. Colouredism, it does seem, is embraced at moments of contingencies and discarded at moments of convenience. Many people from the coloured population were manipulated into accepting privileges denied other South Africans and,

to worsen issues, it became possible to change the individual's racial status during the apartheid era. The much quoted ***Times*** report clarifies this complexity in which one's racial identity could be determined on the basis of one's loyalty to the apartheid leadership. We read from ***Time*** of March 9, 1987, that 1600 people changed their racial categorization in a determination that had all but biological or genetic support:

> Nine whites became colored, 506 coloreds became white, two whites became Malay, 14 Malays became white, nine Indians became white, seven Chinese became white, one Griqua became white, 40 coloreds became black, 666 blacks became colored, 87 coloreds became Indian, 67 Indians became coloreds, 26 coloreds became Malay, 50 Malays became Indian, 61 Indians became Malay, four coloreds became Griqua, four Griquas became colored, two Griquas became black, 18 blacks became Griquas, twelve coloreds became Chinese, ten blacks became Indian, two blacks became other Asian, two other coloreds became Indian, and one other colored became black[128].

Significantly, no black applied to become white, and no white applied to become black. Wicomb is particularly relevant not merely for her self-proclamation as "black and feminist", but more so because of her recognition of "the interdependence of colonial taxonomies of difference", especially in her deployment of "the analogies made between race, sex, and sexuality by racist and sexist scientific and nationalist discourses to ask entirely new questions" (Raiskin, 1996: 6). These questions range from locating the place of the hybrid identity in the 'new' South Africa, or what she coins as 'NSA', to her eloquent articulation of the new 'Woman' of South Africa. In her short stories, especially the sequence of narratives that appeared as ***You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town***, the politics of Colouredism, and the dilemma of women as multiple victims of the complex legacies of patriarchy and racial separatisms form the experiential projections of her

[128] Quoted in Judith L. Raiskin, especially in the Chapter 'Miskien of Gold Gemake', in *Snow in the Cane Field,* (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996): 211-212. Trinh T. Minh-ha and Francoise Lionnet are also reported to have quoted this passage from *Time* in related studies. See, for instance, Raiskin, ibid, p. 272; Trinh T. Minh-ha, 'Not You/Like You: Post-Colonial Women and the Interlocking Question of Identity and Difference', *Inscriptions*, 3.4(1988): 76; and Françoise Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self-Portraiture*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1989: 10).

fiction. This has largely been acknowledged as "a profound response to the portrayal of "coloureds" throughout South African literary history" (Raiskin, 205-233)[129].

V.

David's Story, then, is one condensed narrative un-blurred by the narratorial intention of unveiling "(The) little-known facts" (***David's Story***, 9). What these facts amount to constitute the essentialist nature of Wicomb's post-Apartheid post-colony. Where the imperatives of her feminist agenda emerge to becloud the central protagonist—David, whose primary concern is an inquest into the historic legacies of his Griqua people—the meticulous manoeuvres and subsequent appropriation of the story by his female scribe does not impede the central concerns of the narrative, namely, the desire to assert the identity of a previously *silenced* humanity, and the vibrant contributions of women within the confines of that silenced humanity. In this instance, it stands to reason, Wicomb seems to be of the persuasion, at the turn of the new order, that a flattening of the racial identity of South Africans of the Western Cape origin into a homologous 'Coloured' identity is not only dangerous, but also indicative of a new tendency to efface the contributions of many patriotic people of this province: a tendency, in fact, to collectively dismiss the people as totally inconsequential in the socio-historical liberation of the nation. To this end, therefore, ***David's Story*** immediately announces a *presence* that proclaims itself by subverting its *negation* in the early historiography *written for it* by the colonizing Other.

Wicomb's feminism and interest in rectifying the perceived image of the 'Coloured' peoples is then seen in her systematic recourse to an inter-textuality that readily pins its growth on the proclamations of the colonizers' historiography of the coloured peoples. The insistence on 'Griqua' and 'Namaqualand' is a deliberate ploy by the novelist to highlight the multiple identities of the peoples of the Western Cape. Strategically,

[129] See also Constance S. Richards, 'Nationalism and the Development of Identity in Postcolonial Fiction: Zoë Wicomb and Michelle Cliff", *Research in African Literatures*, 36.1 (2005): 20-33. One observes, here, that there has been an increase in the South African and Jamaican brands of Colouredism, especially in the comparative readings of Zoë Wicomb and Michelle Cliff. Raiskin's study, *Snow On the Cane Field* is particularly directed toward this form of comparatism.

Wicomb paints a picture of David as an angry individual. His anger, of course, does not derive from his inability to *tell his story*, but more so by his battered sense of individuation which is akin to a non-being. His unique features immediately nullify his claims to any dominant racial belonging. He is neither faithfully black, nor confidently white. His body tells his story, just as his personal features have a peculiarity of their own: "his very own eyes are a green of sorts", and this greenish-ness, we are told, "he finds distasteful, if not horrible" (***David's Story***, 12).

The pun on the colour of his eyes serves this metonymical need. His life is his body, and yet, it is a life defined not 'by' but in 'a sort of'. His green eyes lack the conviction of a unique race. He is neither here nor there; else, his eyes would have been 'green', 'blue' or even 'brown' and certainly not 'sort of green' or 'green of sorts'. The impossibility of his narrative finds semblance in the impossibility of his being, or non-being: a life that searches for its origin is thus truncated at source by a genetic deformity implicit in the narrative incoherence of David. But it is a deformity defined by an/Other, and one in which he has been conditioned into hating. Like his person, therefore, his narrative is muddled up in its lack of assurance and clarity. "David's Story", writes his Scribe, "is unreliable" (***David's Story***, 38). Still, the very uncertainty of his sense of racial belonging gets encapsulated in the very same bodily description. 'Sort of green' or 'green of sorts' presumably inheres the authoritative position of 'indeterminacy', 'un-decidedness', and 'uncertainty'. It suggests a dilemma that parallels the nature of its 'un-decidable-ness' and, obviously, dictates the very un-decidability of his entire socio-historical identity.

More fundamentally, however, Wicomb's engagement with the colonizer's historiography of South Africa's Western Cape Coloureds provides the basis for the nature of a David's narrative attuned towards the defensive. The sub-texts in the narrative point to this determination to provide a historical basis for the project of historical retrieval. As a counter-narrative, therefore, Wicomb's narrator of ***David's Story*** is infuriated by the many discoveries he made in the course of his 'research' about his Griqua people. In as much as he lacks the craft to tell his story, he does not fail to record statements made of his people by visitors and chroniclers alike, a trend that has lasted

centuries and remain unabated even till the new era. Some of his readings reveal the following cat/ego/rical statements made 'somewhere' about his people:

> In other parts of South Africa, among the Zulus, the Pondos, the Swazis, the Damaras, and other such tribes, the people were big, and black and vigorous—they had their joys and chances, but here, round about GriqualandWest, they were nothing but an untidiness on God's earth— a mixture of degenerate brown peoples, rotten with sickness, an affront against Nature.
>
> Sarah Gertrude Millin, ***God's Step Children*** (***David's Story***, 63);

> Namaqualand, Home of Strange Tales: Coloured people seldom manage to hang on to their money.
>
> Lawrence G. Green, ***Karoo*** (***David's Story***, 91);

> Many were given to lying from the mere habit of freely indulging the vagaries of a romantic imagination. They invented stories and enjoyed gossip, they loved the marvellous and exaggerated greatly.
>
> S.J. Halford, ***The Griquas of Griqualand*** (***David's Story***, 151);

> Coloureds have no stomach for blood. They had no traditions and family commitment dating back centuries, or loyalties forged by centuries of war as the black people had. No, the Brigadier thought, the Gentleman was a pure African, and one who dedicated his life to fighting the government.
>
> Thabo Shenge Luthuli, ***The Spilling of Blood*** (***David's Story***, 185).

How would a patriot committed to recording the immense achievement of his ancestors respond to such denigrating impressions made about his people in the writings of the dominant, *colonizing* voices? If the battering of the image of Africans necessitated colonial marginality, segregation and later apartheid, what place would the coloured humanity occupy in the long struggle that toppled white minority leadership in the last decade of the 20th century"? It is instructive that Wicomb's narrator did not engage

himself in this sleuth effort until the emergence of a liberal order. Equally important is the observation that the jaundiced image of the coloureds is not limited to the colonizer's writing about Africa. A long, and sustained representation of colouredness as the deficient Other has reached the stage where their definition in the writings of non-coloureds is seen only in terms of their "lack", the "absence" culture and identity motif of the 'authority' writing on South African coloured-ness. Thus when a Gertrude Millin is not repelled by the Griqua "untidiness", a Lawrence Green nauseated by coloured "profligacy", or S.J. Halford offended by coloured 'deceits', a Thabo Lithuli is certain to be perplexed by coloured 'cowardice' and 'irresponsibility' in matters of family life.[130]

In locating coloured-ness in ***David's Story***, the impression is painted of its rootlessness: culture and tradition is totally displaced and diminished to "nonsense" and "Fashionable rubbish". David's wife, Sally, identifies its uniqueness in its non-existence, since she believes that "the beauty of being coloured" is that "we need not worry about roots at all" (***David's Story***, 27). For David, however, nothing is as it seems: "we don't know who we are" (***David's Story***, 29). If Wicomb's mission is to trace the source of shame in the discourse of miscegenation and colouredism, then, ***David's Story*** is a timely response to a perception that has long been taken for granted, and her questions are obviated by the aesthetic reactions to the many negating narratives of the Griqua: If the coloureds of South Africa are defined on the basis of their 'drunkenness', 'irresponsibility' and 'irrational violence' against one another, she seems to be asking, how does one tell the story of this same people whose ancestry is eloquently marked by their many centuries of struggle against colonial misrepresentations as well as their fight against the dispossession of their land by the colonizers and the 'settler communities'? David's investigation is to take him not just to centuries of struggle, but also to discover his great ancestry. In particular, his excavation of the diary of one of his great ancestors serves his desire to reach the bottom of his 'Odyssey'.

[130] For more on this angle to Wicomb's attempt at inter-textuality in *David's Story*, see the novel itself, especially pages 25, 32, 34, 61, 63, 91, 151, and 185, etc.

However, it dawns on him that he does not necessarily fall into the category of the coloureds since the Griqua have a unique identity and sense of history quite distinct from *the rest* of the coloured peoples. We could, at this point, highlight some traditions of struggle that he manages to unearth. The resonance of 'June 16th' as a symbolical date is instructive. It is a day of national public holiday, honoured in commemoration of the many South African youths who set the real struggle in motion in Soweto. Many school children were reported killed on this date when the apartheid police 'opened fire' on black youths protesting the government's educational and language policies. But it is also significant for other reasons. As a narrative of liberation, it is only little surprising that echoes are made of the many historical incidents that took place on June 16. It is 'Youth day— Soweto day, the sixteenth of June— that's also Joyce's Blooms-day; it is the 'Day of Revolution of the Word' (***David's Story***, 35). David's interest in history is less than perfect, but he finds in the diary of the Griqua paramount chief, Andres Abraham Le Fleur, that the date is also very important in the Griqua history. For, indeed, by that date, the chronicler, Le Fleur, was at the Griqua town of Kokstad in 1865 (***David's Story***, 41).

'Struggle' in a way, is in the family, and one brilliant manifestation, here, is the persistence and resonance of the historic struggle to re-appropriate the land taken from the Griqua by what Andre Le Fleur's diary severally describe as "the thieving Settlers" (***David's Story,*** 57-58). In one particularly sober moment the diarist had written: " …if demanding justice is about agitation then yes, I am the Great Griqua Agitator. And yes, I am working with the chiefs of the Bhaca and the Hlangweni; we will fight together to restore the land to the Griquas and the natives. Our land will be purged of these white thieves and the rinderpest they have brought to kill off our livestock" (***David's Story***, 53). Racial Otherness is subtly played down upon in the quest to assert one's uniqueness. The denigrated is here seen in his desperation to redefine himself, even if it will mean taking control of the situation and denying voice to the 'natives'. Evoked here is the sense of denial of 'native voice' in a manner reminiscent of its negation in such other post-apartheid narratives as Jooste's ***Dance With a Poor Man's Daughter***, Coetzee's ***Disgrace*** and, to some extent, Brink's ***Devil's Valley***.

Zoë Wicomb, it is already noted, has often talked and written about the resurgence of 'shame' in the location of 'self' amongst the coloureds of South Africa. It does seem that the conditioned imagination built over several centuries ago about the social irresponsibility of the South African coloured has eventuated in a crisis of identity in which the South African coloured is often expected to defend or justify his action(s) before the rest of humanity. The idea of shame, then, inspires Wicomb's narrative of the Griqua people who the reader is urged to recognize in their distinctiveness. Be this as it may, it is important to observe that Wicomb's characters are caught in a web of incipient contradictions: they lament their derision before the white. Yet, the art of traditional decoration in Africa does not appeal to them; it evokes *shame*: the amaXhosa who use cow-dung for such artwork is then perceived in folkloristic narratives as primitive. In ***David's Story***, Ouma Regel would remind her listeners: "No, that was what savage natives did and we are no cousins to Xhosas; we are a pure Griqua people with our own traditions of cleanliness and plainness and hard work" (***David's Story***, `94). To assert the immense energy of the Griqua, she has to demonize the amaXhosa. Her presence necessitates the deletion of an/Other: Griqua civilization is parralled to amaXhosa primitivism, just as Griqua resourcefulness makes meaning only because an/Other, the amaXhosa, must be painted as 'lazy'.

Yet she valorises the Griqua, not without a cause: "Oh, we were a hardheaded people with so much to learn. What a job the great man had to civilise us, to get the message through our peppercorn heads. And now they say we are a drunken people, Ouma Regel sighed. We Griquas have never been a drunken people, not since we became Griquas" (***David's Story***, 95). Even the speaker, the scribe informs us, is apparently drunk: "she struggles drunkenly to her feet", and descends quite heavily on those that rubbish the image of the Griquas, just as they did of the coloureds. The signalling distinctiveness of the Griqua, unlike the coloured peoples, is the fact that the Griqua are not 'drunks', just as they are 'civilized' and different from the 'primitive' amaXhosa. The search for self-redemption and belief in oneself becomes complicated since they only derive semantic coherence at the dubious positioning of a *self* that necessarily must delete the *Other* to be able to retain its sanity and sense of worth.

The search for Self in ***David's Story*** resonates, however, in convoluted *sloppiness:* David's inability to tell his story eventuates in a recurrent conflict between memory and amnesia. The projection of the self only becomes authenticated by the negation of Otherness: Griqua nationhood and identity is then realized in a narrative denial of its affinity with the racial Other: the Griqua is real: s/he is not black, s/he is not white, and certainly must not be ridiculed by the systematic and conscious efforts made to locate (h)is/er individuation within the bracketed ambience of the coloured in/humanity. For, as most characters of the Griqua narrative would insist, the people are accomplished, respectable and "— proud. Not a cobbled together, raggle-taggle group of Coloureds who do not know where they belong, but a real volk, a nation who had no need to claim kin with either whites or blacks" (***David's Story***, 130). To be, therefore, *Others* must not: privileging the racial Other is tantamount to self-negation, and the Griqua must not be *annihilated*.

VI.

The metafictional character of ***David's Story*** assumes various forms, but particularly evident when David's female scribe reports on his earlier, untidy efforts at narrating his 'nation'. He had attempted to narrate his story through the evocation of historical subjects very germane to the life and identity formation of the Griqua. The painful story of Saartje Baartman, for instance, resonates because such monumental insult meted on his people by the colonizing Europeans should not be ignored. He writes of Baartman in a typical "illiterate" style devoid of coherence. David's scribe would readily remind us: "The page at the end of the unfinished section on Baartman is a mess, schoolboy scribbles that ought to have been thrown away.... Then there are beginnings scattered all over, and at various angles that ignore the rectangularity of the paper, as if not starting at the top or not following the shape of the page he could fool himself that it is not a beginning" (***David's Story,*** 135). David's narrative incoherence becomes an object of pain to his female scribe [!]. David, the teacher, does not display familiarity with the most vital tool of his chosen career as a writer: *language*.

His sojourn into writing— fictional as well as autobiographical— is ridiculed by his inability to transcend the domesticated vernacular 'English' of the Cape residents who often confuse 'Truth' with 'Trurt'. But where David's scribe shows some patience with these infelicities, she loses her calmness when his personal composition descends from incoherence to the downright imbecilic. He writes, for instance: "towhisperspeakshouthollercolour". If this orthographic convolution of meaningless graffiti that suggests a proclamation of 'Coloured-ness' in whatever form is deemed fit is infuriating to the reader, David's scribe does not play the confidential secretary she is supposed to be, as she bursts out in anger: "Who, dear reader, would have the patience with this kind of thing? My computer has none; it has had enough, is embarrassed, and mysteriously refuses to process the elliptical dot-dot-dots, which I have to insert by hand" (***David's Story,*** 136-137). The novelist and the 'scribe' are virtually in conflict here as the intention to document the stories of David is carefully delayed. From the commentary of the scribe on the unreliability of David, Wicomb's counter-commentary on the scribe highlights the dubious ambition of a confidential secretary who is determined to project her feminist agenda at the detriment of the subject's documentary ambition. Yet, it is through this way that scribe and novelist conspire to expropriate and project the memory of a people long silenced by the historical conditions of colonialism, cultural paternalism, apartheid, and male chauvinism.

Where David's desire is "to correct a false memory" so as "to arrive at the truth and find out what really happened" (***David's Story***, 142) in the lived experience of the Griqua through the course of history, his inability to articulate his views and the consequent reliance on a non-reliable scribe, becomes his undoing. The story is 'taken away' from him. His female secretary confesses as much: "It occurs to me that David is in spite of himself, becoming dependent on speaking to me, I say nothing, *but I fear for him. For the telling that will surely take over*" (***David's Story***, 143; emphasis mine). What "takes over" is certainly no longer David's story. It is in this sense that the metafictional identity of the narrative is more readily understood, because what "takes over" signals another dimension of Wicomb's narrative intention of constructing a postcolonial fiction devoted

to interrogating gender representations in both Western and indigenous historiographies of the Griqua. In other words, the Griqua woman emerges as a fighter in the colonial and postcolonial narratives of South Africa.

David's screaming of 'Coloured-ism' is further impugned by his discovery of the notations of his great ancestor, the diarist, Le Fleur. If 'Coloured-ness' is evocative of a special "condition" within the South African social formation, where does one place the Griqua? Of course, while the Griqua had associated with 'the Coloureds' in South Africa, it is doubtful whether they were truly accepted as 'Coloureds'. If the 'founding father' of the Griqua would title his memory of the Griqua with such distinguishing clarity: ***Griqua and Coloured People's Opinion*** (***David's Story***, 143), it follows to reason that the Griqua are aware of their *difference*, and the Coloured's *Otherness*. But Le Fleur desired more than just being 'the Great Griqua Agitator'. The 'Coloureds' must abandon their inhospitable name, and assume the Griqua heritage and identity under his leadership. Andrew Abraham Stockenstrom Le Fleur's quest for power and the retrieval of Griqua nationhood thus thrives on his latent ambition to subsume the coloured communities within a monolithic Griqua nationhood: "... he saw himself as chief of all coloured people under the banner of Griquas, for why would people choose to carry such an indecent name when they could all be Griquas?" (***David's Story,*** 149).

Wicomb's aesthetic propagation and projection of the dilemma of the *Othered* subject is not confined to her interest in the roots and identity of the Griqua. She finds a counteractive parallel in a history of marginality and defacement of black peoples of the world through the course of history. To this end, the non-inscription of the immense contributions of the African slaves in the building of Europe and America, especially in the 18th century (before the abolition of slave trade) provides the required parallel in apprehending the narrative basis of ***David's Story*** as fiction devoted to counter-writing the double 'colonization' of South Africa, as well as the double historical tragedies of South Africa's marginal identities that cover all of the black population of which the 'Coloureds' and the Griqua form a significant part. In this case, David's scribe reminds us: "Surely, memory is not to be trusted" (***David's Story***, 195). Evidence of this

awareness emerges in the painting displayed at the Kokstad's Crown Hotel, enabling David to engage more seriously with his knowledge of image and text. This way, text and sub-text merge in a single devotion to deface a people's humanity. Here is one such sub-text underneath a painting:

> John Glassford (1715- 1783) tobacco merchant and family at home in the Shawfield mansion. The painting by Archibald McLauchlin, c. 1767, *included a black slave on the left hand, which has since been painted over* (***David's Story***, 193; emphasis mine).

The "painting over" of the black slaves provides the semiotic basis of a long tradition of defacements in colonial narratives of Africa. At a time when slaves were regular features that defined the capitalist ethos of aristocratic Britain, the sub-text emerges as a latent pointer to colonial insensitivity and dishonesty to the monumental contributions of these slaves to the enormous wealth of the colonizing nations. David, himself, is not insensible of the truncated nature of colonial historiography and, as his scribe indicates, "he insists, there was no mention of slavery in the documentation of the city's economic growth. No mention of the fact that slaves produced the sugar and tobacco in the American plantations, owned and managed by Glasgow merchants like the wealthy Glassford". Implicit in the "painting out" of the 'black man' is colonial deception. The narrator confides in us: "the painting out of a man who had once, alongside fruit and flowers, signified wealth and status and who, with the growth of humanitarian movement, had become unfashionable as an adornment on canvas" (***David's Story***, 193).

Patricia Waugh (1984) has suggested of the metafictional narrative mode that it tends "to be constructed on the principle of a fundamental and sustained opposition: the construction of a fictional illusion (as in traditional realism) and the laying bare of that illusion. In other words, the lowest common denominator of metafiction is simultaneously to create a fiction and to make a statement about the creation of that fiction" (Waugh, 6). Wicomb's subtle transposition of a supposedly male narrative into a feminist project is the fundamental code in the complex layers of narratives that form

David's Story. David's 'inadequacy' of taking on the writing project necessitates the recruitment of a more imaginative female scribe whose personal aspirations transcend the coverage of a male chauvinist's delicate egocentricity. But the novelist is careful in generating distrust between David and his scribe. He 'charges' her of having too much of "middle-class liberal bullshit" (***David's Story***, 197). Yet his scribe takes in all the incoherency of his stories with 'inaudible' frustration determined by her own *political* agenda.

Indications to this manipulation and consequent diversion of David's stories appeared at the outset in a conspiracy between 'writer' and 'scribe'. She feigns ignorance of David's heartfelt desires, and instead highlights the role of women during the Liberation Movement. Like the men, women were also at the training mission in the VENDA: they were trained on how to be combatants. In Dulcie's fantasies about the man in her life, Wicomb evokes images of the mythical Khoikhoi woman who "turned into a tree" (***David's Story***, 19). But although she made this assumption based on a character in Toni Morison's ***Beloved***, we recall that this magical figure was encountered earlier in André Brink's ***Imaginings of Sand. David's Story***, the scribe tells us in her Preface, "started at the Cape with Eva/Krotoa, the first Khoi woman in the Dutch castle" (***David's Story***, 1). As a consultant, one would imagine that David's scribe would simply privilege the commemorations of her employer. First, she presents us with Eva, followed almost immediately at the introduction with stories about another woman, Saartjie Baartman, "the Hottentot woman placed on display in Europe". She insists that "David's story is unreliable", and in tracing the genealogy of Adam Kok 1 and his descendants, the narrative simply parodies the patriarchal pattern of tracing family history, which the scribe quickly challenges: "All without the interference of women" (***David's Story***, 38). She describes David's verbal pieces of information as 'impossible':

> What else can I do? If it's not really to be about you, if you wont give me any facts, if you will only give me the mumbo jumbo stuff, my task is to invent a structure, some kind of reed pondok in which your voodoo shadow can thrash about without rhyme or reason, but at least with

> boundaries, so that we don't lose you altogether. It's impossible, this writing of a story through someone else. The whole thing's impossible...." (***David's Story***, 199).

David's scribe had unilaterally taken on the task of projecting Dulcie, "the other woman", in his life. She does not subscribe to the deliberate defacement of her role as military officer and liberation fighter, especially given the fact that she worked as well as— and sometimes harder than — other cadet officers at the war front. Dulcie remains a phenomenal character as a woman and as military officer. Whether or not David's effacement of her contribution is part of the whole patriarchal conspiracy to 'paint out' women in liberation narratives is contestable. He complains, for instance, that his secretary has taken too much liberty in writing about 'women' more than she does 'men'. He accuses her: "You have turned it into a story of women; it's full of old women, for God's sake, David accuses. Who would want to read a story like that? It's not a proper history at all" (***David's Story***, 199). 'Proper histories' are, for David, stories about men: real men in the calibre of his great grand father, Andre Le Fleur. The truncation of the narrative to project the sensibilities of women is more than he can handle. But the point has been made: histories are constructed, and the man of power is the one who has control of the resources of its construction. In this sense, the possession of memory through archival research is insufficient in the construction of history. Actual construction could mean an aggressive retrieval. In this conspiracy between writer and scribe, a significant layer of the narrative is unveiled: history will always remain partisan since it is given to protecting the personality of the powerful members of every epoch.

David's protestation against the deliberate 'feminisation' of his narrative by his female scribe is a strategic narrative design that defines the many dimensions of Zoë Wicomb's metafictional project: what started as David's peculiar interest in the history of agitation, by the Griqua, for self-assertion soon moves from the dramatization of David's peculiar achievement to the long tradition of such agitation as undertaken by the renowned nationalist, Le Fleur. But it soon returns to a gradual unfolding of the contributions of the many women sidelined in the celebration of nationalist heroism. Rather than just the story

of the 'Oupas', it's suddenly sustained by the experiences of the 'Oumas': Margaret, Rachel Susana Kok, Antjie, Ragel, Rachel, Sarie (Meintijes), David's wife, Sally (Saartjie) and, of course, his mistress, Dulcie. It is the female scribe that notes that David's pages are often truncated and incoherent.

It would seem, therefore, that the de/face/ment of his mistress is a deliberate 'manic' gesture. For, as she points out, some pages do not have words. In one such page where 'there is a head, an upside-down smiling head', she says: " I have no doubt that it is Dulcie who lies mutilated on the page" (***David's Story***, 205). But the complex layers of narratives, in their overwhelming presence, provide the tedious challenge of its mode of documentation. It is neither Zoë Wicomb nor David who tells of the difficulty implicit in the plotting and narrativization of the many layers of experiences. It is the female scribe who finally streamlines ***David's Story*** into a story about stories. She complains: "I no longer know which story I am trying to write. Who could keep going in a straight line with so many stories, like feral siblings, separated and each running wild, chasing each other's tales?" (***David's Story***, 201)

A story that celebrates the newly 'liberated' South Africa is thus invested with a memory that highlights the long struggle for Griqua agitation, the struggle against colonial and settler appropriation of land in midst of protestations by indigenous Africans, the recourse to guerrilla warfare and military intervention against the colonialist and apartheid governments, the celebration of the victory of 'freedom fighters' who during the long years of apartheid repression were considered 'terrorists and communists', the evocation of stereotypes in forms of derogatory idioms such as 'kaffirs' and 'hotnots', but more importantly, an aesthetic retrieval and reconstruction of women's contributions and capabilities in the long process of the construction of a liberal order in South Africa. Yet, both the novelist and the authorial voice, David's female scribe, appear to be engaged in a conspiracy toward the dethronement of the so-called 'manic' gestures in the narrative. The metafictional mode allows both passive characters a privilege to present a dispassionate image even in their apparent conspiracy to mount a feminist flag as the basic memento of the anti-colonial/apartheid struggles. Toward the end of the novel, for

instance, David meets his tragic death in an ambiguous, inexplicable manner that suggests assassination, suicide, or even an accident. His body is retrieved several days later from a pool of water.

David's long desire to *delete* the narrative of the 'other woman' is here counter-poised by his own sudden *deletion* by that 'Othered woman': Dulcie emerges at the end of the narrative as that brave woman who must not be thought of, the scribe says, as "visitor in my garden" (***David's Story***, 212). Her 'appearance' at the demise of David is left unexplored, a devise elected by the novelist and her author/ial voice to present to the reader the many questions attending to her peripheral position in the anti-colonial narratives. And because the novelist pretends to terminate the story as David's, she washes her hands off the story: "I take a break from writing this *impossible* story with a turn in my unseasonable garden, slipping a backup disk into my pocket as I always do. Especially since, on my return from the funeral, I found several days' work gone, replaced by a queer message in bold: "*this text deletes itself*" (***David's Story***, 212). David's story thus becomes Dulcie's, just as the story of the 'Oupas' gets carefully transposed to the narrative of the 'Oumas'— a parallel we equally locate in the historic struggles of David, and the 19th century self-proclaimed Griqua leader, Adams Le Fleur. Unknown to him, therefore, David becomes a reincarnation of Le Fleur in their collective search for freedom, for Griqua identity within the 'new' South African social formation. They converge spiritually as land agitators, and as apostles of social equality. But their dreams never get fully realized: they both die, leaving their dreams as mere curiosities, and as 'illiterate' agitators who never reckoned with the immense, deadly capacities of women who cleverly "wash their hands off" the unfinished 'manic' stories that insist on being completed.

Notwithstanding her immense achievements as writer and scholar, Zoë Wicomb's theorising sometimes incites a perception of ambiguity, a tendency that leads to a reading of her feminism as absurdist. One also locates this sense of the ambiguous in her notion of 'the literary' in what might be read as her view on the language of literature. For instance, she dismisses 'literary' and 'elevated language' of the Western canon as

nonsensical. While her privileging of the political might sound quite plausible, here, the point must be made that if it has to be literature, the *language* of its representation must necessarily be a *literary* one.[131] Clearly, while her identification of all writing— "whether it deals directly with the revolution or not, occupies a political position"— could endear her to a number of politically motivated critics and readers, her further proclamation that the demand on writers "to write well is nonsensical" is rather bizarre.

Where the politics of writing and publishing could have confined many women writers to border territories, it simply would amount to a multiple tragedy to canonize writers solely on the basis of their gender. There are female writers of quality just as there are male writers. Evidence in the critical industry indicates that most of the canonized women writers did not achieve fame on the basis of their gender and sexuality. Nadine Gordimer— and long before her, Pauline Smith and Sarah Gertrude Millin— provide ready instances within the South African literary garden. The prevalent insistence that anything in print should be privileged as literature simply because they emanate from women is downright nonsensical and certainly smacks of a political appeal for a solidarity criticism—a point, I believe—that Wicomb is eloquently against. In addition, Wicomb's contributions to the intellectual life of the 'new' South Africa continue to provide some ambivalent canvas within which her antagonism of African 'Feminisms' could properly be interrogated. While her interviews and academic essays help illuminate some of these ambivalences, they occasionally present special problematics in the reading of her narratives. While evoking the Fanonian aesthetic of national culture in her comparative reading of Wicomb's ***You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town*** and Michelle Cliff's ***No Telephone to Heaven***, for instance, Constance S. Richards argues that these novelists are essentially post-colonial writers whose work "suggest the important role of Black liberation discourse in identity formation, while at the same time complicate the binary discourses of race (black/white) and colonialism (colonizer/colonized) with

[131] See, for instance, Raiskin's chapter on Zoë Wicomb in *Snow on the Cane Fields: Women's Writing and Creole Subjectivity*, (London & Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996). Here, Wicomb is quoted as saying: "What I'm saying is that we must stop thinking in terms of literary language and we must think in terms of ways in which we can recover the ability to use language.... What is going to be our national language? I want to be involved in this kind of work" (pp 231-232). It seems obvious here that Wicomb is probably not aware of how 'literary' and 'elevated' her own use of the English language appears to the reader. Perhaps, she is being humble, ironical, sarcastic, or even all of these.

questions of gender, sexuality and color privilege" (Richards 2005: 22)[132] But Wicomb has never denied her black heritage even though the campaign for smaller identities in South Africa is an offshoot of the liberalism of the new order. One hopes, to these ends, that Zoë Wicomb would find an occasion to clarify some of these elliptical aspects of her brilliant creativity and scholarship.

In any case, if paradigm shift is to be taken seriously in post-Apartheid South Africa, it could be necessary to place in simultaneous analyses the whole processes of political transitionality that equally subsume cultural renewal. Wicomb submits that "cultural renewal cannot be a switch from old to new, but rather a continuous process of assessment and criticism" (Wicomb, 1991b: 242-3). She does not appear to be optimistic about African culture and the propagation and projection of "authentic" African cultural practices. If her dismissal of the authenticity of the African personality in contemporary global cultural practices is informed by her feminist persuasion, then the question could be asked: 'Whose feminism, and for whose interests? For, we do know that two decades of voluntary exile in Europe is certainly not enough to rubbish — even with the most erudite argument — the defining sensibilities of Africa. Europe, after all, still celebrates customs that have lasted countless millennia.

The existence of traditional rulership, disguised as 'Queen of England', is enough indication that a people's culture[133] should be respected for what it is. The 'Zulu Dance Culture' and even the insistence on the payment of *lobola* in marriage contracts are worthy aspects of African values that should not be demonised. Perhaps, it needs be noted that pornographic films and voyeuristic sexual escapades did not originate from Africa: Africans are yet to accommodate nudist resorts and beaches in Africa, unlike the Western world where the exploitation of nudity and sexuality is currently the dominant

[132] See Constance S. Richards, 'Nationalism and the Development of Identity in Postcolonial Fiction: Zoë Wicomb and Michelle Cliff'. *Research in African Literatures*, 36.1 (2005): 21-33. While it could be said that *David's Story* is an imaginative expansion of the experiential projections of *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town,* the most obvious manifestation of *David's Story*, like in much of Wicomb's non-fictional writing, transcend the binaries of 'white' and 'black'. Instead, it situates itself within the complex liminality of the interstices.

[133] Wicomb's frustration that African female dancers are scantily dressed does not hold much weight, therefore.

symbolism for commercial advertisements. The fact that over two hundred years of vibrant feminism in Europe and America has not stopped women's exploitation of their sexuality at moments of convenience and manipulation of men is the reason African feminists might do well to keep intact those aspects of African life that still remind us of some degree of sanity that marked this side of the planet long before Western colonization of Africa.

VII.

At a time when the re-invention of African 'Modernities' is being celebrated at certain quarters through what has been classified as 'the experimental turn in black South African writing'[134], there is a temptation to overrate narrative forms that depart fundamentally from the soporific reportorial fictions deployed by protest and 'Black Consciousness' writers whose sense of commitment to black liberation undermined the need for psychological profundity in many of their narratives. Where experimentalism must be encouraged, this should not be made the only paradigm for the reading of the 'emergent' fiction of the new South Africa. Postmodernist experimentations, structural dislocations and temporal disjunctions might well be reasonable forms that capture the complexities of our time. Yet, ours is certainly not a period that has lost a sense of entertainment. When a writer fails in every thing else, it follows to reason, s/he must not fail to entertain the reader. By her own admission, Wicomb writes from "a political position as black South African and feminist" (Wicomb 1990a: 14). But her dream for a novelistic tradition defined on the basis of its "cleaner lines, simpler stories, simpler language" (Wicomb 1993: 92), however, remains a mirage. She does not entirely accomplish this aspiration even in ***David's Story*****.** But her apologetic stance: "I'm not

[134] An important statement, to this end, is David Attwell's recent study, *Rewriting Modernity: Studies in Black South African literary history*. (Skotsville, South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2005). See in particular, Attwell's essay, 'The Experimental turn: Experimentalism in Contemporary fiction', pp. 169-204. An earlier version of this essay appeared as 'The Experimental Turn in Black South African Fiction', in Leon de Kock, Loiuse Bethlehem & Sonja Laden (Eds), *South Africa in the Global Imaginary*. (Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 2004: 154-179). One crucial observation here is that it is no longer safe to confine the criticism of black South African writing to the purely realist, reportorial mode since there are evidence of experimental writing. In any case, Attwell suggests that it is "demeaning" to continue to write in the realistic narrative mode for the obvious reason that it takes the literature back to medieval European realist tradition (2004: 175).

innovative; I'm unable to experiment with form" (Wicomb 92), however, only points to Wicomb's humility. For, indeed, she is abundantly innovative and experimental. The sheer innovativeness of ***David's Story*** is the reason that vision and style seem converged, non-disjunctional, and totalising in its narrative universe.

For a writer who claims to be intimidated by the "horror of intensity"[135] which seems to define the grand poem, Wicomb's preference for the "ordinary language of prose" (Wicomb 1993: 82) might conveniently be challenged with the enormous poetry *in*, and *of* her prose. The sheer muscularity of her idiom and her convoluted prose style make the reading of ***David's Story*** both a pleasurable and painful experience even for the most patient admirer of postmodernist narratives. Be this as it may, ***David's Story*** is not only exemplary as a novel of the liberal order, but one that ambitiously engages thorny dimensions of the South African social formation; it is a narrative of gender as it is of race; a story of the self, as it is of the other; a narrative of diversity as it is of the new 'rainbow' nation. Indeed, ***David's Story***, as J.M. Coetzee subtly acknowledges, is the novel of the new South Africa.

[135] See, for, instance, the NELM Interview series, Number Six, *Between the Lines* 11 (1993): 79-96.

Chapter Six

The Confessional Genre and the Liberal Order: Jo-Anne Richards' Post-Apartheid Imagination.

> Designed to free the future from the past, Confession is a performative, intensely instrumental text.
> — Richard Terdiman, *Present Past*, 1993:77

> Confessions enable us to be time travellers, bringing ourselves into the past through memory and then sweeping those secrets into the present through disclosure.
> —Sharon Hymer, *Consuming Confessions*, 1996:254

> Even in an age of iron, pity is not silenced.
> —J.M. Coetzee, *Doubling the Point*, 1992:250

> How, then, do *virtuous readers* end up becoming *complicit confessors*?
> —Dennis A. Foster, *Confession and Complicity in Narrative*, 1987:18

I.

The Confessional genre is quite resonant in the new fiction of South Africa. The form readily brings to mind the echo of the TRC[136], a governmental establishment designed to appease a people long entrapped in anger and frustration due to political repression. The confessional mode, as the name suggests, is marked by a sacramental imperative; a desire

[136] TRC: abbreviation for the 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission'. In December 1995, President Nelson Mandela inaugurated a truth and reconciliation commission to look into the many injustices of the past. The commission started sitting in April 1996, and was led by two clergy men: the Anglican Church's Arch Bishop Desmond Tutu, who was deputized by yet another Bishop, Alex Boraine, of the Methodist Church of South Africa. The revelations at the Commission's sittings were horrific and terrifying. The dramatic revelations at the meetings made the TRC one of the most visible manifestations of South Africa's non-racial capitalism. The numerous fictional narratives that emerged after the commission's sitting, especially among white South African writers, has led—whether for good or bad—into the view that many white novelists adopted the confessional genre as a way of gaining spiritual closure with the turbulent past from which a number of the writers are perceived to have benefited. See especially Michiel Heyns' essay, 'The Whole Country's Truth: Confession and Narrative in Recent White South African Writing'. *Modern Fiction Studies*, 46.1(2000): 42-66.

to embrace a totalising physical and psychological freedom through a remorseful recantation of previous misdeeds. If the separatist doctrine of apartheid was injurious to the human psyche, it follows to reason that a narrative that proclaims the demise of separatism through its projection of spiritual atonement would embrace a mode akin to "a quintessential form of mnemonic performance" (Terdiman, 1993: 76). This narrative mode – confession – emerges pervasively in the narrative of the 'new' South Africa not only as a fictional necessity, but also in a rather engaging way in articulating the socio-historical and psychological injuries visited upon the majority of Africans by the operators of separatism. The TRC becomes particularly relevant here partly for what Njabulo Ndebele (1998) describes as "the triumph of narrative."[137] Its inauguration marked an important socio-historical moment in South Africa's political history: it was at this point that F. W. de Klerk apologized to the whole world, and to the victims of the apartheid regime in particular on the evils of racial separatism.

While addressing the TRC on 14 May 1997, de Klerk made the following appeal:

> Apartheid was wrong. I apologize in my capacity as the leader of the National Party to the millions of South Africans who suffered the wrenching disruption of forced removals in respect of their homes, business and land. Who over the years suffered the shame of being arrested for pass laws offences. Who over the years suffered the indignities and humiliation of racial discrimination. Who for a long time were prevented from exercising their full democratic rights in the land of their birth. Who were unable to achieve their full potential because of job reservation. And who in any other way suffered as a result of discriminatory legislation and policies. This apology is offered in a spirit of true repentance in full knowledge of the tremendous harm that apartheid has done to millions of South Africans.[138]

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[137] Njabulo Ndebele, 'Memory, Metaphor, and the Triumph of Narrative'.

[138] Excerpt from 'Text of Testimony of President F.W de Klerk to Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 14th May 1997'. Cited in Adigbuo, E.R. *Nigeria's National Role Conceptions: The Case of Namibia, 1975-1990.* (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Johannesburg, 2005): 30-31. It is important to note that former president F.W. de Klerk objected to the inclusion of his apology in the final report submitted to the new government of South Africa. The sincerity of his apology could therefore be further interrogated. Was de Klerk genuinely concerned about the injustices of the past or was he, like many other confessants at the

F.W. de Klerk's apology is a fine instance of the sacramental vision that defines the confessional narrative mode: remorse anticipates compassion, and in the process the tension surrounding the present as a result of the injuries and manipulations of the past are nullified and effaced by the anticipation of a positively liberating future. In ***Present Past***, Richard Terdiman has explicated the functional dynamics of confessionality as a narrative strategy. He draws attention to the difference "between two kinds of retrospect narrative." In this instance, memory is seen as a historically factual narrative on the one hand, and on the other, as an empassioned attempt to re-collect a romantic experience. As he puts it, the distinction made between a history "which lays an implicit claim to objectivity, authority, dispassion and to the consequent possibility of totalising", and "a more subjective and im-perfect or untotalizable form of personal memory," "suggests a symbolic complex within which the memory function is further problematized" (Terdiman 1993:80). He writes about "the ritual injunctions of anamnesis". In other words, Terdiman highlights a fundamental dynamic obligation in the mechanism of recollection. At the level of the sacramental or the confessional, the implicit ritual injunction is the paradigm of anamnesis, i.e. "to *remember* and to *tell*" (Terdiman, 90). *Telling*, therefore, is imperative if compassion is the expectation.

The TRC provided an admirable space for telling the crimes of the past. The factual narratives that sounded fictional provide yet a further support for fiction as cultural memory. The confessional narrative has been defined largely in terms of its *autobiographical* form. Again, Richard Terdiman has this to say:

> We might conceive confession as a subject of autobiography – but particularly the autobiography of sin, of error, of transgression. Its practices of avowal are governed by liturgical, juridical, and – in the modern period – psychological or psychoanalytic rituals that despite their evident diversity have as their common purpose some form of individual or social purification. (Terdiman 1993:76)

TRC sittings, more interested in 'stealing' global ovation for showing public remorse? This is, however, subject for another occasion.

The intellectual culture in South Africa at the moment of political transition – and after – seem attuned to this notion of the confessional as deriving essentially from remorse and the anticipation of compassion. Anthony Holiday (1998:43-56) provides a philosophical reading of the dynamics of the TRC in his explication of the concepts of 'forgiving and 'forgetting'. The tragedy of the TRC sitting, he suggests, rests on the fact that the actions and emotional displays of the confessants were not done out of a voluntary desire to seek recompense through a genuine display of contrition. Instead, the promise of amnesty was instrumental to the confessions. "To be remorseful", he writes, "is an indispensable part of what it means to be a penitent and remorse is itself a form of memory which consists in our being haunted by the distinctive presence of whomever it is we wronged". (Holiday, 44)[139]

It could be argued, then, that the confessional narrative is primarily a redemptive inscription. In fiction, however, this generates its own peculiar dilemma: it assumes that the novelist of 'Confession' is essentialist in disposition, and writes with the singular objective of liberating him/her(-self) from the collective guilt that inspired such a narrative. But fictional narratives are not necessarily spiritual in character. The novel, for instance, does not perform a similar function as the Bible: no one ever reads a novel with the intention of achieving entry into God's kingdom, unlike the Bible which is often read by Christian believers with spiritual devotion. And while there is a sense in which fiction "deals with the past" just as certain agencies designed for dealing with the past" such as Truth Commissions, the difference between Truth Commissions and fictive narrations is clear. As André du Toit clarifies: "it would be misleading to conceive of truth commissions as back-ward looking only; compared to historians' concerns with the past, they are primarily aimed at establishing a new moral order and political order. If truth commissions are back-ward looking, they are so precisely as historical founding projects; they deal with the past not for its own sake but in order to clear the way for a new

[139] See Anthony Holiday, 'Forgiving and Forgetting: the Truth and Reconciliation Commission'. In Sarah Nuttall and Carli Coetzee (Eds), *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa*. (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1998): 43-56.

beginning" (du Toit 2000: 125)[140]. Fiction primarily provides aesthetic pleasure or a form of 'entertainment'. Through fiction, however, history is retrieved to educate and enhance the quality of the textual knowledge, the sense of pleasure provided by the narrative, and its unique therapeutic functions.

The notion of truth, however, becomes quite problematic in the areas of 'writing': this is particularly so in fields such as the 'biography' and 'autobiography' with their attendant recourse to sponsored 'eulogies' and self-glorifications. In fiction, too, the search for truth is blurred by the narrative's constitutive nature as an experiment in 'fantasy'[141]. As confessional narrative, then, the narrator or confessant can only operate persuasively within the realms of contrivances with constructed characters displaying imaginatively retrieved historical incidents that resonate in the writer's memory as private or collective 'mentalities'. These, in turn, motivate discursive paradigms/sites.

How the TRC impacts on the white South African novel of English expression after apartheid might not immediately be evident in any superficial or banal investigation by the hasty critic, except in very few instances where some writers overtly drew upon developments at the trial[142]. Yet we feel the resonance of guilt and search for absolution through the narratives of the child-narrators, and in the mnemonic fluctuations of the adult narrator who traverses between recent experiences and the child-narrator's

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[140] Scholarship on TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission), especially the South Africa's TRC is impressive. For some interesting discussion on the morality of truth commissions, see, for instance, Robert I Rotberg and Dennis Thompson (Eds), *Truth V. Justice: The Morality of Truth Commissions*, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000). In particular, see André du Toit, 'The Moral Foundations of the South African TRC: Truth as Acknowledgement and Justice as Recognition', pp. 122-140; Alex Boraine, 'Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: The Third Way', pp. 141-157; Dumisa B. Ntsebeza, 'The Uses of Truth Commissions: Lessons for the World', pp. 158-169; Ronald C. Slye, 'Amnesty, Truth, and Reconciliation: Reflections on the South African Amnesty Process', pp. 170-188, and Charles Villa-Vicencio and Wilhelm Verwood, 'Constructing a Report: Writing up the Truth', pp. 279-294. See also Deborah Posel and Graeme Simpson (Eds), *Commissioning the Past: Understanding South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission*. (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 2002).

[141] Remy Oriaku's categorization of autobiography and fiction as equivalent takes a knock here. There is nothing to indicate that all fiction is mimetically inspired: contemporary predominance of the fantasia, or what is often called 'magical realism' is a clear example. In any case, interest in utopian fiction and what Fredric Jameson (2005) has described as 'Archaeologies of the Future' impugn mimetic theorizing. See also my chapter on 'The Fantasia and the Post-Apartheid Imagination' for a more detailed discussion of the Fantastical narrative.

[142] The specific instance of Antjie Krog's *In the Country of My Skull* is one exception, which unfortunately has also been confronted with devastating charges of plagiarism.

childhood innocence. We observe her gradual loss of that innocence through her 'imagined' complicity in the ominous inhumanities of the past[143].

This chapter explores the genre of the confessional in post-Apartheid South African novel of English expression with special focus on the contribution of Jo-Anne Richards in the construction of emergent paradigms in the literature of South Africa after Apartheid. It looks at the subject of confession as a profound aesthetic mode that draws immensely from historical memory and operates within the dynamics of remorse, compassion, and forgiveness. It explores the theoretical issues implicit in the form, and moves further to subject two of Richards' novels to critical analysis within the framework of this genre.

Jo-Anne Richards (b.1957-) is one of the little known novelists of the liberal order. She has worked as a journalist for several years, and taught media studies at the University of the Witwatersrand. Her adventure into novelistic composition has been quite fruitful with such impressive publications as ***The Innocence of Roast Chicken*** (1996), ***Touching the Lighthouse*** (1997), and ***Sad at the Edges*** (2003). **R**ichards' ***The Innocence of Roast Chicken*** and, very remotely though, ***Touching the Lighthouse***, explore this dimension of the confessional genre in a manner uniquely evocative of the eccentric female/child narrator who feels disgusted by her seeming 'complicity' in South Africa's recent historical past due to her apparent powerlessness. More than this, too, she is further depressed by the hypocrisy of the many confessants during the TRC sittings. ***Sad at the Edges***, too, is equally focused on the politics of memory and forgiveness. Like Goosen's ***Not All of Us***, Jooste's ***Dance With a Poor Man's Daughter***, Behr's ***The Smell of Apples***, among others, Richards' novels venture into South Africa's past with a conviction and assurance of its wealth that needs to be retrieved for a national healing of

[143] Impressive volumes of writing, for instance, have largely been acknowledged as having been informed by the TRC: See, for instance, Sarah Nuttal: 'Telling 'Free' Stories? Memory and democracy in South African Autobiography since 1994', in *Negotiating the Past: the Making of Memory in South Africa*: 75-88. A large array of fascinating responses to the literary implications of the TRC is assembled in *Negotiating the Past*. See also the journal, *Modern Fiction Studies*, special edition on South African fiction after Apartheid, Vol. 46.1(2000). See, in particular, Michiel Heyns' 'The Whole Country's Truth', pp. 42-66; Jennifer Wenzel's 'The Pastoral Promise and the Political Imperative', pp. 90-113; and Mark Sander's 'Truth, Telling, Questioning', pp. 13-41.

actual injuries that, even in their similitude to imagined narratives, transcend imaginative fiction.

It needs to be stressed here, though, that the dilemma of locating 'truth' in narratives is often the reason for the reluctant reception of the autobiography as a genre of literature. Where Sarah Nuttall does not address this as problematic, Remy Oriaku (1998) attempts to establish its literary identity, historical development, forms, and conventions. Significantly, he draws attention to the distinction between 'straight autobiography' with its typical recourse to narratorial egocentricity, and the 'autobiographical novel', which is less egocentric, and could be classified in terms of its confessionality, apology, or memoir. Yet, from George Bernard Shaw to Georges Gusdorf, this form remains an experiment in self-eulogy defined by its many "lies", and the deliberate abstention from empirically verifiable truth[144].

Going by Oriaku's categorization, Richards' ***Roast Chicken*** seems like a fictionalised autobiography. But the burden of thought, so intense in the narrative, oscillates between temporal topographies that would immediately challenge such generic reductionism. There are, of course, temporal indicators that immediately inheres in ***Roast Chicken*** the breath of a fictionalised confessional memoir: much of the incidents of 'ugliness' in the child-narrator's consciousness took place in 1966; the narrative's insistence on contemporaneity is built on the transitional politics of 1989; the child's temporal age at the period of 'ugliness' was 'eight'; the narrator's immediate moment of depression and memory of 'ugliness' is 'thirty-one', during which period she was married. The political relevance of the narrative resides in its confessionality: in its mnemonic evocations of the many incidents that mark the moment of 'ugliness', and the recent 'euphoric hysteria' that usher in post-racial politics in the 'emergent' nation.

[144] See Remy Oriaku, *Autobiography as Literature*. Ibadan: Sam-Bookman Monograph Series No. 8, Humanities Research Centre, 1998.

Theorists and scholars of the 'Confessional'[145] genre as indicated in the epigraphs at the beginning of this essay have made some fascinating suggestions toward the understanding of the dynamics of confession as a performative act instrumental to spiritual and psychological redemption. In ***Confession and Complicity in Narrative***, for instance, Dennis A. Forster (Forster 1987: 7) suggests that confession is hardly an incidental form in narrative. Confession, he clarifies:

> is a mode by which people enter into the discourse of their culture, where they step beyond reiteration of the stories and into interpretation. It represents an attempt to understand the terms and the limits by which the people are defined, both as they listen to the confessions of others and as they recount their own transgressions. It is this demand for understanding that other narratives will repeat as an integral part of their production and effect.

Following Jacques Lacan, Foster argues that 'Confession' allows for a fruitful hermeneutic engagement that transcends the perception of narratives as essentially, mimetically inspired. For "the failure of speech to be adequate", he argues, there is absolute need for 'exegesis: "confession engenders interpretation, drawing the listener into the production of meaning" (Foster 10). This raises some fundamental questions: if narrativity is confined within the dynamics of the sacramental, what implication does this have for artistic intentionality and the author's claims to authority? In addition, is

[145] The Confessional, instituted in the Catholic Church in the 16th century, is largely credited to Charles Borromeo. See Sharon Hymer's epilogue, 'The Power of Confessions', pp. 251-255 for further reading. For a general and specialised reading on the genre of the confessional, see, among others, Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), Charles J. Rzepka, *Sacramental Commodities* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), Jeremy Tambling, *Confession: Sexuality, Sin, The Subject*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), Barry Westburg, *The Confessional Fictions of Charles Dickens*, (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1977), Sharon Hymer, *Consuming Confessions: The Quest for Self-Discovery, Intimacy, And Redemption*, (Center City, Minn, Hazelden, 1996), Mike Hepworth and Bryan S. Turner, *Confession: Studies in Deviance and Religion*, (1982), Terence Doody, *Confession and Community in the Novel*, (Louisiana, 1980), Frank D. McConnell, *The Confessional Imagination: A Study of Wordsworth's Prelude*, (Baltimore, 1974), Norberto Valentini and Clara di Meglio, *Sex and the Confessional* (New York, 1974); and the very early study by Theodor Reik, *The Compulsion to Confess and the Need for Punishment*(1925). Charles J. Rzepka's *Sacramental Commodities* is particularly interesting for the author's exploration of De Quincey narratives from the combined perspectives of aesthetic sublimity, narrative as commodified product, and the discourse of domination.

confession in its spiritual essence now paralleled or diminished with/in the divinational and the psychological?

In the context of post-Apartheid writing, it could be argued that the dismissal of a number of the narratives by white South Africans as self-serving, overt documentations of the many melodramatic theatricalities at the TRC sittings might well hold in typical 'autobiographical speeches' inspired by the anticipations of amnesty. As fictional *re-creations*, however, the metonymical transpositions of experiences and subjectivities provide unique challenges that necessarily authorize our interest in the form, ethics, and teleology of the narratives. As Foster rightly notes: "The advantage of conceiving of narrative as confession rather than expression is that it allows us to see the pathos of the simultaneous pursuit and evasion of meaning in narrative", and "reveals the tragedy and irony implicit in the semiotic revision of psychoanalysis" (Foster 10). In a way, then, "the dialogue of confession" is transformed into "a struggle for power". Again, Foster: "Because we want to see ourselves as autonomous beings constituted independently of the words we speak, we fail to recognize the limits of our ability to control or possess our own language. To a great extent, our statements contain us, not we them" (Foster 13).

From another perspective, Jeremy Tambling appears to be fascinated with the multi-layered concerns of the confessional mode. He observes that any study of the subject of 'Confession' "will be not only intertextual, but metadiscursive as well as discursive" (Tambling 1990: Preface). Noting the diverse manifestation of confession in the human universe, Tambling adds: "In literature, in the church, the social services and the police, confession takes an honoured place. Once we have unloaded some secret about ourselves these institutions press on us the need to go on talking" (Tambling 1). Leaning on Christianity as a discursive site of the confessional, Tambling is persuaded that "confessional practices help to create the private individual, measured by deep interiority and feelings, and by a personal history". He argues that to the extent that 'Confessions themselves encourage an essentialist view of the self', "[there] is no essential form of words or actions called 'confession': there may be varied confessional practices; but even this term of course runs the risk (...) of essentialising the concept of confession, of

making it a-or trans-historical, as though people were constituted by the inbred willingness to confess" (Tambling 2)[146].

Tambling writes of the four fundamental tropes of the confessional narrative to subsume 'the Arena', 'confessional boxes', 'the private and confined space' and 'the social area'. Of the four tropes[147], it is the last one, 'the social area' that provides unique sense of resistance since it is often defined "by the operations of power". Thus, as he suggests, the social arena provides "the possibilities and the purpose of an escape from confession" (Tambling 9). Like nearly every other theorist, Tambling problematizes the place of the autobiographical in confessional narratives. His questions: "Do autobiographies have autonomous existence outside confession, or is the autobiography simply one form of confessional writing?" and, "Can the autobiography be regarded as a possible form of telling?" are issues quite germane in the reading of the 'confessional narratives' by white South African writers after apartheid. In other words, it could be asked: Are Jo-Anne Richards' novels, for instance, autobiographical? To what extent do we regard white South African narratives as autobiographical inscriptions of the confessional genre?

Tambling's theorizing is at one with the neo-historicist persuasions of Stephen Greenblatt, in which "confession as acting" suggests "self-fashioning and implies the presence of metonymic displacements and a glossing of the (textual) self" (Tambling 194). But he is not insensible of the rejection of the confessional in the absence of propelling factors. In this respect, a blend of the three elements of the incident, mnemonics, and the problematics of amnesia would tend to constitute the primal

[146] Following Nietzsche, Tambling asserts: "The basis of the confessional appears in the demand for interiorisation, for introspection, for denial of the instincts" (5).

[147] Of 'the Arena', he suggests that it anticipates confession at a public space, in which the confessant is perceived heroically for his public utterance— "which includes the idea of bearing testimony, of martyrdom". The question arising from this, it could be asked, is to what extent white South African writing affirms this form after apartheid. Must we look at confessionality purely as a TRC-inspired narrative? For the second trope, 'confessional boxes', he seems to be saying, that it is absolutely necessary that the confessant retains his "private space". What is mostly anticipated here is that "'the subject' has to speak, where what must be said must be the declaration of where the self is in relation to the discourse given. Autobiography comes in as the confessing method the subject is invited to use" (8). Again, it could be asked, here, how autobiographical are narratives deemed to be so? The third category, 'the private and confined space such as the prison, or madhouse' which "fits with the confessional box" (9), are relevant because they provide us with narratives of 'the Romantic confession' or 'Detective narratives' that often end in confession.

behaviour of the subject: "Confession is refused when there is an engagement with three stress-points which produce the confessing subject: history, remembrance and the impossibility of forgetting. These three all connect to the need to refuse naming and identity conferred through the past as father and confirmed through confession" (Tambling 202)[148]. In the final analysis, however, the objective is essentially the same whether it disguises as confessional narrative or self-fashioning inscription, since the identitarian nature of 'self-fashioning' confessional narratives often achieve its sense of worth and individuation through counter-writing 'symbolic' misrepresentations.

That the confessional narrative mode predominantly defines white writing in post-Apartheid South Africa is, therefore, a statement not only expressive of the negative perception of racial separatism, but more importantly, the involvement or lack of it by the confessant in a doctrine so universally condemned. Repression and separatism then constitute the sites, the 'new individuality' of which Tambling avers: "each period will produce its own subject that fits with the ideological discourses of the age. The kind of subject produced in the early modern period— introspective, aware of its sexuality and its death — may be seen, indirectly at least, through the powerful discourse of its literature" (Tambling 73). The confessional slant in white South African writing after apartheid is defined by its mnemonic frames: a recollection fore-grounded in overt and indirect participation in the *evils* of apartheid; a recollection constantly aware of the confessant's complicity in the collective unmaking of the psychological in/stability of the imagined Other. Yet, it is a recollection admirably invested with an ethical awareness of that complicity, and constantly seeks both physical and spiritual redemption, not only from the immediate victims of the recent history, but more fundamentally for self-flagellation, and search for compassion from universal humanity. In spite of their dismissal as "lugubrious"[149] confessions, we shall discover in this discussion that Jo-Anne Richards' novels exemplify this narrative mode, as does Jeane Goosen's ***Not All of Us*.** Whether we regard Richards' fiction as autobiographical, or what Tambling describes as 'confession's

[148] See also Tambling's chapter 8, 'I Live on my own Credit: Confession and Post-Modernism', ibid, 185-205.
[149] See Michiel Heyns, 'The Whole Country's Truth: Confession and Narrative in Recent White South African Writing', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 46.1(2000): 42-66.

repressed form', the metonymical slant of the two novels point to an aesthetic mission fashioned for the writer's/narrator's quest for psychological freedom, and the collective absolution of the represented 'Self'[150] — 'the white oppressor' through a fictional appeal, not only to the humanity of the oppressed Other, but also to the conscience of universal mankind.

There is the attendant problem of the audience's reception and apprehension of the confessional narrative. Where the discursive site is transgressed from the traditional fields of church (religion) and psychotherapy (Psychology) to fictional representation, how does one decode the confessional mode given the masked representations of evidently traumatic discursive events as we find, in the case of South Africa's previously racialist system, for instance? The audience/reader is, in this case, the confessor whereby the confessant is not necessarily the writer, but the fictional narrator. Where the autobiographical narrative is abundant in post-Apartheid writing, such "repressed confessions" originate from the 'freedom fighters' that only a few years earlier were classified 'terrorists' by the apartheid government. What emerges as confessional narrative, then, are the many narratives by a large number of 'white writers' who were determined to recreate narratives of their childhood experiences. The implication of their narrative modes to the 'confessor' is probably as spiritual as the confessants' expectations of psychological redemption. Sharon Hymer, it does seem, captures this effect:

> Regardless of whom we chose to hear our confession, our secret — whatever it is — loses its obsessive grip on us when we share it. The risk we take in confessing is the price we pay for redemption, but it is not the only price. In confessing, we may also destroy an old aspect of ourselves while simultaneously experiencing a rebirth, the emergence of a new identity (Hymer 1996:4).

[150] Drawing upon the neo-historicist theorizing of Stephen Greenblatt, Tambling finds a sense of 'self-fashioning' in the confessional mode. Like Greenblatt, he observes, therefore, that 'confession and self-fashioning are antipodal. And, self-fashioning turns out, ironically, to be the mode of existence of confessors'. (Tambling 194)

II.

In fictional narratives, however, something slightly different occurs: while the confessant at the temple is the principal actor who is hopeful of spiritual redemption arising from the fulfilment of the anticipated forgiveness, the confessant in a novel might not necessarily be the writer. The general claims that autobiographical narratives are essentially confessional in character, as Nuttall observes, might not necessarily be true. For, we do know that autobiographies are often times invested with extravagant self-glorifications. Foster recognizes this distinction when he notes that "where the usual confession arouses little interest, the writer's narrative says the truth is hard to tell and you must work to understand" (Foster 3). It is in this respect that fictional narratives provide a peculiar dynamic of confessionality — a metonymical representation of, sometime, the collective travesties of an individual or a people, but a representation that, all the same, is liberating to the writer. In the case of much of the confessional narratives that follow the inauguration of the TRC, Njabulo Ndebele (1998:19-28) observes the sense of collective travesties that authorize this peculiar form of redemption amongst a segment of the white communities in South Africa. He suggests in 'Memory, Metaphor, and the Triumph of Narrative' that

> ... there may be an informal truth and reconciliation process under way among the Afrikaners. Its contours are taking shape in the form of such novels as Mark Behr's ***The Smell of Apples***. Karel Schoeman's ***Promised Land*** anticipated it some years back. Jeanne Goosen's ***Not All of Us*** gave it further impetus. I am certain that there are more such narratives which have not yet been translated. Their distinguishing feature is their focus on ordinary social details which pile up into major, disturbing statements. The ordinary Afrikaner family, lost in the illusion of the historic heroism of the group, has to find its moral identity within a national community in which it is freed from the burden of being special. Afrikaner culture and its language will triumph from the resultant honesty of self-revelation, the resonances of which will appeal to many others whose humanity has been newly revealed by a liberated present (Ndebele 24).

It may well be that "the end of confession", as J. M. Coetzee observes, "is to tell the truth to and for oneself" (Coetzee 1992:291). If confession functions within the dynamics of anticipations and spiritual redemption as elaborated across the disciplines of philosophy, liturgy or even Law, what specific character idiosyncrasies do we identify in the literary representation of the confessional genre? Why is this form so persistent as to constitute a genre in the immense output of white South African writers after apartheid? In the 'Editor's introduction' to J. M. Coetzee's ***Doubling the Point*** (1992), David Attwell notes this trend of confession in its interplay with truth-telling. The novel, in this instance, defies a truth-telling that approximates with quotidian realities. It tells a different kind of truth — one that "neutralizes textuality the closer it approaches full consciousness of its own conditions of possibility". In this way, he suggests, "truth in confession cannot be arrived at by introspection alone, no matter how rigorous …… the endless story of the self will be brought to finality only at the point where it is most unaware; release comes with an affirmation or imposition of truth — alternatively, from grace" (Attwell 10-11).

J. M. Coetzee's rigorous explication of the confessional genre is quite instructive here: "until the source from which the shameful act sprang is confronted, the self can have no rest" (Coetzee, 1992: 251). For Coetzee, "absolution" is fundamental in the functioning of the confessional. Absolution, in his phraseology, implies "the closing of the chapter, liberation from the oppression of the memory" (Coetzee, 252). If the abhorrent acts that define confessional narratives are *committed* and *told* by their narrators as Coetzee suggests, how appropriate is it for us to describe much of white South African writing as belonging to the confessional genre? Much of the apartheid atrocities being 're-invented' in post-apartheid white writing were neither initiated by the writers nor executed by them[151]. In this case, it would be wrong to regard the autobiographical narratives as confessional; yet, by semantic extension, the actions are narrated metonymically in which case the confessants are conveyed metaphorically in their collective quest for absolution.

[151] Exceptions do, of course, abound as we find in the author of *The Smell of Apples*, Mike Behr's confession that he was an agent of the supremacist regime.

The gains of apartheid were largely on the side of the white community and it follows to reason that the collective memory of sharing the benefits of racial separatism would authorize a collective quest for forgiveness[152].

But forgiveness or absolution can only be attained through recompense or remorse: an act which, in aesthetics as in sacramental quests, can only come with *telling*. It is in this sense that Richards' ***The Innocence of Road Chicken*** and ***Touching the Lighthouse,*** Jeanne Goosen's ***Not all of us,*** Mike Behr's ***The smell of Apples,*** Pamela Jooste's ***Dance with a Poor Man's Daughter*** and, to a significant extent, even Coetzee's ***Disgrace***[153]***,*** among others, are eloquently confessional in their collective aesthetic recount of apartheid repression and the seeming backlash that appear to define the narratives of the liberal order.

Concluding in his 'Confession and Narrative,' Michiel Heyns weighs the varying success of the confessional narratives by white South African writers after apartheid, but submits: "the challenge for literature, as for the rest of non-literary South Africa, will be to erect habitable structures on the foundations of remorse" (Heyns 2000:63)[154]. Whereas

[152] Michiel Heyns has observed "the desperate repudiation" of their perceived complicity by some of the characters in narratives by a large number of white writers after apartheid as they dramatize "their share of the group's guilt". This rejection of assumed guilt of the white South African's complicity to the crimes of the past is particularly seen in the dispositions of Gertie in Jeanne Goosen's *Not All of Us*. But we also find this recourse to innocence in characters as varying as Kate (*The Innocence of Roast Chicken*), Patrick Winter (in Dalmon Galgut's *The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs*), Kristien Muller (in Brink's *Imaginings of Sand*), Marnus (in Mark Behr's *The Smell of Apples*), etc. In analysing the conflict between loyalty to the principal character's Afrikaner supremacist nationalism and the quest for a just universal humanism in Behr's *The Smell of Apples*, Heyns suggests: "One of the incidental effects [...] is to subsume individual agency in communal guilt and to efface the difference between unconscious complicity and deliberate collaboration" (53). See Michiel Heyns' essay, 'The Whole Country's Truth: Confession and Narrative in Recent White South African Writing', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 46.1 (2000): 42-66.

[153] Heyns argues that Coetzee's *Disgrace* is problematic in its identification as a confessional narrative since it hardly enacts "a liberation from the past". As he puts it, *Disgrace* deliberately avoids a confessional mode, seeking instead to come to terms with the diminished possibilities bequeathed by history and one's own part in that history" (2000: 64).

[154] Studies of a number of Confessional narratives at the dawn of the liberal order have often interrogated the purpose of the act. One particularly provocative reading of this development is Sarah Nuttall's "Telling 'free' stories? Memory and democracy in South African Autobiography since 1994" (1998: 75-88), in which she writes of "the totalitarian potential of a literary self-consciousness" that should be "welcome in autobiography" (86). In her reading of Mark Behr's *The Smell of Apples*, she suggests: "Behr's text raises the questions about the purpose of confession and who its beneficiaries are. Confession typically presupposes a constellation of notions about the private self-tormented by guilt and the private conscience exposed to self-criticism. However, the fact that people confess to their crimes does not necessary imply a

Richards' novels have not commanded much of critical interest, as 'emergent' narratives, Heyns dismisses even her most accomplished effort, ***The Innocence of Roast Chicken*** as stereotypical of the farm narrative and its penchant for creating the rebel daughter who is disgusted with the antics of her father, especially during the years of racialism in South Africa. In my estimation, however, Richards' ***Roast Chicken*** remains in its cardinal character a confessional narrative that readily brings to mind the cruel treatment of the 'Kaffir' in Jooste's ***Dance With a Poor Man's Daughter***, and the many instances of human violations, which we find in much of post-Apartheid fiction of English expression devoted to retrieving the socio-historical and recent memories of apartheid and liberated South Africa.

Richards falls within the category of other post-Apartheid female writers such as Pamela Jooste and Rayda Jacobs. As indicated earlier, at the level of the intellectual feminism in Africa, and in South Africa in particular[155], a number of the writers will likely protest such flattening. Jooste's 'feminism' is quite pronounced in her fictional recreations of the contributions of women toward the dethroning of racialism in South Africa. It is in this respect, too, that the confessional slant of her ***Dance With a Poor Man's Daughter*** is quite audacious in the portrayal of the systematic silencing of 'blackness' and the gradual psychological destabilization of many 'Coloured' families during the days of forced removals in Cape Town. In some of her other novels such as ***Like Water in Wild Places*****,** ***Frieda and Min*****,** and ***People Like Ourselves***, she moves from encounters with indigenous people and the experiences of whites growing up in the early days, to the reality of life in South Africa after apartheid. Rayda Jacobs, too, is admirably ambitious in her return to the 'historical' novel, especially in her taking a long leap backward to the 18th century to creatively 'investigate' the problematics of inter-racial relationships and miscegenation in ***Eyes of the Sky*** and so on. Jacobs, like Zoë Wicomb, has shown enormous interest in the politics of 'Colouredism' in pre-and post-colonial South Africa.

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compulsion to confess as an escape from a burden of guilt. For Behr, the conscience of memory may be less at stake than the fear of exposure before the TRC in the present. Confessions, as Hepworth and Turner (1982, 35) point out, are constructed and not discovered" (87).

[155] See my chapter on Zoë Wicomb, 'The Subject of the Other: Locating the Self in Zoë Wicomb's Post-Apartheid Post-Colony' for a more elaborate discussion of African feminisms and its politics.

How, then, does Jo-Anne Richards embrace the confessional narrative mode? Is her fiction thoroughly confessional, autobiographical, 'straight-autobiography', or simply an experiment at recycling existing *Plassroman* narrative modes?

III.

Richards' ***The Innocence of Roast Chicke****n* is a fine example of the autobiographical novel that, by every indication, is non-straight autobiography as we find for instance of such narrative as J.M. Coetzee's ***Boyhood***. The resonant presence of the first-person 'narrator' clearly obscures the identity of 'the writer' in spite of the complex aesthetic codes that indicate possibilities of the plot focussing on the primacy of the writer as our first-person. This is clearly distinguished from the straight autobiographical writings where the first-person narrator is ubiquitous in the narrative process as well as in the unfolding actions as we find for instance in Kenneth Kaunda's ***Zambia Shall be Free***, Nelson Mandela's ***Long Walk to Freedom***, Nnamdi Azikiwe's ***My Odyssey***, or Ellen Kuzwayo's ***Call Me a Woman***. While we are aware of the first person narrator, for instance, it is also very clear from the beginning that we are not reading the story of Richards, the writer, but that of 'the narrator'. Beyond the narrative style that deploys the first-person ("I wrote"; "I should"; "I carried"; "I lugged", ***Roast Chicke****n* p.1), the novel's plot model is clearly attuned to the novelistic autobiographical mode of the confessional. Nothing in the novel blurs it with either the *purely apologetic*, or the *memoir* forms of autobiography, even though there is an indirect overlap of the apologetic genre implicit in the thoroughly confessional mode to which the narrative most glaringly conforms. From the first page of the novel, we listen to the narrator in a tellingly remorseful recount of a complicity derived from passivity, given her powerlessness as a mere, young, teenager:

> Don't think badly of me. Everyone is filled with self-pity at fourteen. And for many years I carried the full guilt of that year. I lugged the intense, silent burden of having caused everything very bad, or not standing in the way of the bad things –

> to field and divert them from us, from my farm. I had too much faith in the way things would continue in the beauty of before (***Roast Chicken*** 1-2).

A few pages later, the narrator would reveal a troubling development within the temporal space of the narrative. The concern is a tacit recount of events "before things went ugly". The temporal space is 1966. It could be argued, here, that the privileging of specific temporal moments in the narrative is so profound that it authorizes a recollection of a few historical incidents that took place during the period. In 1960, one recalls, a nation that only twelve years earlier was officially proclaimed 'Apartheid' state suddenly decreed that the identification of its population should be done on the basis of a new formula. 'European' and 'non-European' categories were then dropped for 'White' and 'Black; in 1962, there was the infamous killing of 67 black protesters in what is now being referred to as 'the Sharpeville Massacre'; in 1963, leaders of the predominantly black liberation movement, ANC, were jailed for periods that ranged from ten years incarceration to life imprisonment for fighting against so many forms of marginalization that include the disenfranchisement of Africans; in 1966, the Prime Minister, Dr Hendrik Verwoed was assassinated. The political incidents of the 1960s were, therefore, monumental. In Richards' 'fiction', however, the 'narrator' of ***Roast Chicken*** was barely eight years old and a Standard one pupil in 1966. As an adult relieving the memories of the period in 1989, she tells us: "the cataclysmic political events of the 1960s had, for the most part passed me by. But I did know that blacks, or 'Africans' as I was instructed to call them by my enlightened, English-speaking parents, were badly treated and poor. 'Don't call them natives, dear, they don't like it" (***Roast Chicken*** 5).

There is also a festive aura in the narrative. Every detail is linked to the festive moment of 'Christmas', and the symbolism is not to be missed. To the child, Christmas supposedly effaces anger and bitterness, racial hatred, and intra-racial acrimonies. The child's memory, in this instance, is the instant site for viewing the purity of a period, and topography defined by its reckless, uncomprehending innocence. In the life of the child, then, one observes that blackness and whiteness are meaningless categories of eugenics when trying to locate a noble humanity. During Christmas, children of both black and

white families resident in the farm are brought together to enjoy the festivity with all its promise of fanfare and seductive memories. Yet she is aware of the differences between good and evil. She knows that Africans do not like to be called 'natives' because her parents advised her so; she knows that blacks or Africans are not happy because 'they are treated badly'. At the age of eight, though, a patriarchal society that trains the female child to be submissive and unquestioning about events within her family has brought her up into keeping quiet in the face of evils inflicted on Africans by white, hypocritical adults who feel no moral qualms about their inhumanities to the black farm workers. It is within this temporal site that the innocent child finds the meaning of the ideal, utopian universe that knows no 'ugliness'. This universe allows the child-narrator to regale in the idyll, pastoral promise where, as she recollects:

> We scrambled and scraped down the tree to join the family on the lawn. As they did every year, William and Petrus had brought their younger children round to the front lawn before lunch. Looking clean and uncomfortably proud in their starched new outfits, they posed with us for Christmas photographs. I have such a clear picture of us, as we must have looked. Six young children from the Eastern Cape, from the same farm, who hardly knew each other — two of us white, four black. All of us barefoot.... (***Roast Chicken*** 293-294)

The Innocence of Roast Chicken revolves within the ambience of historical and contemporary memories of constructed racial boundaries, realized on temporal mobility: the time markers of 1966 and 1989 are only necessitated by a narrative desire to evoke recollections of 'ugliness', and the consequences of some profound display of inhumanity to a child-witness. By 1989, the collapse of official apartheid was a foregone conclusion: the prime symbol of the apartheid regime, P.W. Botha, was already rendered invalid by sickness, and had created more trepidation among the population than there ever was during Dr Verword's regime. He had equally missed many chances of transforming the South African society by embracing democratic ideals that were globally fashionable at the time. His successor, F.W. de Klerk, seized the opportunity to write his name in the eternal register of mankind by abandoning the hard line tactic of former president Botha.

The result was his release of political prisoners, un-banning of liberation movements and their consequent recognition as political parties. But it was not a very smooth transition. Rivalry amongst black leaders led to violent clashes in several black settlements.

The trade unions also did not help matters when refusal by some members of the black communities to join them in 'national strikes' or industrial action often led to the killing or 'neck-lacing' of such persons. Many white families suffered in the hands of some criminals especially 'robbers' who presented the gory history of the past as reasons for attacks against white farm owners. The events of the last days of official apartheid, the hope it brought with it, but especially the cruelty and violence which also define it led to fears amongst white communities that the black peoples might unleash enormous violence on them should political powers finally return to the blacks. These developments of the late 1980s finally trigger off memories of the events of the 1960s of which the narrator describes as "cataclysmic" (***Roast Chicken*****,** 5). While the narration oscillates between 1966 when she was merely eight years old, and 1989 when she has become a young woman of thirty-one married to a brilliant lawyer, Joe, therefore, it is significant to note that the choice of the child-narrator of the 1960s is only a function of memory: a recreation that does not necessarily insist on telling 'the perfect truth', assuming such a truth ever exists.

Roast Chicken is the story of Kate, a brilliant South African, who grows up to be affected psychologically by an ugly incident she witnessed some twenty-three years earlier. At the tender age of eight in 1966, she had consistently 'holidayed' with her family in an idyllic farmyard of a town in the Eastern Cape. At an early stage in her life, she had a feel of discontent from the black African farm-workers on the one hand, and on the other, an intra-racial bickering between her immediate English-speaking family and the Afrikanerdom of her grand-parentage. Her inability to comprehend the unnecessary 'battle' between her mother, Elaine, and maternal grandmother, Ouma, provokes a desire in her to 'eavesdrop' during adult conversations and, further, to follow up developments within the farm through adventures. But this was not to last for long since the many scenes of inhumanity that she witnessed became a deciding factor on the direction of her

adult life. Some of these inhumanities constitute the essential incidents of the novel. For instance, within the course of her growth, she witnesses the harshness of white farm owners to the black farm workers in various guises.

She observes that blacks or Africans are often dissuaded from acquiring higher education; they are subjected to all forms of slavery as they do all the work in the farm and have no life of their own; they live in very untidy sections of the farm, and sometimes they are crowded in their rooms; they are made to feel less human by the way they are flogged and beaten up with the slightest provocation. While Kate loves her grandmother and her parents, she does not understand why the black children do not enjoy similar privileges as herself and her elder brother, Neil. Events took a turn for the worse when the farm is sold to a new owner, Mr Vans Rensburg. Unlike her grandmother, Van Rensburg's mother is presented as a mean Afrikaner old woman who is totally 'inhospitable, wicked and insensitive'. Kate does not understand why the new landlord's mother is very harsh in the way she treats the black farm workers. She does not also understand why even dogs are trained to react differently when they find any black person around, including the farm workers. The bottled up emotion among some of the farm workers finally takes its toll when in the Christmas of 1966, one of the farm workers, Johannes, gets himself drunk, and in reaction to the pains he had suffered in the hands of Van Rensburg's mother, decides to humiliate the old woman in vengeance by raping her.

The result is devastating as he suffers double persecution. First he is beaten up and 'castrated' by the white farm owners, and later imprisoned for ten years. The metaphor of 'Roast Chicken' is then expanded with a metronomic finesse, as the rhythm of the incidents peaks on the festive day of Christmas, 1966, the day she actually witnessed the castration of Johannes. While Vans Rensburg spends minimal time in prison for castrating another man, Johannes gets ten years of imprisonment in spite of the earlier punishment of being castrated. But the pains of the actions go beyond the immediate victim. It does seem that Johannes is already immune from suffering since he grew up to encounter hardship as a condition of living. The double persecutions of castration and imprisonment are, therefore, only dimensions to the inhumanity with which the settlers

had coded him as a black person. The metaphor of 'roast chicken' also transcends the physical pains of assault and castration. It is a psychological condition that finds expression in the attitudinal dispositions of the young Kate. Like the innocent 'Roast Chicken', then, she remains psychologically 'roasted' the rest of her life even though she manages to remain someone's daughter, sister, and even passes her school examinations.

Bearing witness to the castration of a human being — even the castration of a *Kaffir*— was to the eight-year-old daughter tantamount to murder. It is bad enough that she witnessed the incident. But there is more to her disappointment and consequent depression. She had always loved and adored her father who, for most of her life, was the symbol of justice and fairness. It is in this way that we get a sense that Kate's psychological condition is a making of the cumulative injustices she witnessed inflicted against the black farm workers. More importantly, her depression is fuelled by the fact that instead of her much-adored father objecting to the castration, he brazenly took part in the horrendous crime. She feels her complicity presided over by her father who waited for "His decision" to be "made for him" (***Roast Chicken*** 306). Such complicity is never without some dire consequences, as the narrator later confesses:

> My father and I never spoke of what had happened to us. But he knew that I knew. My own guilt always stopped me from condemning him allowed, but he was never able to discipline me again, or tell me what to do (***Roast Chicken*** 312).

The Innocence of Roast Chicken, on the surface, it would seem, reads like a melodramatic narrativization of what Wole Soyinka once described as "the recurrent cycle of human stupidity".[156] Actions are defined by arrant insensitivity, brutality, and violations. Where the hostile treatment of black workers is only an aspect of these violations, the intra-racial conflicts and brutal killings that came with industrial actions among the black communities tend to affirm violence as a defining paradigm of the emerging nation at the fall of official apartheid in the late 1980s. Violence becomes a

[156] Wole Soyinka, 'The Writer in a Modern African State', cited in T. Akachi Ezeigbo, *Fact and Fiction in the Literature of the Nigerian Civil War*. Lagos: Unity Publishing & Research Company, 1991: 130.

human condition that transcends historical and racial boundaries, since it manifests in different idioms and degree amongst black and white South Africans. It equally transcends historical moments: the violence of 1966 does not end with the imminent liberalism of democratic South Africa. Instead, by 1989, a new wave of violence seems to overwhelm the nation in form of labour violations and political thuggery. In this way, ***Roast Chicken*** is comfortably coded in a semiotics of temporality that peaks, ironically, in a moment of festivity: in both 1966 and 1989, the brutalities that define the socio-historical, economic, and political lives of the 'nation' are basically placed at the Christmas days. For the child narrator, then, the festive period of Christmas is as strong a mnemonic site as the many brutal incidents that haunt her for another twenty-three years.

But there is another angle to the identity of the adult Kate of 1989. She is arrogant, cynical, and bad company to anyone around her. She frustrates her caring husband, Joe, to no end. The euphoria that greeted the fall of the Berlin wall in Germany and the collapse of the Soviet Union were all having their impacts in Africa and elsewhere, with what seems to be a possible collapse of apartheid and the embrace of democracy by the racist National Party government in South Africa. Like most young and progressive South Africans at the time, Kate's husband, Joe, was enthusiastic about the unfolding political events in the country. But Kate remains cynical and unsupportive of every action initiated by her husband. The readiness with which she dismisses her husband's dreams and aspirations leads to a near-loss of confidence in their marriage. He tries to provide comfort in spite of her cynicism. When he suggests that they leave for holiday in the Eastern Cape, however, the anger that greets him makes it obvious that his wife, Kate, is 'troubled'. He soon discovers that she has been traumatised for years, and that a mere mention of the Cape farms was enough to irritate her to no bounds. This awareness that something 'ugly' must have happened to Kate long ago in the Eastern Cape allows for the narrator's return to memory to narrate the "cataclysmic events of the 1960s". The adult Kate's arrogance is therefore seen to be informed by her loss of faith in mankind, first due to her experience in the 1960s, but more recently as a result of the violence and irrational killings that seem to define political transition in the South Africa of the late 1980s.

Following the many irrational killings, "neck-lacings", and political violence of the post-emergency era of the late 1980s that cut across racial boundaries, the adult Kate, and her utterly disillusioned husband, Joe, would finally find closure through the confessional: an outright admission of their latent complicity through their actions, inaction, and even escapist contemplations. The accumulation of these many incidents of 'ugliness' finally terminates at a point where the adult narrator is compelled to retreat to memory in order to realize and restore her battered individuality and humanity. And while the *telling* of the final assault on Johannes was for the narrator "The hardest part", it was that singular incident in the farm, more than any other, that led her to a certain awareness: "to a sudden and violent knowledge of brutality and a chaotic awareness of the savagery of humans and a God who could allow such things and such people to exist" (***Roast Chicken*** 307).

Confession in ***Roast Chicken*** emanates from a sense of awareness, not necessarily of complicity: the guilt so dramatized in its many resonances, therefore, might be ungrounded. Awareness, here, does not amount to complicity since the child-narrator in her innocence, is completely powerless and does not fully comprehend the implication of the many suggestive dialogues around her. One particularly outstanding instance is locatable in labour relations between the white farm owner and the black employee. The sustained evocations of the binaries of 'Master' and 'Slave' and the implicit recrimination of the narrator's grandmother indicate a long tradition of enslavement, which has long been taken for granted. The irony of this slave-running tradition is the mild and innocent conviction with which her grandmother resists quality education even for children of black labourers. 'Ouma' as the narrator fondly calls her grandmother, encourages John (Son of one of her black worker's) to join his parents as farm-worker. She dissuades him from acquiring higher education because, as she persuades him, "For what do you want more? It can only make you unsatisfied and angry with life, as I see you are becoming. You should speak to the new Master on the next farm. I spoke to him about you and he said he can always use another good boy" (***Roast Chicken*** 41).

Kate's grandmother, 'Ouma' is a matriarch of sorts. She is strong, and even exudes more authority in the farm than most of her male children. But she belongs to a generation that is determined to project the imagined superiority of the white race to eternity. For her, then, the black farm worker should remain loyal and resourceful; the black farm worker has no future outside the farm, and this applies to all children of black employees of the farm, as well as their future descendants. It is for this reason, even if said quite innocently, that she urges John to avoid higher education since such pursuit of more learning will only lead to tragedy and dissatisfaction with life. John's display of political consciousness, especially his awareness of the capitalist nature of labour exploitation leads him into accusing 'Ouma' of enslaving her workers and disposing of them at their most vulnerable states. This leads further to the old woman's protestations, denials, and the consequent ironic acceptance of the charges levelled against her: "My boys have never been slaves, and you know as much .... *You know their families have lived on this farm for generations"* (***Roast Chicke****n* 43, my emphasis).

Ouma may not know of it. But she has implicitly located the identity of generations of black farm workers resident in the farm, and many of who are probably older than herself as her "boys". Even more *disturbingly telling* is the innocent revelation that the retirement benefits for generations of black workers who served her ancestors and her self was to transfer them to another "Master" who "would never beat them for nothing". Elsewhere, the old woman tells John:

> You have already more education than is good for you. I don't like the sound of you. You are starting to sound like those political natives up there in Transvaal. But I won't have that attitude on my farm (***Roast Chicke****n* 61).

John, therefore, must address himself to a serious consideration of applying his labour to the growth of the farm, just as his father and his ancestors did. He is reminded: "There is no room for layabouts here, causing trouble *among my boys.* And you know very well, John, that I have always treated *my boys* well". (***Roast Chicke****n* 61, my emphasis) The implication of these altercations to the tender Kate is unmistakeably in conditioning her

into a depressed young woman who would later describe the period as marking the beginning of "ugliness". She is "shocked into/frightened stillness" (***Roast Chicken*** 61). She is confused at the insensitivity, or outright wickedness of her grandmother ("I didn't know what it was I had witnessed. And I could never have put into words my disquiet or the reason for it", ***Roast Chicken*** 62).

Richards' narrative is an intriguing one: what emerges as connubial altercations between Joe and the narrator, Kate, at the dawn of the liberal order is carefully salvaged in temporal mobility through the suggestive dialogues. 'Temporal mobility', understood in this context as the movement of time, allows for a proper understanding of incidents through a juggling of moments. In fact, it is through this narratological device that the confessional thematics of ***Roast Chicken*** find its most eloquent support: 'Innocence' and 'guilt' are carefully complicated in the positional dissonance of the child-characters that include the narrator's brothers, Neil and Michael, Mr Van Rensburg's son, Koboy, and the children of the black farm workers, just as the traumas of the past consistently haunt the memory of the adult-actant-narrator, Kate.

The confusion is implicit in the innocent eight-year old Kate who, at once, wishes for an opportunity to provide for the deprived black kids and yet protect the seemingly benevolent image of her grandmother. For Kate, then, John (Williams's son) should be satisfied with his primary school education; he must not complain because many people never had the privilege of attaining standard six; he should not be angry at her grandmother because "it wasn't her fault (they) got too old to run the whole farm" and, in any case, "Not many Africans go to school for so long". The confessional slant of ***Roast Chicken***, it is safe to reason, derives from the adult-narrator's implicit mission to correct the child-narrator's naive perception and understanding of life in the bucolic universe of Eastern Cape's farmlands. Temporal mobility, in this case, satisfies the aesthetic need to provide two points of view only distinguished by innocence and maturity through time-space. The self-assertive adult Kate who is visibly disgusted by, and cynical of human potentials, it follows to reason, is far different from the naive Kate of the 1960s who took the dictates of her parents with uncritical adulation.

The exoneration of her grandmother becomes, in a way, the exoneration of herself and the rest of the white farmers who, she imagines, should be commended for providing jobs to an otherwise passive and inconsequential blacks' humanity. The innocent child-narrator, however, needed a superior intelligence to remind her of the complicity of all white benefactors in the collective deprivation of the black child. Richards' dialogue form inheres this sense of guilt through Kate's' elder brother, Neil, and thus sustains the need for a spiritual redemption for both passive on-lookers and the active participants in the systematic oppression and exploitation of the black farm-workers. Neil reminds her: "Maybe it's all our faults for letting things happen. Don't you know that's what the Germans said in the war, that it wasn't their fault and it wasn't fair to blame them? But you know what? They were all guilty, for letting things happen. It's the same here. We're to blame, me and you" (***Roast Chicken*** 132).

This systematic and gradual construction of guilt in the child's consciousness remains a recurrent theme in a number of white South African writing after apartheid. Like Richards' narratives, instances of this mode, as we have observed earlier, are particularly resonant in Pamela Jooste's novels, especially in ***Dance With a Poor Man's Daughter***. But where Jooste uses the medium to celebrate the immense contribution of white women in the struggle against racial separatism in South Africa, Richards' narrator remains obsessively haunted by her powerlessness, passivity, and inability to challenge the many inhumanities she witnessed, to the level of pathology, and depression. She becomes progressively cynical and a near-misanthropic pessimist. The only sensible salvation, it does seem then, will come from *saying it all* to a sympathetic listener. The narrator is here presented as a repentant confessant who appeals to, in this case, the reader. At age eight, Kate believes that she is partly responsible not only for the racial inhumanities she witnessed, but even more compulsively, of the very barbaric incident of castration that she had the misfortune of watching. 1966, then, becomes a temporal marker for "ugliness" not only in the nation as a whole but, more fundamentally, in the pastoral ambience of her family farms. She says of the period:

> That was the year, you see, in which I first noticed danger in the commonplace. When, for the first time, death seemed to reek from the livestock and hatred from my lived ones. When the certainty of the world unravelled, and when its familiar form turned slowly monstrous. But I had to carry on to clutch at the sameness, to hold it all together (***Roast Chicken*** 170).

Confession, then, is not purely informed by the racial altercations, or the injustice of man to a fellow man, which she saw. For the narrator-confessant, it is a total event, and the choice of a child-narrator suggests a profound innocence, which makes her feel guilty and responsible even in the conflicts involving 'live-chickens' in the poultry farm. At another level, though, the choice of the child-narrator presents notions of authority and power relations even at the family front. Kate must be protected from the evil things happening around her; she must not be allowed to witness the sadism that her father is capable of unleashing on a fellow human, even when such a person is a 'kaffir'; she must be protected from the 'other' farm residents who have "a different smell about them"; she must be taught to learn that she is special and loved more than anything and anyone else. Such upbringing, nevertheless, authorizes that she must not question developments around her. She must be taught that every action taken by her father and the rest of the family is meant to protect and provide for her. As a female-child, too, she must not take to 'dangerous' sports, unlike her brother, Neil, who is free to visit friends, and free to return at odd hours. Her freedom is utterly limited, first as a child and, second, as female.

Richards' ***Roast Chicken*** is especially problematic in the discourse of the child-narrative within the confessional framework. While confessionality is severally defined by actions and conclusions that are progressively infantile, the plot formations and their unfolding indicate a fascination with a narrative complexity that eludes the anticipated portraiture of innocence. The child-narrator, then, is sustainedly consumed in 'innocent guilt' — a pure-heartedness that, nevertheless, seems conflicted by an irremediable complicity in the many tragic incidents of 'ugliness'. Katie, for instance, remains troubled that her inability in matching the strength of her grandparents' dog is the reason the angry bulldog attacked a visitor to their home. While she cries for the pain of the injured, however, the defence

put forward by her grandmother continually confuses her. The poor child, here, does not understand why even house-pets such as dogs are taught to imbibe racism and racial idioms. She blames herself for the 'ugliness' but insists on finding out from her grandmother why the dog suddenly became ferocious:

"But why, Ouma? My voice scratched out.
'Why did the dog do that?'
'*Ag, my kind,* she wasn't one of our girls.
The dog knew that. The dog knows the smell of our people'.
'But it's never bitten anyone, never, even when Mr Van Rensburg was here.
He's not from here and the dog didn't bite him'.
'Natives have a different smell about them. Dogs pick that up. It makes them wary. And the silly girl ran. That's the worst thing she could've done'. (***Roast Chicke****n* 225)

The child's confusion, then, is confirmed: not too long ago, Mr Van Rensburg had so inhumanly forced his son, Koboy to pick a fight with the narrator's brother, Michael; the same Mr Rensburg had threatened to mercilessly flog the 'arrogant' English kids; her grandmother had seen nothing wrong in his flogging of the "stubborn black workers".

To conclude this segment of our discussion, some of the fundamental thrusts of Richards' ***The Innocence of Roast Chicken*** need be re-visited here: Where the child-narrator of 1966 is persuasively confessional and overtly remorseful of every 'ugly' incident, the adult-narrator of 1989 is unrepentantly arrogant, and pathologically cynical of human capabilities. The adult Kate of 1989 is, therefore, a diametrically characterological 'Other' of the innocent Kate of 1966. Temporal mobility thus allows for a progressive construction of the cynical 'Other' through anomic experiences that are readily racial and inhumane. But it goes beyond this: temporal mobility places the insanity of the past in parallel position with the insanity of the present: what was yearned for only yesterday emerges as the traumas of today: the anticipated liberation of the whole does not materialize, as the violence of today eventuates in a new meteoric wave of angst. Kate's

husband, Joe, captures the mood of the present: "somehow I don't feel quite easy anymore about criticizing people for becoming disillusioned" (***Roast Chicken*** 233).

The violations of the temporal present resonate in practically every aspect of post-Apartheid quotidian existence at its moment of transition: political strife, racial tension, labour insurrections, intra-racial bickering and parochialism all eventuate in geographies of violation with their accompanying protestations. Notwithstanding the significant thematic differences between them, Richards' ***Roast Chicken*****,** in its engagement with South Africa's transition era politics and social universe, thus emerges as a post-Apartheid narrative of disenchantment in a manner equally evocative of similar novels of transition such as Brink's ***Imaginings of Sand***, Mda's ***Ways of Dying***, Coetzee's ***Disgrace***, Duiker's ***The Quiet Violence of Dream***, and several others. The guilt of the past and the confession it incites are then ridiculed by the enormity of violence and the seeming lack of direction that define the emerging regime of democratic non-racialism. The dilemma generated by this fascination with contemporaneity in ***The Innocence of Roast Chicken***, as in ***Ways of Dying*** and Phaswane's Mpe's ***Welcome to Our Hillbrow*** in particular, is the entrapment of narrative in the representation of daily events. It is an established fact that political violence marked the first democratic dispensation in 1994 and after, particularly in the KwaZulu-Natal province (Taylor 2002). The deployment of the tabloid narrative form in the aesthetic retrieval of that historical moment in some post-Apartheid fiction thus blurs the imaginative presence of some of the narratives. However, Richards' innovativeness through temporal juggling, her provision of detail, the dialogues, and especially her impressive exploration of the interior personality of the central child-figure through adulthood, saves ***The Innocence of Roast Chicken*** from the outright, soporific reportorial narrative mode.

IV.

In ***Touching the Lighthouse,*** however, Richards' concern for the liberating narrative is far less eloquent, given its significantly 'private' form: where the personal intertwines with the public, confession becomes less obviated as a mnemonic function of artistic

responsibility. Yet, it is this conflict between the personal and the public that makes the confessional impulse such a significant presence in ***Roast Chicken***. In ***Touching the Lighthouse,*** confession sidelines the political and racial antics of segregationalism. Instead, we encounter two young ladies – Jennifer Pringle and Susan Grant – so concerned with the mission of apprehending what the narrator unambiguously describes as "part of our joint mystique" (***Lighthouse*** 146). South Africa, — "a country of inevitabilities" (***Lighthouse*** 158) remains the central narrative space, with much of the incidents unfolding in the amorphous city of Cape Town. Although evocations of the 1976 youth uprising provide the canvas for the narrator's public interest, the revolutionary ethos of the new 'youth' expands this fascination with society to a racial crisis that implicitly explains apartheid repression, especially at the periods of urgency. ***Lighthouse*** is fundamentally a private narrative: it is essentially a narrative of individuation given that a significant chunk of the dislocated plots are attuned to the psychological apprehension of Susan and Jennifer.

In other words, ***Lighthouse,*** in many ways, is a novel of 'identity': it is a narrative of female sexuality and quest for emotional and sexual liberation. The narrator, Jennifer, and her friend, Susan, grew up together as friends. Transiting from the coastal City of Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape to the more urbane Western Cape Capital of Cape Town, Jennifer and Susan develop a lesbian relationship that is immediately sublimated to a cult of sisterhood. But this sexual affinity is consistently truncated by both ladies' individual desires to be cuddled by men, and thus indirectly admit their desire to enjoy men's warm embrace. Repeatedly, they jump in and out of relationships to such a time that Jennifer considers herself a failure as far as maintaining a steady relationship is concerned. Her liaison with Susan fails, as easily as her inability to sustain similar romantic opportunities provided her by men as varying as Martin, Malam and Mandla. Where she is treated like a mere sexual object by her white lover, Martin, her racial conditioning in a highly segregated South African society does not allow her to give a chance to a black lover, Mandla. She provides shelter for Mandla at a moment of siege and imagines herself in control of every situation. Her notion of power as a liberated

white female lawyer takes a knock, however, when she finds herself in the assembly of black men who caution her at will (***Lighthouse*** 227).

She strikes friendship with her clients, many of whom get several terms of imprisonment following the enormity of the violence that took the lives of many innocent people — white and black alike. But the cruelty of the age, the brutality of the regime, and the violations of the 'colonized' are subtly evoked by Richards through a careful manipulation of language through dialogue. A regime so stubbornly given to protecting white supremacy had, among other things, promulgated a decree, banning sexual engagement across racial boundaries. And while Richards does not specifically present a trauma informed by this policy of racial purity, it is through the lowly old maid, Maud, that we find humour. She tells Susan about her new boyfriend, Manie, the police reservist who is "full of *Apettite* (apartheid) about black people" (***Lighthouse*** 166). Her poor education and the general social violence she suffered while growing up makes her to be suspicious of everyone who shows interest in history. The past, for her, remains a traumatic and painful memory as she thinks of her childhood in the Transkei: "it is a poor place. No water. And too much cattle, too much. And no grazing for them. All the cattle were so thin. I remember the men must all leave, when they get big, to go to the mines. My father was gone, and my mother …. It is not good to think of things that are past. It is not good" (***Lighthouse*** 167).

Whether or not the past should be effaced presents a moral burden at a moment of democratic non-racialism. Richards' ***Lighthouse*** makes light of a long tradition of apartheid repression that unleashed immense hostility to man and beast alike. The cows were thin, they had no grazing, and adult men and women had to leave for mining towns to provide labour for white capitalism[157]. The defacement of history on the part of the repressed is, unfortunately, unbalanced by the melodramatic recreation at the court trials where black freedom-fighters-narrate how they witnessed the killing of some white men

[157] The finest example for this state of affair is illustrated in the monumental dispossession of blacks of their land as documented by Sol Plaatje in his very important book, *Native Life in South Africa* (1916).

during the uprising. The old man, Mr Mabuza, tells the court for instance of his experience on the day of the youth revolt:

> That is the day I see the blood of whites. Blood lying in the dust. It is the first time I see whites die. Before, I have seen many people die in our streets. Many neighbours, family, even children. But this is the first time I see a white man fall. The blood, it looks just the same, as it falls in the dust (***Lighthouse*** 175).

In the general context of African feminism, however, Richards' ***Lighthouse*** reads like a mockery of the agony of the many women of Africa who are daily inundated with the quest for survival from cultural strangulations and economic deprivations. Richards' 'women' emerge as over-pampered white bourgeois identities whose enormous privilege, taste, and antics aspire for nothing but more spaces to satisfy their bursting libidos. In the face of racial crisis in the transitional South Africa, Richards' women escape to England rather than be around to attend to the demands of building a troubled nation. Yet, there is a sense in which ***Lighthouse*** and ***Roast Chicken*** strike the reader as a narrative continuum. In both novels the 'I' narrator seems to be the same person. Kate in ***Roast Chicken*** is transformed to a lawyer, Jennifer, in ***Lighthouse***. The Eastern and Western Cape remain the spatial domains of the narrative incidents, and while the cynical Kate is less audacious in Jennifer, both identities are clearly delineated by their positive attitude to a common humanity. While Kate is less disposed to returning to the Eastern Cape due to her memories of "ugliness', Jennifer is remorseful of her inability to be more perceptive and helpful in the many ways she could. Neil, who appeared in ***Roast Chicken*** as Kate's "big brother", re-emerges in ***Lighthouse*** in a less determined identity.

Confessionality in ***Lighthouse,*** then, is locatable in the general sense of remorsefulness with which the 'I'-narrator unleashes herself to the scrutiny of the reader; her lack of inhibitions in locating her sexuality; her resentment of the many violations of the human body — whatever its racial affiliation, and her sustained determination in mapping out her individual space. Susan and Jennifer present a private experience that does not remain private. In a way, they end up providing what Jeremy Tambling (1990:66-87) describes

as 'Geographies of power', in which "privacy is no absolute value, nor should it be seen as the hard-won privilege of the middle-class: it is rather a concept produced through the configuration of particular conditions which nurture the sense of the personal (...). Or a concept such as the family, or some forms of sexual or social behaviour — which is to be defined as independent, free from social controls, with its forms of behaviour regulated by the self or by the family" (Tambling 72). Jennifer's confession, as private as it might seem, is as powerful as Kate's in ***Roast Chicken****:* this is informed not by her failure to maintain a stable and definable relationship as she would prefer to believe, but in the ultimate failure to protect the black man who ran to her for rescue. She would never say the final word on how Mandla got killed, but will remain traumatized by the memory of witnessing its process. By her admission, the ultimate tragedy was neither hers, nor Susan's. It was Mandla's — "the terrible waste of him". She "watched it all" and "hadn't the courage to face them alongside him" (***Lighthouse*** 249). But while it is possible to conclude that the nature of Kate's upbringing in ***The Innocence of Roast Chicken*** helps condition her attitude to the racial 'Other', we are not privileged to witness such display of paternal authority over Jennifer in ***Touching the Lighthouse***.

V.

Like in ***The Innocence of Roast Chicken***, memory triggers off confession in ***Touching the Lighthouse***. Kate and Jennifer — two narrators haunted by their memories of racial injustice in apartheid South Africa— suffer the perennial trauma of a humankind defined by the recurrent cycle of its stupidity. In both narratives, the confessional is incited by a sense of complicity through passivity. Kate watched a black man, Johannes, castrated and incarcerated for ten years, and could do nothing to help in ***The Innocence of Roast Chicken***; Jennifer watched Mandla killed by the agencies entrusted with sustaining the repressive apartheid legislations, and could do nothing to help him. Both women suffer the traumas of witnessing severe injustices against black persons during the racialist system. The search for spiritual or psychological redemption for their 'complicities' in these inhumanities leads ultimately to their *telling* or *confessing* their passivity during the period of injustice. Through her narrators, the writer weaves these incidents by blending private and public experiences in a manner that authorises critical attention. It is in this

sense that Jo-Anne Richards certainly deserves a fair consideration as one of the major contributors in the construction of paradigms for understanding South African fiction of English expression after apartheid, particularly within the tradition of the confessional narrative.

Chapter Seven

In Search of Paradigms: The Post-Apartheid South African Novels of English Expression and the Challenge of Narratology: Conclusion

> The structures of art, the organizing plots, as much if not more than the content, create patterns, or a potential syntax of images, within which to think about the unrepresented future. Whether synoptic or dilatory, neatened or fraying, conventionally confirmatory or experimentally interrogative, closed or open, endings offer us different kinds of jumping off places for speculations about what has happened and what is to come
>
> —Elleke Boehmer, 1998:47.

In 'Endings and Beginnings: South African Fiction in Transition', Elleke Boehmer (1998: 43-56) argues persuasively for the embrace of an experimental narrative at the dawn of South Africa's non-racial capitalism. Boehmer's exploration of the narratological element of narrative ending in a number of novels at the height of the emergencies of the 1980s points to a pessimism inspired by the apparent diffidence on the part of the writers to make visionary statements through their narratives. In nearly all the novels she read, the Gramsci proclamation, made famous by Nadine Gordimer on this side of the planet a few years back, emerges as the totalising description of the 'ended-ness' of the narratives. For the society, as it was for the novelist, it was a moment of interregnum: 'the old is dying, while the new refuses to be born'. Boehmer is persuaded that this dilemma arises because many writers, given the peculiar demands at the time for a functionalist narrative designed to capture the imagination of the public toward dislodging an oppressive regime were neither creative nor comfortable enough to explore 'indeterminacy' "in form and language as well as in subject matter" (Boehmer 44). The implication is that the reader is left uninspired since what s/he encounters, "is a suspension of vision, a hemming in as opposed to a convinced and convincing opening up or testing of options", particularly at that section of the novel "which involves both retrospection and anticipation—the ending".

Boehmer's interest is to locate "the symbolic vocabulary with which to imagine and articulate a changing world" (Boehmer 46), and while convinced that there will always be repetitions and borrowings of such forms and themes as the poststructuralist 'play', the magic realist narrative, the perception and deployment of history as 'discourse' or as fantasy, or the autobiographical self-inscriptions, she is of the persuasion that narrative endings will always provide clues toward the construction of newness: "The mixing and permutation of forms (in literature) gives an occasion and a framework for new beginnings" (Boehmer 47). By her investigation, Boehmer raises questions that are quite germane in the discourse of the post-apartheid fiction of English expression. For instance: Has there been any development in the South African novels of English expression after apartheid? What are the bases of the newness, assuming there are such departures from the previous narratives? Are there repetitions and recycling of old themes? What specific character idiosyncrasies can we identify in the discourse of the new narratives that mark them distinctly out as departures from the old forms? Are the subjects of the new narratives truly reflective of the post-apartheid social imaginary?

My attempts have been to explore the existing narratives of the new era—the South African novels of English expression after apartheid emergencies, or what Boehmer rightly describes as "the moments and movements following apocalypse" (Boehmer 51). But the questions, more importantly, highlight the fundamental issue of a narrativity that transcends mere recognition of the experiential bias of individual writers to locating an aggregate summation of the over-all aesthetic manifestations raised by the narratives of the new era.

In a study that engages the new fiction of South Africa at the dawn of the liberal order, many readers are likely to look forward to grasping issues essentially attuned to the politics of representation. Yet a careful reading is likely to suggest a peculiar interest in locating the creative points of convergence between narrative, narrativity, and 'context'. The challenges imposed by this way of reading are likely to be seen in the shifting patterns of narrative semantics, the changing meanings of the basic narratological elements of temporality, place, and sequence, and the peculiar interest in tying these

structural paradigms of fictional narratives in actual socio-psychological idioms of the mnemonic, violence, alterity, the confessional, metaphor and the magical, as well as historicity in the discourse of the 'new' social imaginary.

Narratology, Malcom Bradbury suggests, is: "the study of the poetics of fiction, exploring the nature of narrative systems and devices, and has been of increasing importance in modern culture. It is a key part of critical theory and of writing and artistic production, exploring the mechanics of all types of storytelling, for example film scripting and direction, for the purpose of refining artistic and media techniques"(Robert, 2004)[158].

Developments in contemporary narratology tend to affirm my persuasion that theoretical models of varying orientations could fruitfully be deployed in the reading of the 'new' novels. The overwhelming fascination with the political in narrative discourse in forms of post-coloniality, or all forms of cultural materialism is not too distant from the opposite dogma of structuralism and its proclamations on the 'assassination' of the author. Narrative —especially the novel— in my view is as structurally defined by its emplotment as it is semantically attuned to a teleological 'ending'. Narrative *design* and *intention* could then be decoded as being both politically and poetically encoded. An isolation of one from the other is tantamount to hermeneutic injustice. An investigation subsuming thematology and narrativity of the type embraced in my discussion therefore calls for a privileging of narratology within the confines of narrative semantics and narrative modes. Ruth Ronen's identifications of the paradigm shift in plot models become particularly relevant, here, not only for his insightful suggestion that "text semantics should be the basis for any text grammar", just as "abstract narrative structures should be tied to semantic constructions", but more fundamentally in the three basic transitions of narratology, namely, that "syntactic functionalism has been replaced by a narrative semantics", that "attempts to describe a logic of narrative by isolating a unique

[158]As cited in Allen, Robert (Ed), *The Penguin Dictionary*, London: Penguin Books, 2004: 923. See also Bal, Mieke, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, transl. Christine van Boheemen (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985); Prince, Gerald, *Narratology: The Form and Functioning of Narrative* (Berlin & New York: Mouton Publishers, 1982).

principle of organization have been replaced by a more dynamic and eclectic view of narrative organization", and that "the anti-referential conception of narrative has been replaced by a renewed interest in the referent and in the structure of the narrative universe" (Ronen, 1990: 840-1)[159]. While locating 'narratology' as emanating from French structuralism and fascination with neologisms, Peter Brook (1984) had argued that it is implicit in "the organized and coherent analysis of narrative structures and discourse" (1984:xiii). Given its structuralist origin and the bias of many of its theorists to confine their discussion to the "identification of minimal narrative units and paradigmatic structures", he suggests, it blurs the fundamental impacts of the narratives on the reader. In other words, 'intention' or narrative semantics gets sacrificed at the altar of linguistic or structural explications. Plots and plotting in narratives allow for a discovery of the dynamics of ordering and its impacts on the reader/audience/society. It is partly for this reason that Brook conceives of plot as an engagement essentially with "design and intention in narrative"—an exercise in ordering and its dynamics[160], especially with "*how narratives work on us, as readers, to create models of understanding, and with why we need and want such shaping orders"* (Brook 1984:xiii; my emphasis).

More recent scholarship has continued to emphasize the place of narratology in cultural theories attuned to the referential. Where much of contemporary literary and cultural theories privilege the experiential over abstraction or—put differently—where politics and ethics evidently dominate narrative discourses in our time, it does seem that the narrative modes through which the ethical and political imperatives are couched will eventually re-emerge in the theory and practice of contemporary narrative forms. In an interesting essay, 'On a Postcolonial Narratology', Gerald Prince (2005: 372-381) has drawn attention to the many inflections, nuances and applications of contemporary narratology as one tending toward pluralism. He also notes that "narratology can be

[159] Ronen's fascinating study takes into account the many developments since the classical structuralism of Roland Barthe's persuasion to the more recent return to thematology. See Ronen, Ruth, 'Paradigm Shift in Plot Models: An Outline of the History of Narratology'. *Poetics Today*, 11.4(1990): 817-842.

[160] As he puts it: "narratology has, of course, properly been conceived as a branch of poetics seeking to delineate the types of narratives, their conventions, and the formal conditions of the meanings they generate". See Brook, Peter, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984: xiii).

useful (and it has been used) in the accomplishment of these very tasks: even the simple characterization of the points of view selected, the speeds adopted, the modes of discourse exploited, the actantial roles foregrounded, the transformations favored in particular narratives can help to shed light on the nature and functioning of the ideology those narratives represent and construct" (Prince 2005:372). While narratology "tries to account for narrative diversity", a focus on postcolonial narratology will, ultimately, address itself to a serious consideration of the essential postcolonial concerns of Otherness (alterity), identity politics, race, nation, gender, etc, within the dynamics of such classical narratological elements of 'temporal anchoring'. In other words,

> (n)arratologists are attentive to the nature of time as well as to its action: straight, cyclical, or looping, regressive as opposed to progressive, flowing irregularly instead of regularly, subjective rather than objective, characterized by duration or by date, segmented according to artificial or perhaps natural measures, close or distant from deictic focuses, curative, energizing, paralyzing, degrading" (Prince, 2005: 375).

Prince identifies postcolonial thematics to be implicit in the exploration of "the old, the new, nostalgia and hope, authentic and false beginnings and ends, or memory, amnesia, and anamnesis", and for these peculiar interests, the narratologist could focus on such elements as "datelessness, quasi—or pseudo-chronology, heterochronology, multichronology—now (or now or now) in contrast with a past or future then (or then or then) or with always, never, at times, at some time—as well as on the (partial or total) simultaneities, (immediate or proximate) continuities, and (weak or strong) inconsistencies between temporal segments, the relative magnitude of those segments, and the nature of their borders" (Prince 375)[161].

A most relevant issue, to this end, is how to locate the nexus between narrative universe and the social universe. In this instance, whether the mimetic perception of character as

[161] See Prince, Gerald, 'On a Postcolonial Narratology', in James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz (eds), *A Companion to Narrative Theory*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005: 372-381).

the materiality of personhood in narratives or its dissolution in semiology is contested or contestable is not the issue: it is common knowledge that without the individual—the 'person' or 'peopling' of the textual universe, stories will roll without anchors, without effect, and without meaning. Narratives will always be about 'a people', whatever character idiosyncrasies such 'peopling' manifest. Rimmon-Kenan has observed that "[I]n the text, characters are nodes in the verbal design; in the story they are—by definition—non (or pre-) verbal abstractions, constructs. Although these constructs are by no means human beings in the literal sense of the word, they are partly modelled on the reader's conception of people and in this they are person-like" (Rimmon-Kenan 1983[1994]: 33). But narratives are not 'peopled', nor are characters constructed, as mere erotic figures designed to provide pleasure. Characters are constructed to perform actions, just as actions attain meaning through eloquent displays and dispositions of the characters. The whole postcolonial engagements with issues of self-apprehension and minoritarian discourses are achieved through actantial dialogues and narratorial alertness. The creative point of convergence, therefore, calls for an embrace of what Rimmon-Kenan describes as "the reversibility of hierarchies"—an engagement which necessitates that "characters may be subordinated to action when action is the centre of attention", and that action be subordinate to character "as soon as the reader's interest shifts to the latter" (Rimmon-Kenan 36). This way, it makes much sense to fruitfully talk about the 'psychological' and 'a-psychological' narratives.

There is the added question of 'Frequency', of which Rimmon-Kenan suggests, "is the relation between the number of times an event appears in the story and the number of times it is narrated (or mentioned) in the text". Frequency, he elaborates further, "involves repetition, and repetition is a mental construct attained by an elimination of the specific qualities of each occurrence and a preservation of only those qualities which it shares with similar occurrences" (Rimmon-Kenan 1983 [1994]: 56). At the level of 'Frequency', then, we observe this dynamic of the temporal element at the three essential units of the 'singulative' in which the narrator tells *once* what 'happened' once; the 'repetitive', in which the narrator tells '*n* times' what happened '*n* times', and the 'iterative', in which the narrator tells *once* what 'happened' *n* times (Rimmon-Kenan, 57-

58). How, then, does my reading of the post-apartheid South African novels of English expression draw upon these aesthetic logics? This is, indeed, a very broad question, given the topical nature of the various chapters of this study.

But a summary could be deployed here as metaphor of the changing idiom of South African novel after apartheid. The search for trends in the post-apartheid imaginary must, of necessity, then, take into cognisance the many recycling, repetitions, and reconstructions of old narratives. This should also consider the dominant modes of narration which, in the case of many of the writers, appear as confessional, or self-writing. Self-fashioning, one observes in this regard, manifests in the complex representations of blackness in a number of white writing: Blackness is not entirely derided. Depending on the writer, blackness is often approached cautiously, sometimes eloquently—suggesting a desire to *comprehend* a seemingly incomprehensible social identity. 'Blackness' in white writing is at once as mysterious an arena as it is a complex layer of African social humanity best abandoned for its mysteriousness. At another level, it is a pathetic social identity best perceived in its sleek, untrustworthiness—a social buffoonery ever at work to counter an imaginary injustice with a morbid vengeance. The helplessness, poverty, total lack of, or ill education which define much of these representations are, however, never too distant.

The peculiar resonance of 'Petrus' as that metaphoric character delineation of the black's humanity comes immediately to mind. In a Nadine Gordimer's 1956 short story, 'Six Feet of the Country'[162], for instance, one encounters this desire to comprehend a cultural ethos so distinct, and yet so mysterious. The black African is flashed through the lens of the 'illegal' immigrant workers in white-owned farms. Arriving in South Africa from then 'Rhodesia', Petrus works in a farm about ten kilometres from the central city of Johannesburg. The 'unannounced' arrival of his younger brother during the winter season, and his untimely death due to pneumonia had provided Gordimer the fine tapestry

[162] I am indebted to Simon Gikandi for drawing my attention to Gordimer's 1956 short story, 'Six Feet of the Country'. The story is re-issued in Gordimer, Nadine. *Selected Stories*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1975: 59-69.

within which not only to explore the attitudes of Africans to the whole question of mortality, death, dying, and burials, but also to subtly compare this cultural attitude to their white employer's extravagance on the one hand, and the total carelessness and disregard for the blacks' humanity during the heydays of apartheid. Gordimer's 'Petrus' in 'Six Feet of the Country' remains the innocuous African who is prepared—like the rest of his poor neighbours and fellow farm-workers—to sacrifice life in order to honour the dead at whatever the cost.

When we encounter 'Petrus' in the post-apartheid narratives of a number of white writers, however, we are confronted with a vanishing innocence: the loyal farm-worker and 'houseboy' in Gordimer's stories who is prepared to appeal to his *baas* for support at every turn, becomes a crafty observer who is keen on re-possessing the land of his ancestors. Petrus is still largely uneducated as we found him in 'Six Feet of the Country'; he openly displays loyalty, resourcefulness, and is apparently committed to making the best out of a helpless situation. But his loyalty is no longer profound, or deep enough; it lacks a basic spiritual essence, and there is at every turn a crafty attempt to unleash vengeance on the white farmer who is perceived as oppressor since time immemorial. In Jo-Anne Richards' ***The Innocence of Roast Chicken***, this motivation for vengeance is the reason for the rape of the septuagenarian mother of the farm-owner, Vans Rensburg—a tragic incident that ignites a chain of other tragedies, as the white farm-owners not only got the rapist castrated, but also succeed in getting him legally incarcerated for ten years. In Richards' novel, 'Petrus' is typically invisible and dumb.

In J.M. Coetzee's ***Disgrace***, 'Petrus' emerges in his most pathetic self: the humanity of the black African is here diminished to a calculating, vengeful, and extremely violent, criminally-minded identity who would stop at nothing to inflict pains on the perpetrators of the dehumanising system of racial separatism that had overtly regaled in the denigration of blackness for several centuries. Coetzee's 'Petrus' is typical: it evokes memories of Joseph Conrad's and Joyce Cary's images of Africa and, worse still, Coetzee's 'Petrus' is denied vocality at a time when many Africans had emerged at the top of western intellectual culture as knowledge disseminators and thinkers. Petrus, like

Man-Friday and Caliban, is denied a tongue; he is a mimic-man whose mimicry does not impede his evil genius. But, indeed, 'Petrus' has mimicked his oppressors and colonizers into his personal economic advancement by adopting their dated idioms of intrigue and unrivalled violence.

In many ways, the South African novel of English expression after apartheid is like the changing life of 'Petrus' in 'white writing'. The novels of English expression after apartheid provide very provocative issues of interest, both at the levels of ethics and aesthetics. A number of panoramic statements have reduced the emergent narratives thematically to include concerns that 'supplant old protest themes' such as reconciliation and reconstruction, accounts of exile and return, child abuse, homelessness, xenophobia, homophobia, the challenges of rebuilding the new 'nation', the search for solutions in matters as devastating as the 'ubiquitous' HIV/AIDS debate, interests in 'those for whom things did not change', a diffidence to address and redress 'Land restitution' by many of the writers, the absence of the pastoral imagination, the dying influence of African indigenous languages, as well as the exploration of the complex nature of human experiences. There is also interest in themes of 'crime' or violence of all forms, the inner-self of the individual, in religion especially in the relation between Christianity and Islam, the purely humorous, the 'demise' of 'the myth of white superiority', the privileging of 'other' minorities, an insistence on the historical, and an 'assertion of urban sensibility and sense of belonging' (M.V. Mzamane, 2005: 214-229; Mphahlele, 2005:204-213; Oliphant, 2005:230-250). I have gone beyond such panoramic statements—useful as they are—to engage in actual explication of post-apartheid novels of English expression to delineate some significant manifestations in the new fiction after apartheid.

Through the tropes of memory, violence, and alterity, this study has tried to read a number of narratives from the 'new' South Africa, and suggests that there are, indeed, some developments that differ at the points of theme and style in the new fiction in a manner that suggests the infusion of fresh energy in the new writing. Where Nadine Gordimer's apocalyptic novels of the apartheid years lamented the possible backlash in a futuristic South African society, her new fiction, especially ***The House Gun***, has

demonstrated this new energy in her depiction of an entirely new form of challenges following the liberal order. The new South Africa is presented in a way that exposes the injustices of the past, and the apparent ignorance of the many privileged members of the old order about the realities of their 'nation'. The old stereotypes of black ignorance is transposed to white ignorance in a new society being gradually defined by crime, violence, and the obduracy of historical memory.

Still at the level of thematics, André Brink's tireless efforts in the figuration of the new order projects a totalising transitional society in all its violence, its phobias, its aspirations, and the ghost of the past as it haunts not only inter-racial relations and delusions, but also highlights the ugly intra-racial crises that have tended to sustain such ethical lapses as incest, gerontocratic despotism, sexual domination, liturgical and juridical hypocrisies and, in particular, the arrogant stereotyping that continues to assert colonial domination through presenting forms of otherness. Brink's immense energy are demonstrated in a number of his post-apartheid novels that include ***Imaginings of Sand***, ***Devil's Valley***, ***The Other Side of Silence***, ***Before I Forget***, and ***Praying Mantis***. His recourse to the form of magic realism or the fantastical mode makes his new fiction particularly relevant in the discourse of the post-apartheid post-colony. Whether it is at the level of ethics or aesthetics, Brink's interest and style also find resonance in a number of narratives by other South African writers such as Zakes Mda's ***The Heart of Redness***, ***Ways of Dying***, ***She Plays with the Darkness***, ***The Madonnas of Excelsior***, and ***Melville '67***. We also find similar concerns in the narratives of Mike Nicol, K. Sello Duiker, Zoë Wicomb and others, even if at varying degree

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J.M. Coetzee's ***Disgrace*** has aptly been described as the most provocative of the novels of the 'new' South Africa. His narratives of the liberal order, especially ***Disgrace*** and, remotely, ***Boyhood: Scenes from a Provincial Life*** point to his fascination with the discourse of colonial domination of the indigenous population. What emerges as a novel of white pessimism in ***Disgrace***, also explores the implications of white settler-ship in Africa through his figuration of the crisis of land possession and dispossession. Again, one observes that the anger and violence associated with forced removals of citizens and

the dispossession of the indigenous peoples of their land is not peculiar to J.M. Coetzee alone. We find this concern in the narratives of black writers such as Zakes Mda, Zoë Wicomb, and K. Sello Duiker, among others. In the chapters on Coetzee and Zoë Wicomb, the land question resonates in various ways. But Coetzee's narratives remain engaging and very topical due to the novelist's deliberate deployment of a style of writing that he calls "writing the middle voice". Thus Coetzee's fiction is larger than story, given the inescapability of a unique form that insistently tries our interpretive endurance.

Zakes Mda's very rich transitional narratives, especially ***Ways of Dying***, ***She Plays with the Darkness***, ***The Heart of Redness***, ***The Madonna of Excelsior***, ***Melville '67*** and ***The Whale Caller***, take the reader through the various tapestries of the South African social formation through historical memory, violence, and the politics of Otherness. His fascination with the narrative forms of intertextuality, mythopoesis, colonial domination and anti-colonial struggles point to this novelist as one of the most engaging of all South African writers across racial divide. More importantly, however, his readability and capacity to straddle temporal moments in the narratives of the liberal order point to a writer who knows the limits of cerebral writing and the beginning of narratives as cultural statements in knowledge production and entertainment. Where a number of black writers have tried their hands in these forms of writing, the degree of success varies.

Zoë Wicomb's ***David's Story*** would seem very 'muscular' to the average reader. But it is a very engaging postcolonial narrative. ***David's Story*** cannot be avoided in any serious discussion of the post-apartheid novels of English expression. The novel, by its sheer merit authorises serious critical attention not only for the postcolonial questions of dispossession, domination, and demonization of the indigenous peoples, but also in its exploring how the stereotypes implicit in western colonization of Africa have led to other forms of internal colonization. In South Africa in particular, 'dispossession' assumes racial, gender, and class identities. Wicomb's novel is important because the writer, in addressing some of these questions, also engages with the general sentiments that prevail across the continent in matters of gender and sexual marginalization. Above all, the novel is quite experimental in its use of the metafictional mode of narration. Although there are

many women writers in post-apartheid South Africa, not many of them are given to this kind of narrative experimentation.

Jo-Anne Richards takes the reader through a narrative form that has come to be seen as defining much of white South African writing after apartheid: the confessional mode. In ***The Innocence of Roast Chicken*** and ***Touching the Lighthouse***, Richards' narratives take us through memory, even as the narrator juggles temporal spaces to be able to establish the transitionality of the narratives. The pains of the past collide with the violence of the present. The sacramental imperative resurfaces as the insistent search for the truths of the past necessitates the quest for forgiveness and reconciliation. The confessional narrative, as shown in this study, is an important genre in the fiction of the 'new' South Africa, as we find in the novels of other writers that include Pamela Jooste, Mike Behr, Chris Landman, Jeanne Goosen, among others.

There are, of course, novelists that tried to highlight the health dilemma and narratives of allied interests in South Africa after apartheid. Phaswane Mpe's ***Welcome to our Hillbrow***, K. Sello Duiker's; ***The Quiet Violence of Dreams*** and ***Thirteen Cents***, Rayda Jacobs, Lewis Nkosi, Inraam Coovadia, Ahmed Essop, Elleke Boehmer, Njabulo Ndebele, Mandla Langa, Mary Watson, Fred Khumalo, and so on, all try to explore aspects of the 'new' nation in their many narratives. Scholars who are interested in what is gradually emerging as health and sexuality narratives for instance, might want to explore Mpe's and Duiker's novels, just as readers who are fascinated with the Afro-Asiatic Other and the Moslem Voice might want to read the novels of Jacobs, Coovadia, and Essop.

It is the thrusts of my investigation, then, that a number of apartheid themes such as the land question and the crisis of racism and class have continued to resonate in the narratives of the 'new' South Africa. It recognizes that in the representation of a class system defined by historical circumstances, economic disparities continue to manifest in the fictional narratives as in the lives of real people in the society. It recognizes that given these historical circumstances, the majority of black South Africans remain marginally

deprived, dispossessed and, consequently, impoverished. It recognizes the abandonment of the repressive policies of 'apartheid'—with the implication that police brutality, reckless attack on the black citizenry on such inhumane impositions as 'Pass' or 'Permits' of all forms, hardly ever appear except in the occasional xenophobic treatment of other Africans from north of the Limpopo. It recognizes that the crisis of miscegenation is gradually giving way to a more harmonious universe where sexual freedom and inter-racial association are taken for granted. It recognizes that inter-racial conjugal or sexual relationships have continued to resonate, though, as a major mnemonic site as we find, for instance, in Zakes Mda's ***The Madonna of Excelsior***. It recognizes the impressive efforts of younger writers whose fascination with new themes and experiences of the erotic has led into a 'new' writing attuned to such 'elite compulsions' as sodomy and homosexuality. It recognizes the immense presence of narratives that attempt to contain religious diversities within the new social formation. The earlier fiction of writers as diverse as Peter Abrahams, Richard Rive, Bessie Head, Mongane Wally Serote, or even the more influential names as Nadine Gordimer, André Brink, Es'kia Mphahlele and J.M. Coetzee, among others, are immediately counter-poised by the immense output of writers such as K. Sello Duiker, Fred Khumalo, Mandla Langa, Pamela Jooste, Rayda Jacobs, Mary Watson, Elleke Boehmer, etc. Yet, whether we focus on old or new writers and, for that matter, apartheid or post-apartheid novels, we still encounter thematic blocs such as crime, love and resilience in the midst of unbridled violence and hardship, anger, hatred, jealousy, kindness, struggle for survival and sometimes outright display of senseless killings or murder, or rape. These are only essentially reminiscent of Vladimir Propp's theory of narrative 'functions'. They are purely human behavioural tendencies whose novelistic identities are very often defined by the writers' sensitivity to newness and experiment in the true sense of 'the novel'.

I have, in the course of my reading, drawn from the selected work of both established and 'emergent' writers. Where Nadine Gordimer's novels are not discussed as a chapter, references to her novels and short stories resonate in many of the chapters. This is an indication that whether or not we are concerned with apartheid or post-apartheid temporal spaces, Gordimer will for a long time remain relevant in the discourse of South African

letters. Novelists as varying as Elleke Boehmer, Pamela Jooste, Rayda Jacobs and a number of male writers of English expression such as Mike Nicol, Mark Behr, Mandla Langa, Lewis Nkosi, Njabulo Ndebele, Christopher Hope, also emerge in several units of my discussion. What is not in doubt in the novels of these writers is the fact that they all treat similar, but sometime varying humanistic issues so germane to the South African social formation. In a systematic study that necessarily anticipates an approach of reading the new novels of South Africa, I have drawn upon the novels of André Brink, Zakes Mda, J.M. Coetzee, Zoë Wicomb and Jo-Anne Richards to illustrate aspects of the post-apartheid social imaginary and how this new universe of discourse continues to draw from the 'nation's' historical past and contemporary experiences.

If we reduce the primary field of discourse to its apparent historicity, it becomes evident that within this historical paradigm, we are necessarily penetrating a number of related structures of narrativity that draw from politics, ethics, fantasy and magic, gender and sexuality, racial domination, and violence of all forms. In other words, if *H* is to be the pivot of history, a decoding of the implications of the various moments of *H* against the actantial interactions of the principal developments of each epoch is likely to be located in a number of other humanistic realities that could range from *O* (Otherness), *L* (for 'Land'), *C* (Colouredness), *GI* (Gender Inequality), *F/M* (Fantasy/Magic), *V (*Violence), *R* (Racism/Racially-related inhumanities), L2 for the nature of linguistic medium deployed, and a host of other human values and vices that often emanate in racially pluralistic societies. Put differently, the attainment of these humanistic factors is perceivable through a careful 'peopling' of such narratives and the frequency of the actions. In this case, then, if *CT* could signal Characterization, and *E* for events and actions, an axis of *CT* through the parameters of racial contacts and violations could be read at the frequency of such events and actions within a spatio-temporal framework. If we decide to read through the pivot of *H* (history) and *P* (place), or by *CT* through the *E axis,* each narrative paradigm is drawn and defined through a contrapuntal logic. Text and context converge at varying levels of each narrative, providing approximations of narratives that fall within any of the following categories:

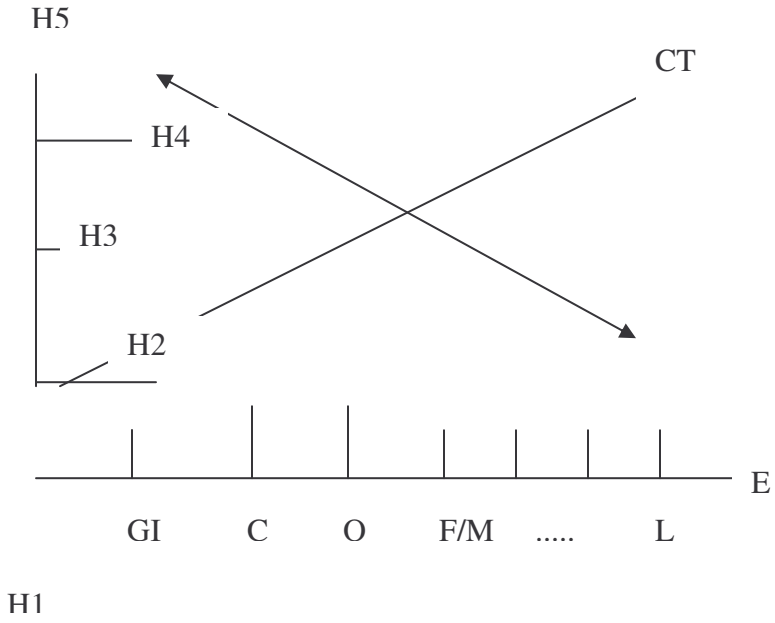


Fig.1: Interactions of temporality, action or event with the realities of history.

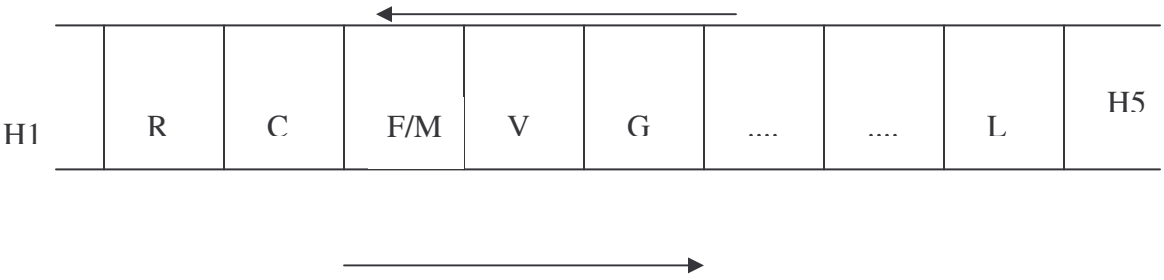


Fig. 2: Narrative logic and the contrapuntal dynamics of thematic self-completion.

If the distinctions between H1 and H5 indicate the degree of events within each historical epoch, we could conveniently—even if tentatively—perceive H1 as the earliest moment of the arrival of the Europeans to South Africa. This moment gradually generated 'R' (racial) crisis arising from the settlers' image of his hosts as inferior humanity. Over time, European settler-ship created more serious problems that include, among other things, the

systematic decimation of the indigenous male population, the exploitation and rape of the indigenous female population, the birth of the coloured population, the enslavement of the people, and so on. In Fig 1, this becomes quite clear through a temporal mobility during what time we now see the bitterness of the population through various revolts. The land question, youth restiveness, protestations against the imposition of 'oppressive' language, the struggle for gender equality, the assertion of the individual and collective identities are then seen through the lens of the narrative logic. In Fig. 2, this narrative logic becomes better clarified as each thematic interest necessarily invites an/other thematic interest for its self-completion. In nearly all the novels read in this study, there is a frequency of this sort. It is then possible to think of land as a very sensitive issue in post-apartheid South Africa because land dispossession of the African blacks is one of the most visible aspects of the settlers' greed through the centuries. Whether the narrative progression adopts a causal-chronological or hetero-chronological framework, then, each narrative concern excellently locates itself within the broader paradigms of memory, metaphor, violence of all forms, alterity, the confessional, gender and sexuality, and the desire for change.

In the post-apartheid novels of André Brink, Nadine Gordimer, Zakes Mda, J.M. Coetzee, Lewis Nkosi, Mandla Langa, K.Sello Duiker, Zoë Wicomb, Pamela Jooste and Jo-Anne Richards, among others, these thematic thrusts find immense eloquence. There is evidently an overlap of many of the themes in most of the novels. More importantly, given the gradual phasing out of the old apartheid themes of police brutality and hate crimes of all types, as well as issues of racial separatism and dehumanisation of the indigenous population, there seems to have arisen a new wave of crime and violence that tends to present fresher challenges for the writer at the current period of democratic non-racialism.

The basic thrusts of transition, then, are both thematically and stylistically visible in South Africa's novels of English expression after apartheid. Where the traditional recourse to realism has not been totally abandoned by both black and white writers alike, there is also enough evidence that experimentalism in the new novels is not confined to

any racial category as very often peddled by some critics. Many black and white writers are clearly innovative at the level of style—the most obvious addition being the embrace of the fantastical narrative mode in its magical best. André Brink and Zakes Mda are particularly visible in this regard. The form enables these writers to present the novelistic universe as a total experience that combines the quotidian and the metaphysical, the sacred and the profane, the mundane and the ethereal in volumes of stories that previously would have infuriated readers at the periods of urgency when functionalism was a paramount paradigm of narrative hermeneutics. Brink remains unrivalled in the deployment of this form; Mda, on the other hand, goes beyond fantasy to link orality and historicity in a manner very much reminiscent of Chinua Achebe's trilogy. The narrative complexity evident in the work of some of the writers would, however, remain controversial. J.M. Coetzee's ***Disgrace***, for instance, will for a long time present conflicting readings from Africans and Africanists, black and white scholars, as well as critics of art versus history binaries, since the lucidity of Coetzee's prose does not shield the seeming racism in the narrative.

On the whole, the nature of transition in the new narratives tends to suggest that memory, metaphor, fantasy, violence, gender sensitivity and sexuality, the confessional, the historical, the quotidian, and the absent are all visible terrains that have come to define the post-apartheid novels of English expression and, therefore, constitute the essential trends of this 'nation's' socio-cultural transformation. Whether it is viewed within the lens of 'ambiguities', of literary pluralism as against the monolithic perception of South Africa's literary identity, or even as a construct of the global imaginary, the post-apartheid novels of English expression are vibrant and innovative in every respect of the terms. What needs be done is to task many of the 'emergent' writers to embark on more 'research' before taking on the project of novelistic composition. This is particularly an issue in areas as relevant as the health and rural narratives. Health narratives, in this case, must of necessity be attuned to science fiction with a bias for finding solutions to aspects of the human predicament at the dawn of the liberal order. A 'Health narrative' that does not aspire to identifying with what Fredric Jameson calls 'Archaeologies of the Future' should be viewed with suspicion. In addition, where 'urbanities' or city narratives are not

necessarily soporific by their very nature, the demands of the liberal order equally authorise that the 'emergent' writer should go the extra mile of presenting pastoral narratives that will truly project a total South Africa, and not the perennial rehash of the lives of superficial city-dwellers. If anything, there is evidence on ground that South Africa transcends the cities of Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, Pretoria, or Bloemfontein. There is further evidence that there is a criminal level of poverty and crime amongst the populace, especially among the black communities.

So saying, it may not be unreasonable to suggest that scholars and researchers in South African universities and elsewhere in the continent may do well to balance their studies not only with their awareness of the theorizing by western philosophers but should also show the points of convergence or divergence with the epistemological proclamations, metaphysical realities and assumptions, as well as the psychological modes of response within Africa itself. In other words, the task of locating the anxieties of 'influence' and its lack through creative dialogue or intertextuality should not be limited to the function of the creative artist but also in the productive engagements of the interpreters of such created works. African academics and students should resist attempts at imposing western modes of perception as the only credible forms of reading the continent's cultural productions. Of course, the dilemma in following this pattern of reading should be noted: the many sites of power in South Africa are still controlled by evangelists of the west: the departments of English and literary studies have largely maintained the 'status quo'; university syllabuses are still largely favoured with the scholarship of the west; most journals, editors of such journals, editorial teams and assessors are largely orientated toward the west. Young scholars who insist on following new forms of Africanization are likely to be frustrated by these 'cults of western intellectuals' in South African institutions. But attempts should continuously be made through debates on reform and its resistance in South African tertiary institutions.

The most criminal of all the suggestions by a number of 'authors' and 'authorities' concerned with South Africa's cultural production since the dawn of democratic non-racialism, however, is the infuriating calls and insinuations for the obliteration of history.

More than at any other time, it is now that 'silence' and the elite conspiracies to diminish the immense energy and achievements of Africans through the course of history should be revisited, re-invented, revised and energised. The re-invigoration of Africa's cultural sensibilities in forms of a 'renaissance' and systematic 'remembering' should fascinate every cultural worker determined to construct a harmonious multicultural South African society. History should be privileged with an allied interest in presenting total geographical studies that will enable the younger generation of Africans to understand the immense contribution of Africans to human civilization, past and present. The 'emergent' writer after apartheid could also do well to construct narratives of Africans in their manifold occupations as scientists and humanists. Where the so-called 'anxieties of non/influence' tend to suggest a privileging of Western canons, the historical reality of Africans will always remain sympathetic to an influence drawn from a common awareness of the many inhumanities suffered by the African 'natives' in the hands of the colonizing peoples of the West.

The attainment of a national culture within the ambit of the new literatures is only a mission that requires persistent trials and errors, criticisms and counter-criticisms, corrections and revisions. It is not a project to be undertaken by a fatalist or the literary pessimist. Literary culture, or any culture for that matter is not constructed through passivity. The cynicisms and resistances expressed in some sections of the white literary academe that embarking on such project as South African national literature is tantamount to a "hasty and questionable marriages of convenience" which "occur between oppositional and pro-state structures in the arts"[163] should, therefore, be taken with caution.

The 'emergent' writer could do well, too, to present visions that could transmute humankind's existential dilemma into the promise of hope within these social formations, for the experience of history has taught that the rich have reason to be nervous in a society dominated by paupers.

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[163] Kelwyn Sole (1994:7) cited in Shane Moran, 'The New Helenism', in *Rethinking South African Literary History* (1996:191).

Translations of novels from the other South African languages into the English language should be encouraged if the writers in such languages seriously wish to be read by a larger global audience. The South African novel after apartheid has emerged as a narrative of history: it has shown this not only in its figuration of the past-ness of the past with its many sordid realities and sense of resilience that sustained and animated the survival of the African humanity, but has also largely proved to be creative in its figuration of contemporary memories. Be this as it may, novels written in English should be translated into major African languages within South Africa and beyond. This way, the search for trends will finally transcend the selective engagements often confined to the elevation of the 'nation's' literary identity at the level of narratives couched in the dominant language medium accessible to local and global readers.

The challenge of narratology, given the immense resonance of the social and the historical in the emergent narratives, is that critics should not shy away from matters of narrative semantics. Whereas many contemporary narrative theorists appear satisfied with the assemblage, theorising and analysis of the internal structures of narrative art, the rising interest in narrative semantics is gradually demonstrating the possibility that we could embark on more fruitful engagements with the problematic location of narrative design and intention. The specific interest in what Gerald Prince describes as 'postcolonial narratology' finally inheres some breathe of relevance to a system of reading often perceived as unnecessarily pedantic. With postcolonial narratology, we have a sense of the nexus between narrative design and intention or, put differently, we finally locate a creative point of convergence between the aesthetic and social universes. The instance of the South African novels of English expression after apartheid shows that narrative design and intention could be read positively as imaginaries of the post-apartheid postcolony. The changing topography of the new narratives in terms of visions and styles find immediate semblance in the changing idiom of the nation's historiography. In searching for trends in the new narratives, this study suggests, therefore, that narratology transcends the logic of 'insiderism' since the social universe presents historical contexts that constitute part of the entire narrative *designs*. A blend of

‘insiderism’ and ‘outsiderism’—to borrow the phraseology of Tony Bennet—will allow for a scrutiny of art that will draw upon established canons of reading that take cognisance of such basic paradigms as memory and metaphor, Otherness and individuation, violence and counter-violence, crime and the confessional, magic and fantasy, etc. This way, the critic could systematically and fruitfully engage with the task of locating the point of convergence between the aesthetic and social ideals.

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Appendix: A Selection of Post-Apartheid South African Novels of English Expression (including some translated versions)

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