LITERARY EXPRESSION IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

BY

ADETUNJI KAZEEM ADEBIYI

MATRIC NO.: 108685

SUPERVISOR

PROF. E.B. OMOBOWALE

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CERTIFICATION

I certify that this work was researched and written by Adetunji Kazeem Adebiyi under my supervision.

Professor Emmanuel Babatunde Omobowale

B. A. (Hons), M. A., PhD (Ibadan)

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my maternal uncle, Late Chief Popoola Balogun, without whose support, at a most critical time, my dream of tertiary education could have turned a stillbirth.

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ABSTRACT

Literary productivity in South Africa increased dramatically with the political change from apartheid to multi-racial democracy in 1994. This surge has attracted much interest, with critics trying to map the changes observable on the post-apartheid literary landscape using race and gender. However, adequate attention has not been given to the emergent literature from the political perspective. This study, therefore, examined new themes and forms in selected post-apartheid literature in order to show the impact of political change on literary expression.

The study adopted Jean-Francois Lyotard's and Homi Bhabha's models of postmodernism and postcolonialism respectively. It selected five texts, based on thematic affinities, from each of the genres of prose, drama and poetry. The prose texts are *End, A Duty of Memory, The Quiet Violence of Dreams* (*TQVD*), *Thirteen Cents* and *Disgrace*. The drama texts are *Nothing but the Truth* (*NBTT*), *Ubu and the Truth Commission* (*Ubu*), *Dream of the Dog* (*DOD*), *Molora* and *Reach!* while those from poetry are *Dancing in the Rain* (*DITR*), *Handsome Jita* (*HJ*), *It All Begins*, *Letter to the State* and *The New Century of South African Poetry*. The methods of analysis are literary and critical interpretations of the texts.

Inscriptions of sexual acts, non-normative sexuality and open inter-racial romance, politically forbidden before 1994, are prominent thematic concerns in the novels. Linguistic vulgarism and eroticism are inscribed brazenly in *End, TQVD* and *Thirteen Cents*. Postmodern inter-textuality also inscribes eroticism in *End. A Duty of Memory* and *Disgrace* explore gay relations only between women, but with restraint. In T*QVD* and *Thirteen Cents*, characterisation establishes the inter-racial dimension of gay relations. Specific spatial settings in *End* and *Thirteen Cents* destroy the myth of secrecy about the sexual act. The drama texts thematise national reconciliation. However, while *Ubu* and *DOD* dwell on the significance of truth in reconciliation, *NBTT* and *Reach!* emphasise memory. *Molora* advocates forgiveness. Using 'faction', *Ubu*, *NBTT* and *Molora* directly appropriate materials from South Africa's politically-motivated Truth and Reconciliation Commission while *DOD* and *Reach!* do so indirectly. While characterisation is fictional in the plays, some of the spatial and temporal settings are real. In poetry, the theme of disillusionment about the hopes which multi-racial democracy had held for the people is depicted. This is done directly in all the collections, but also ironically and satirically in *It All Begins, Dancing in the Rain, Handsome Jita* and *Letter to the State*. Proverbs and wise sayings, as well as combinations of standard codes and slang, feature noticeably in *DITR, HJ* and *It All Begins*. In all the genres, postcolonial hybridity such as glossing, abrogation and linguistic pluralism features.

The multiplicity of thematic preoccupations and executions in post-apartheid South African literature illustrates how political change affects the country's literary expression. This multiplicity, occasioned by the new political realities, defines the new trajectory of South African literature.

Key words: Post-apartheid literature, Political change, Sexuality, Reconciliation, Disillusionment
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

Following her adoption of constitutional democracy and repeal of racially discriminatory laws in the early 1990s, South Africa assumed the sobriquet 'Rainbow Nation', which derives from the amalgam of different racial groups and ethnic diversity inhabiting the country. The country now operates on the principles of equality, liberty and justice. Geographically, South Africa is located at the Southern-most part of sub-Sahara Africa, specifically on Latitude 29 Degree South and Longitude 24 Degree East. It is bordered on the North by Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe; by Mozambique and the Indian Ocean on the East, and by the Atlantic Ocean on the West. Somewhere in the eastern part of the country are Swaziland and Lesotho landlocked by this giant country. The country has three administrative capitals, comprising Pretoria (Executive), Cape Town (Legislative) and Bloemfontein (Judicial), and nine geo-political divisions, which include Gauteng, Limpopo, Free State, Eastern Cape, Western Cape, Northern Cape, Kwazulu-Natal, North-West province and Mpumalanga.

By virtue of the composition of her population, South Africa is one of the few multi-racial countries of the world. As is the case with other similar geographical entities, this status is a consequence of the imperialistic adventures of the metropolitan powers centuries ago. With the subsequent neo-colonial and current globalisation trends, the emergence of more multi-racial countries appears to be on the increase. Countries like Britain, France, Canada, and so on are few examples, as people of different racial backgrounds inhabiting these countries are recognised as their citizens. Although most of these countries are hardly categorised formally as multi-racial, the reference to their nationals as West-Indian British, Nigerian-British, Chinese-American, French-Canadian, and Senegalese-French for example confirms this. This description may well be motivated by a deliberate attempt to reverse or discourage the divisive tendency towards the unhealthy black-white racist dichotomy. Somehow, this is not the

case with South Africa. The reason for this probably lies in the historical tragedy of apartheid, which officially segregated South Africans into black, white and coloured. This segregation still percolates many aspects of the people's life in subtle and uncomplimentary ways, the dislodgement of apartheid and enthronement of democracy since the early 1990s notwithstanding.

Speaking politically, socially and economically, South African government has made deliberate efforts to ensure that the country move in a uni-polar direction where everybody's interest is considered on the singular basis of South African nationality. However, because of its very fluid nature, the cultural front has not lent itself to easy intervention by a government operating on democratic principles. While some cultural productions are still preoccupied with the past, others have abandoned or attempted to subvert it. In all, there are incipient characteristics in the country's new cultural productions, literary in particular, which seek to map a new trajectory in the field. Our interest in this study is to identify, explore and articulate the most dominant patterns in this regard.

In order to achieve this task, a brief exploration of the past is also considered imperative. As historians recognise that they 'cannot understand the present as an entity in itself but as a continuous part of the past' (Ade-Ajayi, 1980:4), the same view may well apply to a study which is interested in the analyses of imaginative writings spread over a length of time. Indeed, several scholars have underlined the significance of history in literary enquiry. Aderemi Bamikunle (1991:73) has noted that 'It is widely accepted by literary critics that each work of art finds inspiration in the historico-social realities in which the author finds himself.' Similarly, another critic has asked rhetorically, 'For what novelist can hope to produce good art who is not, ultimately, concerned about human relationships?' (Roscoe, 1977:174) These views presuppose that literature is bound up with society and the time of its production. Rene Wellek and Austen Warren (1984:109) articulate this even better when they submit that 'literature is the essence and summary of the historical realities of its enabling milieu' (109). In his own assessment of the significance of the relationship between history and literature, Ayo Kehinde (2002:35) argues that 'History is a veritable quarry for the provision of background or context against which literary texts can be studied.' Many other critics share the foregoing views, and we do so too.

1.2 A Brief Historical Profile of South Africa

The geo-political entity called South Africa today, like most of the other countries in Africa, was a creation of the erstwhile colonialists. In 1652, Jan Van Riebeeck arrived at the Cape of Good Hope with the mandate of the Dutch East India Company to set up a way-station for its trade route between the Netherlands and East Indies. Steadily, the station grew into a settlement of white folk which was inexorably drawn into contact and interaction with the indigenous black population. The interaction between the white settlers and the indigenous black people was characterised by acrimony, strife and sometimes wars. The early white settlers were from the Netherlands, who later took on a new identity by the name Boer and later Afrikaner. They speak a variant of Dutch language called Afrikaans. Later on, the English arrived and overpowered the Dutch colonists. Thus, we have two white groups and the indigenous black people co-habiting the southernmost part of the African continent.

With the ascendancy of the English to political and, by extension, economic eminence, a Union of South Africa was put in place in 1910. With this significant political act, the two white groups also agreed on segregation between the blacks and the whites. This marked the genesis of apartheid. Although different dates have been identified by historians as marking the beginning of that obnoxious and inhuman policy, it was the constitution that heralded the Union of South Africa in 1910 that first gave official endorsement to the policy of segregation.

In the union formed by the English and Dutch settlers, the Dutch settlers were at a disadvantage, having been defeated by the English in the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902. This disadvantaged position fostered a sense of brotherhood not only among the Dutch settlers but also between them and other marginalised whites who were not of British descent, especially those of German and French roots. This sense of brotherhood eventually led to the formation of the National Party. In 1948, the party won the elections and wasted no time in institutionalising apartheid as a state policy. The apartheid government went beyond denying the black people the right to vote and severely restricting their other rights and privileges. Different kinds of obnoxious laws were made to keep the two races apart psychologically, socially and physically. Some of them include the Group Areas Act, the Immorality Act, Prohibition of Mixed Marriage Act, Group Areas, Population Registration Act, Bantu Education Act and

many others. Some were as ridiculous as to stipulate that blacks had to enter public buildings through the back door, ride on buses for blacks only and even disallowed from possessing land.

Naturally, the apartheid policy invited resistance from blacks. Beginning with individual complaints, resentments and defiance against the law, opposition to the policy steadily gained articulation and voice in organised structures like the African National Congress (ANC), South African Communist Party (SACP), the Black Consciousness Movement, Congress of South African Trade Unions, students' bodies and many others. These bodies organised rallies, strikes, sit-at-homes, demonstrations and so on to register their displeasure with the government's racial and oppressive policies. Instead of being responsive to their demands, the apartheid regime clamped down on the leaders of the groups, their members, sympathisers, and other innocent people. As these bodies later went underground in order to beat the government's surveillance and attacks and, at the same time, challenge and resist the obnoxious policy, the government became more vicious and ruthless in its attack on these struggle activists and groups. The result was the employment of violence by both sides.

The hitherto indifferent Western nations' conscience became pricked when, in 1976, scores of protesting black school children were killed in cold blood by apartheid security operatives in Soweto. A similar thing had happened in Sharpeville in 1960 where a large number of black demonstrators were massacred. With the change in attitude of Western powers manifesting in form of economic sanctions and international isolation, combined with the pressure from the restive and increasingly violent black populace, the apartheid government eventually succumbed to a negotiated transition to multi-racial democracy in the early nineties. This culminated in the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as the first president of a multi-racial and democratic South Africa. All these historical antecedents greatly impacted on the psyche of the nation, and this is evidenced in clear relief in the material and cultural productions of the time. In fact, its literary production became simultaneously famed and notorious for its mono-thematic preoccupation with the racial issue.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The end of apartheid in South Africa was expected to wean creative writings in and about the country off the psychology of struggle and protest against the obnoxious racial policy. In fact, long before the official demise of apartheid, Lewis Nkosi (1967) had expressed displeasure over the aesthetic barrenness of much of the black writing of the era. In anticipation of the freedom which was steadily becoming certain, two other critics, Albie Sachs, in a paper presented in 1989 but published in 1990, and Njabulo Ndebele (1991) re-echoed Nkosi's decades-old view in a more vociferous and strident manner. Although these critics were more concerned about black writing, there is no gainsaying the fact that much of white writing also focused on race issues.

In the transition and early post-apartheid years, speculations, observations and even prescriptions about writings in the new dispensation were offered. Johan Degennar (1992) suggests the need for the new writings to engage the past in order to build a better society. Phillip John (2002), on the other hand, prefers that the past be allowed to rest in peace. Brink (1998) recommends the interrogation of past silences. Graham Pechey (1994:33) anticipates 'multipersonal, polyphonic' writings. Tanimu Abubakar (1999) credits Bernth Lindfors with anticipating literature of disillusionment. Which of the above now holds?

Almost twenty years on now that apartheid is gone and the socio-political landscape has changed, how are the changed and changing realities of the country being illuminated and refracted in the new writings? How are the writers responding to these realities and exploiting their long-denied freedom of expression? In which ways have these changes impacted on creative writings? Is there any special genre-specific preference for some subjects? Are there diverse and, or dominant issues to slake the thirst of writers in their imaginative endeavours in the new order? These are the questions to which our study shall proffer answers.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

Having explored the historical background of the South African nation, and noting that her literature before the transition to multi-racial democracy in 1994 was largely influenced by the exigencies of such a historical matrix, it is necessary to clearly state

the objective of investigating the post-1994 writings from the country. Therefore, the objectives of the study include:

i. To examine and analyse some of the emerging themes in the post-apartheid writings, with a focus on the dominant ones
ii. To explore the patterns of representations of the new themes against the backdrop of each genre
iii. To explore the formal properties of the new writings and their significance in the selected works in particular and South African literature in general.

1.5 Purpose of the Study

South African literature before 1994 when the country became a democracy enjoyed both fame and notoriety for its almost monothematic discourse, dwelling virtually ad infinitum on apartheid or racism. Just like black writers of the period were generally and particularly known for their engagement with this subject, the works of major white writers like Nadine Gordimer, J. M. Coetzee, Andre Brink and Breyten Breytenbach of the same period are also concerned with this discourse directly or indirectly. Perhaps, the only difference observable in the works of the writers of different racial backgrounds lies in the treatment of the subject. While black writers largely employed the mimetic approach, white writers tended to be subtle and sometime allegorical in their mode. Yet, some combine both forms in a given work or shift between the two forms from one particular work to the other. Consequently, most of the writings which emanated from this sub-continent have been variously termed protest, resistance, anti-apartheid or political writings. Indeed, an exploration of the literary history of the country would confirm this. But for few exceptions, even writings in and about the country before the ascension of the National Party to power in 1948 and the official institution of apartheid are, wittingly or unwittingly, political. This study is therefore interested in finding out the new trajectory of literary writings in the post-apartheid era, paying attention to the dominant and, perhaps peculiar preoccupations of the different genres of South African literature. In addition, the study also seeks to explore the formal components of the new writings.

Indeed, there have been speculative and tentative observations about post-apartheid writings in article-length studies (van Choller, 2005; Renders, 2005; Foley, 2007;

Geertsema, 2007; Stobie, 2009). Our study derives inspiration from some of them and goes into in-depth study of a number of post-apartheid texts with a view to establishing the validity or otherwise of some of their tentative speculations.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is significant in various ways. It is our belief that its significance would be best appreciated against the backdrop of historico-literary antecedents and controversies in cultural discourses during the transition from apartheid to multi-party and multi-racial democracy in South Africa. South African literature of the apartheid era, despite its almost monothematic concern, has contributed significantly to modern African literature, producing two out of the four Nobel Laureates to have emerged from the continent. In 1994, apartheid was officially abolished. This abolition of apartheid, around which much of her literature revolves, in 1994 has thrown up a new challenge and generated a lot of interests with regards to what would become of cultural productions in the country in general, and of creative writings in particular. This study partakes in the on-going mapping of the literary landscape of post-apartheid South Africa. Secondly, it explores the different genres and demonstrates the amenability of each of these genres to the new challenges and exciting objects of interests to the post-liberation South African writers. Thirdly, the study defines some of the major directions of the literary endeavours following the demise of apartheid. Finally, it contributes to the exciting body of critical responses to the bewildering number of literary publications coming out of the sub-continent.

1.7 Research Methodology/ Scope of the Study

This study is purely library-based. It adopts a purposive sampling of texts for its analyses. In the study, events, experiences, and characters in the selected works are brought under examination for both literal and literary interpretations, with regular references to the South African social, political and economic environments.

The research topic is explored vis-a-vis the three major genres of literature, with focus on a specific theme in each genre. Five novels are chosen in the genre of prose, five plays selected in the genre of drama, while poems drawn from five collections and anthologies are examined in the genre of poetry. The choice of the texts is mainly

informed by thematic unity of works in the same genre. Although no consideration is given to race in the choice of the texts in order to avoid a relapse into racial compartmentalisation which has done more harm than good to the country, every race is represented. Both genders are also represented. Two of the novels are written by blacks while the other three are authored by whites. Of these five, one is authored by a woman. As for the plays, two are authored by men while the other three are written by women. However, only one of them is written by black. In poetry, the different races and sexes are also represented.

The study adopts a duality of approach in its critical enquiry as it examines themes and styles using the hermeneutics of postmodernism and postcolonialism in its analyses.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

As noted earlier, this study relies greatly on the literary theories of postmodernism and post-colonialism for its analyses. These theories are relevant because they provide appropriate templates for examining most of the discourses generated in the selected works. They are also apposite in engaging the writers' manner of executing their visions or representing their real or imagined worlds. Most significantly, we have adopted them because they appear best placed to facilitate an informed critical apprehension of the selected texts against the background of the postmodern culture and postcolonial realities of the sub-texts that inspired them. For reasons of their pertinence, the tenets of the theories are examined in this sub-section as a backdrop for subsequent exegesis.

The origin of postmodernism as a cultural or literary orientation courts diversity of opinions among scholars. Some place it in the late 1940s, 1950s or 1960s (Jameson, 1991; Morris, 1988; Gabardi, 2001) while others place it in the 1970s and 1980s (Hall and Jacques, 1989; Hall, 1996; Milner and Browitt, 2002). Surprisingly, others have argued that there was nothing like postmodernity; rather, modernity was still in force in those years (Fielder, 1971 and Hassan, 1985). In his pioneer seminal work in the field, *The Postmodern Condition* (1984), the French eminent theorist, Jean-Francois Lyotard, admits that the term postmodernism had earlier been in use among American sociologists and critics. Apparently explaining away the insignificance of the temporal origin of postmodernism and, at the same time enunciating an aspect of its tenets,

David Harvey (1989) has noted that attaching a date of origin to it would undermine the assumption that it transcends temporal and spatial boundaries.

Similarly, Simon Malpas (2005:4) has observed that any attempt to arrive at a clear and concise definition of what postmodernism means would not only 'miss the complexities of the postmodern, it would also be in danger of undermining the basic tenets of what makes it such a radical and exciting area of contemporary critical thought and artistic practice.' Indeed, not only is it difficult to define postmodernism (Hart, 2006), we may well be content with piecing disparate views of scholars and critics together for a reasonable apprehension of what it entails. Since it not only assumes many of the tenets of modernism but goes ahead to reinvent them, another scholar sees postmodernism as 'both the continuation of modernism and its transcendence' (Jencks, 1989:7). For Krishan Kumar (1995), postmodernism should be seen as a reaction to the modernist's ideals of meta-narratives, progress and universal truths. Frederic Jameson (1991:63) describes it as characterised by 'an effacement of the older distinction between high and so-called mass culture'. According to Andreas Huyssen, postmodernism is a practice that 'revitalized the impetus of the historical avant-garde'(1995:17). There is also the view that 'Postmodernism, like many of its conceptual brethren, post-revolutionary or post-industrial society, post-structuralism and the like, understand themselves *not in terms of what they are* but in terms of what they come after'(Feher, 1990:87), (my italics). Perhaps this diverse and intractable predisposition explains its being described as an exasperating term by Hans Bertens (1995).

Of the several other perspectives from which the postmodern has been described, the following are particularly pertinent. The American critic, Ihab Hassan (1989) describes it as a new aesthetic formation. Linda Hutcheon (1988, 2002) views it as a periodic mode of self-conscious representation; Terry Eagleton (1996) thinks it is an illusion; and C. Norris (1990, 1993) dismisses it as an outright mistake.

Despite the lack of unanimity of views with regards to the origin and definition of postmodernism, there is agreement on the fact that it seeks to supplant modernism. In an essay titled 'Postmodernism and Gender Relations in Feminist Theory', Jane Flax

(1987) outlines some of the modernist ideals which postmodernism attempts to subvert, viz.:

> (1) The existence of a stable or unified self;
>
> (2) That reason, best exemplified in science, can provide an objective, reliable, and universal foundation for knowledge;
>
> (3) That the knowledge acquired from the right use of reason will be 'true';
>
> (4) That reason has transcendental and universal qualities that exist independent of the self's contingent existence;
>
> (5) That the right use of reason will ensure autonomy and freedom;
>
> (6) That reason can effectively distinguish true knowledge from power;
>
> (7) That science is the paradigm for all true knowledge; and
>
> (8) That language is transparent in its representation of reality (622).

From the above and earlier observations, the following emerge as the principles underlying postmodernism in literature: intertextuality, ironic playfulness, pastiche, meta-fiction, magic realism, fragmentation or non-linear narration, hyperreality, multiplicity of perspective, indeterminate and discontinuous narrative, parody, feminine radicalism, pornography, non-normative sexuality, subjectivity of truth, cynicism, pessimism, disillusionment, rejection of distinction between 'high' and 'low' cultures and so on.

Hutcheon (2004) has noted that irony is a central feature of postmodern fiction. Irony is not new in literary arts. In fact, it provides one of the back-bones on which classical writings like the Greek tragedy derive their strength. Its use in postmodern writing is, however, remarkable for its playfulness. Postmodern writers have the penchant for treating very serious issues in a playful way, reminiscent of black humour.

Intertextuality implies the interdependence of one literary text with all those before it, (Allen, 2000; Orr, 2003), which presupposes that there are neither isolated creations nor absolute originality about a given work. Intertexuality may manifest in form of reference or extensive discussion of another work, an appropriation of style or an

extensive quotations from other sources. Such referenced work may even be from fields other than literary. Although this may signify a lack of originality, it seems more of an inscription of the decentred and plural perspective postmodernism brings to apprehending the universe. Closely related to intertextuality, an aspect of postmodernist operating principles is pastiche. Pastiche literally means 'paste'. It deals more with style, rather than ideas from other sources. More often then not, it comes as a parody of the styles of other writers. It can also be a conflation of multiple genres or sub-genres. For instance, we could have a combination of science fiction, detective fiction and fairy tale element in a given narrative. We could also have spatial shifting between verse and prose interspersing a work supposedly belonging to either of these genres. It may even involve the cutting and pasting of texts from newspapers, magazines and other media of pop culture in a fictional or poetic work. An example in this connection is seen in Jeremy Cronin's (2002) poem, 'Even the Dead' where cuttings from the South African *Business Leaders Series* and a Southern Angola map with super-imposed rugby field make up the text of the poem. Clearly, this suggests that an attempt to dissolve the distinction between 'high' and 'low' cultures.

Another prominent element of postmodernism is meta-fiction, which simply means fiction about fiction. Indeed, it is a peculiar feature of postmodern writing which subverts the notion of 'suspension of disbelief' taken for granted by authors of realist novels. A meta-fictional work announces rather brazenly the fictionality of fiction as it comments and takes the reader through the process of writing or depicts inter-boundary crossings between the real and imagined worlds. Sometimes the author draws attention to his presence and even shares his motivation for the content or style of his narrative. Martin Amis does this very well in *London Fields* (1989). Postmodern writings also sometimes draw attention to the artificiality of language in much the same way as they do to the writing processes. In short, they exhibit literary self-consciousness.

With its displacement of the omniscient narrator associated with the realist novel, postmodernism offers incoherent, sometimes multiple and obscuring viewpoints, thereby engendering a *writerly* text. Similarly, the plot, borrowing from the modernist tradition, lacks chronology. It is episodic, indeterminate, fragmented and leaves the

story open to an end of endless possibilities. The implication of these tendencies is captured in the following words:

> These devices and others help create a world whose ultimate purpose and meaning remain, for characters and reader alike ultimately unfathomable. Faced with pure enigma, the reader is forced out of passivity into activity, into a practical collaboration with the text (Travers, 1998: 209).

Obviously related to this is the practice of temporal distortion where different events occur simultaneously or where, even more confusingly, a particular character is involved in different events simultaneously. Time distortions also manifest in form of juxtaposition of the future with the present, the future with the past or the present with the past. In a nutshell, time overlap or fork into startling possibilities. Certainly, it is these characteristics which give postmodern writings their notoriety for difficulty. However, these same qualities are viewed as necessary for reasons of aesthetic and personal freedom (Robbe-Grillet, 1965).

Jean Baudrillard, a foremost theorist of postmodernism, argues that the postmodern world is overwhelmingly characterized by hyper-reality where simulations or appearances have replaced the real. He notes that any attempt at grasping the real is mediated by simulations which are supported by information via revolutionised technology. Consequently, reality is displaced and what we have are 'models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal' (1994:1). By implication, the postmodern fiction hardly privileges realism. Similarly, it faults the notion of objective truth. Since there is no objective reality, then there can be no objective truth. Postmodernism conceives of truth as subjective and perspectival. As Friedrich Nietzche (1986:13) argues, 'There are no eternal facts, just as there are no absolute truths'. This brings us to the conception of language by postmodernists. They argue that language shapes what we think and that there can be no thought without language. Speaking of the power of language in relation to truth, Richard Rorty (1989:5) insists that 'where there are no sentences there is no truth.' This presupposes that truth is created instead of discovered.

Magic realism is also appropriated by postmodern fiction. It is a sub-genre which conflates the natural and the supernatural, the realist and the fantastic; makes use of dream, fantasy, myth, fairy tale and subverts rationality. In the opinion of Salman Rushdie (1991) it is inspired by the modernist form, surrealism. However, it has also become steeped in postmodernism and it cultivates self-conscious narration, contradictory point of view and labyrinthine plots among other aesthetic principles of the postmodern. Besides Rushdie, other postmodernist writers who have made use of magic realism in their works, as pointed out by J. A. Cuddon (1998), include Italo Calvino, Gunter Grass, John Fowles, Emma Tennant and Angela Carter. From Latin America and Africa are also names like Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Ben Okri respectively.

Olutoyin Jegede (2000), in her study of Dambudzo Marechera's fiction, notes that postmodernism deals with sex, non-normative sexuality and queer tendencies like homosexuality, coprophilia and necrophilia, as well as pornography and obscenity. Indeed, these are some of the thematic interests of postmodern writing. Apparently, the exploration of such themes coheres with its self-imposed task of seeking the interest of 'the other', those marginalised by modernist ideologies of elitism, binarism and dualism. Consequently, uninhibited and brazen textualisation of obscenity, pornography, violent sex, homosexuality and lesbianism constitute aspects of postmodernist tropes. Not surprisingly, a category of 'the other' - the women- are at the forefront in this connection. Thus, radical feminism has also come to characterise postmodern fiction, deconstructing the myth of heterosexuality, exploring the politics of eroticism, subverting the commercialisation of the female body and so on. Generally, postmodernism espouses feminist and queer causes.

The postmodernist writing, especially the novel, is often peopled by characters that lack psychological depth and rounded personalities. Flat and undeveloped characters, reduced to mere nominal, enter the pages of the narrative and disappear almost as quickly as they sneak in. Of course, there are always few characters that do not fit into this profile. However, with the former in preponderance, the emptiness and disillusion with which postmodernists hold humanity on one hand; and the nihilistic vision of its future they espouse on the other hand, are metaphorised.

Postcolonialism as a theoretical and critical enterprise is often traced to Edward Said's (1978) *Orientalism.* In fact, two of the notable theorists in the field, Homi Bhabha (1992) and Gayatri Spivak (1993) are unequivocal about this. While the former observes that the work 'inaugurated the postcolonial field' (465), the latter notes that it is 'the source book in our discipline' (21). Although Barry (1995), like Raman Selden and Peter Widdowson (1993) traces the ancestry of postcolonial criticism to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth,* he also admits that Said's *Orientalism* is a major book that can be regarded as marking the inauguration of postcolonial criticism.

What is postcolonialism? Like postmodernism, it is another intellectual practice that defies specific definition. Perhaps, postcolonialism's multiple status as designating 'a chronological moment, a political movement, and an intellectual activity' (More-Gilbert et al., 1997:1) is responsible for this. Thus, our engagement here bypasses any pretence to a comprehensive or disparate definitions but focuses on the basic assumptions and principles of the theory vis-à-vis literary practice.

Postcolonialism engages the discourse of colonisation in diverse ways. It deals with the issues of political and cultural independence of former colonies and their people, the issue of crisis of identity and its myths among the colonised, social and linguistic alienations, and the question of language in general. It also rejects the notion of grand narratives and offers radically decentred subjects. In addition to different aspects of language abrogation and appropriation, postcolonial writings also appropriate distinctive use of allegory and magic realism as stylistic strategies.

In their engagements with political and cultural independence of the colonised or former colonies, postcolonial writings examine, rewrite or celebrate the struggle for independence. It also attempts a rehabilitation of the infelicitous depiction of the cultural past of the colonised in what has come to be termed decolonization project. It generally modifies or subverts the traditional discourse on colonialism by bringing the perspectives of the centre under close scrutiny. In the post-independence era, the influence of the coloniser's culture and its implication for the development, or lack of it, in the new nation enjoys attention.

In their explication on the thematic presence of crisis of identity in post-colonial writings, Ashcroft Bill et al. situate their view in the context of *place* and *displacement*. They believe that it is in the concern with place and displacement that 'the special post-colonial crisis of identity comes into being' (1989:9). In other words, the proper sense of self suffers extenuation or denigration in consequence of dislocation, especially for the colonised that had experienced forced or voluntary migration. Indeed, this is particularly true of the West Indies where much of its literature is awash with myths and crisis of identity.

As a response to colonialist ideology and politics, postcolonialism rejects every notion of grand narratives. The colonialist's claim of universalism and timelessness of some great literature, which indirectly refers to his literature, is totally rejected in postcolonial theory. Such privileging of his writing as grand amounts to *pheriphelising* works from the so-called margins and devaluing social, cultural and national differences which may inhere in such works (Ashcroft et al., 1989). In addition, post-colonialism rejects the colonialist's idea of binary opposition depicted in self-other, black-white, male-female, ruler-ruled, master-servant relations and so on, which the metropole espouses to establish a culture of dominance. Rather, it borrows from post-structuralism the principle of decentred subject. In a nutshell, postcolonialism privileges hybridity and fluidity over cultural essentialism. It also privileges multicultural syncretism (Bhabha, 1992).

In postcolonial theory, the issue of language is central. Its centrality has been underscored by Moore-Gilbert et al. when they note that it is crucial 'not simply at the level of a national language, but in terms of idiom, since many of the argument within postcolonial theory turn on exactly how critics should discuss their subject' (1997:4). Most fundamentally, postcolonial theory rejects the use a standard code, usually the language of the coloniser, as a medium of cultural practice. This denial of privilege position for the coloniser's language is termed abrogation. However, it also views the attempt at a return to the pure cultural past as decidedly unrealistic. Consequently, it privileges the appropriation of the coloniser's language. Ashcroft et al. (1989) have identified the strategies of appropriation deployed in postcolonial writings to include glossing, untranslated words, inter-language, syntactic fusion, code-switching and vernacular transcription.

Certainly, allegory is a major aesthetic of classical writings. It has been appropriated by modernist as well as postmodernist writings. Similarly, it is appropriated in postcolonial writing. It is one of the strategies by which postcolonial writers respond to both allegorical and non-allegorical representations of the dominance by the imperial centre. Besides being used to execute a kind of counter-discourse, it is significant in postcolonial theory because 'it disrupts notions of orthodox history, classical realism and imperial representation in general (Ashcroft et al., 2000:9).

Magic realism is another feature which postcolonial literature shares with postmodernist one. As noted earlier, magic realism combines the natural and the supernatural, the realist and the fantastic, and makes use of dream, fantasy among many other creative tools. Its attraction for postcolonial writing may well lie in the fact that it subverts the principles of rationality and realist fiction of the metropole. It seems to be another form of reviving the pre-colonial culture. In the Latin America, where its use is very popular, and even in other regions of the world like the Carribean and Africa where it is also patronised, magical traditions are unmistakable feature of local cultures. This has been demonstrated very well in Nigeria's Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*, *Songs of Enchantment* and *Infinite Riches.* Consequently, magic realism in postcolonial writing is also an expression of the peculiar identity of the colonised, as well as a strategy of inscribing difference from the coloniser.

Central to postcolonial theory is the issue of hybridity. In his work, *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha (1994) expostulates on the intersections across different spheres like gender, race, class, nation, location and generation. He also observes that cultural identity is best produced on the boundary he describes as *in-between.* He underscores the imperative of this *in-between* when he asks: 'Where do you draw the line between languages? between cultures? between disciplines? between people?' (59)

The foregoing explorations of the tenets and features of postmodern and postcolonial writings are, by no means, exhaustive. We have only highlighted some of them, especially those that are pertinent to our critical analyses of the texts under study. Chapters three, four and five of the work shall bear this out.

CHAPTER TWO

Developments and Trends in South African Literature

2.1 Periodising South African Literature

Since our study is concerned with literature of a period, specifically the post-apartheid era, it is necessary to begin this section with an examination of the issue of periodisation in the country's literature.

With respect to written literature, scholars have offered similar accounts about its commencement. J.C. Hawley (1996), John Povey (1993) and Christopher Heywood (2004) have all traced the beginning of written literature in South Africa to the late 19th Century. They ascribe the origin of written literature to South African whites of English heritage. In denying the literate Dutch settlers of this privilege, Povey observes that despite the fact that Dutch settlers predated British colonisation, they 'failed to develop even a minor literature' (85). He attributes this partly to their migrant lifestyle and partly to their religious beliefs, which treat the Bible as the only prescribed reading matter. As we shall demonstrate later, researches have shown that imaginative creations in South Africa predate the advent of white colonialists and the literary culture introduced in the wake of the contact between the two races.

In their constructions or reconstructions of the literary history of South Africa, scholars have come up with divergent and sometimes overlapping delineations. The result is that there is no coherent and generally accepted historical pattern in the growth and development of South African literature. In the pre-apartheid and apartheid years, this aspect of literary discourse was totally left unattended as the issue of racism made the idea of a national literature absolutely unthinkable. Although few anthologies made pretensions to being representative of different shades of South African writings without prejudice to colour during these periods, a critical look at them points to the contrary. For instance, Guy Butler's *A Book of South African Verse* (1959) parades only white English-speaking poets. While Heywood's *Aspects of South African Literature* (1976) includes white and black writers, the work is limited to literature of

English expression. This is hardly surprising because the editors of these anthologies themselves must have been mindful of the censorship law in the land at the time, which underscores the impact of racism on cultural productions. Few anthologies were also exclusively dedicated to the works of black writers. An example is Michael Chapman and Achmat Dangor's *Voices from Within: Black Poetry form Southern Africa* (1982).

However, since the collapse of apartheid and the birth of a new nation where all South Africans enjoy equal citizenship, the imperative of forging a national literature as a major aspect of the country's cultural productions, has dawned on literary scholars. Thus, several efforts have been noted in the area of historical construction and reconstruction of the diverse and disparate writings of South African people of different ethnic, language, racial, social and ideological backgrounds. This is with a view to coming up with a body of works that can be referenced as representing the national literature of the country. In the attempts to do this, harmonisation and periodisation seem to pose the biggest challenges. These have been tackled by different scholars, using different approaches.

Faced with the challenge of harmonising literature of different languages, Chapman (1996) chooses to adopt a comparative approach in his study. His work, which covers the entire Southern Africa, is the most ambitious in its account of literary history of South Africa to date. Most other works in this field avoid a holistic study of South African literature and largely concentrate on the literature of English expression. At best, they offer examinations of Afrikaans and Zulu or Xhosa literatures that are not in-depth. Povey (1974, 1993) Hawley (1996), Albert Gerard (1975), Mazisi Kunene (1996) and Heywood (1976) are some of the works in this category. They also exhibit divergence of views in their observations about the periodisation challenge. While some are overtly political in their delineations, others seem more interested in the thematic and aesthetic trends of the literary works.

In accounting for the development of literature in South Africa with his unexplained bias for 'Writing in English', Hawley provides what he describes as a rough division into five periods, viz.:

> the early frontier writing and that of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the period following the Nationalist election victory in 1948, that following the explosive response to the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960, the new consciousness following the Soweto school rising of 1976 and the death of Steve Biko in detention in 1977, and the present transitional period away from apartheid (1996:53).

Obviously, this periodisation relies greatly on political or historical events in the country for its delineations. Besides the first period, Hawley seems to imply that different political events of different times provoke the kind of literature which follows in their wakes. A significant point in Hawley's literary historiography is that it does not pretend that literatures of other expressions or that people of other races have nothing to offer. This is, however, the case with Povey (1993) who avers that in the earliest period of literary activities in South Africa, Afrikaners did not develop even a minor literature. He observes that Afrikaans writing had been 'vigorous and independent' (85) only in the last four decades before 1990s. However, he admits the existence of oral forms among black South Africans dating to very early times.

In another exclusionary survey, Heywood observes that 'South African literature in English falls into three periods, 1830-1910, 1910-1960, and 1960 to the present day' (1976: xii). He adds that the 'periods coincide with transitions in international colonial development and are less peculiar to Southern African than may be supposed' (1976: xii) Like Hawley, Heywood is silent on South African literature of other expressions. What actually compels critical interest in his submission is the use of political and historical transitions as markers of periodisation. This is particularly significant because subsequent commentators and historico-literary scholars seem to have borrowed from Heywood's initiative. Thus, we have a critic like Christine Loflin (1997) coming up with three periods, viz.: 1948-1960, 1960-1976 and 1971 to the present as capturing contemporary South African literature. By contemporary Loflin means post-World War II. In her analysis, she places the anti-apartheid works of Gordimer, Paton and others, as well as works by E'skia Mphahlele and Peter Abrahams in the first period. The second period is indicated as covering the rise in black poetry after the Sharpeville tragedy of 1960, in addition to white writings that focus on the problematic of apartheid. The third period, which is said to have actually begun in 1971, is described as the time of 'active resistance to apartheid' (211) and the

time of Soweto poetry. After this neat periodisation against the backdrop of historical and political events, Loflin still entertains the possibility of an "interregnum" in contemporary South African literature. This begins with the release of Nelson Mandela from prison in February 1990.

In advancing justification for her choice of these periods, Loflin argues that the Sharpeville Massacre of 1960 and the Soweto protest of 1976 are useful in her historico-literary mapping for some reasons. The Sharpeville demonstration, which resulted in the death of over sixty Africans, marked the beginning of highly oppressive and repressive rule by the Calvinist nationalist government. With many black political leaders and writers imprisoned, banned or exiled, black writing suffered a great fracture while white literature 'turned increasingly to the subject of apartheid as quintessential topic of modern South African literature' (212). Another reason for choosing 1960, according to Loflin, is the fact that other South African literary critics like Heywood, Chapman and Piniel Shava have also done so. Having traced the beginning of Soweto Poetry to 1972 with the publication of Oswald Mtshali's *Sound of a Cowhide Drum* and regarding 1976 as merely symbolic, Loflin anchors her choice of the year and the event as a period marker of South African literature on the fact that Soweto protests not only assumed symbolic importance for both writers of white and black descents, poetry, novels, non-fictional works and theatrical performance after the event explored the civil protests extensively and intensively. The fact that the protests later engender thematic interests in literary works and cultural activities across racial boundaries in the country seems to justify Loflin's choice.

However, her periodisation, wittingly or inadvertently, glosses over certain pertinent issues. First, what happens to the literary production before 1948 in South Africa? Are they irrelevant or inconsequential? We would like to aver that they are not. Accordingly, we support its inclusion like Chapman, Povey and so on have done. Another question is why the start from 1948? Our thinking here is that choosing 1948 as a period marker is intentionally done to coincide with the ascendancy of the National Party to power. Surely, other scholars of literary history have equally used political events in their periodisation tasks. Our reservation with this approach is hinged on the fact that South African literature, with this reading, might be reduced to being absolutely about apartheid, or starting with the institutionalisation of apartheid.

In his own investigation of the history of literature in South Africa, Chapman (1996:8) does not regard periodisation 'primarily as a genre consideration but as responsible to political change.' This means that periodisation of literary history is linkable to political events. Yet, as easy as this might appear, he admits the problematic nature of choosing which major events qualify for consideration in this all important task. According to him, Afrikaners see the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) as of major political and literary significance because the defeat of the *volk* brought about a renewed interest and commitment to their language as a foremost heritage, symbol and strength of the *volk*. As for black South African writers, he proposes three different dates which he considers as appropriate in marking the beginning of significant changes. The first date is 1910 when the Act of Union excluded non-whites from political rights. The second is 1913 when the Natives Land Act was used to expropriate the rights of tenure from Africans, and thereby engendering organised opposition to white settlers' rule. The third proposal, which is also linked to the Natives Land Act, contemplates the appropriateness of 1916 when S. T. Plaatje published *Native Life in South Africa*, a novel that seriously condemns the Land Act.

By the time he brings all these options under critical lens, Chapman concludes that 'considerations of literary periodisation are connected, emotively, to the general history of oppression, struggle and liberation' (1996: 8). However, he later repudiates the three options on the ground that Heywood (1976) and Dieter Riemenschneider's (1987) de-emphasise the use of matters of dispute as markers of literary-historical movements. This is not particularly convincing. Our contention is that if matters of dispute are genuinely responsible for the emergence of certain remarkable actions or reactions in the literary movement or literary history of a society, flinching from the fact would amount to infidelity to the people and their history. Indeed, were we to borrow from the modern literature of metropolitan Europe and the United States, evidence abounds to support the view that conflicts between people of different classes, races or nationalities have impacted greatly on the literary and cultural productions of these areas. The same thing can be said of Africa and other parts of the world. However, it must be added that the conflict or dispute does not have to be physical, violent, military or bloody. To be certain, the ideological difference, which lasted decades between the East and the West, affected the literary productions of each

side, just as the Second World War equally and gravely impacted on the literature of the principal characters in the conflict. That historical event, since 1945, has been a marker of periodisation not only in literature but in other areas of human endeavour to date.

In coming up with three dates as options for South African literary periodisation, before eventually discarding them, Chapman proposes dates that appear important to Afrikaner and black Africans because they were at the receiving end of the happenings he factored in. This is absolutely correct. If the feeling of victim-hood or sense of loss therefore fires commitment to literary endeavours in Afrikaners and Africans, he fails to intimate us of any significant adverse event or occurrence which can easily explain why the English settlers have a longer and more robust history of literary production in South Africa. In other words, the reason which Chapman advances as highly significant and shaping force in the change or emergence of Afrikaner and black African written literatures may only be partially correct if we consider the claims attributed to Gerard (1975) by Loflin. Gerard is credited with similar but more persuasive reasons, which support the view that Afrikaans, blacks and white English literature experienced significant surges as consequences of defeat. He had cited the 1948 political defeat of whites of British heritage as the catalyst for the surge in their literature; the institutionalisation of apartheid for the growth in black literature; and the Afrikaner military defeat in the Anglo-Boer War as the trigger for Afrikaans literature. However, as noted earlier, Povey (1993) asserts that Afrikaans writing started making impact after the National Party took over the reins of power in 1948.

Gerard also cited different events as markers of periods while specifically using between 1948 and late 1960s to indicate apartheid literature period; and between 1970 and 1995 as the interregnum. Here, we see the use of overlapping dates. His idea of interregnum in South African literary history is supported by Loflin who opines that interregnum is readable into the history as follows:

> Its dates could be variously set as 1976-1990 (from the Soweto protests to the release of Nelson Mandela and others from prison). 1985-1996 (from the imposition of the State of Emergency until the recent formal acceptance of the new constitution), or some other combination within

this period, possibly ending with date of the elections in April 1994 (1997:70)

Stephen Gray (1976:13) has also contributed to the subject of periodisation in South African literature. In his reckoning, seven phases are identifiable in the development of creative writing in the country viz.:

a. The Fabula stone and iron-age oral cultures (still co-existing)

b. European literature from Cameons to 1960: (epic and travellers tale);

c. 19th Century British literature: Adventure, Romance to Realism;

d. The 2nd Anglo-Boer War to Union: 1899-1910: (Reportage and Naturalism);

e. Union to the end of the 2nd World War: 1960-1945;

f. The rise of apartheid: 1945-1960; And

g. The rise of African English Independence: 1960-

Gray's delineations, like Chapman's (1996) and Heywood's (2004), recognise the oral culture. He admits its pre-historic status as well as continued survival and relevance. Unfortunately, however, his work is loudly silent on black writers of the nineteenth century like J. T. Javabu and H.I.E. Dhlomo and R.R. R. Dhlomo. Again, he merely underscores the significance of 1960s as maturation years for creative activities among blacks, paying little or no attention to their exploits before this period.

Perhaps, it is in an attempt to correct the omissions and disservice to the history of black literature, such as above, that Mzamane (1981:1) argues that the literature of black South Africa is distinct and has developed into four periods, viz.:

(a) Turn of the century to 1930: Plaatje, Dhlomo brothers and Abrahams;

(b) 1942-1950: From *Dark Testament,Drum to Sophiatown* Renaissance;

(c) Literary responses to Sharpeville and Exile; and

(d) Black Consciousness to the present

Although the focus of our study goes beyond the black South African literature, Mzamane's view is considered relevant here for its illuminating essence. Yet, the delineation erroneously glosses over the oral form. For a black South African critic of Mzamane's stature, one would not have expected an error on the side of exclusion where the creative exploits of black South Africans are concerned. Although it may well be that Mzamane is primarily concerned with the written form, we nevertheless feel strongly that any historical mapping of the African creative landscape must necessarily include the oral form. This has been persuasively argued by Ruth Finnegan (1970).

By 1996, after South Africa had amazingly escaped the much expected apocalypse through a negotiated transition from apartheid to multi-racial democracy, Mzamane had updated his periodisation of black South African literature. In his earlier periodisation noted above, the last two periods obviously connote protest literatures. Now that the object of protest has been removed, Mzamane sees the literature of post-apartheid South Africa in a different light. This is eagerly announced in the title of his essay, *From Resistance to Reconstruction: Culture and the New South Africa* (1996) where he opines:

> The move from protest to challenge to reconstruction in South Africa has been accompanied at the literary level by a shift from the literature of surface meaning - dependent entirely upon the spectacular events – to the literature of interiority with its concern with introspection and the inner life …. It is this turn away from the surface and the venture into the interior which will usher a new dawn for South African literature and Society (18)

From this submission, two points emerge. First, the development of a literature is contingent on the socio-historical realities of the society. Second, and by far more relevant, is the view that South African literature is, at this stage, in a new era, hence the new theme and style. This appears to be what Mazisi Kunene has in mind when he notes that 'Some critics are suggesting that the most recent writing reflects a new spirit of liberation, more celebratory of writing per se, freed from the need to provide political documentation'(1996:101). In a nutshell, Mzamane has added to his previous

classification 'the Literature of Reconstruction', which apparently begins with the demise of apartheid.

In one of his critical essays, *Books by Black Writers*, Richard Rive (1982) traces the development of black creative writings and categorised them into the following periods:

(1) Early Literature: World War II and earlier, 1928-1942

(2) Protest Writing: (a) The Drum School1942-1970

(b) The Soweto School 1971-1975

(3) Black Consciousness Writing: 1976 to the present.

This categorisation largely places black South African literature within the context of political development and activism in the country. It shows black literature as inspired by the need to respond, challenge or attack the Calvinist ideology on which apartheid was predicated, hence it is also ideological.

So far, most of the foregoing attempts at periodisation of South African literature, be it the racially inclusionary or exclusionary approach, have been largely structural. They are not accompanied by details of trends, which can serve as dominant characteristics or by which the periods can be distinctly isolated. This is the approach adopted by Tanimu Abubakar (1999) in *The Black Novelist and Politics in South Africa.* He delineates the development of the Black Novel in South Africa into four periods, viz.: 1960-1964; 1965-1970; 1971-1975; and 1976-1986. He goes further to highlight the trends which, in his view:

> … demonstrate the perspective from which the novel acts upon thesocial formation, postulates upon the social, political, cultural, and economic conjectures of the social formation, and thus illustrate the complex relationship between Literature and social Transformation (36).

We share Abubakar's view and therefore adopt his approach in our mapping of South African literary history. This approach is also adopted by Hawley (1996) in his essay, *South African Writing in English.*

There is no doubt that these choices of dates are genuinely contentious and controversial. Consequently, our study does not uphold any as the most appropriate or the most valid, especially when one considers their overlapping tendencies. What, in our view, is incontestable about the history of South African written literature is that it has spanned three broadly identifiable periods, viz.: the pre-apartheid, the apartheid and the post-apartheid eras. Even though there might be snippets of stylistic and thematic resemblances in the works of these different epochs, each has its own dominant characteristics. Presently, we shall turn attention to the salient characteristics of the works belonging to the two earlier epochs.

2.2 Developments and Trends

As is always the case in the treatment of most African countries, early writers, historians and non-historians usually date the history of South Africa to the contact of the natives in the area with European explorers, which happened in the seventeenth century. Similarly, the literary history of South Africa, like that of the rest of sub-Sahara Africa, is usually dated to the period after the contact between the white explorers and the black natives by most early scholars and anthropologists. This implies that before the coming of white men to Africa, there was nothing like African literature. This perception has been persuasively faulted by Ruth Finnegan (1970) in *Oral Literature in Africa*. She has shown that most of the elements that characterise written literature are also recognisably present in oral forms: elevation of style, attention to aesthetics, expressiveness of communication and so on. On this account, it seems appropriate to begin our study of contemporary South African literature with a historical exploration that begins with the oral forms by the natives. Other scholarly enquiries have not only espoused Finnegan's claims, they have gone further to unearth many of these forms in different parts of Africa and even document them. With specific reference to South Africa, Wilhelm Bleek (1864 and 1911), A.C. Jordan (1973), Leroy Vail and Landeg White (1991), Michael Chapman (1996) and Jeff Opland (1998) have come up with documentations as well as critical examinations of old collections of oral forms credited to the South African Bushmen. An example of some of the pieces collected in Bleek's *Specimens of Bushman Folklore* (1911) frequently anthologised invocation to the sun and the moon:

Young Moon!
Hail, Young Moon!
Hail, hail,
Young Moon!

Young Moon! Speak to me!
Hail, Hail,
Young Moon!

Tell me of something.
Hail, hail!
When the sun rises,
They must speak to me
That I may eat something. (Bleek, 1911: 414-415)

Another oral form which has been extensively remarked upon as a veritable example of traditional poetry is the *Izibongo* (praise poem) among the Zulu of South Africa. Trevor Cope (1984) offers a disquisition on Zulu poetry and other aspects of Zulu creative lore in his work, 'Zulu Izibongo as Written Literature'. Proverbs, myths, orations and folktales have also been identified as parts of South African oral creative forms. Similarly, Harold Scheub (1975 and 1985) explores Xhosa and Zulu oral traditions respectively. A. C. Jordan (1973) has also carried out extensive studies in these areas. Of these sub-genres, the folktale actually enjoys a close affinity with the modern prose narrative. Despite this affinity, the aesthetics of the folktake, for the most part, differ from what we are likely to find in the modern novel. Usually, there are opening and closing formulas, direct involvement or participation of the audience through chorus, song or chant, potential for reinvention, borrowings from other tales, and so on. The oral form today has, however, through interaction with modern Western values and influences become incapable of maintaining its pure African and pre-colonial status. However, in a symbiotic genius, it has also enriched modern African writing as seen in the works of Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ngugi Wa Thiongo, Ayi Kwei Armah, Okot p'Btek and others. In black South African works, Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka,* Sol Plaatje's *Mhudi* and H.I.E. Dhlomo's *The Girl Who Killed to Save* provide veritable examples.

Generally, the creative lore of the pre-literate South African society was essentially for didactic, ceremonial and entertainment purposes. Like all such works elsewhere, they are used to teach and instruct the young ones on the rules of behaviour, virtues and

values expected of them by the community. Folktales, songs, riddles, chants and so on are the different forms put to these services. Forms like myth and legend are also used to capture the history of the people, especially with respect to heroic figures and important personalities. They also perform other functions. In his study of the oral poetics of South Africans, Jordan has pointed out that the African bard not only functions as a poet and chronicler of history but also has the job of 'praising what is worthy and decrying what is unworthy, and even forecasting what is going to happen'(1973:60-61). The works of such bards and other artists are, however, not solely remarkable for their functionality. They are also suffused with artistry. The richness of their artistry is commented upon by Heywood (2004:36) when he observes that the style of the Nguni-Sotho orature has 'lent power, eloquence and flexibility to the masterly poetic achievements of Krune Mqhayi, Herbert Dhlomo, Benedict Vilakazi, Mongane Serote, Masizi Kunene, and many others.'

South African written literature began as literature of European settlement or what is generally regarded as the settler tradition in South African literature. The credit for the first piece of such work is generally given to Jan van Riebeeck's *Daghregister* (1651-1662). Van Riebeeck originally set out to keep a faithful account of daily events while in the service of the Dutch East India Company as commander of the new post recently established at the Cape. The work features in great details the descriptions of the country and her people. With the advent of the British and their occupation of the Cape, the written literature of English expression also started its development in South Africa. Prominent in this context are travelogues like John Barrow's *Travels* (1801) and *Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa* (1806). In tracing the development of South African writing in English, Povey (1974) has observed that the settler record and the diary marked the beginning, as it did in Canada and Australia. He cites the chatty letters of Lady Ann Barnard, the wife of the Colonial Secretary and the poetry of Thomas Pringle as pioneer works. According to him, Lady Barnard's writings exude the confident, but sometimes irritating attitude of the middle class English ladies, as captured below:

> We have now quite settled down at our residence in the castle, my dear friend, and I like it very much. I have arranged it as best I can, a few things we brought out with us from old England coming in most useful, and really the

> effect is very pleasing to the eye … (qtd. in Povey, 1974: 157)

This work provided subsequent distinguished writers like Olive Schreiner the template from which to launch their own literary adventures in the settler tradition. Schreiner's work, *The Story of an African Farm*, has been noted as 'an antiromantic and proto-feminist settler novel that introduced many of the thematic ambiguities that have become central in subsequent colonialist discourse in South Africa' (Hawley, 1996: 54).The narrative centres on the lives of Waldo, Em and Lyndall living on a farm in the South African Karoo region. It somewhat radically engages women issues like pregnancy out of wedlock, pre-marital sex and independence of thought. It also speaks the language of resistance against land appropriation, Christian persecution and genocide. This semi-autobiographical work enjoys a significant status in South African literary history partly due to the issues with which it engages and partly due to the period of its emergence. In his critical applause on the novel, Butler (1977: 20) describes it as 'the first work of imaginative power in South African literature.'

Not exactly locatable within the opus of the mainstream settler tradition, the contributions of Thomas Pringle to the development of South African literature cannot be overemphasized. This is because, as a settler, his concerns went beyond the challenges of survival to the issue of the native question. In his *African Sketches* (1834), comprising *Narrative of a Residence in South Africa* and *Poems Illustrative of South Africa*, Pringle invites the reader to examine the colonial predicament. He challenges the exploitation of native Africans, condemns the commando system and respects the customs and traditions of the native groups. In the *Narrative,* he gives the reader a feel of what it means to live under an unjust system. Like other settler writings, he also captures the wild landscape of the country and the challenges of living there in his poetry. The following extract from 'Afar in the Desert' provides an apposite example, viz.:

> Afar in the Desert I love to ride,
> With the silent Bush-boy alone by my side;
> Away--away-- in the wilderness vast,
> Where the white Man's foot hath never passed,

A region of drought where no river glides,
Nor rippling brook with osiered sides;
Where sedgy pool, nor bubbling fount,
Nor tree, nor cloud, nor rusty mount,
Appears, to refresh the aching eye:
But the barren Earth and the burning sky,
And the blank horizon, round and round,
Spread…void of living sight or sound.

(*Poetical Works of Thomas Pringle*, 2006:10)

The strength of his works in general, however, derives from their relevance to the settlers and the native communities, as well as the revolutionary aesthetics with which they are imbued. His works, especially *African Sketches,* anticipated the tradition of protest writing which would later dominate South African writing. The work largely launched attacks on colonial authorities' role in land appropriation, covert slavery and covert genocide. Indeed, the revolutionary aesthetics in Pringle's writings is not in doubt. This would later earn him an exile from South Africa.

Other notable writers within the settler tradition include John Fairbairn, Jeremiah Goldswain, John Montgomery, Thomas Stubbs, John Phillip, William Wright and Thomas Miller. Unlike Pringle's, the narratives of these writers are dominated by frustrations faced in the efforts to succeed in their hostile environment, the pain of losing family members, challenges of coping with agricultural demands among other themes. Basically, this tradition of writing focuses mainly on the daily hardship of living.

By the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, however, voices similar to that of Pringle were being heard again. A veritable example was Douglas Blackburn's, to whose credit include *Prinsloo Prinsloosdorp: A Tale of Transvaal Officialdom* (1899), *A Burgher* Quixote (1903), *I Came and Saw* (1908), *Leaven: A Black and White Story* (1908) and *Love Muti* (1915). His narratives are especially critical of the colonial life; sometimes satirical and other times abrasive in tone. His best known novel, *Leaven*, scathingly attacks the urbanising process in the colony.

The foregoing writers who were on the scene in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century were all whites. However, this time also witnessed the emergence of

written literary output by Africans. The Xhosa who had come under missionary influence and embraced Christianity blazed the literary trail by coming up with verses of syncretised Christian-African hymns, which gradually led to written literary outputs. The prominent pioneers here include Tiyo Soga, the first black South African to have university education, H.I.E. Dhlomo, W. W. Gqoba and J. T. Javabu. Soga wrote many hymns, Christian devotional writings and translated Part One of Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*. This translation was to later influence other early writers in Xhosa and other African languages for a long time. Later on, young African intellectuals started to shed the Christain influence which was encouraged by the translated *The Pilgrim's Progress.* They became more secular, nationalistic and political in their writings. Jonas Ntsiko, John Knox Bokwe and Walter B. Rubusana are examples of writers of this ilk. Abubakar (1999) has also traced the creative writings of black South Africans to the nineteenth century. He cites Couzens and Patel as having published poems composed in English by blacks as early as 1892 in *The Return of the Amasi Bird* (1982). He also credits Couzen with references to the poems of Isaac Wauchope and A. K. Soga published in *ImvoZabantsundu* in1884.

Another sub-genre in the development of South African literature is what is referred to as the fiction of the colony. This class of writing is characterised by adventure, cultural prejudices and fantasies of the white settlers. Its early form came as short stories in local newspapers depicting the colonial administrator and his savage, native boy, tales of fortune and misfortune about mining and so on. Later on, the short story form developed into full length romance, adventure and popular novel. Ridder Haggard and Wilbur Smith are very representative of the generation of writers in this category. Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines,* published in 1885, is particularly illustrative. The narrative is an adventure story. Allan Quartermain is requested to help find Sir Henry Curti's brother who had gone on adventure in search of the fabled King Solomon's Mines. The search by Quarternain for Henry's brother becomes another adventure. This short adventure novel earns significance in the history of South African literature because it illustrates the colonialist prejudiced attitude to Africans and foreshadows the racism, which would later characterise the socio-political landscape of the country for well over another century. For instance, the king of the Kukuanaland, Twalal, and his chief adviser, Gagool, are depicted as barbarians. The interracial romance in the novel

between Foulata, a Kukuana woman and Captain Good, an English man, is doomed, a fact that anticipates the consequences of breaching the apartheid Immorality Act.

The narratives that followed mark the beginning of overt exploration of racial themes in the country's literary productions. Sarah Gertrude Millin blazed the trail with her publication of *God's Step–Children* in 1924. The protagonist of the novel, Revd Andrew Flood, scoffs at the racist practice of his white community by having sexual relation with a black lady. This crime of miscegenation is made to bear devastating consequences upon the product of the affair as the children of the mixed blood become more and more enfeebled and get ostracised. Millin shows some pity for the unlucky children. It is this display of pity which balances the narrative. It must, however, be added that Millin's later writings, especially after apartheid became institutionalised, are suffused with racist prejudices. Her works like *King of the Bastards* (1949) and *The Wizard Bird* (1962) are good examples.

This issue of miscegenation became an obsession with white writers after Millin's *God's Step-children.* William Plomer's *Turbott Wolfe* (1926) is another remarkable novel that is largely preoccupied by the issue of sexual relations across racial divides. While unsparingly condemning white arrogant and oppressive treatment of the natives, Plomer demonstrates an understanding portrayal of miscegenation and sympathy for Africans. In the novel, contrary to societal expectation, a white woman falls in love with a black man and marries him. Not only this, whites in the novel are also depicted as wicked and hypocrites. Not surprisingly, this attracted outrage and feeling of betrayal among his fellow whites. The consequence is that Plomer became one of the first writers to be hounded into exile by the dominant reactionary elements in the South African white community. Such portrayals are seen as threats to the white's assumption of superior status and privileged position. Gordimer also received a banning of her work, *Occasion for Loving* (1963) for a daring engagement with the same subject. Cope's *The Dawn Comes Twice* (1969) equally takes on the same issue.

Later on, some black writers would also join in exploring sexual relationship between whites and blacks. In *Mating Birds* (1987) Lewis Nkosi does this. Arthur Maimane does the same thing in *Victims* (1976). However, these black writers' perspectives differ in that they explore the issue, using the rape motif. The mating birds in Nkosi's

novel, Sibiya, a black man, and Veronica, a white lady, actually have carnal knowledge of each other on mutual consent but, when caught in the act, Sibiya is accused of rape, charged to court, found guilty and sentenced to death. This is made possible through the collaboration of Veronica after a lot of pressure has been mounted on her. By this, Nkosi exposes the profundity of racial prejudice, the devastating consequences it holds for the blacks and the psychological entrapment into which the whites are forced. In Maimane's *Victims,* the possibility of intimate inter-racial relationship is hinted at but, with Phillip Mokane's rape of Jean Ryan, this possibility is doomed as inter-racial sexual relation is objectified as beastly, predatory and particularly vindictive on the part of the black man.

Besides the idea of miscegenation, the issue of race preoccupies a number of other novels, especially those of English expression. Dan Jacobson's *Evidence of Love* (1959), Alan Patron's *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1948) and Peter Abraham's *Mine Boy* (1963) are few examples in this category. The last two have enjoyed a great deal of critical attention, almost canonised in the study of apartheid literature. They share certain qualities. Both belong to the early attempts at drawing attention to the evils of apartheid through creative writing. Both novels also envision an idealised raceless or multiracial society, and both are suffused with passionate sentiments. In trying to prick the conscience of the Calvinist state, both works appeal to personal goodwill and the Christian love often mouthed by the white interlopers. Indeed, the strength of these works and their continued relevance lie in their historical and prophetic accuracy. At some point, blacks and whites would have to come together for the common good. This has eventually happened. *Evidence of Love* and *The Dawn Came Twice*, on the other hand, are saturated with despair and cynicism. They are examples of what is generally referred to as novels with apocalyptic vision.

At this stage, a quick look at the role of Roy Campbell, William Plomer and Laurens Vander post and their literary magazine, *Voorslag*, is compelling. The magazine mostly featured satirical pieces, which is in tandem with the object of the publishers, for *voorslag* means whiplash. The magazine provided the needed medium for the trio and other young contributors to give expression to their feelings and "flog sensibility into the apathetic South African populace" (Povey, 1974: 161). Campbell, a fine example of the lot, illustrates the satiric wit and waspish criticism of the South African

society for which his group is famed. In the opening lines of the poem, 'The Wayzgoose', he declares:

> Attend my fable if your ears be clean
> In fair banana land we lay our scene
> South Africa renowned both far and wide
> For politics and little else beside.
> Where having torn the land with shot and shell
> Our sturdy pioneers as farmers dwell,
> And text the hours of strenuous sleep, relax
> To shear the fleeces or to fleece the blacks (1928: 1)

These lines perfectly highlight the dilemma between the attraction and repulsion offered by the beauty and politics of the land respectively. It was the wry acidity of his pen as seen here which eventually led to his exile. To his credit is the poetry collection, *The Flaming Terrapin* (1924). As for Van der Post, his creative imagination found expression in a novel entitled *In a Province* (1934). The significance of this novel lies in the fact that it inscribes the need for a change of heart to begin with individuals before there can be a change in the society. Therefore, it sets the tone for the future liberal writings of novelists like Nadine Gordimer, Andre Brink and so on (Chapman, 1996).

Another journal which provided platform for many other writers, especially blacks, to sublimate their feelings in manners critical of the Calvinist tendencies and the new apartheid order in its early years was *Fighting Talk* (1950-1963). Among writers who took advantage of the opportunity were Dennis Brutus, Alex La Guma, Athol Fugard, Alan Paton, Richard Rive and Ezekiel Mphahlele. All of these writers would later play active and sustained roles in the anti-apartheid struggle on the literary front. In fact, some of them would later get involved in social and political campaigns against the odious system. Consequently, they suffered abuse, intimidation, molestation and psychological trauma as they were either hounded into exile or jailed. In spite of all these, these writers and, of course, many others continued with their literary writings and other forms of struggle. It is their writings at this early stage of apartheid that have come to be known as literature of resistance in the development of South African literature. The pertinent question at this stage is: What kind of literature is it?

During the Second World War, there was increased demand on the manufacturing sector of the South African economy. With the realisation of this facing the government of the day, it embraced the idea of allowing the urban black population to be permanently settled in the cities as a source of cheap labour for fledgling industries. Meanwhile, the National Party insisted on segregation. With the ascension to power by the Nationalists in 1948, the party started its official segregation by enacting laws meant to consolidate white domination. Some of these laws included Population Registration Act, which brought about the use of racial register; the Group Areas Act, which mapped out different residential areas for the whites, blacks and coloureds; the Amended Immorality Act, which forbade interracial sex and marriage. Other obnoxious laws ensured that there was no social intercourse at public places like cinemas, beaches, trains, buses, parks and so on. Steadily, these realities of life would find their ways into the text of literature and receive subtle mockery or outright condemnation from outraged and indignant writers of different racial backgrounds. Thus, the indignities of life engendered by apartheid inexorably offered creative writers materials for their stories.

Several literary works written around this time focused on this development. One of the earliest creative writings that condemned the National Party's's preference for apartheid is Alan Paton's *Cry the Beloved Country.* Published in 1948, when apartheid was officially instituted as state policy, the novel was inspired by the optimism that, with the Western world repudiating racialism and promoting liberty and democracy after World War II, South Africa would become a more liberal society. This would turn out a pipe-dream when the National Party assumed power and tightened the noose of racial segregation even more. The novel is a dramatic presentation of the writer's objection to the racial situation in his country, South Africa. The novel confronts its reader with images of wickedness, fear, hatred, brutality, exploitation, deprivation and dehumanisation. Surprisingly enough, it is also suffused with the tone of affection and empathy, which borders on sentimentality. The story is about a black priest, Revd Stephen Kumalo, who leaves the countryside in search of his son Absalom in the city where he gets to discover that his son has committed murder and his sister Gertrude lives on prostitution. His son has killed a young white man whose life was devoted to supporting the blacks and who was also a son of a notable and generous land owner in the priest's village. At the end of it all, we find the white landowner being kind enough

to give support to the priest to rebuild his church and the village. Both, however, realise that their respective tragedies are occasioned by the racial acrimony in their country. Through the novel, Paton proposes that with good heart, racial reconciliation and harmony is possible.

In his later work, *Too Late the Phalarope* (1953), Paton's indignation with racial discrimination and the concomitant psychological complications assumes a harsher tone. The novel daringly explores and subverts the Calvinist notion of racial superiority, racial purity and non-interracial sexual relation. Unlike *Cry the Beloved Country*, where compassion rules, *Too Late the Phalarope* is a tale of vengeance and tragedy which result from the sin of interracial sex. Pieter, the son of Jakob van Vlaanderen is involved in sexual relation with a black woman and thereby earns the wrath of his father for sinning not just against God but against the destiny of the Afrikaner race. Published just three years after the enactment of the Amended Immorality Act of 1950, the novel tries to objectify the folly, stupidity and impracticality of the new law. The whole idea of forbidding inter-racial sex is dismissed as symptomatic of Calvinists' rigidity, self-righteousness and baseless superiority. The fact that this perspective comes from a white writer demonstrates that the Nationalists' apartheid policy did not go down well with every white South African. It also lends credence to the view that white literature at this stage had "increasingly become a literature of dread, in contrast to a black discourse of endurance and challenge" (van Wyk Smith, 1990: 67).

Another writer whose works also engage the racial issue by condemning discrimination along colour lines in South Africa is Peter Abrahams. His first novel, *Dark Testament*, was published in 1942; the second, *Song of the City*, in 1945. It was the third one, *Mine Boy*, published in 1946, which brought him to the literary limelight. Not surprisingly, it has received more critical attention than his other works. This is probably because it enjoys the status of being the first novel by a non-white South African to attract international audience. The novel is about Xuma, a young black boy, who goes to the city in search of a greener pasture. At work in the mines, he comes face to face with racial discrimination and ill treatment. Using characterisation, Abrahams tries to show that the problem of race in South Africa is not only a political one; he also presents it as a moral one. There are good whites just as there are bad

blacks. As there are black collaborators with the system, so there are whites sympathetic to the plight of the blacks. In fact, a white miner unbelievably abandons his group to join the black strikers. By this, Abrahams attempts to prove that racial reconciliation and harmony is possible. This view is similar to Paton's in *Cry, the Beloved* as both narratives are characterized by what Nadine Gordiner describes as "countryman-comes-to-town" story (1973:29). The hardship, cruelty and depravity of the town are also captured in the two stories. The most significant point of agreement in the two novels is that each tries to draw attention of the world to the evils of racial segregation and its consequences in South Africa.

As the repression and vicious dehumanisation of apartheid continued with more and more draconian legislations churned out to consolidate the National Party hegemony, more Africans apprehended the urgent need to employ creative imagination to expose the evils of the racist system and, probably, give others both the psychical and visceral experiences of what the non-whites in South Africa undergo. In undertaking this task, a good number of African writers coming after Abrahams appropriated the autobiographical form. Abrahams actually set the pace with his 1954 publication, *Tell Freedom.* Other writers who would follow his path include Ezekiel Mphahlele with *Down Second Avenue* (1959), Bloke Modisane with *Blame Me on History* (1963), Todd Matshikiza with *Chocolates for My Wife* (1961) and Alfred Hutchison with *Road to Ghana* (1960). Much later, there were *Kaffir Boy* (1987) by Mathabane and *Memory is Weapon* (1987) by Mattera. These autobiographies codify the tensions that pervade the social landscape of the apartheid era, especially black people's experiences of them. These experiences have been described as 'the purposeful quest of a people who have had to…. rescue their psyche from alienation and near obliteration and forge a collective will to carry out the task allotted to them by history' (Watt, 1989: 5). It is this historical responsibility borne by the writers that marks the significance of this sub-genre in the development of South African literature.

This choice of autobiographical genre is reminiscent of what happened among African – Americans in the United States who had had a historical experience close to that of black South Africans under apartheid. African – Americans like Frederick Douglas, Ralph Ellison, Harriet Jacobs, Harriet Wilson, William Brown, Booker T. Washington, and John Edgar Wideman among others have used this form to highlight, document

and draw the world's attention to the pains and indignities of blacks' life during and after the era of slavery in the United States of America. The choice of this form seems to demonstrate a vital part of their motivation as writers, which is to draw the world's attention to their personal and people's inhuman predicament. Of the South African writings under this genre, Mphablele's *Down Second Avenue* (1971) has been widely acclaimed. Here is one of such acclamations:

> Despite hardships and oppression, the book displays a tolerant and affectionate tone, recognizing that even in the harshest conditions for children there are always times of happiness, and that to deny this is political posturing. It is this even handed tone that gives Mphahlele's writing a strength and honesty that escapes those who vehemently stress only the intolerable elements of experience. This is the writing of a humanist rather than a polemicist. (Povey, 1993: 90-91).

Indeed, the work deserves the commendation. However, if the other writers' works are appreciated for what they are, that is, autobiographies, they cannot be seriously faulted for lacking artistry since they are not, *a priori*, motivated by or interested in literariness. Secondly, perhaps the urgent need to capture the ugly realities of the society with a view to inducing necessary corrections was more overwhelming for these writers. Besides, autobiography is based on experience and objective reality; hence its attraction to these writers whose primary preoccupation is to draw attention to their painful condition. The capacity of autobiography to help achieve their aim is attested to by the following observation by James Olney:

> Autobiography is the literature that most immediately and deeply engages our interest and hold it and that in the end seems to mean the most to us because it brings an increased awareness, through an understanding of the author's life in another time and place, of the nature of our own selves and our share in the human condition (1973: 37)

With the benefit of hindsight, it can safely be argued that the use of this form by black writers contributed in no small measure in bringing the world's attention to the atrocious nature of South African racism, and the ultimate defeat of apartheid. It is also worthy of note that most other black South African novels of the apartheid days generally make use of autobiographical elements. The use of this mode, however,

draws Gerald Moore's ire when he comments on the weakness of Mphahlele's *The Wanderers* (1971). He says *The Wanderers*

> …is not a novel. Rather, it is a thinly disguised autobiography, which extends the story of Down Second Avenue to cover the author's last couple of years in South Africa …..As a novel, it totally lacks shape and relevance. Incidents should be included only because they happened; events should be presented with some sense of their moral complexity, rather than in self-justification (1980:61)

Moore's comment here illustrates the liberty many of the black South African novelists take in their writings in the name of protest against the injustices of the apartheid system. To corroborate the view that autobiographical elements characterise most of the black fictions of apartheid years, here is what Mbulelo Mzamane intimates us with in the preface to his collection of short stories, *Mzalax, (*1980) where he makes 'it categorically clear, that all the 'characters' in these stories are actually based on people I know …. (xii).

Exile and expatriation have been identified as 'significant feature of South African writing' (Hawley, 1996:57). Indeed, most of the writers who patronised the autobiographical form were victims of these developments. He presents us with a list of the prominent victims as follows:

> Peter Abrahams, Dennis Brutus, Lewis Nkosi, Bloke Modisane, Alfred Hutchinson, Can Themba, Alex La Guma, Arthur Nortje, Daniel and Masizi Kunene, Mongane Wally Serote, Bessie Head, and Njabulo Ndebele, and others.

A critical look at the list reveals that almost an entire generation of black writers were victims of this unwholesome development. Some of these writers eventually died in exile in circumstances that were quite ignoble. Some of them also had their works banned by the government under the Publications and Entertainment Act or the Suppression of Communism Act. The censorship slammed on writing by these Acts, no doubt, negatively affected the development of South African literature. Hawley also provides a list of those who underwent expatriation as a result of protest against the unjust and racist order in South Africa. They include Pauline Smith, Roy Campbell,

William Plomer, Van der Post, Dan Jacobsen, Sydney Clouts, Christopher Hope and Roy Macnab. All these writers are whites, and this goes to show that not every white person supported apartheid, inhumanity of man to man, or injustice under whatever guise. As for black writers, voluntary or forced exile was the order of the day. Peter Abrahams, Lewis Nkosi, Can Themba, Ezekiel Mphahlele, Bessie Head are a few of the numerous examples in this category.

The tradition of protest writing among black South Africans would later dominate the country's literary landscape. It gained greater momentum and adopted revolutionary aesthetics after the Sharpeville Massacre of 1960 and the Soweto Revolt of 1976 respectively. Abraham's *A Night of Their Own* (1965), La Guma's *In the Fog of the Season's End (*1972) and Lauretta Ngcobo's *Cross of Gold* (1981) are quite representative of the typical protest writings of the post-Sharpeville Massacre. This kind of protest writing is markedly different from the earlier one in that it is imbued with revolutionary spirit. *A Night of Their Own* heralds the inscription of armed struggle and underground activities in the black creative writing. The determination of the blacks to challenge the Afrikaner hegemony by 'any means necessary' is clearly objectified in this novel. And, this determination and resistance are pursued with uncommon zeal and great guts, even with the sacrifice of lives. The international dimension to the struggle for liberation is also shown in the bringing in of money for the underground movement from London through Richard Nkosi, the narrative's protagonist. Most significantly, Abraham, through the way *A Night of Their Own* (1965) ends, advances the theory that the way out of racial subjugation and oppression is violence, neither tolerance nor passive resistance. This is demonstrated in the arrival of armed guerrillas on the coast at the end of the story.

In the Fog of the Season's End (1979) also marks La Guma's writings' departure from the normal protest tradition to the adoption of revolutionary imperatives. It illustrates the organisational savvy of the underground activities of the liberation movement and the hope that the oppressed will, sooner than later, breathe the air of liberty. Tekwane, the hero of the story, tells one of his contacts and collaborators, 'it is a good thing that we are now working for armed struggle. It gives people confidence to think that soon they might combine mass action with military force' (143). Like Abraham's *A Night of Their Own*, the international dimension of the struggle is also hinted at by La Guma.

At the end of the novel, three members of the movement are sent abroad for military training. By this, La Guma also enlists his support for Abrahams' revolutionary action. Also, by this, the liberation struggle is signified not only as a physical and social war but also a psychological one. Here and elsewhere, black novelists try to show that militancy or armed struggle is a necessary reaction to the continued repressive and sophisticated onslaughts of the Calvinist state. The novel also highlights the roles of the different classes of the oppressed in the society. Professionals and middle-class who are not active in the struggle give their supports in cash or service while the low class give theirs in service or collaborative silence.

Whereas the depiction of black women in terms of their role in *In the Fog of the Season's End* is nothing to write home about, their portrayal in Ngcobo's *Cross of Gold* (1981) is admirably realised, despite the fact that the protagonist and hero of the narrative is a man. Besides this area of divergence, *Cross of Gold* also shares many parallels with *A Night of Their Own* and *In the Fog of the Season's End* in terms of revolutionary bearings, the most important being the presentation of Mangoba, the son of the convicted hero, as a guerrilla fighter who supports the rebellion led by Piet, a dissident Afrikaner Minister of Defence. In the epilogue of the novel where this takes place, Ngcobo offers a resolution which, in apartheid days, must have appeared unrealistic but turned out prophetic later.

From these protest novels have emerged what later became known as the Soweto Novels. This later sub-genre falls within the paradigm of writings of apocalyptic vision, as implicated by the revolutionary consciousness that runs through them. The novels are so christened essentially because they were inspired by the three-day revolt of black students against the Bantu Education Act, which stipulated the use of Afrikaans as the language of instruction in black schools and, generally, inferiorises the quality of black education. The novels also offer artistic sublimation of this political event and its consequences. In the Soweto novel, the seed of revolutionary proclivity sowed in Abraham's *A Night of Their Own*, La Guma's *In the Fog of the Season's End* and others have not only germinated, they have grown to the point of bearing fruits. Mbuleleo Mzamane, Serote Mongane, Miriam Tlali and Sipho Sempala are some of the artistic hands to engage in the plucking, literarily speaking. Exploring the use of mass protest and armed struggle, their novels enquire into the motivations of

the revolt, the strategies of the insurgents, the response of the State, as well as the impacts on individuals and the political collective of the liberation movements and the Calvinist State.

Mzamane's *The Children of Soweto* (1982) and Sempala's *A Ride on the Whirlwind* (1981) are quite representative of the Soweto novels. *The Children of Soweto* traces both the remote and immediate causes of the revolt to the economic and social disadvantages inherent in the hegemonic education policy of the apartheid system. In its aetiological investigation, the novel locates the remote cause of the revolt in the general discontent with the quality of education the blacks are provided while its immediate cause is attributed to the imposition of Afrikaans as language of instruction for black students. In condemning the type of education received by blacks, the narrator argues:

> The fact of the matter was that to drag in stuff like woodwork into our curriculum was being extremely impractical. Look at it another way, how many times did township residents ever acquire the services of a carpenter? Not even a pauper was buried in a home-made coffin these days…… How then did a carpenter make his living in an environment where everybody could afford furniture even from the most exclusive shops like Bradlows? (30-31)

This argument underscores the fact that the students' violent protest is motivated by the need to counter a system that stultifies their social and economic progress. As they burn down government buildings, they also loot shops and destroy beer halls. The police respond by shooting, as "army tanks roam down the streets like hungry hippos, the ground was strewn with casualties" (40). The State also uses the mass media to justify its action while demonising the student protesters. Mzamane, however, presents the students as a sensible and strategising group. In a nutshell, the novelist explores the successes, limitations, failures, and impact of the Soweto revolt and its contribution to the overall liberation struggle.

Similarly, *A Ride on the Whirlwind* (1981) enquires into the role of the students revolt in advancing the course of the struggle for liberation by the blacks. Like *The Children of Soweto,* it also examines the successes, failures, limitations and impacts of the

historic event. The novel, however, differs from Mzamane's in the sublimation of these realities. The actions in *A Ride on the Whirlwind* are not spontaneous; they are well-thought out and thoroughly planned as each member of the struggle

> … took part like a trained worker on a production line. One picked up a bottle, examined it; another scooped sand from the container standing ready; yet another carried a measure of petrol. So it was. The group operated in the true fashion of a military unit (1981:70)

To be certain, this sounds too good to be true about students comprising primary and secondary school age children. Such a sense of organisational savvy must, therefore, be understood as the novelist's aesthetic rendering of the liberation activists' unity of purpose. *A Ride on the Whirlwind* is also about blacks trying to deal with the agent of the state. The primary target of the liberation movement in the novel is the elimination of Warrant Officer Andries Batata who is notorious for mercilessly dealing with opposition figures. The movement we see in *A Ride on the Whirlwind* is also better equipped in terms of arms. In fact, one of its prominent members, Mzi, is actually a trained guerrilla fighter. From stones and petrol bombs, there is gradation to the use of Molotov cocktail and AK47 rifles. The Police Station, Railway Station and other selected targets are bombed. The Police respond with arrest and torture. The consequences include maiming, death and exile. Thus, Sempala, like Mzamane and others, captures one of the most turbulent times in the history of apartheid using artistic imagination. By their works, the Soweto novelists illustrate the view that literature is a voice and weapon of the struggle for liberation.

Another major trend in South African literature was the development of the category described as prison literature by Douglas Killam and Alicia Kerfoot (2008). This sub-genre shares relation with the auto/biographical oriented South African works as most of the writings in the latter form also have their ancestry in prison experiences. Some of the auto/biographical writings that fall in this category include Breyten Breytenbach's *True Confession of an Alibino Terrorist* (1984) Sachs' *The Jail Diary of Albie Sachs* (1966), *Mandela's Long Walk to Freedom* (1994). In fact, Killam and Kerfoot date the commencement of this sub-genre to one of the stories in Bleek's (1911) collection titled '//Kabbo's Capture and Journey to Cape Town.' Besides using

the self-narrative mode, the prison literature in the country has also come up with fictionalized creations. Prison experiences are codified in such fictional works like La Guma's *The Stone Country* (1967) D. M. Zwenloke's *Robben Island* (1973), Breytenbach's *Memory of Snow and Dust* (1988) among others.

These works draw on the writers' experience of the South African prison system to expose the indignities, violence and privations suffered by the inmates as well as the cruelty and inhumanity of the prison officials. Zwelonke's *Robben Island* particularly draws attention to the plight of political prisoners who are lumped together with common criminals to serve their terms. The narrative centres around Bekimpi, a political activist, whose beliefs and principled convictions landed him in jail, which culminates in his death. Bekimpi is hanged upside down until he dies following suffocation. This manner of death is generally believed to hint at the way Steve Biko, a prominent struggle activist was killed while in prison. Zwelonke and Biko were jailed together on the penal colony of Robben Island.

Interestingly, the literature of prison experience in the country is not an exclusive preserve of the genre of prose. Drama and poetry also boast a sizeable number of works which derive inspiration from prison experiences or document such experiences. Athol Fugard's *The Island* (1973) is a typical example in the dramatic genre. In poetry, we have examples like Brutus' *Letters to Martha and other Poems from a South African Prison* (1968) and *A Simple Lust* (1973). There is also Jeremy Cronin's *Inside and Out: Poems from Inside and Even the Dead* (1999).

The place occupied by the short story genre in South African writings, especially black literature, cannot be over-emphasized. Different theories have been formulated for its eminence in the body of black writings in particular. Some argue that it enjoyed great patronage during apartheid era because the hostile environment of the time did not encourage extended narrative. Others are of the view that its short form permits the writer to quickly mesh his personal experience and social realities into a fictional piece, which can also be quickly consumed by the literate middle-class and the literate *proles* of the black urban population. In support of the form's reliance on personal experience, Mzamane states in the preface to his collection, *Mzala* (1980) "that all the 'characters' in these stories are actually based on people I know …. I claim absolutely

nothing for myself" (xii). Giving reason for his choice of form, he states that "the short story is a genre most suited to my prosaic mind, without making the kinds of demands (in terms of self-discipline, concentration and sustained effort) which the novel form makes on the writer" (viii). There is no doubt that there is a great element of litotes and excessive modesty in Mzamane's observation above, which is personal to him. Still, the observation implies that the longer narrative, the novel, is more exacting. Thus, it may also validate others' preference for the short story form, if the theory of hostile environment is put into consideration. However, elsewhere, Mzamane is credited with expressing regret at the realisation that his short stories lack ideological underpinings. He declares:

> Despite what I now perceive as some positive elements in my early works, I was painfully aware of a groping, of something lacking in my works, the absence of an ideological framework to elevate my work to the standard I so admired in the works of Alex La Guma, Keopetse Kgositsile and a few more of my compatriots. I had been educated to believe that literature and politics did not mix, that to mix them was recipe for poor art …. Politics, economics, and social concerns of every description did, in fact, mix in literature of the highest order (Daymon et al, 1984:192).

By early woks, he refers to his short stories which had appeared in publications like *The Classic, Staffrider* and *Izwe.* By 1982, when he published his first novel, *The Children of Soweto,* his ideological predisposition is unmistakable. He has settled for the Marxist direction. Certainly, the novel form would afford any writer a greater leverage to explore his ideological bias than the short story would.

In discussing the short story genre in black South African writings, the role and significance of *Drum, Classic* and other periodicals cannot be ignored. The 1950s and 60s has been generally acknowledged as the period when the short story was the most popular and prolific genre of creative writing in South Africa. The major outlets for this imaginative expression were *Drum* and *Classic*. *Drum* magazine, owned by Jim Bailey, hit the newsstand in 1951. Besides news, stories and entertainment tit-bits, the magazine was, in its early years, reputed for pro-black activism as it exposed terrible exploitation of blacks working on white farms, inhuman prison conditions and other evils of the segregationist policy of apartheid hegemony, the injustice of mass

removals, the absurdity of banning social mixing by people of different racial backgrounds and the enactment of the Immorality Act.

The high point of *Drum* and its relevance to the development of South Africa literature is established in the contribution of its fiction beat to the discovery and nurture of many black writers who would go on later to become literary icons. Most prominent among many others is Mphahlele who, at a point, was the editor of the fiction beat of the magazine. Others include Can Themba, Nat Nakasa, Henry Nxumalo, Todd Matshikiza, Richard Rive, James Mathews, Alex La Guma and so on. Most of the contributions of these writers to *Drum* later found their ways into different literary collections and anthologies. With time, the fortune and power of *Drum* however declined. Although still in existence and promoting black values, it is doubtful if it can re-attain its glory of the fifties. Nevertheless, its pride of place in the literary history of South Africa is not in contention. Indeed, the *Drum* of yore nurtured and enriched black writing, as the imaginative contributions of Africans to the periodical cannot be ignored in South Africa's literary history.

Classic was another important publication in the development of black writings in South Africa. Co-founded by Nat Nakasa and Barney Simon in 1963, the magazine also contributed to the nurturing of South African literature in general as it published some of the writers who would also later become notable literary figures in the 1970s and 1980s. The publication, still in existence, unlike *Drum*, is consciously literary.

Most of the early short stories that appeared in these publications draw their themes from the issue of racism - some attempting to understand the illogic and absurdity of apartheid while others expostulate on its distasteful consequences. Some of the stories which have enjoyed archetypal status and received extensive attention in the hands of critics include Mathews's 'The Park' and 'The Party'; Mphahlele's 'Mrs Plum'; Rive's 'The Bench'; La Guma's '*A Walk* in the Night' and a few others. La Guma's *A Walk in the Night*, which is more of a novella, captures the spirit of what is obtainable in the works of his literary contemporaries in terms of engagement with the issues of race, violence and oppression. Though lacking in the humour, ironic and satiric undertones for which the writings of his contemporaries were famed, La Guma's *A*

Walk in the Night exposes the inhumanity and injustice of apartheid, as well the oppressed's struggle against its crushing onslaught.

While the aforementioned writers may be regarded as pioneers in the tradition of short story writing within the black literary community, the 1980s witnessed the emergence of another crop of writers whose attainment of literary limelight derives from the quality of the short stories they produce. The most notable of them are Mzamane, Mothobi Mutloatse and Ndebele. Mzamane's stories are collected in *Mzala* (1983), Mutloatse's in *Mama Ndiyalila: Stories* (1982) and Ndebele's in *Fools* (1983). They deftly deploy ironic, sarcastic or satiric tones in their narratives. For instance, an African-American lady in Mzamane's 'The Soweto Bride' would tell his South African black husband that "To me the 'back to Africa call' would always remain a black American myth" (Mzala, 141). Meanwhile, she had left the United States for South Africa. In Ndebele's 'The Music of the Violin', a black father laments on how it is difficult to raise and give a child a culture in South Africa because his son would not cooperate in learning and playing white musical instrument!

The genre of short story is not an exclusive of the black writers. An internationally recognized and prominent voice in this literary space is the 1991 Noble Laureate, Gordimer. A writer of the liberal tradition, Gordimer has produced more collections of short stories than any other South African to-date, with her collections being about twenty in number. Perhaps the title-story of her recent collection, *Beethoven Was One-sixteenth Black* (2007) best exemplifies her contributions to this genre. The story subtly explores, in typical Gordimer style, the nuanced implications of pigmentation in the post-apartheid era. Fred Morris, a fifty-two year old academic and anti-apartheid activist in the years of the struggle, is apparently not getting the 'deserved reward' for his efforts, now that his political constituency has triumphed in the struggle against apartheid, due mainly to his white pigmentation. Fred is therefore determined to undertake historical and genealogical excavations in an attempt to link his ancestry to the colour of those in power today – blacks. In a narration steeped in indirectness, Gordimer laughs at the craziness for privilege which the colour of a man's skin seems to guarantee or throw at him in South Africa. But, even more significant is her perplexity about the subversion of the ideals of the struggle. She asks, 'So what's happened to the ideal of the struggle….for recognition, beginning in the self, that our

kind, humankind, doesn't need any distinctions of blood percentage tincture' (15). In locating the culture of racism in the ignoble desire to corner more privileges at the expense of others, she observes: 'Once there were blacks, poor devils, wanting to claim white. Now there's a white, poor devil, wanting to claim black. It's the same secret.' (15-16). By this, Gordimer not only condemns racial discrimination or privilege as the case may be, she also conjectures that people would do the ridiculous in an attempt to get out of a disadvantaged position.

In the literary or written sense, the genre of drama has not enjoyed as much patronage as prose or poetry in South Africa. This is not because it is unattractive to artist, but for other reasons. The enjoyment and appreciation of a drama piece can only be fully realised in performance. With most of the writings in the country having political undercurrents, writing for the stage in the pre-democracy era usually attracted the State's attention. Many dramatists had a rough time with the law while trying to stage their plays. Consequently, fewer plays can be found on the South African literary landscape compared to poetry and fiction. Even of the plays produced, many were unscripted, especially during the height of apartheid's repressive onslaught on the cultural front in the 1960s and early 70s. Much of the work in this genre falls within the popular and agit-prop typology. The plays were produced as part of contributions to the struggle for liberation. Thus, in the spirit of Black Consciousness borrowed from the United States, most of the plays were meant to raise the consciousness of the black populace to resist white oppression. Examples of such plays include Gibson Kente's *Too Late* (1981) and *Woza Albert* (1983) by Percy Mtwa et al.among others. Indeed, these plays contributed immensely to freedom struggle. In Shava's opinion, 'the radicalism of this theatre goes beyond that of Fugard in the sense that the theatre not only registers protest but also advocates change' (1989: 136). He also thinks that this theatre did 'prepare the school children and workers for the uprising' (143) which would later characterise the socio-political landscape of the country. We totally subscribe to these views.

Fugard's drama, which is less radical than the popular form promoted by black artists, offers a fine example of literary playwriting and, in fact, boasts of greater international recognition and acceptance than works of other South African playwrights. Although white, Fugard's works have largely engaged issues of racism in a way that shows

identification and comments on the black predicament. However, this perception has been challenged as lacking in credibility by some critics. Donald Morales (2000:257) argues that Fugard, in capturing the black experience in his plays 'is writing as an observer and imposing his vision of reality over something very distant from him.' To corroborate his point, Morales cites from his personal interview with Duma Ndlovu (1986) who had noted that Fugard writes what he considers as political priority for blacks but which, in his (Ndlovu's) assessment, are low on the blacks' priority list. Similarly, Morales recalls Brutus's misgivings about Fugard's works in the following words: 'I always felt that there was an element of exploitation in his work, that he really was, in a sense, writing about the predicament of blacks without completely supporting them' (258). Because Fugard was a first-hand witness to the unfair and oppressive treatment of blacks while working as a court clerk, it may seem unfair to suggest that his obsessive preoccupation with racism in his plays is suspect. Fugard made his international fame with the publication of *The Blood Knot* (1963). The play explores the implications of pigmentation in apartheid South Africa, using brothers with slightly different colours. This theme resonates with the experiences of the coloured in and beyond South Africa, especially the United States, Latin America and the West Indies. The theme is also taken up in a recent post-apartheid fiction, *The Remittance Man* (2007) by Michael Worsnip as an example of what Susan Gallagher (1997) describes as the 'backward glance' in the dialectics of history and the novel in South Africa. Some of Fugard's plays which feature prominently in the opus of South African dramatic literature include *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (1972), *Boesman and Lena* (1969), *My children*! *My Africa*! (1990) and *Master Harold and the Boys* (1983). The other playwright of high consequence in South African theatre is Gibson Kente, with credits for the production of over twenty plays and television dramas.

Another major voice in the genre of literary drama is Zakes Mda who came into the limelight in the 1970s following his publication of *We Shall Sing to the Fatherland* (1973) and *Dead End* (1979). His drama falls within the orbit of black consciousness culture of the seventies, with most of his plays interrogating issues of race, class and liberty. His other plays include *Dark Voices Ring* and *The Hill*. They are all collected in *The Plays of Zakes Mda* (1990). Other notable playwrights in the country, including new voices, are Lewis Nkosi, Pieter Dirk Uys, Reza de Wet, Yael Farber, Paul Slabolepszy, Ismail Mahomed, Nicholas Ellenbogen, Brett Bailey, Fatima Dike, Lara

Foot Newton, Mike van Graan and so on. Before the apartheid years, however, there had been plays published before 1948 and some of the playwrights included black writers. For instance, we have Herbert Dhlomo's *The Girl Who Killed to Save* (1936) and *The Valley of a Thousand Hills* (1941).

During the 1970s the Black Consciousness movement which emerged, was more identified with poetry. The poetry, which has been variously described as township poetry, black consciousness poetry or Soweto poetry, is mainly concerned with raising consciousness among the black folk and drawing them into the struggle for liberation. Notable figures in this poetry include Osward Mtshali, Mongane Wally Serote, Sipho Sempala and Mafika Gwala. The early works of these poets, especially Mtshali and Serote, found outlets in *the Classic* and *the Purple Renoster* magazines. Both would later publish *Sound of a Cowhide Drum (1970)* and *Yakhal'inkomo (1972)* as their first volumes of poetry respectively. Their poetry places premium on the content, rather than the container. Consequently, their works, like most of the literary outputs of apartheid days, do not strike remarkable aesthetic cord in the Western sense. The poetry, in its self-imposed preoccupation with raising consciousness among blacks, mainly draws attention to the unenviable predicament of the blacks, and focuses on violence, poverty, alienation, oppression and man's inhumanity to man. Stylistically, it is characterised by the use of expletives, modernist imagism and occasional use of local language among others. The extracts below illustrate this point:

A murder's hand,
lurking in the shadows,
clasping the dagger,
strikes down the helplessness

I am the victim
I am slaughtered
every night in the streets.
I am cornered by the fear
gnawing at my timid heart;
in my helplessness I languish

man has ceased to be man
Man has become beast
Man has become prey
(Mtshali, *A Selection of African Poetry*,1988:*257)*

I am the man you will never defeat
I will be the one to plague you
Your children are cursed
If you walk this earth, where I too walk
and you tear my clothes and reach for my flesh
and tear my flesh to reach my blood
and you spill my blood to reach my bones
…
let me seep into Africa
let this water
this sea
seep into me own me
and break my face into its moods
break my chest
break my heart into the fathoms where no
hands reach.

(Serote, 1982: *Selected Poems*, 85)

White writing of this period also produced notable poets, some of which include Douglas Livingstone, Lionel Abrahams, Patrick Cullinan, Peter Horn, and Wopko Jensma. These poets appeared on the literary scene in the early 1970s and some of them are still active today. Unlike the Black Consciousness poets, they engage private and political themes and tend towards modernism. However, each poet has his own peculiarity in the treatment of chosen subject. For instance, while Abraham's poetry is tempered by political liberalism, Horn's courts Marxist cousciousness while Breytenbach and Livingstone appear more concerned with the issues of oppression and racism.

Another landmark in the history of white writing was the emergence of the *Sestigers* in the 1960s. The major voices of the group include Jan Rabie, Andre Brink, Etienne Leroux, Breyten Breytenbach, Chris Barnard and Bartho Smith. Although they are Afrikaans, most of the works of these writers challenge the hegemonic predilections of the Nationalist Party, which was in absolute control of the government. In spite of or because of the *Sestigers*' rebellious proclivity, the writing of *Sestig* is highly regarded and enjoys serious critical attention within the Afrikaans literary circle. A good example of the *Sestig* subversive work, as noted by Heywood (2004) is Leroux's *Magersfontein, O Magersfontein!* (1976). In the work, the novelist provides an account of sexual escapades among a certain film crew. This was a serious fly in the face of

Immorality Act and censorship laws of the country. Consequently, it was banned. As a result of Brink's damning verdict on Afrikaans' Calvinist mentality, his *Looking on Darkness* (1974) was also banned. In the novel, Brink draws attention to the absurdities, contradictions, inequalities and oppressions which characterised apartheid South Africa. Arbitrary detention, torture, censorship, State-sponsored murder and the aberrant Immorality Act are held up to ridicule. The same fate was also suffered by some of the other members of the group.

While the *Sestigers* are self-confessed committed white writers, there are others who equally see themselves as writers of political conviction but without an organised platform, the iconic symbol of which is the 1991 Nobel Laureate, Gordimer. Her early works tend to be subtle in their attacks on the illogicality of apartheid, but as the State became more ferocious in her onslaught against the victims of the system and their sympathisers, her later works became laced with apocalyptic vision. *Burgher's Daughter* (1979) and *July's People* (1981) are quite representative of this dark vision. *July's People* centres on the tensed issue of interracial relationship in apartheid South Africa where the hitherto powerful and privileged have to swap roles with the oppressed and the disadvantaged. July, a servant of fifteen years, helps his employer, Smales, to escape attack in the hands of black militias bent on using force to overthrow their white oppressors. Gordimer not only uses the reversal of roles here to warn of a likely reality in the future but also to predict a violent and frightening end to apartheid. Fortunately, apartheid ended in a surprisingly peaceful manner.

Like Gordimer, Brink is another white novelist of international repute from South Africa with a conscious political conviction. Like Gordimer, operating from the liberal platform, he also employs his art in the service of political imperative. His rebellion against his Afrikaner constituency derives from the discomfort with the inheritance of racial privilege engendered by the chauvinistic and Calvinistic ideology. Again, like Gordmer, he is a prolific writer, with novels numbering well over a dozen. Other examples of politically conscious white novelists include Wessel Ebersohn W. P. B. Botha, Wilma Stockenstrom, and Christopher Hope among others.

Still on white fiction, J.M Coetzee's writing occupies a pride of place. The 2003 Nobel Prize Laureate, like Gordimer and Brink, is quite prolific in the genre of novel, which

he mostly chooses for his imaginative expression. With well over a dozen novels to his name, Coetzee's contribution to South African literature and, by extension, world's literature cannot be overemphasized. Besides the international recognition his works attract, which earned him the Nobel Laureate status, Coetzee's writing is significant in the history of South African literature for its perspective and aesthetics, qualities which stand out his works from others'. While we make no pretence to singling him out as the best contemporary novelist from South Africa, there is no gainsaying the fact that his works tend to be more universalising in the exploration of their themes, and more literary in their stylistic presentations.

While the above attributes make his works unique in an environment where most creative writers fall over one another in the effort to exploit socio-political and historical realities as 'ready made' materials for their works with little or no craft, the same attributes have made his works controversial and enjoy a lot of critical interests. He has been accused of not showing commitment to the ugly politics of racial segregation and oppression in South Africa. For instance, David Atwell (1990:128) observes that although Coetzee may not deny the existence of history and reality, he is nevertheless 'decidedly anti-political' in his views and, by implication, in his writings. Gordimer (1984:6) has also talked about Coetzee's fictional 'revulsion against all political and revolutionary solutions' to the apartheid problematic. Those who choose to write the so-called apolitical novel like Coetzee are seen and sometimes attacked as collaborators in the injustice of the apartheid system.

While apartheid lasted, Lindfors (1985) and Reingard Nethersole (1990) have actually observed that black, white or coloured South African writers were mostly preoccupied with highlighting the iniquities of the system and thereby producing didactic literature. Certainly, Coetzee's fiction does not fall within the didactic category. Even in its depiction of iniquities, his works tend to be allegorical, which has led to the perception of his works as somewhat difficult. The view that Coetzee is not committed and that his novels are apolitical has been debunked by Susan Gallagher (1991) and Kehinde (2005). Both contend that Coetzee's fiction engages history by merely drawing thematic inspiration from it. In their views, they point out that rather than preserve history, his fiction rivals and transforms it. Michael Wade (1993) also places Coetzee's fiction in the context of historical and social realism for its depiction of the dissonant

experiences that make up life in apartheid South Africa. In situating Coetzee's fiction in the tradition of realism, Michael Vaughan (1982:134) has also observed that 'His work partakes of the doom of which he writes.' In her study of *Disgrace,* Lucy Graham (2003: 96) has also noted that 'Coetzee's fiction is an ethically and politically committed literature.' In addition to sharing the foregoing views, our observation is that the approach Coetzee often employs - allegorical and postmodernist - makes his fiction atypical of much of what obtained in South African writings of the apartheid era. And, here is to be located the significance of his creative opus in the South African literary history. His fiction demonstrates commitment to both his society and his art. Even some of his post-apartheid writings, as evidenced in *Disgrace* (1999), attest to this dual commitment.

2.3 Post – Apartheid Era and the Literary Imagination

Thus far, we have traced the development and examined the dominant trends characteristic of the different phases of South African literature right from the traditional oral form to the modern written form. The different genres and sub-genres, since the contact between native South Africans and European settlers in 1652 up to the twilight of the twentieth century when apartheid yielded passage to multiracial democracy in the country, have been examined. A couple of years before the end of apartheid, it was increasingly becoming certain that the system was nearing its end. The previous two decades had witnessed an explosion in anti-apartheid activities in terms of mass protest, students' revolt and organised insurgency. International pressures in form of sanction and isolation were also on the increase. The prospect of apartheid's collapse, unsurprisingly, threw up new challenges, inspired speculations and even generated prescriptions as to what should be the next direction of cultural productions in event of apartheid's demise. Hitherto, culture had been put at the service of politics. Indeed, literature was largely employed as a weapon in the liberation struggle either as a means of protest and resistance or a medium of conscientisation.

In 1989, Sachs, a notable white member of the African National Congress (ANC) presented a paper before fellow members in Lusaka, Zambia during one of the Congress' in-house seminars. The paper entitled 'Preparing Ourselves for Freedom'

argues about the need to reverse the trend whereby art is conceived as an instrument of struggle. Sachs declaims:

> If you look at most of our art and literature you would think we were living in the greyest and most sombre of all worlds, completely shut in by apartheid. It is as though our rulers stalk every page and haunt every picture; everything is obsessed by the oppressors and the trauma they have imposed, nothing is about us and the new consciousness we are developing (Spring is Rebellious, 1990:21).

Although he later admits that the arts played a vital role in the struggle for liberation, he insists that members should be disallowed from saying that culture is a weapon of struggle. To him, tying literature to politics is tantamount to imposing 'our own internal states of emergency' (21). He therefore exhorts: 'let us write better poems and make better films and compose better music, and let us get the voluntary adherence of the people to our banner' (21). He also condemns what he describes as solidarity criticism, which he considers inimical to good arts. He even prescribes a moratorium of about five years after which culture should have been totally divorced of politics.

Obviously, Sachs's arguments boil down to the need to improve the craft of writers as well as the imperative of exploring new themes. By moving away from the position of arts as a weapon of struggle and liberation for which it was known for many years, Sachs is actually re-echoing the drowned voices of critics like Nkosi and Ndebele. Decades back, Nkosi (1967) had faulted the artistic quality of black fiction, claiming that it is characterised by 'journalistic fact parading outrageously as imaginative literature' (222). Like Nkosi, Ndebele (1991) argues that black writing is too much preoccupied with socio-political realities forced on the nation by the Afrikaner hegemony. This, he thinks, merely re-draws attention to what is already known. He asserts:

> Recognition does not necessarily lead to transformation: it simply confirms. Beyond that confirmation, it may even reinforce the frustration produced by the reader's now further consolidated perception of an overwhelmingly negative social reality (27).

In other words, Ndebele expected black writers to come up with works that, in formalist parlance, would *defamiliarise* the familiar, thereby impacting more effectively on the reader's consciousness.

Another writer and critic, Coetzee (1988) has also spoken, though in not as many words, against the tendency of some writers to approximate the novel with history. In his essay, 'The Novel Today', he deplores:

> … a powerful tendency, perhaps even dominant tendency, to subsume the novel under history, to read novels as what I will loosely call imaginative investigations of real historical forces and real historical circumstances; and conversely, to treat novels that do not perform this investigation of what are deemed to be real historical forces and circumstances as lacking in seriousness (3).

By history or historical circumstances, Coetzee is not only referring to the past, he is also talking about the historical present. He thinks that the novel should engage history, whether of past or present, dialectically. In other words, Coetzee aligns with Sachs, Nkosi and Ndebele on the view that social realities require ingenious sublimation in the hands of creative writers. He therefore contends that the novel should operate 'in terms of its own procedures and issues its own conclusions, not…… in terms of the procedures of history and eventuates in conclusions that are checkable by history' (3).

While the other critical views above pre-date Sachs' paper, it is Sachs' contribution that has become most historically significant. The paper, which was originally presented to ANC members in 1989, was later published in February 1990 by Johannesburg *Weekly Mail* on the same day that F.W. de Klerk, the last South African Prime Minister of apartheid era who also midwived the birth of multiracial democracy, addressed the Parliament on his planned termination of apartheid. Referring to the impact of the coincidence, Susan Gallagher (1997) notes that the 'tumultuous response to this brief essay was unprecedented, revealing the volatile interconnection between culture and politics during the decolonization process' (381). This is also corroborated by Duncan Brown and Bruno van Dyke (1991) who think that Albie Sachs's paper generated a response that is unrivalled in recent South African cultural history. They

also point out that the paper was 'energetically debated at cultural locals, COSAW meetings, academic seminars, and even by Members of Parliament' (vii). All these underscore the epiphanic significance of Sachs's polemics. The questions then were: 'What are South African writers going to write about when apartheid is over? How will South African writers now engage their subject? There have been a number of postulates in response.

In his exploratory comments on the new directions of post-apartheid literature, Abubakar (1999) draws attention to Lindfors's speculative observation that disillusionment will soon overwhelm the new South African writing like it happened in post-colonial African states up north; that writers will soon take up adversarial relationship with the new leaders; that a new form of protest writing would be engendered; and that censorship and imprisonment of artists would start all over again. Obviously, this is a rather grim picture. And we totally share Abubakar's view that the 'pessimism of Lindfors' text pushes his insightful speculations to a seemingly hyperbolic level' (xvi). However, some of the inscriptions in the new writings are actually validating these speculations. For instance, Mda's *The Heart of Redness* (2000) partly offers one of the early explorations of disillusionment in the South African post – apartheid novel. Camugu, a returnee from exile armed with 'too much learning' (29) would soon find out that his decision to stay for good and contribute to the development of his country can only work out through 'network and lobbying' (32). With twenty job interviews behind and four years on without a job in his area of training, he gives up the hope. A sense of disillusionment has also been noted in the poetry of the new era. In 'Comrades, Don't We Delude Ourselves' for instance, Vonani Bila captures the people's disappointment with the new order as he laments: 'Azania bleeds and groans and moans,/ The wounds of liberation betrayals are gushing and gaping" (*It All Begins*, 2003 : 203). With respect to repression, Kelwyn Sole (1996) has hinted that due to the poet's penchant for calling a spade by no other name, Lesego Rampolokeng, a poetic voice of note in the country, has occasionally been brought into conflict with the post – 1990 powers-that-be. Surely, this kind of trend is ominous for the literary community in the country.

In his own thinking, Johan Degenaar (1992:11) suggests that the post–apartheid literature should engage the historical past with a view to building a new and better society. He theorises:

> Events in the past have to be interpreted in an imaginative way. Storytelling is the most appropriate way of doing this. Stories about the past enable us to create and share a common future. They contribute to the production and consumption of an informed culture, for it is through the art of storytelling that a culture is enriched with intertextual significance.

Indeed, a great number of fictions published by South African writers since the collapse of apartheid draw their materials from history. A few of them include Brink's *The Other Side of Silence* (2002) and *Imaginings of Sand* (1996) W.P.B. Botha's *A Duty of Memory* (1997) Mda's *The Heart of Redness* and so on. Several plays have also been inspired by past events, which in turn constitute the major material with which the dramatic stories are woven. All the plays in Yael Farber's trilogy, *Theatre As Witness* (2008) are good examples. Numerous poetic pieces have equally made use of history in their compositions.

Coterminous with Degenaar's proposal is Brink's (1996:17) conjecture about the likely direction of the novel in post-apartheid South Africa. In his view, historical consciousness in the new novel is virtually a forgone conclusion. He stresses : 'It is likely to form part of an intensive endeavour in post-apartheid literature to address the silences of the past, and the forms this may assume cannot but be informed by the peculiar concept of history the authors concerned bring to it.' In this observation, Brink predicates the imperative of interrogating the past by literature on the pretext that apartheid had made impossible the exploration of many issues in the past. To be certain, this subtle reference is to the censorship laws of the Calvinist State. He however admits that 'in many cases the silences arose because the urgencies of the situation presented priorities among which certain experience simply did not figure very highly' (1996:21). Brink goes further to explain his concept of history as either 'history as fact' or 'history as fiction', that is, whether a narrative merely chronicles events of the past or it brings then under aesthetic sublimation.

In different instances, Christopher Hope (1993) and E. Pereira (1993) have added their own voices to the discourse on the place of history in post-apartheid writings. In his interviews with South African literary figures about the future of writing in the country after apartheid, Hope observes a 'growing desire for… fictions from the badlands and backwaters of South African history' (10). Similarly, Pereira talks about 'radical rewriting of history' (1). As for Ndebele (1991:155), there are compelling reasons why the new writing has to engage the past. He avers:

> We have to cry out when the past is being deliberately forgotten in order to ensure that what was gained by it can now be enjoyed without compunction. It is crucial at this point that the past be seen as a legitimate point of departure for talking about the challenges of the present and the future. The past, no matter how horrible it has been, can redeem us. It can be the moral foundation on which to build the pillars of the future.

Ndebele's strong feelings as expressed above must not be interpreted as a reflection of the desire to open old wounds or a sign of unforgiveness and political vendetta; it is indeed a signification of the inextricability of politics from the literature of postcolonial societies. The truth is that for a long time to come, South African literature will continue to bear direct or indirect relation to the legacy of apartheid. Ndebele also calls for a shift in South African writing, especially black writing, from 'exteriority' to 'interiority'. In his explication, the literature of exteriority is a writing that focuses on the spectacular and tends to be document. 'It is the literature of the powerless identifying the key factor responsible for their powerlessness' (1991:46). Conversely, he sees literature of interiority as one that 'displays the capacity to break down the barriers of the obvious in order to reveal new possibilities of understanding and action' (1991:50). In other words, Ndebele advocates for a more nuanced plotting, characters with greater psychological depth and a general proclivity for experimentation. This would later find support in the view of another critic who expresses his anticipation about the future of literature in South Africa in the following words: 'It is premature to predict that the "grammar" of the nation's writing…black writers, as they are increasingly freed from the immediacy of political goals, may turn with more relish to the sort of fiction currently being written by white – more allegorical, less realistic, and post modern in experimentation' (Hawley, 1996:61).

Certainly, a move in this direction would serve black writing well. It is however hoped that white writing would not swap places with black writing in terms of pre-occupation with the politics of the historical present.

Talking about a new dawn in South African literature, Mzamane (1996) acknowledges the manifestation of Ndebele's thesis with respect to the idea of 'interiority'. With what can be described as a good degree of certitude, Mzamane states:

> The move from protest to challenge to construction in South Africa has been accompanied at the literary level by a shift from the literature of surface meaning – dependent entirely upon spectacular events –to the literature of interiority with its concern with introspection and the inner life. The literature of interiority is concerned, too, with the entire human personality in all its complexity – and not only with the status of victim and victimizer. It is this turn away from the surface and the venture into the interior which will usher a new dawn for South African literature and society (18).

The implication of Mzamane's submission here is that new South African writing is indifferent to what happens in the larger social formation; it is indifferent to politics. It also implies that by so doing, it will shed the garb of aesthetic sterility for which it is notorious (or famed?), at least for which its black variant was. This is certainly contestable. Literature cannot be absolutely divorced from the politics or social concerns of the milieu in which or against which it is set. This point has been persuasively argued by Ngugi wa Thiongo (1981:xv) when he says that literature does not develop in a vaccum and that it is given impetus, shape by the political and economic forces of its milieu. Chidi Amuta (1987) has also observed that the society influences the writer, just as the writer influences his society. Similarly, Aderemi Bamikunle (1991:73) is of the opinion that 'each work of art finds an inspiration in the historical – social realities in which the author finds himself.' However, it is possible for a writer to distance the objective reality in his process of artistic sublimation. Thus, the distance or proximity to realities of a piece of literary work tends to influence the critical reception of such work. More significantly, most of the canonical and other great writings of World Literature engage politics and social concerns. Consequently, it would be impractical for South African literature to allow itself to be overwhelmed

by the propensity or zeal for aesthetic fermentation in a bid to get besotted or prove itself.

This discourse on the dialectics of politics and arts assumes a humorous turn on a certain occasion. Fugard, the most internationally known of South African playwrights, recalls some of the embarrassing questions he was asked by pressmen and women in the United States following the rapprochement between South African government and ANC, together with other liberation movements in 1990. According to him, some of the questions include:

> Haven't de Klerk and Nelson Mandela put you out of business, Mr Fugard? ... Aren't your plays now out of date? What are you going to do for subject matter when South African apartheid system is in fact abolished? (Fugard, 2002:382).

Certainly, these questions appear embarrassing and even ridiculous. Yet, they are not entirely without substance. In fact, there is a seeming profundity about them. Thrown to a writer who has devoted his entire career to writing political plays revolving around the subject of apartheid, these questions had pertinence. As such, answers were expected. In his answer, Fugard faulted the questions on the grounds of ignorance and naivety about the true realities of South African society by the questioners. Nevertheless, he made it clear that the idea that there could be a South African story that doesn't have political undercurrent is ridiculous. He insists that every act of storytelling is, directly or indirectly, a political action. Again, this corroborates our earlier position and aligns with the views of other scholars noted above.

The foregoing inter-critical postulations held sway before the formal end of apartheid in 1994. With the first majority election and inauguration of Nelson Mandela as the first President of multi–racial South Africa, literary critics and commentators on cultural productions in general have been trying to apprehend and spawn taxonomy for the burgeoning arts in the post-apartheid or post–colonial era. By post-colonial era, we also mean post-1994 elections. This is in agreement with Gallagher's (1997) observation that, politically speaking, South African, did not become postcolonial until

the elections of 1994. It is the period Ashcroft et al. (1989:2) describe as the 'post-colonial moment.'

In the current post-apartheid and post-colonial period, critics have come up with diverse responses and observations about the new reality and its implications for South African literature. These responses and observations are related to but different from those made earlier in anticipation of the end of apartheid in the late eighties and early nineties.

Post–apartheid writing has attracted and continues to attract wide ranging interests and comments by literary critics and cultural enthusiasts. This is not particularly surprising because expectations about what the new order would offer were rather high before its birth. The veteran critic and writer, Nkosi (2002:253) has noted that new black writers examine 'the ways in which our recent and distant past …. exert their pressure on the present'. With respect to white writers, he observes that they either tend 'to explore their own sense of guilt' or create stories where blacks are cast as villains 'to serve as pawns in a game in which roles are suddenly reversed.' In his own observation about the post – apartheid works of writers like Brink, Gordimer and Coetzee, Isidore Diala (2001:68) notes that their fiction remains 'firmly anchored in history and politics' while 'they strive to exorcise the present of its enduring trauma'. This may well be extended to other white writers. Sarah Nuttal and Carli Coetzee (1998:6) have also talked about the 'mode of the confessional' as being characteristic of white South African writing. On black writings, Annie Gagiano (2002:71) has also observed that there is a steady interrogation of the 'communities and sub-strata of our society whose variety and vitality were to a large extent hidden.' In addition, she also notes that some of the post-apartheid fictions are characterised by subtle or overt criticisms of 'some letdowns and weaknesses of the post-1994 state administration' (2002:7).

According to Graham Pechey (1998:58), the new South African writing departs from its struggle psychology of old. He articulates his view in the following words:

> Post-apartheid writing turns from the fight against apartheid,
> whit 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 post modern knowledge, a new symbiosis of the sacred and the profane, the quotidian and the numinous.

To a very large extent, some of the texts under study bear testimony to these claims. In doing so, race or gender hardly imposes any kind of restraint or limitation. Indeed, they break out of what Brink (1998:27) describes as 'the strains of realism' and 'conventions of struggle literature'. Aesthetic experimentations are painstakingly cultivated in some of the new writings while the hitherto politically forbidden themes are explored without inhibition.

Writing on the 'South African fiction after Apartheid', David Atwell and Barbara Harlow comment on the impact of freedom on the new writing and the limitation imposed by the apartheid order. Because of the freedom of expression which the post-1994 order engenders, they observe:

> 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 (2004:4)

Like some of the earlier comments, what is being emphasised by Atwell and Harlow here is the freedom which is now available to writers, as well as how it is being exploited.

In his own reflection and reaction to the significance of the liberal space made available to writers in the new era, Elleke Boehmer (1998) looks forward to seeing 'the lens of vigilant social observation crack across to give life skewed, fragment, upended……hallucinatory, dislocating non-camera-ready ways of representing the world' (53). In other words, she also advocates more creative narrative strategies in the new fiction. In line with this thinking, Michael Green (2005:6) has suggested magical realism as a viable option 'as long as it is made clear, that it is drawn from

African tale-telling traditions rather than any particular international influence'. Indeed, Brink (1993) and Mda (2000) have exploited this mode in *Cape of Storm: The First Life of Adamastor* and the *Heart of Redness* respectively.

Shimawua Atimga (2011:175-176) has cited Coeztee's observation about the new South African writing, eleven years into the post-apartheid era:

> … the end of apartheid means that writers are all much freer than before… But I think it especially has a freeing effect on young writers who didn't have the confidence to write during the time the whole conflict over apartheid continued… relieved the pressure on them to write only about certain subjects.

From this standpoint, Coetzee logically links the liberation in the social formation to the liberation of arts. This sense of freedom in creative writing, he implies, affords new and young writers the leverage to thread boldly where, otherwise, they wouldn't have dared. For Brink (1998:27) there is now opportunity '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.' Indeed, new possibilities are not only being eplored, new approaches are also employed.

Before 1994, the status of South Africa as a post-colonial nation had been controversial. Critics like Ann McClintock (1992) and Anna Maria Carusi (1989) have noted that bringing South African into post-colonial historical discourse before 1990 would be problematic. This, apparently, is due to the fact that even though South Africa was a sovereign state prior to this time, a greater number of its inhabitants were still under social, economic and political subjugation. This appears to be what Gallagher (1997:376) also mean when she observes that 'South Africa in many ways remained a colonial country, in that the vast majority of people were denied the rights of citizenship and were exploited economically as sources of cheap labour.' However, if we consider the view of Ashcroft et al. (1989:2) who use the term post-colonial 'to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonisation to the present day… because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression.' then it is still possible to assert that South Africa's status as a post-colonial nation over the years is not a site for

disputations. All said and done, what is indubitable is the fact that the country is now in a new era where pigmentation is not supposed to confer official privilege or attract State oppression. Yet, it must be admitted that South Africa is now in another phase of post-colonial reality, one described by Frantz Fanon (1961) as the fighting phase. It is a phase which engages the historical past, participates in the present and envisions a brighter future.

As a post-colonial nation, from whichever perspective we look at it, South Africa is condemned to a shared historical and cultural experience with other countries that had come under one imperialistic influence or the other in the past. The question now is how does culture, literary in particular, currently interpret or interrogate the new developments in the country? What exactly is the impact of freedom on literary imagination? How, or, to what extent does artistic inquiry grapple with the present and the past? Are there elements of continuities between apartheid and post-apartheid literary cultures? Are there indices that could be relied upon in the current writings for the purpose of literary cartography or prognostication? Using post-colonial and post-modern theories, the following chapters attempt answers to these questions by exploring the dominant thematic and aesthetic inflections in post-apartheid South African literature.

CHAPTER THREE

Socio-Political cum Creative Freedom and the Subversion of Sex and Sexuality Myths

3.1 Introduction

Whether borne of awe, myth or taboo, there is a certain reticence about the subject of sex and sexuality in different cultures across the world. Although evidence abounds to show that the degree of taciturnity on the subject in different parts of today's world is declining, there is no doubt that it is still one of the most socially pertinent but least discussed subjects among people of all climes. As the world increasingly becomes smaller through the aid of technology, so is cultural diffusion becoming more pronounced and ubiquitous. No society has any kind of absolute bulwark against the influences of others in the current age of information technology. Consequently, those cultures where silence or reticence about sex and sexuality is not only being questioned but replaced by modest and even immodest talks and displays are steadily influencing others.

Yet, some cultures have either or are still trying to resist influences in this direction. South Africa during the apartheid years was a good example of this. The cultural censorship by the State, at the time, tried to discourage a subject like sex from being brought to the public domains, including literary and other cultural productions. But being probably volatile and irrepressible subjects, they somehow, however briefly, found their ways to the pages of some literary works. With the termination of the old order in the early 1990s, this apparently forbidden subject has become the the staple of a steadily increasing number of South African writers. Its treatment in the works of such writers seems to suggest that they are giving expressions to long-held and bottled-up feelings, views, beliefs and convictions. Indeed, their explorations of the subject straddle the modest and the immodest continuum.

Perhaps due to the attitude of people towards discussing it, there is paucity of representations of sex and sexuality in African literature. In the relatively few texts where they feature, their treatment is brief, incidental and pejorative. In one of the

early critical writings on an aspect of the subject, Chris Dunton (2007:727) problematises the treatment of homosexuality in African fiction in his essay, 'Wheyting Be Dat?' He views the treatment as unsympathetic and monothematic in a 'restricted and predictable' way. He also shares Daniel Vignal's (1983) view that African writers treat homophilia as a deviation introduced by Arabs and Europeans. He goes further to provide a survey of texts to illustrate this claim, while admitting a non-pejorative treatment of the subject by a few of the texts. In his conclusion, he observes that the practice of homosexuality in Africa is still an area of social experience yet to be 'granted a history by African writers, but has been greeted, rather, with a sustained outburst of silence' (Dunton, 2007: 427). To a very large extent, we share these views. There is however a steady shift as new fictions emerging from some parts of the continent attest to this. What is even more striking is that there has been an almost total critical silence on the subject. The few African fictional works that treat the subject have not been given deserved critical attention. Dunton's 'Wheytin Be Dat' appears to be the only visible and perhaps the first critical intervention in this area. Michiel Heyns (1998) has also engaged this subject by examining white South African gay writing during the State of Emergency. More critics have begun to engage the subject from different perspectives.

Gaurav Desai (2007), extensively using Soyinka's *The Interpreters*, undertakes a revisionist reading of the sexuality trope in African literature. He argues that Dunton's observation about the monothematic and restrictive treatment of the subject in his seminal essay referred to above is traceable to the 'interpretive limitations' (737) of most of the critics of early modern African literature. Faulting the perception that ambiguous sexuality is one of the legacies of colonial experience, he submits that in some traditional African societies, homosexuality probably predates the African-European encounter, while homophobia is what was actually inherited from Europeans. Juliana Nfah-Abbenyi (2007), joining the emerging critical intervention on this subject, has critically examined and situated Calixthe Beyala's two novels – *Tu t'appeleras Tange* and *C'est le soleil qui'm'a brulee* in the emerging tradition of postcolonial queer sub-genre. She comments not only on the lesbian provenance of sexuality in the above novels by Beyala, she also explicates on the inscriptions and significance of the erotic in the novels. Similarly, Brenna Munro's (2007) reading of K. Sello-Duiker's awards-winning novel, *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* places the

novel within the same tradition. Unlike Beyala's and other earlier African fictions that explore queer tendencies with subtlety, Duiker's novels published before his death in 2005 brazenly and unapologetically explore non-normative sexual practices like masturbation, lesbianism, homosexuality, bisexuality, as well as erotic and shocking descriptions of the sex act.

In order to properly appreciate the dynamics and enormity of the changes taking place in the representation of queer sexual behaviour and practices in African fiction, and South African in particular, it is perhaps expedient to undertake a brief exploration of one or two precursor texts. Some of the African novels which have treated this theme include Yambo Ouloguem's *Bound to Violence* (1971), Yulisa Amadu Maddy's *No past, No Present, No Future* (1973) Wole Soyinka's T*he Interpreters* (1972), Ayi Kwei Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons* (1979), Ama Ata Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977), and D. M. Zwelonke's *Robben Island* (1973). Of the list above, Ouloguem's *Bound to Violence* and Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons* offer more extensive and sometimes violent treatment of the subject. However, since the focus of our study is South African literature, we shall briefly use Zwenloke's *Robben Island* and Gibson Kente's *Too Late* (1981) to illustrate the way this subject is treated.

As a novel dealing with prison experience in South Africa, *Robben Island'*s treatment of this apparent deviant behaviour is placed in the context of such gaol experience. In the novel, homosexuality is depicted as a sexual orientation forced on the inmates as a result of the oppressive prison condition where victims of sexual harassment are not protected. As typical of the earlier writers on the subject, the practice is presented as undesirable and repugnant. Here is how the narrator describes Blacky, the protagonist's experience: 'A young boy with a Christian upbringing….was subjected to nights of terror. The mess of beastly semen, like a mess of jelly on his thighs, was a sight so disgusting as to make him want to vomit' (21). The boy's revulsion against the act forces him into killing one of those who want to continue to sexually exploit him after Bra Kit, his erstwhile exploiter, has been relocated. The prevalence of this experience in prison has also been identified by Dunton (2007:730). In fact, he views the situation as a reflection of the 'extreme distortion in social organization' established by the apartheid regime (730). This is not to imply that queer tendencies are restricted to prisons only. Bessie Head, in *A Question of Power* (1974), observes

that slums in South Africa also parade a lot of homosexuals and rapists. As pointed out by one of the inmates in the prison who is also a victim of homosexual violation in Zwelonke's novel to Blacky, the prison officials in the barracks are also implicated in the practice.

Kente's play captures the terrible, dehumanising and constraining conditions under which the blacks lived during apartheid, and also comments on non-normative sexuality. In the play, Saduva, the central character, encounters in jail the reality of deviant sexuality where the boss in his cell, Matric, calls him over to his section of the cell for homosexual coitus. In these texts, as in others from other parts of Africa, the sex acts are not described in any particularly detailed, lurid or erotic way.

However, in the emerging new fictions from South Africa, the subject of sex and sexuality is enjoying attention more than ever before, partly in a way faithful to the old tradition in terms of disapproving depictions and short details. On the other hand, the new fictions are actually interrogating and mapping new trajectories in the discourse of sex and sexuality. In their explorations of the subject, the novelists are remarkably different from the stereotypical depictions of their precursors. In a way, the works of some of these writers read like gay activism, while those of others appear to be interested in drawing attention to the growing and disturbing reality of sexually deviant behaviour. Some of the new fictions have also offered new perspectives on the issue of force and violence in both homosexual and heterosexual relations, as well as the ungodly attraction to the very young by the old.

Different factors have been identified as responsible for the bewildering number of literary works by South African writers which engage significantly, mainly, partially or incidentally the issue of alternative sexuality. Not a few of the new fictional offerings from the country also treat this un-conventional sexuality in an unflinching, bold and sometimes poignant manner. Cheryl Stobie (2009) observes that 'over the twentieth century there was an increasing representation of queer/alternative sexuality and gender issues' (par.2) in world literature. He notes further that this has been enhanced by the international dimension of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) studies. He therefore sees the emergence of narrative on these subjects in South Africa as a reflection of international practices and cross-cultural reality. In addition, he

speculates that the apartheid laws, which illegalised homosexuality might have suppressed the impulse to explore the subject. In other words, the proscription of the old order and its laws engenders the liberty to write the hitherto *unwritable*. Munro (2007) indirectly but similarly attributes the flourishing of this kind of writing and people's tolerant and even embracing attitude toward gay rights to the new South African Constitution that ushered in democracy in 1994. Truly, Chapter 2, Clause 9(3) of the Constitution stipulates:

> The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone or on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth.

In reference to the spirit of the constitution and perhaps to this clause in particular, Graeme Reid and Liz Walker (2005:1) have also noted that the new constitution has 'unseated gender hierarchies' and paved 'the way to new ideals of equality between men and women.' This, perhaps, is what has also been referred to as 'the legislation of homosexuality' (Reddy, 1998:65). To illustrate the new attitude of South Africans toward gay life, Brian Munro (2007) cites Mark Gevisser's description of people's reaction to a gay pride march in Johannesburg in 1994. It is as follows:

> The onlookers – ordinary black folk who live in the neighborhood – beamed back delight. 'Vivia the moffies'. A young man shouted… on one level, the bonhomie of the onlookers was simply sheer ebullience at a South African which is no longer compartmentalised and categorised and shut people off from each other…. But there was something in the crowd's clear – if bemused – approval of the event. 'No, I would not want to see my son or daughter marching there,' said one observer to me …. ' but those people have the right to march. This is the new South Africa. When we were voting last April, we weren't just voting for our freedom, we were voting for everyone to be free with who they are (754).

This quote clearly demonstrates not just the improved attitude of people towards being gay, it inscribes a mood of freedom and the use to which the freedom is put. However, as pointed out by Munro, the attitude of the second commentator illustrates the

contradiction in the country's 'rainbow' nationalism. The commentator says he would not like to see his daughter or son being part of a march by gays, yet he sees nothing wrong in letting gays live their lives the way they choose. The crucial point, for the man, is freedom. Consequently, a link is preserved between political freedom and the expression of non-normative sexuality in the post-apartheid era.

Hitherto, homosexuality and, by extension, other forms of non-normative sexual orientations are viewed with misgivings, revulsion, contempt, and seen as unnatural, alien or barbaric depending on individuals or their cultural backgrounds. Pierre Bourdieu (2001) note that the unfavourable disposition of many toward homosexuality stems from the hegemonic perspective that it is sacrilegious to feminise men. He also notes that homosexuality is perceived as a 'revolt against the symbolic domination' (ix) of the conventional heterosexual order. According to Kobus DuPisani (2001: 169), homosexuality in the traditional context of South Africa is seen as 'sinful, unnatural and abnormal' as well as a challenge to the 'patriarchal and racial order' of the apartheid years. Peter Nardi (2001) also lends his voice to the view that male homosexual relation is a challenge to the conventional heterosexual orientation.

As noted earlier, the issue of sexuality has become one of the most extensively explored thematic concerns in post-apartheid South African literature. As is often the case in much of South African writing, there are also racial undertones to the disquisitions on the subject. However, the issue goes beyond the matter of pigmentation. It revolves around the ideas of personal liberty, moral degeneration, sex politics, spiritual vacuity and economic gratification. In our examination of this pre-occupation, attention is focused on homosexuality, bisexuality and self-sex or masturbation. This is because sexual orientation in these directions is conceived by many as unnatural, aberrant and, therefore, undesirable and condemnable. However, in a post-modern world characterised by the unthinkable and unspeakable, it is not altogether surprising to discover the *textualisation* of these disturbing realities, which have hitherto been a secret and closely guarded affair. As far as it goes, hetero-sexual relation is also examined to balance the scale.

3.2 Critical Analyses of Selected Texts

Sello Duiker's second and award-winning novel, *The Quiet Violence of Dream* is about a young undergraduate at Rhodes University who is grappling with a frightening and traumatic past in an effort to understand the precarious present. The novel, in chronicling the events in the life of Tshepo, the young undergraduate at Rhodes and the protagonist of the narrative, focuses almost exclusively on the sexuality of this young man with a tortured mind. Where incidents or events in the story seem divorced of concern with the protagonist's sexuality, their accounts are actually, albeit indirectly, linkable to the same subject. In exploring the interaction between his protagonist and other characters in the novel, Duiker further expounds on the subject of sexuality by bringing us into the intimate world of these characters.

In his search for answers to the questions which assail and torture him by the day, Tshepo eventually finds a reprieve in the discovery and use of his sexuality. It is, however, paradoxical that the origin of his psychiatric disorder is partly traceable to his first sexual experience. At seventeen, Tshepo had his first sexual experience in some very bad and rather unpleasant circumstances. His family was attacked by mafia gangsters who raped and later killed his mother, as well as sexually violating Tshepo himself. Later on, he would experience another gang-rape in the hands of his flatmate and friends. Prior to this second experience, Tshepo's sexuality has actually been hinted at through his suspicion of every other person as sexually ambiguous; his absolute reticence about his past or current sex life; and his recurring emotion of love and attraction to Chris, his flatmate. This is powerfully captured in this lengthy text:

> It is embarrassing to think about a man like this. I don't know what to do. He is so captivating. His powerful arms and strong but elegant neck keep one guessing about the rest of his landscape. I wonder what lies under the clothes that fit him so well. I wonder how soft or rough his skin is, how gently his breath comes and goes. And his scars and the stories that each scar would have to tell. I have studied his movements, his clumsiness when he reads at the desk, his natural grace and ease when he lies on the floor, the manner in which he clutches his groin every now and then, the way his laugh seems to emanate from his pelvis, from the depths of his humanity, a shy innocent place that I rarely see (*Quiet Violence*, 167).

Indeed, Tshepo presents us with his homoerotic feelings toward Chris, and seems to invite us as voyeurs. Little doubt is left about his sexual preference. Having lost his waiter job and accommodation apartment to Chris, he eventually settles for a job with a massage parlour - a euphemism for a brothel. It is here, the Steamy Windows, where commercial massage and sex services are provided, that Duiker comments extensively and intensively on the motif of sexuality in the ground-breaking novel. Its in-house service team include Kalahari West, Sebastian, Storm, Carrington, Andrian, Cole and Tshepo, adopting the pseudonym Angelo. They represent the different racial groups of white, black and coloured.

In the dark circle of male prostitution in Cape Town, the sexual relation between men is seen as an expression of power play. It implies a rejection of women and a subversion of their sexual clout. In the indoctrinating exposition on gay life presented to Tshepo by Sebastian, one of the experienced male prostitutes at Steamy Windows, Tshepo learns that a great deal of power had been invested in women due to their capability to reproduce life by having babies. Sebastian explains that the women's possession of the receptacle called uterus has placed men at a disadvantage. Consequently, men secretly fear women and their power, which could also be used for evil purposes, as in witchcraft. For him, men have therefore attempted to checkmate women power through 'the rise of patriarchy, subordination of women and things like genital mutilation' (*Quiet Violence*, 320). He, however, implies that these strategies have failed as he advocates the celebration of 'Phallus and its own magic' (*Quiet Violence*, 302), which the sexual relation between one man and another represents. This kind of relationship is also seen as a celebration of masculinity. The idea that masculinity is associated with violence while tenderness is associated with women is therefore repudiated by the logic of homosexuality. In addition to condemning gun-toting as a way of celebrating masculinity, Sebastian asks Tshepo rhetorically:

> Who says violence has to be synonymous with men? Who says men can't be tender? Who says men can't look to each other for love and comfort beyond sexual preference? Who says women are the only ones who understand tenderness and what it means to be nurturing?
>
> (*Quiet Violence*, 303).

By these questions, the conventional roles or stereotypes associated with each of the sexes are undermined. More specifically, Sebastian advocates the celebration of the phallus, a practice, which he argues as characterising pre-Christian societies. In line with this advocacy, the homosexual order chooses and invests one of their own, Andromeda, a black man, with the symbolic embodiment of all they stand for - affirmation of masculinity. By investing a black man with this symbolic role in a brotherhood dominated by the white folk, there emerges an element of racial stereotype, Sebastian's argument to the contrary notwithstanding. Generally, whites have this mythical belief that African men are more sexually endowed, strength-wise, than they are.

Other indices of stereotyping and racism would later manifest in Tshepo's interaction with his boss and clients in the gay brotherhood. Shaun, the boss at Steamy Windows, carelessly uses a racist language while asking Tshepo about his experience with one of their clients. The indecent word is *kaffir*. Tshepo is shocked and offended. Although Shaun offers profuse apology, the reality of racism within the so-called brotherhood dawns on Tshepo's consciousness, but he would yet receive greater and ruder shocks. At the New Yorker, a posh gay bar in Green Point, he experiences one. He waits for about five minutes before anyone attends to him. He orders an Amstel drink and offers a ten rand note for payment. The white attendant grabs the note while hardly looking at him. Worse still, when he demands for change, the attendant threatens him with arrest on the ground that he must have given him back the change, having paid long ago. Suddenly, Tshepo realises that he is 'the only black person, in fact the only person of colour' except a young black who moves 'like an invisible shadow' (*Quiet Violence*, 343) clearing tables of empty bottles. At this epiphanic moment, he does not only feel dejected and disillusioned, he also recalls that Biloxi, another gay bar, is a haven for white people while few of those he ever noticed hassled by the bouncer were always black or coloured. It equally dawns on him that only he and Cole are the only black faces at the Steamy Windows's world of commercial *homosex*. In his interaction with Cole later on, after the sack of West, another of the brotherhood member, his misgivings about the spirit of equality and brotherhood in the gay world are not only confirmed but clearly objectified. Cole tells him:

> This whole brotherhood thing is a clever gimmick. Very convenient, because it works. People want to believe in

> that sort of thing. But make no mistake, when Shaun's done with you, you'll know … You are only useful as long as you bring in money… this thing is about power and about who has it. They come here, they pay. Okay, so we choose what we want to do with them, but we don't really have any power. It's just sex cleaned up, given a better look? (*Quiet Violence*, 346).

With the foregoing prejudice and inequality among the so-called Brotherhood members, Duiker draws attention to the dual degree of prejudice a black gay has to put up with in South Africa. As a gay, you attract prejudice from the larger society. As a black, you are discriminated against by the whites. Thus, by virtue of their pigmentation, black gays are doubly burdened. Tshepo's realisation of this burden would therefore make an irony out of his answer to Arthur, an African-American client of his who asks: 'So what's it like being gay and black is (sic) South Africa?' Tshepo had felt offended and retorted by saying: 'I'm sure nothing different to being gay and black in America' (*Quiet Violence*, 315).

Unlike Tshepo, Cole has a better appreciation of the workings and underlying principles in gay relations, and especially those who spend their money to buy what we describe as *homosex*. He understands the power game involved too. Sebastian, another colleague, would also expound on the power intrigue later on.This idea of power underpinnings in homosexual relation has been commented upon by Alfredo Mirande (2001: 346) with respect to the masculine culture among Mexicans. According to him, homosexuality 'is defined not by object of choice but by the distribution of power'. In his explication, the power belongs to the one who assumes the inserter role. Further indices of racism in gay relations as it affects blacks is also illustrated by the fact that Cole is referred to as a black stallion, usually found appealing by Europeans looking for the exotic, especially German tourists, 'always looking for an authentic African man' (*Quiet Violence*, 205). When such Europeans assume the 'inserter' role, they reassert their superior hegemonic airs. Through the above eye-opening counsel from Cole and personal experiences, Tshepo would soon realise that the gay world 'has its own racist frayed edges' (Gagiano, 2002:74). He also realises that 'in a whirlpool of colour' (*Quiet Violence*, 344) where he and his colleagues operate, the lily white is in the centre while 'other colours gather like froth and dregs' (Quiet Violence, 344) on its edges. This shows that the postcolonial binary relation between the margin and the

centre also operates within the postmodern culture. He captures his disappointment, shock and frustration in the following words:

> I feel depressed and disillusioned, naïve for ever fooling myself that gay people are different. They are white people before they are gay… I feel hopeless. Someone just tore up a beautiful image I had in my mind. It is offensive, even ludicrous, to imagine that a gay person can be prejudiced when we live with so much fear and prejudice. It is a rude awakening. You are black. You will always be black (*Quiet Violence*, 343).

This extension of racism from the macro society to the gay circle clearly destroys any notion or pretension to brotherhood among Steamy Windows professionals. It confirms the view that 'white gays, who have been suckled on racial prejudice, maintain the status quo. They seek out coloured counterparts for sexual interaction, but refuse to extend this into all aspects of egalitarian living' (Isaacs and Mckendrick, 1992: 94). As Tshepo reflects further, he realises that most of the black people he had seen at Biloxi, a gay bar, are not the kind he meets in the township or squatter camps. They are the powerful, the sophisticated, and the European-mannered black elites.

Arthur, the African-American, who asks Tshepo what it is like to be African and gay, infuriates Tshepo with this remark not only because it comes from a fellow black, but also because the question sounds ridiculous and the attitude of the speaker is denigrating. In fact, he rubs salt into Angelo's injury when he adds, 'I 've never had a real African man. So, what tribe are you from?' (*Quiet Violence*, 315). Tshepo feels humiliated and likens the question to being asked what one's 'breed' is, to being treated like an animal. The treatment, indeed, illustrates the way most African-Americans treat blacks from elsewhere, especially from Africa. They feel conceited by the privilege their nationality confers and tend to assume superior airs, even when they are not socially or economically better off.

Arthur's conjectural follow up, that African men are supposed to be manly, that is, too strong to condescend to the level of supposedly effeminate role in homosexual relation, would however find contradiction in Sebastian's theory about sexuality among Africans. Sebastian contends that the people are 'very warm and open about sex'

(*Quiet Violence,* 249) and don't make unnecessary issue out of men's preference for fellow men. Tshepo does not only completely agree with him but also adds that 'It's stupid to even suggest that homosexuality and lesbianism are foreign to black culture' (*Quiet Violence,* 250). Surely, the claim that Africans are open about sex is dubious. It sounds like a fraudulent attempt to universalise the West's justification of its own immoral and sexual permissiveness. Certainly, the other claims are very contentious. While Angelo's conclusion that 'Long ago, long before whites, people were aware of the blurs. They must have been*'* (*Quiet Violence,* 250) casts doubt over his claim, it also re-echoes Dunton's (2007) and Desai's (2007) critical submissions on a number of early African fictions. Both have speculated that non-normative sexual orientation is not exactly a colonial import to the African continent.

Interestingly, the scope of Sebastian's theory about sexuality extends beyond Africa. It explores and offers perspectives on sexuality among some of the primitive societies in Europe and the South Pacific. He argues that among a certain tribe in the Pacific, prospective warriors or warriors-in-training are secluded from contact with women, while young boys are placed at their service. The boys not only do the chores but also provide them sexual service through fellatio.

On the above account, he theorises on the power of being a man, man's sexuality and man's semen. In his exposition, the boys are literally or symbolically 'ingesting something about the elders' or 'giving the men strength by doing that, honouring the phallus', which shows the significance of semen and the phallus as 'a hot energy spot' (*Quiet Violence,* 251). Duiker's indirect argument is to the effect that homosexuality should be recognised and embraced as a means to optimally tap the energy deposited in men by nature.

To press his argument on the imperative of accepting blurred sexuality further, Sebastian recalls the relationship between some Greek men and their catamites in ancient Greece. The catamite, usually a boy, would have a sexual relationship with an older man. By the time the boy becomes old, he would in turn have sexual relations with boys, even though he is already married to a woman. This allusion is used by Duiker to ask for liberalism in the sexual space of today's world, that is, people should be allowed to be homosexual, heterosexual or bisexual as it was in the Greece of old.

Still drawing from the past to justify the present, Sebastian also cites the legend of the Vikings in their expansionist drives. According to him, the Vikings were very successful because 'they were a little friendlier with each other than people thought… they sought comfort and strength in each other by *fellating* each other' (*Quiet Violence*, 252). This reference, again, seeks to link sexual ambiguity or homosexuality to success and achievement. To drive this point home, a list of gay achievers in history is provided, viz.: Oscar Wilde, James Baldwin, George Michael, Martina Navratilova, David Geffen, Michelangelo, Alexander the Great and so on. Indeed, most of the patrons of Steamy Windows, New Yorkers, Biloxi and other gay joints are highly placed professionals. West, one of the veterans at Steamy Windows makes this observation clear:

> …the men I meet are not ordinary men. They are businessmen, lawyers, bankers, stockbrokers, analysts, chartered accountants, pharmacists, engineers, doctors, surgeons, architects, editors, journalist, writers, poets, artists, academics-generally, people with serious education, money and influence. Even sports personalities… Men who have worked hard for the success they enjoy (*Quiet Violence*, 293).

Sebastian also adds that 'besides being a little superficial and clicky, they are also loaded, very qualified, very outgoing, cultured…. I am talking predominantly white here. I can't speak for the township. They have a lot of disposable income. A hell of a lot' (Q*uiet Violence*, 253). Relying on this list, one may easily fall for the view that homosexuality or bisexuality brings about economic success. Such would be fallacious. Although most of the names of the people we often hear about as being gay are people who have achieved greatness in one area of life or the other, there are obvious reasons for this. First, it is natural for the common people to prattle about the private lives of the rich, the powerful and the highly-placed. As such, it does not mean that the lowly-placed and commoners are not involved in non-normative sexual activities. In addition to Chris, his friends, Virgil and Brendan, it does not look as if the so-called masseurs at Steamy Windows belong to the class of the rich and the powerful. Secondly, it appears as if the category of people referred to by Sebastian and West are people in a position to buy *homosex*, the category Mirande (2001) seems to ascribe 'inserter role' to. These are people with great economic might. Isn't it strange

that we hardly hear the names of their lovers or partners? Perhaps, the partners are commoners like Tshepo, Karel, West, Cole and so on. In fact, Cape Town, the setting of the story, is famed for its population of upwardly mobile, predominantly white and westernised black South Africans, as well as Western immigrants; indirectly suggesting that most of its inhabitants are either rich or middle-class.

In what seems like a rationalisation of gay life, Sebastian, the intellectual avatar of the gay brotherhood, posits that being sexually ambiguous or being gay may well be beyond the power or conscious cultivation of gays themselves. He observes: 'There seems to be a greater intelligence behind it. Life. God. Call it whatever you like' (*Quiet Violence,* 253). In a casuistry, typical of his erudition, he expounds further:

> I mean being ambiguous, being attracted to your own sex or to both sexes, maybe understanding it is beyond us. Maybe it is life responding on its own. You know that theory about the frogs that if you have only a set of male frogs and no female ones, somehow nature finds a plan and some of them adapt and change?…Why are we any different? We could also be governed by the same high power (*Quiet Violence*, 252).

With postulations like this, Duiker appears to be making an attempt to de-stigmatise and remove the prejudice with which being gay is viewed in the larger society. To further espouse his sexual preference, he disparages heterosexual men as tired, burnt out, dissatisfied, wanting more sex and better sex. He cites Bill Clinton, a former U.S president as an example. Bill Clinton, the U.S president between 1993 and 2001 was involved in a sex scandal at the twilight of his administration. He had oral sex with one of the interns at the Oval office of the White House by the name Monica Lewinsky. With this example, Sebastian illustrates the want and duplicity which characterise heterosexual relations, especially in high places. On the other hand, he exults in gay men's sexual liberation "because they understand each other's needs better than a woman" and therefore contends that 'Gay men are going to take their place in the world arena in the future' (*Quiet Violence,* 254). They are also going to celebrate what he considers beautiful, pure and honest.

Sebastian's intellectual exploration of sexuality, apparently acting as the novelist's alter ego, is not limited to gay men. It extends to gay women. Because he thinks women's sexuality is much more introspective, he concludes that lesbians are not as sexual as gay men. In the new order envisaged for the future, he, however, sees gay women playing greater role than gay men because 'society will revert to a reverence for the earth mother' (*Quiet Violence,* 254). Not only this, gay women 'are going to be the wise people leading the community because they understand women's strength, they understand that there is strength in weakness, strength in being a woman, spiritual, intuitive strength' (*Quiet Violence,* 254). In spite of this apparent ennobling status granted women in the future civilization where gay life is expected to be at the centre, not the margins, Sebastian's theory still places women in the current stereotypical matrix. They are still to be perceived as weak, even though they are strong; they are still to have their strengths in intuition and spirituality, rather than in reason and the physical. The converse qualities would, apparently, still belong to the men. For Duiker, patriarchy will still dominate the social landscape for some time more.

Although most of those involved in gay activities in *Quiet Violence* are whites, there are other blacks besides Tshepo and Cole. As noted earlier, a black by the name Andromeda is actually adopted as the male archetype and sex symbol for the gay brotherhood. It is particularly interesting to note some of the motivations that underline inter-racial attraction among the gay community. Long after becoming part of the brotherhood, Tshepo does not get patronage from any black except Arthur, the visiting African-American. This is in spite of the fact that he meets many blacks at Gay Clubs, especially Biloxi. Even the black patrons of Steamy Windows go for the whites. Cole, the Senegalese immigrant who is part of the gay brotherhood, has a similar experience. This situation raises some questions: why do white gays have preference for black prostitutes? Why do black gays prefer white prostitutes? The first question may well be answered by what Shaun, Steamy Windows boss, sees as a sense of curiosity, but curiosity about what? Perhaps it is curiosity about the mythical sexual prowess of the African man. It may also be curiosity borne of incredulity about the reality of gay life among Africans. It may even be borne of a mere sense of adventure to taste the exotic, especially where visiting Europeans are concerned. For Peter, one of Tshepo's white regulars, it is because the colour makes it easier to

distance self from the act when he does it with a black guy. To the second question, the answer seems elusive. Tshepo's observation about black gays, however, tracks the answer. He notes:

> When I see black men in the street I'm overcome by how much pressure our culture exerts on us… There isn't the loose charm of being a little camp. And the ones that recognize me look away. Or they give me a dirty look so that I mustn't come by and say hi…. I have only met schizophrenic dancing queens by night that is rigid grey suits by day.
>
> (*Quiet Violence*, 331).

Although African culture is here conceived as intolerant of homosexuality, at least openly, what is more pertinent about Tshepo's observation is its tone of lamentation and regret. He really wishes the situation could be otherwise. In short, he is advocating an open acceptance of gay life among Africans. Like organised commercial sex, it is unfortunate to note that gay practices are spreading fast on the continent; it is even more distressing that the possibility of dislodging it in the face of aggressive globalisation gets slimmer by the day.

This brings us to the issues of legality, human rights and open socialisation among the gays. In the context of democratic ideals in the contemporary world, individuals, groups, peoples and nations have never enjoyed so much freedom in human history as we witness today. From the struggle for political freedom to economic and social freedom, man keeps looking for more reasons to extend the frontiers of the freedom he currently enjoys. He demands for the so-called freedom under different guises. There are children rights, women rights, sexual rights, marriage rights and so on, all in the name of *Human Rights* and *Democracy*! Many well-funded non-governmental organisations (NGO's) are established to champion these fantastic, attractive but delicate and ominous rights. In the South African society captured through Duiker's literary optics, we see a gay world that is sophisticated in its organisation and steadily asserting its presence on the social landscape.

Gay life in South Africa before 1994 was a clandestine affair. Since the adoption of a new constitution in 1996, gay relations and activities in the country are no longer secretive. The constitution is generally regarded as progressive mainly because it 'was

the first in the world to prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation' (Munro, 2007:753). Cape Town, a predominantly white city and the major spatial setting of the novel, is a good example of where this obtains. There are bars that are exclusively gay's, like Biloxi, New Yorkers, Angels and so on. At these bars, gays freely dance, chat, drink, kiss and even make love to each other. There are gyms that are also virtually exclusive to gay men. Gay magazines are also available. In Johannesburg, gay life is filled with more fun and excitement for blacks. This is partly because there are more black gays in Johannesburg compared to Cape Town, and partly because the whites there 'are a bit more worldly, not as provincial and conservative as the whites in Cape Town' (*Quiet Violence,* 419).

The socialisation trend among gays is increasingly becoming more open and uninhibited. The import of this is that there is a very big challenge before humanity as a whole to correct this corruption and perversion of nature, which some people now gleefully embrace and even celebrate. This challenge is, however, being made more problematic by the recognition some countries in the Western world have given to gays. For instance, in countries like Belgium, Canada, Netherlands, Spain, and some states like Iowa, Connecticut, New York and New Hampshire in the United States of America, gay sexuality and relationship is not only recognised, gay marriage is endorsed and enjoys legal backing like the conventional heterosexual marriage. Recently, the current US President, Barrack Obama, included it in his campaign manifesto for second term presidency. The development is even more disturbing when one considers the official disposition of these Western powers to efforts targeted at stopping homosexuality in other parts of the world. Recently, Nigerian federal legislators passed a law in December, 2011 outlawing same-sex marriage in their country. In a swift reaction, some Western governments and non-governmental organisations condemned the law and threatened to withdraw their aids to the country. President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe was also vilified by Western powers for condemning gay as un-African.

In *Quiet Violence,* Duiker also attempts an exploration of the roots and motivation for bisexual and homosexual impulses. In one breath, the outcome is as starling as it is confounding. In another breath, it is depressing and irritating. West, one of the veterans at Steamy Windows confides in Tshepo that he doesn't really like sex with men but prefers women. He only mates with men as part of his job. In other

words, he gets involved in homosexual life simply for economic reasons. Although Tshepo's sexuality has been ambiguous for quite a long time, he also gets attracted by the offer at Steamy Windows for want of job and the fantastic financial prospect dangled by Shaun, Steamy Windows's proprietor. Cole, the Senegalese immigrant working with the Steamy Windows and a member of the gay brotherhood, shows his apprehension of the economic underpinnings of the brotherhood when he counsels Tshepo not to get carried away by the gimmick of brotherhood and realise that he is just useful as long as he can bring in money. In a nutshell, homosexuals who provide the hole into which 'the inserter' penetrates do so essentially for economic reasons.

Some of the gay characters in the novel share the unpleasant experiences which seem to have laid the foundation for their homosexual and bisexual orientations. West attributes his association with men to the hollowness experienced in his adolescence due to the lack of a father figure in his life. He had felt incomplete and therefore turned to other men to find solace in their arms. The void in him was so oppressive that even a university degree could not take away the emptiness and his lack of confidence. His words: 'I lacked a basic self love that only a man could have shown me. I don't remember how exactly I ended up calling Shaun but it was during an intensely unhappy period in my life' (*Quiet Violence*, 294). West's experience as captured above is only slightly different from Tshepo's. Tshepo was sexually violated and lost both parents at seventeen – the 'mother to death' and the 'father to crime'. Realising later that his father was an accomplice in his mother's murder, he became doubly devastated and ended up in a mental facility. When he regained his sanity, he excommunicated his father and lives with the burden of his tragic experience. At school, he became a 'kind of a shadow' (*Quiet Violence*, 327) and found the company of women more comfortable. When he had mental crisis again, he got deserted by his friends except Mmabatho, the one who introduced him to cannabis. By the time he regained his health, he had become disillusioned with his old friends and flatmates who sent him packing. He withdraws from his studies and joins a certain Chris as flatmate. He becomes attracted to Chris and the latter eventually takes advantage of him as he rapes him. On another occasion, Chris, together with two other friends, rapes him again. With these experiences on the one hand and joblessness on another hand, he decides to join organised male prostitution. It is here that he fully discovers his sexuality and decides to make the most of it. After one of his sexual intercourses

with a gay patron, he feels so good that he thinks he had held himself in bondage unnecessarily for too long. In a monologue that follows, he notes:

> No one is going to liberate me. Who am I waiting for? What am I waiting for? It's not like anything is going to change. There are always going to be those who disapprove. There will always be bigots, hypocrites, hetero-fascists who only want to further their own prejudices … perhaps this is the last rite of passage for me: liberating my body. No one should tell me what I can and can't do with it, when it is I who face loneliness, despair, and confusion (*Quiet Violence,* 334).

This monologue reveals aspects of the psychic dissonance with which Tshepo has been grappling for a long time. It shows that he has been inhibited from giving expression to his real sexual proclivity because of the society's attitude to gay life. More importantly, gay sexuality is linked to troubling emotional and psychological experiences of individuals in the process of coming to terms with the realities of life. As pointed out earlier, Tshepo is a victim of a harrowing past. The same thing, though in different degrees, is applicable to most of the gays encountered in the narrative. West, Sebastian, Chris, Storm and most of their clients have one emotional or psychological problem or the other. Sebastian lives with an ugly memory of sexual humiliation he suffered in the hands of his classmates in high school. West misses the parental role of a father in his life. Chris's experience at the Poolsmor Prison is still etched in his sub-conscious. The list is long. With regards to men who patronise Steamy Windows, West has this to say: 'It's not so much that they suddenly find men attractive but rather that they are looking for a type of tenderness and understanding that women cannot give' (*Quiet Violence,* 295). This seems to corroborate the view of one of them, Peter, who says he has a wife and three children, thinks he doesn't like men, yet keeps coming to keep trysts with them. He doesn't go for women because it would 'feel closer to cheating on my wife' (*Quiet Violence,* 267). Another guy, Oliver, prefers men because he doesn't want to get married so that he doesn't end up like some of his couple-friends who are sexually frustrated but still remain stuck in unhappy marriages.

The practice of homosexuality among women, otherwise called lesbianism, in is also hinted at in the novel. Mmabatho, the protagonist's supportive female friend,

makes reference to her past sexual relationship with Karuna, an Indian woman who works at Ganesh, one of the bars in Cape Town. The protagonist also notes that in some places in Cape Town people don't care about whether you are black or white, speak well or not and sundry other matters. Rather, they care about your looks, dress, dancing ability and whether 'your girlfriend has a pierced tongue' or 'goes to bed with another woman and likes you to watch them' (*Quiet Violence*, 34). These seemingly casual observations indeed bear witness to the prevalence of gay relations among women as well. Of the texts under study, it is WPB Botha's *A Duty of Memory* which, however, comments more on this aspect of sexuality.

A Duty of Memory primarily chronicles the devastating consequences of emotions of fear, hatred and distrust, which subsisted between the two white groups, Afrikaner and English, in the post-Second World War South Africa. Using the marriage of Andries Hartzenberg, an Afrikaner, to Caroline, an English lady, as a take-off site for his literary exploration, Botha brings into relief the tragic repercussions of this unsanctioned but tolerated marriage. Published in 1997, a few years after the publication of Mark Behr's celebrated but controversial debut, *The Smell of Apples*, Botha's *A Duty* partly continues with the exploration of this tacitly forbidden subject in the apartheid days. Behr had blazed the trail in this regard in 1995 with *The Smell of Apples*. In *A Duty*, Botha furthers the exploration of this subject beyond the circles of men and takes us into that of women as well. It explores issues of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality and phaedophilia.

Jo, a product of the marriage between Andries and Caroline is cowardly and clandestinely sent into exile in London by her mother, partly due to the persistent acrimony, violence and tension in the family but mainly because of Jo's daring and defiant challenge of her father's oppressive authority. In London, she meets Beth, another victim of the male hegemonic oppression in another apparently unhappy marriage. Beth had suffered under the oppressive pain inflicted by her husband, William, and members of his family for sixteen years. She suffered bullying and even rape in William's hands. Eventually, she opted for divorce. Not long after, she gets relieved of the pains and burdens of the past in her new found love, Jo. The love relationship between the two brings Beth back to happiness. We are informed that within a few days, Jo 'has rescued her from years of bitterness and anguish and managed to instil in her … a new sense of liveliness and adventure. Who, in teaching

her to swim, a honeymoon promise her husband had never kept, has restored her old self-confidence' (*A Duty,* 54).

When Jo gets the news of the tragic deaths of the remaining members of her family, she returns to South Africa in the company of Beth, her lover. While she battles with the depression engendered by the tragedy, Beth provides her with the much-needed psychological and sexual support. Despite physical discomforts and longings to be away for a while, she finds it impossible to desert her lover. This mutual support and sense of identifying with each other in times of pain and trouble inevitably marks out the contradistinction between female homosexual relationship and male homosexual relationship. From what we have seen of male homosexual relationships in our study so far, it is clear that the relationship is motivated or characterised more by what to gain from it; rather than what to give to it. It is either one of the partners is trying to exploit the other or trying to get financial gratification and vice versa. Secondly, there is that tenderness, which is usually ascribed to women, in Jo and Beth's love affair. In many of the lovemaking scenes of male lovers depicted in the novels under study, there is often element of aggressiveness, roughness and sometimes even violence. This is in sheer opposition to Jo and Beth's lovemaking which involves 'coaxing', 'gliding silkily', 'brushing bellies', 'locking limbs', 'floating' (*A Duty,* 25) and so on.

Although the above may not be valid in all cases of lesbian relationships, the love relationship between Jo and Beth appears to be motivated by the need to break free of *phallocentric* shackles or the burden and pain the *phallocentric* order has brought to bear on their lives. In other words, it appears that it is not the pleasure principle that usually triggers off romance between two women; rather, it seems informed by some internally overwhelming pressure to reject the oppressive figure man has come to represent in their lives. The pleasure, which comes in the process, is largely seen as a secondary benefit or sheer bonus. For most gay men, on the other hand, the driving impulse is the pleasure. Even in Duiker's fictional world, where financial gratification is highly privileged by male prostitutes, we also find that within the so-called gay brotherhood, the itch of the flesh and crave to satisfy it is astoundingly overwhelming.

Jo is single. Beth is a divorcee. Jo has tried several affairs with men but happiness and fulfilment continue to elude her. At a point, she dismisses men as 'awful bores' (*A Duty,* 24). As for Beth, she is still burdened by the unpleasant experiences of the

marriage left behind. In their lesbian world, both now find not just an escape from the oppressive influence of men but a fulfilment almost too good to be true. Beth captures her own experience in the following words:

> It was as if there was this huge tree I'd been cowering under. Suddenly, when I met Jo, it was surrounded by others, hundreds. A whole forest of emotions to wander among and explore. Not all dark and frightening, many of them beautiful. Lots of variety. Lots of light. I found my sense of adventure again. Old, forgotten paths reopened, leading away from the pain (*A Duty*, 102).

Similarly, Jo enjoys the company of Beth. In fact, she abandons the company of a male partner to strike friendship and loving relationship with Beth. But while Beth and Jo delight and bask in their mutual love, the reception of their relationship by the society is typically uncomplimentary. Not only do Beth's children, Jamie and Gemma, find the idea of their mother being in love with another woman surprising and unsettling, they are also bothered by what people will say. The mother however remains unbothered. Surprisingly, Lettie, the black maid who tended to the upbringing and care of the white Hatzenberg family, is neither particularly surprised nor outraged at the discovery of the lesbian relationship between Jo and Beth. In fact, she takes pleasure in the fact that the relationship made the lovers happy. This disposition seems to put the lie to the view that lesbianism is strange and unacceptable in African culture. However, Lettie's reaction or attitude may be due to the fact that she is aware that such a practice is commonplace among the white folk she has had to serve for decades.

While *A Duty of Memory*'s treatment of non-normative sexuality focuses more on lesbian relationship, the novel also comments on gay relations among men. Adolfo, an Italian immigrant, is involved in a sexual relationship with young Eeben, brother to Beth. This paedophilic relationship is not just meant to show the vulnerability of children or the abusive predilection of adults, it also largely intimates us of the reality and prevalence of homosexuality among the white folk during apartheid years, notwithstanding their pretensions to moral superiority. Botha informs us that Adolfo meets the young Eeben in the *moffies* joint in Hillbrow. Apparently, he comes around in search of what Azure, the young narrator in *Thirteen Cents*, calls a trick. It is also around this joint that Draak, Staal and Ben-Piet, Eeben's schoolmates who are loyal to

the *volk* values, hang to pick out, trail and beat up unsuspecting gays in their flats or hotel rooms. Eeben's observation that he must have partook in beating up dozens of *moffies* after joining the Draak's group attests to the prevalence of gay sexual relations within the so-called righteous community of the whites. The use of Adolfo, an immigrant, in illustrating homosexuality among white men also internationalises the issue. While it is possible that he actually picks up the gay way of life in South Africa, it is equally possible that this way of life is imported into the country from Italy. The undying activism and renewed demands for gay rights in the West lend credence to this.

Another inscription of sexuality in the new South African fiction is that of bisexuality. A good number of the sexually ambiguous characters represented in the novels under study are either bisexual or have shifted from being heterosexual to being homosexual. The male prostitutes at Steamy Windows, which include West, Storm, Carrington, Cole, Sebastian, Andrian and Tshepo, also receive female clients whenever they call. At different points in their lives, they were heterosexual. In fact, as noted earlier, West confidentially informs Tshepo that he prefers women, admitting that it is economic circumstances that forced him into gay prostitution. He therefore sees his job at the Steamy Windows as a stop-gap in his journey of life. It is little wonder therefore that he is not particularly troubled when he is given the sack by Shaun, the boss of Steamy Windows. The very day following his sack, West's preference for women is demonstrated inside the train he takes to Somerset West in company of Tshepo. Within the one hour the journey lasts, he feels attracted to three different women; a coloured girl, an Indian woman and a black girl. Although Shaun, the boss at Steamy Windows, does not do the extra, that is carnal penetration, he is also deeply involved in offering sexual gratifications to male clients whenever the need arises. Yet, he is a married man with a child. Andromeda, the symbolic Prince of the gay brotherhood, also has female clients.

With regards to the patrons of Steamy Windows, a good number of them are also bisexual. For instance, Peter, one of Angelo's regulars, is married with three kids. There is also a husband and wife from Transvaal with whom West is sexually intimate. There is also another couple, Jonathan and Lorraine who, together with Tshepo, Olivier and some other friends, get involved in a sexual orgy. Besides the foregoing active participants in the world of male prostitution, some other characters in the

narrative also share bisexual orientation. The two nameless gangsters who murder Tshepo's mother fall into this category. They copulate with the mother and later engage the son in anal and oral sex. Mmabatho, Tshepo's only supportive friend, was also a lesbian at some point in her life. She had had a sexual relationship with Karuna, a beautiful Indian woman who works at Ganesh, a café-cum-bar in Cape Town, before meeting Arne, her German male lover.

The prevalence of homosexuality and bisexuality in Cape Town is underscored by Tshepo's observation that few of the things the people of the famous city care about include the idea that 'your girlfriend has a pierced tongue and that sometimes on a Saturday night she goes to bed with another woman and likes you to watch them' *(Quiet Violence,* 34). On another occasion when he is discussing the fact that a mutual friend, Fiona, is married to Jay, another mutual friend, with Mmabatho, Tshepo premises his suspicion that Fiona was a lesbian on the fact that gay life 'in Cape Town it's kind of a given, it comes with the territory' (*Quiet Violence,* 181). Tshepo himself, the novel's protagonist, alludes to his heterosexual orientation as a young man in the university when he was dating Subashnee, an Indian girl. Besides admitting that they had a lot of sex, he also adds that he enjoys sex with women. In his recollection of this period of his life, Tshepo tells West that despite Subashnee's beauty and popularity on the campus, as well as many guys' interest in her, she was always joking that he, Tshepo, would leave her for another man. This turned out ironical because she was the one who broke up the relationship and went off with another guy. The significance of the joke, however, is that it hints at the sexual ambiguity of Tshepo as far back as his university days. In fact, Tshepo concedes having the habit of hanging 'around a lot of ambiguous people at the time' (*Quiet Violence,* 327), which he enjoyed; even though it was weird. The transition from heterosexuality to homosexuality, as noted in some of the above examples, can, however, be interpreted as the novelist's advocacy for the right of individuals to choose their preferred sexual orientation at any given time.

Zebron, one of the psychiatric patients at Valkenberg, who was also involved in the rape and murder of Tshepo's mother, also illustrates bisexual orientation in the novel. Together with an unnamed member of their gang, he sexually violates Tshepo. Both of them forced the teenage boy into anal and oral sex after partaking in the rape of his mother. The other three members of the gang limit their sexual violence to the lady of the house. This, in one breath, can be seen as showing the difference in the sexuality

of the gangsters. As for the sexual violation of Tshepo, in the light of subsequent revelations in the narrative, it can be interpreted as part of a deliberate attempt to induce psychical imbalance in the teenage boy by his father.

Thirteen Cents, another fiction by Duiker, in fact his first published work, revolves around the life of children living on the streets, especially how they are economically and sexually exploited by adults. In the novella, Duiker extensively explores the plight of urban street children in a world of violence, desperation, gangsterism, uncertainty and struggle for survival dominated by greedy and callous paedophiles who are also bisexual in orientation. Lebowitz, an Investment Banker and one of the several white men who pick up Azure at the *moffie* section of a beach in Cape Town, is a married man. He takes the boy to his apartment and has sessions of oral sex and smooching with him. Because he neither requests nor tries to sexually penetrate the boy, one may easily think that he does not fit into the bisexual profile; that he probably needs a relief of sexual urge due to the absence of his wife. He tells Azure that his wife is away on holiday when the boy asks him whether his wife is aware of his sex escapades with youngsters like him. The question is, why settling for a member of the same sex? And why a thirteen years old boy? Why even going to the *moffie* section of the beach to look for a partner?

Obviously, he is not only a duplicitous cheat of a husband but a confirmed bisexual who also prefers children that can easily be exploited. Indeed, the way Alfred, the guard at the gate to Lebowitz's flat, gives Azure the evil eye while going in with the banker does not only suggest disapproval, it also suggests that he knows, from experience, what the young boy is going in to do. Similarly, an unnamed married man with his wedding ring on also picks up Azure from the park in Sea Point, takes him to a dark beach around the V&A Waterfront in his family mini-bus and takes him in the back seat 'like a beast' (*Thirteen Cents*, 30). In Azure's observation, 'The married ones are always the horniest and by far the roughest' (*Thirteen Cents*, 30). By this observation, married men are largely implicated in male versus male prostitution, which means that such men are bisexual in orientation. In addition, Azure conjectures that such men probably do not experience sexual satisfaction in their marriages. This also seems to be Duiker's view on the matter.

In some of the novels under study, the culture of bisexuality is represented as more prevalent among married men who are either in search of sexual fulfilment in fellow men due to lack of same in their wives or those who are too sensitive to the perceptions and attitudes of the society to homosexuality, and have therefore decided to openly satisfy the society by marrying a wife and secretly satisfy themselves by keeping regular trysts with other men or boys. Some are motivated by other factors. As for those motivated by unfulfilled sexual experience with their wives, the character named X in Barbara Adair's *End*, another of the novels under study, provides a typical example. X's wife, Y, is virtually estranged from her husband; she is immersed in drugs and has no time for her husband. On a certain occasion when she notices that her husband's sex organ is getting roused in her presence, she gets hold of it, twists it and laughs while the husband writhes in pain. In his frustration, X asks himself, 'Why do I stay with her' (*End*, 69). It is this feeling of frustration which eventually drives him into exploring sexual relationships with fellow men.

X also relieves himself of sex urges through masturbation from time to time. Hints are also dropped about his bisexual orientation elsewhere in the story. While still fantasizing about the prospect of his wife coming back to her senses by realising that he is the best for her, his wandering thoughts ramble to the recollection of a past affair with a boy. As he gets sexually excited in the process '…he wanted the boy's body. He wanted to push his finger deep into that bracken sweet-smelling salubrious arse. He wanted to see his semen run down thighs and catch itself in the faded hairs that trapped it' (*End*, 70). Obviously, this recollection demonstrates X's thorough involvement in same-sex intercourse since his estrangement with his wife. In the opinion of the interlocutor-narrator, Freddie, X's descent into homosexuality is a cowardly act of revenge because he was hurt by a woman. In other words, X's current homosexual impulse is attributed to the attempt at getting even with his wife for abandoning him. Thus, lack of sexual fulfilment is implicated in men's experimentation or embrace of bisexuality.

In Botha's *A Duty of Memory*, the protagonist, Jo, also offers an example of a woman with predilection for bisexual relations. While in London, she had had sexual affairs with different men and women before meeting Beth. Back home in South Africa with Beth, her lover, she also welcomes Sergeant Muller, a male security operative, into her bed. Although she does this in the hope that she could exploit the intimacy to test the

genuineness or otherwise of the Sergeant's apparent concern and kindness to her, the intention behind the act does not abrade her continued proclivity for bisexual relations. The use of a ploy like this by Jo is also a reflection of the power of women sexuality.

In the representations of sexuality in the fictions of the post-apartheid era, most of the writers, especially the young and new ones, seem to be taking umbrage at the modesty, morality or inhibitions of the older and more established writers in the treatment of this subject. They have handled it in a rather explosive manner, as if trying to make up for the taciturnity of their precursors on the subject. The depictions of the sexual act in their explorations of the subject are rather unsettling, given the antecedents of fictional representations of the sex act in the country's literature. Although this development may easily be explained away as a consequence of the liberalisation of the cultural space after almost five decades of repression and censorship; itself a consequence of political freedom; the treatment of the same subject by iconic figures of South African writings like Coetzee, Gordimer and Brink suggests that this may not be absolutely correct. It seems more persuasive to argue that the coarse and vulgar textualisations of the sex act seen in today's South African fiction is more of a reflection of the post-modern culture in which the current generation of South Africans live. Yet, as far as it goes, freedom in the cultural space makes this possible. This, perhaps, is what Brink (1998:27) implies when he observes that the post-apartheid literature has not only freed itself of 'inhibitions of apartheid' but is in a position to 'construct and reconstruct new possibilities.'

In furtherance of the argument that the prevalence and manner of treating the issues of sex and sexuality in the post-apartheid South African fiction is a function of the world in which the young and new writers live, the trailblazer in this disturbing vista, Mark Behr, one of the acclaimed voices in post-apartheid literature, is a self-confessed gay. His debut and awards-wining novel, *The Smell of Apples,* is the first to explore the issue of homosexuality among Afrikaans (the self-proclaimed righteous and God-chosen people) in the new South African fiction. An Afrikaner himself, his novel exposes the sexual, moral and political hypocrisy of the Afrikanerdom. The novel, however, is restrained in its depiction of the sexual act, unlike what we encounter in the works of other new writers like Adair and Duiker.

Duiker's *Quiet Violence* presents a most graphic and lurid details of the sex act in a way that either invites the reader as a voyeur or rudely assaults his moral sensibility. In the description of one of the sex orgies in which the protagonist, Tshepo (as Angelo) partakes, he notes:

> The two women being fucked become the centre of attention. One of them gets taken from the rear on the billiard table…. On the sofa a guy is licking the balls of the one doing the fucking, fluids dripping. The other woman bounces up and down his shaft with infectious glee. Oliver massages my cock while we watch. I reciprocate. The third woman joins in and moans with pleasure. She gets fucked on the floor, missionary style (*Quiet Violence*, 372).

It is disturbing to observe that this indecency involves both single and married men and women. In fact, a married couple make up the number to eight. Describing the act further, Tshepo speaks of his involvement:

> We couple on the floor. The woman begs me to fuck her. While I fuck her the guy begs me to let him fuck me. I let him and get lost in sensuous pleasure…. I moan shamelessly. The wave of a hand discourages another guy from fucking another woman in the arse. Her clean pink anus is exposed as she gets fingered by a guy with long thick fingers and a hairy groin…. We go at it for a while before all the guys eventually come on these women. They lie on the floor while we wank on them *(Quiet Violence, 372)*

These vulgar details and uncouth language are totally new in South African fiction. Although this can be viewed as a reflection of the contemporary porn culture, these inscriptions are made possible by the liberalisation of the literary space in the country. Being the closest to the West, of all African countries, in terms of cultural and material values, one should have been little surprised about these fictional representations. The point, however, is that the country has been enjoying this status for decades, yet representations like these in its fiction are a rarity. In a nutshell, the dislodgement of a

system, which preached, rather than lived morality, opened the space for explorations of hitherto dreaded or forbidden subjects in the narrative of the new nation.

When Angelo asks his client, Oliver, what the attitude of his father towards a sex orgy like the above would be, the latter replies that his father too has 'sessions of his own' (*Quiet Violence,* 373). In other words, his father is also licentious. He goes further to point out that it's a common thing in Europe, and that it saved Jonathan and Lorraine's marriage. The married couple in the sex orgy is Jonathan and Lorraine. Oliver's comments have some implications. First, by implicating his father in a similar act, the obscenity and perversity depicted are shown as generational. It also shows a subversion of family value, and hints at a loss of confidence in the marriage institution. This is further accentuated by the fact that a married couple voluntarily participates in a sex orgy where partners are swapped and shared for sexual gratification. The idea that this unhealthy session has become a kind of protection for Jonathan and Lorraine's marriage is absolutely confounding. It leaves one wondering whether Oliver's observations are not just meant to justify his own perversion and decadent lifestyle. However, his claim about the prevalence of this deviant tendency in Europe can hardly be faulted. Indeed, there are brothels and sex syndicates scattered all over European cities where lots of unspeakable sexual activities take place by the hour. If Oliver's comments are accepted as indeed true of South African reality, then the reality is certainly ominous. Oliver, for instance, expresses his cynicism and disillusionment about the marriage institution when he tells Tshepo: 'I'm not interested in doing the couple thing if it means I'm going to end up like Jonathan and Lorraine one day' (*Quiet Violence*, 373).

In numerous other instances, Duiker luridly describes the act. While Angelo engages one of his regulars, Peter, he says: 'I grab his cock and massage it gently. He moans… He takes some KY Jelly and starts fingering my anus, but very gently … I put a condom on his cock but with my mouth… I lick and suck it gently, stimulating base of his shaft' (*Quiet Violence,* 388). Like most other of such descriptions, Duiker deliberately seeks to suffuse his narrative with eroticism. Although he succeeds, it is still possible to inscribe the erotic without being crudely obscene as seen here. For Peter, oral sex, as depicted here, is a high point in lovemaking, which women do not encourage and usually object to. According to him, this is one of the things he doesn't enjoy with his wife; besides the fact that the wife tends to be frigid and puritanical. He

indirectly attributes his time-out with prostitutes to lack of sexual fulfilment in his wife. At some point, he thinks the church hasn't served its members well in this regard. Unfortunately, he is silent on what is responsible for his attraction to a fellow man, and not a woman. In indicting his wife for his infidelity and bisexual orientation, he tells Tshepo: 'You know, when I come in you, I know this is how it is supposed to be with my wife' (*Quiet Violence*, 388). In Tshepo's thinking, occasional blow job is what the wife needs to give to Peter. Perhaps, Duiker's graphic and lurid inscription here is meant to corroborate the dispositions of his characters, regardless of whether their arguments possess or lack merit.

One more example should suffice to underscore Duiker's obsession with unrestrained luridity in the inscriptions of sex in *Quiet Violence.* Recalling one of his engagements with a client, Angelo provides the details of their experiences as follow:

> I use KY Jelly and gently finger him…. then he starts moaning, short little moans that encourage me to tease him some more…. I thrust inside him gently. He moans again. I grab his cock while I do this…. Soon I'm pumping him. He moans with pathos…. He reaches between his legs, feeling me as I plunge into him. I start accelerating. He clenches his arse, also grinding against me. Together we work like a piston. When I come he splashes all over his chest *(Quiet Violence*, 391).

Besides the lewd and lurid details, again the language is uncouth. In addition, this description, as much as the earlier ones, literally removes the sex act from the realm of sacredness or one characterised by diffidence and places it within the mundane and profane while despoiling it of its reverenced aura. Duiker's debut novel, *Thirteen Cents*, partakes of this idea of sex narration in a way comparable to what is seen in X-rated films. The thirteen years old protagonist – narrator, Azure, shockingly captures the way adults usually take advantage of street children in Cape Town economically, socially and sexually. Already suffering social and economic abuses in the hands of a gangster king-ping, Gerald, Azure is also forced into oral sex by four of Gerald's boys. This is also graphically presented in the novel. Richard, the leader of the boys, shoves his dick in Azure's mouth, forcing the boy to suck his penis. Others join in the act. This is how Azure describes parts of the experience:

> Richard takes out his *piel* from my mouth but he doesn't put it away. He starts playing with himself while I suck the other's *piel*. Soon they all join in and take turns with my mouth. "*Suig, suig*, they keep prodding me… After a while my jaws become stiff but I continue sucking their smelly dicks with white stuff like pap on them. They make me give them blow jobs till they all come. (*Thirteen Cents*, 54).

Doing this to a thirteen-year old speaks stridently of the paedophilic infestation of the tourist city of Cape Town as well as the fate of a vulnerable segment of its society. Although the boy feels driven to use his body as a means of survival on other occasions, this case is not only unsought by him, it is made worse by the fact that the poor boy is still battling to recuperate from Gerald's mental and physical bullying. However, it is quite poignant to note that when it is for a commercial purpose, this early teenage boy engages in the act with glee. He becomes bold, quite uninhibited and even jovial. For instance, he would shake his client's penis and say, 'Pleased to meet you' (*Thirteen Cents,* 85). In such instances as when he willingly engages in sex for reasons of economic gratification, the description is also lurid and revolting. He talks repeatedly of dick sucking, banana dick and the release of fountains of sperm.

Similarly, Adair captures the sexual permissiveness that has come to characterise the contemporary world. Unlike the other novels under study, *End's* exploration of the sub-theme of the sex act focuses almost exclusively on oral sex and masturbation. In its presentation, however, there is a shared vulgarity and obscenity between the novel and others in terms of graphic details. At the hotel where X goes in search of his wife, Y, to rescue her from her creditors, he runs into a policeman and a young woman in the act. Here is how it is described:

> Her dark thick pink lips covered a pale hairless cock. She worked her red tongue around the swollen glands so that when she sucked this raised high human object would receive the most pleasure… She stayed on her knees as his semen spurted from the needle hole at the end of his cock…. She turned her head and spat the semen from her mouth, her tongue licked her teeth (*End*, 106).

On another occasion, X recalls having oral sex with an unnamed woman. He does this as part of a masturbation process. Before this, he had asked for the company of his wife for the night but she had refused. In his recollection, he could see 'a moving head that stirred his cock. He could smell her as she took him in her mouth, wet and warm' (*End*, 65). Describing the woman as skilful at cock-sucking, X notes that she does it as if she knows how it feels, as if she had done it to herself before. He also recalls 'pushing his cock into her throat… His semen spurting into her mouth, she swallowed it. Some of the viscous opaque custard liquid dripped out of the corners of her mouth and fell down her chin' (*End*, 65). She promptly wipes it with her hand and licks it. As these recollections set the needed mood, X rubs his sex organ until he empties himself into the water closet.

Besides the unflinching and bold textualisation of the sex act depicted in the examples above, the images connected with the spurting, swallowing, spitting and licking of semen are very vivid. This, again, goes to show the post-modern novelists' reductionist approach to the understanding and explication of sex. To these novelists, sex is all about giving and receiving pleasure. It is underpinned primarily by the principle of hedonism. X's resort to masturbation further supports the theory of hedonistic drive, which here implies that getting the pleasure is the governing impulse and ultimate object, the how and where are inconsequential. In yet another instance, X is involved in oral sex. This time, it is with the male protagonist in the narrative. He takes X's organ in his mouth while "his tongue caressed the glands in the head of the cock" (*End*, 143). These focus and re-focus on oral sex by Adair warrant more than a cursory attention. In the numerous instances and references to sex in the novel, only one relates to the conventional sex; it even does so only tangentially, while placing the act within the aberrant behaviour of multiple partnerships in sex. This obsessive focus on oral sex may therefore be seen as an extension of the subversion of the sex-act, an abandonment or relegation of the conventional coitus in favour of the strange and warped explorations of the orifice in a crazed drive for carnal pleasures.

In another audacious depiction of the sex act, the novelist, drawing from the postmodernist tenet of intertextuality, appropriates a sexually explicit scene from Marguis de Sade's *Justine and Juliette* (1984). In what would later turn into an orgy, Durand introduces Juliette, her friend and lover, to a crowd of dockers and sailors for sexual gratification. In a short while, Juliet 'soon finds herself carried aloft on the

penises of two sailors, penetrating bow and stern' (*End*, 143). Following Durand's request that Juliette should be given something to hold so as to maintain her balance, she places 'a large penis in either hand' of her friend. 'She then presents her hindquarters to another sailor' (*End*, 143). We are finally intimated that 'Juliette alone satisfies fifty men' while the two women later dine with the men in 'disgusting conditions' (*End*, 143). Although there are several examples of inter-texts in the novel, this is the most lengthy. This length allows the novelist to achieve the apparent goal of shocking the readers.

Indeed, if we are to see the contemporary South African society through the artistic optics of a writer like Duiker, Adair's portrayal of sex and sexuality in *End* would pale into litotes. In spite of this, there is no doubt that her inscriptions and comments on sex in the novel adds to the gathering ripples in the new territorial waters of South African fiction. Adair's choice of a graphic and detailed inter-text, which is but sparingly quoted above, demonstrates her obsession with the subject of sex, an obsession which appears borne of the hitherto reticence on the subject by literary artists.

To be certain, the inclination to explore the hitherto forbidden or abandoned subjects in the South African literary landscape is not just on the increase, it is so at a dizzying pace. As the subject of sex and sexuality obviously constitutes a major area of attraction, especially as it relates to pictorial depictions, it needs be pointed out that not in all cases do we have uncouth, offensive, and coarse representations. A few examples will suffice to demonstrate this.

In Coetzee's *Disgrace*, sex is a major trope. Virtually all the sex acts in the narrative are implicated in the engendering of disgrace and shame for some of the characters, especially the protagonist, David Lurie. As this trope is sublimated through the metaphorical figure of indirectness, the sexual acts are also either prosaically reported, or described through indirectness and suggestive phraseologies. In the first sexual act in the novel, which involves the protagonist and a call-girl by the name Soraya, Coetzee briefly and modestly reports the act. The closest to the erotic he gets is when he says 'he stretches her out, kisses her breast. He strokes her honey-brown body, unmarked by the sun' (*Disgrace*, 1).

In *Disgrace*, a case of sexual exploitation is one of the many thematic preoccupations in the novel. David Lurie, a professor of Communication at the Cape Technical University is sexually involved with one of his students, Melanie Isaac. In his accounts of the intercourse between David and Melanie, Coetzee merely reports the acts to the reader. In their first session, we are simply informed that he takes the girl to his house and makes love to her on the living-room floor. On the second occasion, we are only told that he carries the girl to her bedroom in her own apartment, take off her slippers, kisses her feet and makes love to her. Except 'when she hooks a leg behind his buttocks to draw him in closer' (*Disgrace,* 29) the third occasion is also casually and plainly reported by the narrative voice. In David's sex trysts with Bev Shaw, the woman in charge of the Animal Welfare League and a white friend of his daughter, the novelist describes the act in the following words: 'She is lying under the blanket with only her head sticking out… slipping off his underpants, he gets in beside her, runs his hands down her body' (*Disgrace,* 149). The rest is left to the reader's imagination. Even in the rape incident involving Lucy, David's daughter, and a gang of two men and a boy, no direct mention or description of the act is given. The only thing said is that the two men get into the room with the girl and lock her father outside. Although several suggestive remarks are woven into the narrative by the novelist, it would be much later before Lucy admits to the ugly experience. Besides drawing attention to the hatred with which the rapists carried out their crime, no other details of the forced sex are given.

In the novel, Coetzee provides veritable examples of what traditionally characterises South African fiction. In the pre-liberation or pre-1990 fictions, like Nkosi's *Mating Birds* (1987), *Brink's A Chain of Voice* (1982) Ndebele's *Fools* and a few other literary works, sex constitutes aspects of their thematic preoccupations. However, none of such works registers the immodest and indecent textualisation of sex and the erotic, which brazenly strut the pages of works of art by some of the new and young post-apartheid writers. In Botha's *A Duty* and even Behr's *A Smell of Apples,* details of the sexual acts are not only confined to the private space to which they conventionally belong, the little intimation provided the reader is unmistakably modest.

As far as it goes, there are some instances of the sex act in *Quiet Violence* where Duiker, though given to vulgar descriptions, is more restrained. In such cases, there are no explicitly shocking and outrageous portrayals of copulation, yet the descriptions are

unnervingly erotic, each making the process appears to be the end in itself. For instance, in Tshepo's intercourse with a Norwegian girl we have the following descriptions among others:

> I touch her breast and press her inner thigh in a sensitive spot… She moans, and soon we are kissing…. Her thighs are firm and smooth, no prickly hairs. We pump and grind against each other …. She presses my bum, encouraging me to go deeper inside her. She says something in Norwegian. She scratches my back. She closes her eyes and drifts off in her own fantasy
>
> *(Quiet Violence,* 332).

This reads more like the narrations of scenes of copulation that one would come across in the writings before liberation. Like in such writings, there is restraint in the choice of words. Similarly, while in the act with an ex-journalist, Angelo describes his experience in the following terms: 'I soon hear myself moaning. He slides in gently, teasing me, giving me a few inches and then pumping. When I moan some more, he gives me more inches till eventually all of him is inside me' (*Quiet Violence,* 392). This description is, no doubt, suffused with eroticism, yet there is no vulgarity and offensiveness about the language.

In a couple of instances in Adair's *End*, erotic texts also form part of the narrative. On a certain occasion when the protagonist strangely nominalised by the pronoun *She* throughout the narrative gets her mind occupied with thoughts of X, she attempts masturbation. X is her casual lover. She touches her breast and feels her nipple while thinking of X. Not done, 'She put her index finger into her cunt; between her thighs she could feel the sticky moisture' (*End,* 73). Elsewhere, X also remembers her on her knees. He remembers her fingers. He remembers how she would touch herself, 'her whole hand almost inside her cunt' (*End,* 103). In yet another instance, another character, a white policeman by the name Andre, while sharing his story with the narrator, recalls how he 'felt his cock stir between his legs' when his wife was trying to help him squeeze a pimple on his back. Later on, while walking past the wife and noticing her dressing gown fell open, he put his hand inside the gown and 'felt her cunt' (*End,*125).

Clearly, the texts above are erotic. Not only that, the choice of the word 'cunt', instead of such other polite or neutral ones like female genital or vagina inches closer to vulgarity. However, since eroticism dominates the texts more than vulgarity, we may well conclude that Adair's interest lies more in the erotic. In making this claim, we go beyond the suggestive implications of the words or phrases used by the novelist. Our argument relies more on the relevance or otherwise of the texts in their contexts. The *She-protagonist* and X meet again for the first time after a long while. During their first meeting, they became quite intimate and had made love. They also promised to keep in touch. X in particular promised to write but to no avail. Now that they are together again, the memories of time spent together in the past flood back. This scenario appropriately contextualises and enunciates the relevance of the second text. As for the first and the last ones, relevance is difficult to establish. The *She-protagonist* has just received a telegram requesting her to attend a meeting in Johannesburg. She reads it over while holding a cigarette in her right hand. Simultaneously, she engages her left hand in the exploration of her erogenous zones. Later, she would wonder at 'these strange thoughts when her job may have been in jeopardy' *(End*, 73).

Certainly, connection is lacking between the action and the thought going on here. With respect to the third example, Andre, the policeman, is sharing a story of his involvement in the crushing of black school children demonstration with the narrator when his thoughts dart to the squeezing of a pimple on his back by his wife earlier that morning. This is attributed to a touch of rain water over a boil growing on his back. With this link, one would think there is logicality in the train of Andre's thoughts. However, when we consider the unfolding event of violent demonstration going on as Andre moves out of his police tank, it becomes difficult to accept the luxury of thinking about sex when the protesting children, armed with stones, defiantly stand their ground in the face of tanks and guns. The implausibility of this narrative order, as we deem of the first example too, would persuade us to see the novelist's effort as nothing but a deliberate attempt to lace her writing with the erotic, to remove coherence and logicality from the plot order and to self-consciously saturate her fiction with the aesthetics of postmodernism.

3.3 Aesthetics

Of all the critical evaluations of South African literature during the near five decades that apartheid lasted, the most damning and controversial was the view that South African literature is documentary and lacking in artistic vigour. This verdict is often applied to black fiction of the era. One of the influential and important critics of black literature of the time, himself a black person, Nkosi (1967), describes black fiction of the era as journalistic facts in the guise of imaginative writing. Coming from a critic who is extensively and thoroughly familiar with the literature of other parts of Africa, especially West and East Africa, this should not be particularly surprising. Writings from these other parts of the continent at the time immensely benefited from the received tradition of the metropolitan Europe as well as the rich oral tradition of Africa. A blend of both traditions and, especially, the skilful appropriation of the oral resources of the native lore of the African society made for a unique and interesting imaginative works from writers in these regions. Of course, it is not as if these traditions and resources were unavailable to black South African creative writers, what was different is the socio-political circumstances of the writers. It has been widely argued that the urgency of the socio-political realities of South Africa made black writings of apartheid era what it is. Going into details here again would be unnecessarily repetitive. Aside his consciousness about the fertile aesthetic qualities of writings from these other regions, Nkosi's critical jabs at South African black writings of the time must also be understood as a challenge to inspire robust creativity; rather than an attempt to disparage the writers' efforts.

Although white writings of the same epoch enjoy a more favourable critical assessment, they are also known to be bogged down or trapped in the South African racial dissonance and infelicities. In what sounds like an apology for this state of affairs, Nkosi (1981:76) has reasoned that this is 'because very often colour difference provide the ultimate symbols which stand for those larger antagonisms which Southern African writers have always considered it their proper business to explain.' But even now that apartheid is officially dead and interred; it would be illusory to contemplate an absolute break with this past. However, it is heart-warming to note that writers' execution of themes bordering on race issues these days clearly departs from the old style. Generally, the new fiction by both black and white artists, whether about race or non-race issues, exhibits unusual and sometimes startling manners of execution. The

texts under study in this work share this attribute. It must be added, however, that this trend appears to be more prevalent among the new and young writers. In confirmation of this impression, Coetzee (2005:8) has noted that the demise of apartheid 'has a freeing effect on young writers who didn't have the confidence to write during the time the whole conflict over apartheid continued…relieved the pressure on them to write only about certain subjects'.

Some of the new and young voices in the fictional space of South African writing are breaking new ground and appropriating several post-modern tendencies. It is not as if postmodernist temper is totally unknown to South African literature hitherto. If anything, Coetzee's works like *In the Heart of the Country* and *Foe* would put the lie to such an assumption. The point is that some of the new fictions emerging after the collapse of apartheid exhibit unusual artistic vigour, which could only have been a product of rigorous and unfettered imagination. Adair's *End* is one of many veritable examples.

Besides the erotic and pornographic representations of the sex act depicted in *End,* references to sex at ungodly times and places further steep the novel in the postmodernist tradition. At a time when Andre, one of the policemen trying to quell a riot by black protesters, is inside a tank preparatory to attacking the defenceless children, he is preoccupied with sex thoughts such that he 'felt his cock stir between his legs' (*End,* 124). The nameless *She* in the novel is also engaged in masturbation while reading a telegram and smoking cigarette. Between another policeman and an unnamed woman, sex also takes place in the public glare at Rick's Café. Similarly, Juliet's copulation with several sailors and dockers is also a public spectacle. These temporal and spatial settings of sex clearly objectify a rejection of the traditional view of sex as something surrounded by an aura of secrecy and awe. This demystification, indeed, draws attention to the realities of life in the contemporary world. Perhaps, it illustrates what Olutoyin Jegede (2000) perceives as ways of breaking free of the society's 'mental and physical confinements' (178).

If, indeed, Adair's representation of sexuality in her novel foregrounds physical and psychical freedom from the inhibiting morals and conventions of the society, other aspects of the novel offer an even greater subversion of both the classical and modernist traditions of fiction writing. In an ingenuous but disorientating narrative

structure, Adair presents a story where characters and the narrator engage in continual conversations about their fates, what may or may not happen, what should or should not be done and sundry other matters. In a manner atypical of the classical master narratives, the narrator begins her story by asking the audience/reader whether she could tell them 'a story, a fiction; words that mean nothing or everything depending upon how you want to perceive them?' and whether it will have 'a wow finish' (*End,* 1). This beginning sounds like the formulaic opening of the traditional African folktale. But, more significantly, it deliberately hints at what Peter Brooker (1992: 175) describes as 'radical indeterminacy, and a tone of self-conscious…scepticism' characteristic of postmodernism. For Freddie, the narrator and, by implication, Adair the novelist, the apprehension of the story is entirely tied to the perspective the reader brings to it. It may even be meaningless, given the meaninglessness of the pretexts from which the writer draws her inspiration. The concern with 'a wow finish' also underscores the postmodernist propensity for shocking the reader into the consciousness of the realities of a contemporary world where the outrageous and the impossible hold sway. Although the opening of the story suggests that the narrator is a certain Freddie who wonders if she could tell us (her audience/reader) a story, there is another narrative voice which subsumes Freddie's, which also narrates Freddie as part of the story. This complexity in narrative style impels us to briefly masticate on the grammar of narrative, especially as it concerns narration and focalization or narrator and focalizer. This is necessary in order to highlight the relevance and implication of Adair's narrative technique and her management of the narrative space in general.

Traditionally, narration is equated with point of view or narrative viewpoint, which usually comes in form of first-person perspective or third person (omniscient) perspective. New insights have however been introduced to the concept of narration. In his exposition on the theory of narratology, Roger Webster (1996) aligns with the French theorist, Gerard Genette (1996) in making distinction between the narrator and the focalizer. Both contend that the idea that the figure who narrates is synonymous with the figure from whose perspective events are seen is erroneous. The narrator is the one who tells while the focalizer is the one who sees.

Viewed from a conservative and very traditional approach, Adair's *End* would snugly fit into the omniscient narrative mode, which is believed to be more objective because

the narrator, through whose eyes the events of the narrative are presented, is not a character and therefore not involved in the story. *End* fits into this mode because the primary narration is done by a voice other than the characters in the story who simply tells the story using *he, she, it*, and *they* as may be relevant. As usual of the mode, the narrator distances self from the story. Besides this unknown narrator, there is also Freddie who interacts with the characters in the story, claims to be the author and writer of the story in which these characters feature and, indeed, witnesses every incident in the story. By this last role, Freddie assumes the status of a focalizer in the novel. By virtue of her direct interactions with the characters in the story and the information she provides the reader about these characters, she is actually an internal focalizer. The internal focalizer participates in the events in the story and also reports the feelings and thoughts of other characters (Bal, 1996; Prince, 1987). However, Freddie's claim to being the author and writer of a story in which he features more or less like a theatre director in a narrative being told by another voice introduces a new angle to the narrative style. This leads to a problem of indeterminacy or Mikhail Bakhtin's (1989) idea of *dialogic* or plural text. Certainly, Freddie's role in the story, sometimes as chorus or authorial intrusive voice, complicates the narrative structure. Rather than enhancing the realization of meaning, the employment of a focalizing agent in the novel undermines it. Indeed, sources of perspective become more problematic and disorienting.

Through Freddie, the narrative is suffused with meta-fictional elements and unpretentious avant-garde experimentations and borrowings. As early as the second page of the novel where she declares herself 'the writer and the author' of the story, she explains the obvious implausibility away by noting that '…if Martin Amis can do it in *London Fields*, well I can too' (*End*, 2). This is an open admission of stylistic borrowing from another novelist. In numerous instances, she comments on different elements of fiction writing. On a certain occasion, she ponders the theme of love and wanders 'if there is a novel in which this theme is not present?' (*End*, 6). On another, she thinks about all novels having social element to them and decides to invest some internal drama in her story and justifying it with 'something that makes readers think that they are not just indulging in an individual stage show' (*End*, 8). Thus, she decides on creating contexts of genocide, racism and poverty for her story.

We are also intimated of how she uses a story she had read elsewhere about an exhibition of body parts in one of the chapters in her on-going novel. She also contemplates using a she, a he or a trans-gendered character as the protagonist in the novel. Elsewhere, she reads over her narrative in order to decide what to retain or expunge from the story. She considers the appropriateness or otherwise of the omniscient narrator and tries to capture images the readers would find attractive because they 'like a man with personal integrity, morality, intelligence' and because they 'want to be able to identify with the hero' (*End*, 5). Aside the foregoing, the list of meta-fictional discourses in the novel abounds and, virtually all of them, are explored in the novel to varying degrees of success. The result is that we are presented with a fiction about fiction, a fiction about principles and conventions of fiction writing. These explorations of the processes of writing a novel have been described as narcissistic and as a tendency which 'de-naturalise' the content of postmodern writings (Barry, 1995). Perhaps, this de-naturalisation is what Fred de Vries (2009) has in mind when he describes *End* in the following terms in his review: 'Adair's work is experimental …does away with rules and expectations. It rips, plunders, and remoulds like the best of underground hiphop' (par. 2)

Another signifier of aesthetic experimentation in Adair's novel is the extensive use of intertextuality, which betrays the novelist's eclectic sources of inspiration and materials. The concept of intertexuality has been described by Cuddon (1998:424) as the 'interdependence of any one literary text with all those that have gone before it'. By this is meant the fact that literary works are not absolutely original creations of their authors. This further corroborates Roland Barthes' (1988) view that the author is a mere synthesizer of the diverse ideas in a text, rather than the creator or originator of those ideas. He views every text as a rehash of past works, parading signs, formulae and other aspects of social languages. In his popular essay, 'The Death of the Author' he declares the irrelevance of the author, undermines his place and the meaning traditionally ascribed to him in the interpretive process. This is what provides postmodern writers with the needed alibi to self-consciously appropriate aspects of form and content from a wide range of discourse; from literary, historical, sociological, philosophical, and religious to other kinds of texts. Sometimes, this comes in form of indirect allusions, parody, pastiche or direct appropriation of other texts to corroborate an idea or display eclecticism.

In Adair's *End* most of the *intertexts* encountered either function purely as corroboration or mere exhibition of the novelist's eclecticism. Some of the examples include an excerpt from Coetzee's *Disgrace,* which reads: '…The choice is between the operating table and the floor. He spreads out the blanket on the floor, the grey blanket underneath, the pink on top. He switches off the light, leaves the room, checks that the back door is locked, waits …' (*End,* 144). In *Disgrace,* this text draws attention to what fifty-two years old David Lurie, a former Professor of Modern Languages at Cape Town Technical University and servant of eros, is reduced to after years of sexual adventures with both the young and the old. He is now reduced to caring for dogs and making do sexually with an unlovely and plain woman who is cheating on her husband. In the context of Adair's *End,* the text subtly draws attention of the reader to the sex-starved plight of X, following the re-appearance of his former extra-marital affair lover. This text is preceded by another from an Italian film based on the novels *Justine* and *Juliette* by Marguis de Sade. It is a graphic detail of sex orgies, which makes Adair's own representations of the sex act in the novel less shocking. In fact, Adair seems to weave de Sade's textualisation of sex into her own narrative in order to demonstrate the view that she is doing nothing particularly new or out of the world. It is nothing but what has been described as 'discursive recycling' (Webster, 1996: 101). From Umberto Eco's (1987) *Travels in Hypereality,* Adair also imports this: 'Two clichés in a story can make you laugh, a hundred clichés, they will move you…extreme banality allows you to catch a glimpse of the sublime….' She also imports the question 'What is the point of war without love?' from Saul Bellow's (1996) *The Adventures of Augie Marsh.*

In addition to the foregoing, the novelist formally acknowledges 'the direct and indirect use' of texts from Murray Burnett and Joan Alison's play, *Everybody Goes to Rick's* as well as the mise-en-scene of the film titled *Casablanca.* All these are noted on the acknowledgement pages at the end of the novel. By this relation to other texts, both literary and non-literary, Adair further inscribes the allegiance of some of the new South African fictions to the postmodern episteme. This self-conscious eclecticism and obsession with form by Adair can be further gleaned in several allusive narrations and poetic idiosyncrasies employed in the novel. There are literary allusions to Sophocle's play, *Oedipux Rex* and Virgil's *The Iliad;* historical allusion to the life of Gustave

Eiffer and his architectural works; as well as allusions to political figures like Patrice Lumumba, Fidel Castro, Che Guevara and Samora Machel. Some of the texts taken from earlier texts are quite poetic in their diction and imagery. Their occasional re-wordings by the novelist are no less poetic. Here are some examples:

> Tick, tock tick, tock… Time is fleeting, madness takes its toll. How does the rest of the song go? And soon this story will end… Tick, tock, tick, tock… Time goes by … After time comes time…' (*End*, 6)
>
> Bright red, red, like the sky at night, red like the ruby the Indian nurse wore in her nose, red, red… Red for the unborn child, the child in utero, but had already been born (*End*, 57)
>
> You must remember this, a kiss is just a kiss, a sigh is just a sigh. It's still the same old story, the fight for love and glory… (*End*, 33)

These texts are not just significant for the quality of their language; they assume poetic status of refrain in the novel. They intersperse the narrative 'disorder' of the novel. In their slightly different variations, the second and third examples occur in the narrative eight and six times respectively. The same thing applies to 'And so in Casablanca, we wait, and wait, and wait…', the *mise-en-scene'* of the film Casablanca.

An interesting stylistic novelty, which sharply draws attention to itself in the novel is what the focalizing agent flippantly refers to as 'a trans-gendered character' or 'changeable-at-a-whim character? In the first chapter of the novel and, as early as the second paragraph, the narration revolves around a certain *he* who, apparently, is a friend to the protagonist called X. The focalizer, Freddie, who also serves as a narratee of the omniscient narrator, joins this duo to make up the character list in this chapter. For this *he*, there is neither nominal antecedent nor subsequent referent throughout the chapter. At the beginning of Chapter II, Freddie initially, for a moment, wonders whether she should change the nameless *he* to a *she* and, pronto, she does. The unnamed protagonist begins to be referred to with *she*. In the third chapter, we also have a *he* and a *she* for whom there are no nominal referents. This would be replicated for the better part of the rest of the story. Thus, intelligibility becomes difficult to attain as the narrative assumes steady and confounding complexity. With this

disorderly syntactic and, by implication, semantic incoherence, the reader becomes trapped in what Jegede (2000:176) describes as 'a profound sense of ontological uncertainty', not just about the signifiers in the text but also about the realities of the contemporary world. In the novel, Adair employs this technique to generate ambiguity and dismantle the idea of binary opposition with which we are familiar. Ashcroft et al. (1989) have highlighted these tendencies as characteristic of postmodern writings.

Closely related to the above is the namelessness of most of the characters in the novel. Instead of giving these characters names, the novelist simply uses descriptive epithets to refer to them. Thus, we have characters like the photojournalist, a Khaki shirt, the piano player, a waiter, the barman, the door man, the receptionist with braided hair, a gilded whore, X's colleague, a white hand, a black hand, the stereo voice, the golden hearing, the man with the money, a short black shirt and a white T-shirt and so on. While these characters are indeed minor characters in the story, the same cannot be said of X and Y. They are major as well as rounded characters. Letters X and Y are used in Mathematics to denote unknown values. Using such letters as personal names of people, inexorably, ascribes anonymity or insignificance to them. With this technique, the novelist seems to self-consciously dissolve the identities of these two major characters, implying in the process that they could be any man and woman. Similarly, the nameless characters that are essentially flat in their conception must be seen also as illustrative of the novelist's design to dissolve or deny such characters their individual identities. In our shared view with Kehinde (2001:27), this is 'a reflection of the deep doubt that humanity has about itself'.

In terms of plot structure, Adair's novel is obviously atypical of South African literary work. The narration in the novel does not follow the traditional or conventional logical presentation as diverse and unrelated events are forced into contiguous trajectory. Different events are juxtaposed while the narratee – narrator weaves in her rather too frequent meta-fictional discourse. The result is a disjointed and fragmentary narration, which compels the reader to decode meaning through inductive and deductive contemplations of diverse ideas and events in the story. Perhaps, this is meant to objectify the fragmented nature of today's contemporary world. Indeed, Kehinde (2001), amplifying Edward Muir's view, has pointed out that a fragmented structure like this is not only typical of postmodernist fiction but also symbolic of a transitional

era. Surely, South Africa is still grappling with psychical transition almost two decades after the political demise of apartheid.

Another quality, which has increasingly become characteristic of the new South African fiction, relates to language. As a multiracial and multilingual society, it is expected that the literature of the country would also be characterised by its polyglossic cultural features. This is so in a rather subtle way with respect to only few texts of the apartheid years, as both black and white writings of the period are more vociferous in the treatment of race issues. In the current post-apartheid era, South African writings are steadily offering cross-cultural texts, texts that fully place the South African nation in post-colonial reality. As noted earlier in the introductory chapter, the post-colonial status of South Africa has been controversial hitherto, and for good reasons too. Although an independent state, the majority black and coloured populations were still under subjugation until 1994. Technically and politically speaking therefore, only the white population was not under colonial hegemony. Consequently, 1994 would be seen as heralding South African post-coloniality in the political sense. However, Ashcroft et al. (1989:2) have used the term postcolonial 'to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present'. Implicit in this position is the fact that even the apartheid years were part of South African postcolonial period. Be that as it may, our current interest is in the language of post-apartheid fiction. Steadily trending in the new fiction are some of the features of postcolonial literatures like code-switching, untranslated words, glossing, allusion and other forms of appropriation of the language of the centre by the margin. In the South African polyglossic literary space, these are also obtained in reversed order. In Adair's *End* for instance, the novelist does not only allude to a popular song of the struggle days, she transfers and imposes it on her English text in its Xhosa rendition, viz.:

> *Nkosi sikelel' iAfrika. Maluphakanyisw' uphondo lwayo, Yizwa imithandazo yethu, Nkosi sikelela, thina lusapho Lwayo. Morena boloka setjhaba sa heso, O fedise dintwa la Matshwenyeho, O se boloke, O se boloke setjhaba sa heso, Setjhaba sa South Afrika- South Afrika…. (End*, 92).

This rendition inscribes the element of cultural distance and difference between the worlds of the white settler and the black native. It is in Botha's *A Duty,* however, that this trend is most pronounced out of the works under study. Botha is one of the few Afrikaners who write primarily in the English language. In this third novel of his, language is made to foreground the cultural difference between the two white groups in South Africa. There are several examples of untranslated words from Afrikaans in the novel; some of which include *broers, dood, dronklap, lekker, neek, skander, skelim, skollies, nogal* and so on. There are also instances of code-switching as seen in the following: 'Then I used to remember what Pa had told Lettie to tell Lucas: *Se net vir Lucas as hy drink, drink hy in sy eie tyd'* (*A Duty*, 16); '…Lettie asked what she must do with the half-jack. But Pa he answered, *Se net vir…*' (*A Duty,* 5). Another example is noted when a policeman, Sergeant Muller, tries to converse with Jo and Beth. He starts, '*Nee, nee, mevrou, die wind is te… Ag,* now, I'm sorry. I must remember to speaking English' (*A Duty,* 89).

These features of language, especially those of untranslated words, draw attention to cultural experiences which are deemed peculiar and probably irreproducible in another language. The tension of such language difference, as noted by Ashcroft et al. (1989), is particularly observable in Sergeant Muller's attempt at interlocution with Jo and Beth. Further instances of language use, which situate Botha's work in a post-colonial setting, include glossing and syntactic fusion. While glossing refers to parenthetical translations, syntactic fusion implies a combination of linguistic structures of different languages. Meshing the linguistic structures of English and Afrikaans, Botha combines nominals and their pronominals as subject in the following examples: 'But *Pa he* assured', (*A Duty,* 5); 'Gessie and me we had no worries on that score' (*A Duty,* 20), 'Mafimane he didn't understand' (139) and 'Some bloke he expresses condolences to your wife' (*A Duty,* 155). Again, this draws attention to the appropriation of English to convey the mind of an Afrikaner. As for glossing, few of the examples are found in the following contexts. While recalling the great Rugby teams of South Africa, Eeben picks a hole in the claim of South African motto. "You see our country's motto may be 'eendrag maak mag' – unity is strength – but really we are many teams, not one" (*A Duty,* 47). Again, recalling how his father used to subject members of the household to severe beatings, Eeben notes: 'When I fetched Mafimane it turned out Pa wanted to show me how to *vat so 'n byt* – take a bite – out of a person's ear with a sjambok" (*A*

Duty, 95). In his nihilistic vision of life, he notes that one day one would die and all that friends, family and neighbours would offer is 'A few tears and it's *totsiens my vriend* – so long ol' pal – followed by a quick dop on the way home, (*A Duty*, 155). Again, these features signify the cross-cultural context of Botha's narrative in postcolonial South Africa, postcolonial in both political and literary senses.

Similarly, Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* and *Quiet Violence* are replete with elements of language variance. Both novels' emergence from a polyglossic culture is made obvious by the use of code-switching and untranslated words. A fascinating aspect of this technique is the novelist's frequent switch between English and Afrikaans. Himself a black Sotho, his facility with Afrikaans points to the linguistic melange that has come to pervade the cultural space in South Africa. Duiker's extensive use of untranslated words and code-switching may appear deliberate to contextualise and underpin his characters' linguistic background since most of the Afrikaans texts in the novels are attributed to Afrikaners. This is significant for some reasons. Firstly, it underscores the linguistic plurality of the society in which the stories are set. Secondly, it marks a radical departure from what South African literature has been known for. Thirdly, it is a celebration of hybridity which has come to be associated with postcolonial culture.

Prior to the liberalisation of the political and cultural spaces in the 1990s, it was a rarity to find this kind of linguistic experimentation in black writing. Some examples of untranslated words in *Thirteen Cents* include *gemors, skollies, breyani, lytie* and so on while *The Quiet Violence* parades such words as *vasbyt, wena, batlang, bona, voerstek, eina* and so on. While the use of these words is metonymic of cultural diversity, it also asserts the presence and significance of the culture they signify. As far as it goes, the words also inhibit the apprehension of meaning in some cases. This effort at apprehending meaning is sadly made worse by the use of untranslated clauses and sentences in code-switching contexts, especially in *Thirteen Cents.* During one of Azure's sex-work experience, Richard, his client tells him, '*Tsek jou naai! Jy dink jy's mos'n kleurling, ne? Suig Suig'* (*Thirteen Cents*, 53). What exactly is meant here can only be known by a reader who understands Afrikaans. The little one can infer is that the earlier part of the text is a question, as the punctuation mark '?' suggests. One can only guess that it has something to do with sexual request, as the context also suggests.

Numerous other examples abound in the short novel. Consider a few more: 'You can't hide anything from me, *meisietje. Daai glad hare*' (*Thirteen Cents,* 14); *'Jy's awright nou. Ek is ook van daai kaut. Daai Vaalie mense, ek verstaan hulle nie' (Thirteen Cents, 26); 'Dankie vir die kos, Auntie, ek was baie honger.* Where's Auntie Bertha?' (*Thirteen Cents,* 11). Although the contexts of the texts are used in the process of meaning apprehension, little or no understanding of texts like these and others is achieved. In a way, this situation becomes a kind of metaphor for the misunderstanding subsisting between the centre and the margin in postcolonial reality.

In the much longer and epic narrative, *Quiet Violence,* there is multiplicity of linguistic medium as there are of plot, setting, narrator and innumerable characters. The novel breaks new ground by employing what Munro (2007:762) describes as 'multiple lingos' and identifies as including rasta-talk, tsotsi – taal (street talk,), Sotho and English. In addition to these, we have also identified the novelist's use of Afrikaans and French. Like we have noted with respect to language use in *Thirteen Cents*, the use of multiple languages in *Quiet Violence* is not only to illustrate the linguistic background or social status of the characters, it is indeed the novelist's strategy to inscribe cultural difference as well as appropriate the resources of the centre to bear the burden of the periphery. Pluralism in language use, as seen here, is also an inscription of hybridity.

A consideration of some of the examples of these 'multiple lingos' is quite pertinent. In an interaction between Mmabatho, the protagonist's most reliable friend, and Madame Spiers, the hostess at a Mexican restaurant, the hostess asks, 'Alors, what's wrong with les amourex ce soir?' (*Quiet Violence,* 65). Later on, she observes: 'You are very fiery when you get upset, I think that's why men find you tres charmante cherie' (*Quiet Violence,* 65). There are several examples of this kind of English – French code-switching in the novel. Similarly, we find code-switching between English and Afrikaans in the conversation between Tshepo, the protagonist, and his room mate, Chris, in the following: 'Ja, that woman friend of yours, she gave you korobela, sy het jou lekker geslaat' (*Quiet Violence,* 173). In Chris and Tshepo's encounter with some policemen, Chris protests, 'You can't just stop us for nothing and search us. Ek het niks verkeerd gedoen nie. This is unconstitutional! One of the policemen also replies, 'Constitution. Constitution se moer. Julle daggamannetjies

dink julle is slim, ne? fok julle' (*Quiet Violence*,183). In conversations between Tshepo and Mmabatho, they occasionally switch between English and Sotho. For instance, Mmabatho once tells Tshepo, 'That's weak. O batla ho re kereng' (*Quiet Violence,* 9). On another occasion, Tshepo tells Mmabatho, 'Ja, well, ha re tshwane kaofela. I don't like talking about things like that' (*Quiet Violence,* 74). The fact that all the characters above share the same social status and have the ability to speak English confirms the view that the use of code-switching in the text is underpinned by the novelist's ideological inclination.

It is in the rasta lingo, which derives from the Jamaican creole, that we have the most sustained abrogation and appropriation of English, a language of the centre, to express a culture of the margin in *Quiet Violence.* Consider the following response to Tshepo's request for more information about the rasta by a Rastafarian:

> Yes, Papa, I sight dat you have de theist for knowings. I'n I must always ask. Dat is de only way dat I'n I knows. Now you sight a rasta man is like onion. A rasta man grows from de east. Everything he learns is from de eart. I'n I learns to love de eart, to respek her. He is de roots of de people, de originalman. He knows stories, tings about people, he come long time before anyone. He most alone by himself. A true rasta man live on de inskirts and watches and listens and remember everything about people… A rasta man knows man 'n man better than man 'n man tink and he knows man 'n man story, where de peoples come from (*Quiet Violence*, 186).

The lengthy text above speaks a lot about the place or status of language, especially the imperial language, in the postcolonial society. First of all, the rasta lingo as used in the novel is a signifier of a sub-culture, drawing attention to and emphasizing its distinction. Secondly, when Tshepo addresses the speaking Rastafarian, he uses imperial English. This choice, wittingly or unwittingly, inscribes class difference between the two parties, an inheritance from the imperial order that institutionalised social hierarchy during its hey-days. The hierarchy is hereby retained through language. In fact, Tshepo's comments, earlier on in the novel, about the condition and lifestyle of rastafarians lend credence to their proletariat status, to use a Marxist cliche. Again, the language of the extract clearly shows phonological, syntactical and morphological variations from metropole English. Nevertheless, rastafarian English

seen here is able to 'bear the burden' of the peculiar experiences of the rastafarians, which the English of the centre seems incapable of bearing. Thus, Duiker's epic novel further evinces another aspect of tension between the centre and the margin in postcolonial studies.

Still on language, two instances of glossing are noted in the novelist's presentation of poems by N.P. van Wyk Louw and C. louis Leipold. Let us cite one for the sake of illustration:

> Dis vred, man, die oorlog is verby!
> Hoor jy die mense skreeu die state vol!
> Sien jy die hele werld is op hol?
> Kom, hier's 'n bottle soetwyn; laat ons drink! Ons nasie, wat so wild was, is nou mak…… Die beste wat ons nasie het - die vrou!
>
> It's peace now, man, at last the war is over!
> Why, can't you hear those screeches wild and glad? And can't you see the whole world going mad? Come, here's a fug of wine; let's have a spree! Our nation that was wild and free is ripe…… Of all that's best: Woman! Our nation's treasure! (*Quiet Violence,* 355)

Extracts from the poems of these writers are initially presented in Afrikaans and immediately followed by their equivalent translations in English as presented above. This incorporation of borrowed verse into a prose narrative foregrounds a further enrichment of the stylistic innovation in the new black South African fiction. The intermingling of genres and series of allusions scattered over the narrative also display eclecticism hitherto rare in black South African fiction. Unlike its precursors of the apartheid era, which had been obsessed with the politics of apartheid and its consequences, the new black fiction engages diverse subjects. The same thing applies to fiction by white writers. More significantly, fictions by black writers are no longer mere documentary works parading like literature.

Duiker's allusive references cut across literary and non-literary fields. Besides the poetry of vanWyk Louw and Leipoldt from which the sampled excerpts above are taken, there are literary allusions to Dambudzo Marechera's *House of Hunger,* Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease,* and Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mocking Bird,* and to African

literary icons like Wole Soyinka, Ben Okri and so on. Historical figures like Marcus Garvey, Haile Selassie, Jomo Kenyatta and so on are equally alluded to. Euro-American myths about St. Sebastian, Pre-Raphaelites artists and the great painter, Picasso, also feature in the novel's allusive exploits. The Rwanda Genocide, the Auschwitz Tragedy and the Anglo-Boer War are equally included. This exploit inscribes the new stylistic ambience of fiction by black writers.

In Munro's (2007) essay, 'Queer Futures: The Coming-Out Novel in South Africa', he devotes a section, 'Narrating the Nation' to reading *Quiet Violence* as an allegory. In his reading, he sees Tshepo's struggle and eventual recovery from cannabis-induced psychosis and psychological trauma occasioned by a divided and abusive family as a metaphor for the pains of liberation struggle and the eventual dislodgment of apartheid. He equates the novel's concern with the different and delicate inter-racial relationships among the characters with the country's project of national reconciliation. Tshepo, the protagonist, is also conceived as 'a symbolic figure through which the nation's past is exorcised and new national senses of belonging and affiliation forged' (756). Munro also sees the idea of Tshepo sexually penetrating and being penetrated as a textualisation of 'the breaking down of the old boundaries after apartheid' (757). We totally subscribe to these interpretations, as they indeed, demonstrate the quality of the novel as what the structuralists and post-structuralists would call a *writerly* or *scriptible* text (Jefferson, 1982). Again, the novel obviates the assumption that black South African fiction lacks artistic vigour.

The assumption referred to above is further subverted by Duiker's narrative style. In what reminds one of an aspect of modernist tradition for which a writer like William Faulkner is famed, Duiker employs as many as eleven narrative voices in *Quiet Violence.* Nine of these voices are those of character-narrators while the other two belong to the protagonist who, in one breath, narrates as Tshepo and, in another, as Angelo or Angelo – Tshepo. Through this multiple perspective, the reader is afforded the opportunity to arrive at objective assessment of events and ideas built around the protagonist. The character-narrators' objective and subjective views are brought under critical lens and then juxtaposed with the protagonist's for a balanced judgment. Each of these other narrators provides the reader with the account of the intersection between his/her life and that of the protagonist in some cases once, while several times

in others. Mmabatho, the protagonist's friend, illustrates the latter category and is the most frequent, next only to Tshepo, the protagonist's voice. With this multiplicity of narrative voices, Duiker appropriates what has been described as the 'modernist's obsession with pluralisation' (Ker, 1997:8). To be certain, black South African fiction hitherto tends to make use of the conventional first person or omniscient narrative perspective.

Another relatively new aspect of form in the black South African fiction is surrealistic tendencies, which sometimes border on magical realism. Surrealism has been described as the 'attempt to express the unconscious mind and to synthesize these workings with the conscious mind'(Cuddon, 1998:882). Surrealism, in other words, expresses imagination using the dream perspective. It contradicts the reasonable and the conventional while highlighting the workings of the subconscious. In one of his dreams, Azure meets people whose lips are sewn with wire, bleeding. He also sees T-rex, a monstrous being, marching on cars, tearing down buildings and chewing those people whose lips are sewn together. In another introspective imagining, Azure grows a tail and uses it to smack Gerald, his erstwhile tormentor. When T-rex comes around, he first chews off Gerald's head and later eats him up, even as 'Snakes pour out of his neck' (*Thirteen Cents*, 123). In another dream perspective, he takes out a bone from the ribs of Saartjie, an old woman he meets on a mountain, and uses it to 'take out the maggots under her breast' (*Thirteen Cents*, 127). When Azure pees, the 'water is bright yellow and starts shining and becoming fire… yellow water becomes the sun' (*Thirteen Cents*, 129). There are other numerous instances of this in the short narrative.

In *Quiet Violence*, four times the length of *Thirteen Cents*, on the other hand, there are fewer examples of the surreal. In a moment of psychotic imagining, Tshepo sees 'Trees move and rocks whisper' (*Quiet Violence*, 91). He hears the voices of the 'undead' and unseen while the air also breeds 'stories and messages' (*Quiet Violence*, 91).We are also intimated with how a pile of scabs peeled off her mother's scalp scurry like spiders before Mmabatho who watches and screams as the spiders multiply. Her horror becomes complete when she sees her grandmother also become a large spider. These depictions of the surreal in the otherwise social realist novels attempt to attract attention to or interpret the subconscious of some of the characters in these novels.

They specifically highlight the psychologically imbalanced nature of these characters' minds, revealing the flux of untoward emotions they are grappling with. Commenting on the newness of this form in the current South African poetry, Kelwyn Sole (1996:26) points out that this device is 'oddly little in evidence previously in a country where social reality often borders on the surreal.' By the surreal social reality here Sole means the unbelievable, revolting and dehumanising experiences which characterised apartheid South Africa. As observed earlier in the early section of this chapter, most South African writers of the apartheid years, especially black writers, found the idea of experimenting with form an unaffordable luxury in the face of urgent political imperatives.

In the novel of a leading South African writer under study in this work, Coetzee's *Disgrace*, there seems to be nothing new in terms of formal aesthetics. By this, we mean that most of the aspects of style in the novel are not new in Coetzee's literary ouvre, especially his works of the apartheid years. The use of one or two of these aspects of style is however remarkable in terms of quality and quantity. These include the use of intertextuality, allusion and poetic language. The novel is also remarkable for its signification of change in Coetzee's style of writing in a particular way. Before examining this particular change, let us explore his extensive use of allusion, intertextuality and poetic language.

In his character portrayal of the protagonist, David Lurie, very early in the novel Coetzee describes him as a happy man by 'most measurements' (*Disgrace,* 2). David is also said to strongly believe so. However, we are intimated of the fact that he is mindful of Oedipus's warning that no man should consider himself happy until he is dead. Obviously, this alludes to the tragic end of Oedipus in Sophocle's classic play, *Oedipus Rex,* which is based on a Greek myth. This literary allusion is particularly significant for its status as a foreshadow of what would happen later. At the end of the novel, David's fate is no better than that of King Oedipus. In fact, his seems worse for it ends in disgrace. He attracts no sympathy, unlike Oedipus. The novel also alludes to other writers and their works. Lord Byron's life is not only extensively invoked as part of the writing project Professor David Lurie has placed before himself, it is skilfully woven into the narrative to illustrate some parallels between the lives of the literary artist and the literary critic, Byron and Lurie respectively. Byron wrote

extensively on the theme of love, Lurie also writes on the love life of Byron; Byron had several mistresses and romantic affairs in England and went to Italy so as to escape scandal; similarly, Lurie has several romantic affairs with the married and single and eventually runs to Salem in the Eastern Cape in order to escape scandal. Both of them also end up in their places of refuge enmeshed in another adulterous affair – Byron with Teresa, Lurie with Bev Shaw.

Wordsworth is another writer to whom allusion is made in the novel. The novel comments 'on his first stay in London, visiting the pantomime, seeing Jack the giant killer blithely striding the stage, flourishing his sword, protected by the word *Invisible* written on his chest' (*Disgrace,* 178). It is, however, not the account of his London days that is of much significance; it is the intertextuality which some lines of his poems come to represent in the novel. Professor Lurie would read out 'From a bare ridge' in Book 6 of *The Prelude:*

> We also first beheld unveiled the summit of Mont Blanc, and grieved to have a soulless image on the eye that had usurped upon a living thought that never more could be.
> (*Disgrace*, 21).

Explaining the theme of the extract as having to do with the limits of sense-perception, the novelist hints at a link between the subject matter of the poem and the fading light in the sexual life of Prof. Lurie. In spite of the rigorous explications, the professor's students, among who is Melanie Isaac with whom he has a sexual relationship, register no understanding. He dismisses the class. While there appears to be an element of abstruseness to the interpretation of the extract, its juxtaposition with others below does not only obviate any form of obfuscation, it actually underscores the significance of the novelist's use of the device. Here goes the first one:

> He stood a stranger in this breathing world, an erring spirit from another hurled; a thing of dark imaginings, that shaped by choice the perils he by chance escaped.
> (*Disgrace*, 32).

This is from 'Lara', another poem of Wordsworth. In the midst of the listening students is also Ryan, the boyfriend to Melanie who has been sexually abused by Prof. Lurie. Ryan had tried to get even with the professor by vandalising his car. Here, he is

an unwanted guest, daring the professor in his space. Technically, he fits into the portrait of the 'stranger', 'An erring spirit' and 'A thing of dark imaginings' referred to in the extract above. In his explication, the professor equates the erring spirit to Lucifer. As the boyfriend of Melanie looks on with a wry smile playing around his lips, apparently mocking his rival-in-love, the professor reads and explicates the following lines for good measure:

> He could at times resign his own for others' good, but not in pity, not because he ought, but in some strange perversity of thought, that swayed him onward with a secret pride to do what few or none would do beside; and this same impulse would in tempting time mislead his spirit equally to crime (*Disgrace*, 33).

To draw his students into the explanations to follow, he asks, 'So, what kind of creature is this Lucifer?' Needless to add, Coetzee uses Wordsworth lines here to develop his own theme. The discourses from which these texts are appropriated are unrelated to the discourse in *Disgrace.* This demonstrates the novelist's self-conscious adoption of eclecticism. It also confirms that literary textuality is a form of 'discursive recycling' (Webster, 1997:101).

Further instances of eclecticism in the novel can be found in allusions to Mao's China and Origen's castration. During Chairman Mao's revolutionary change in China, the socio-political landscape was characterised by state-encouraged or forced recantations, self-criticisms and public apologies by those considered as enemies of the revolution and, by extension, enemies of the State. This scenario is what Professor Lurie sees as the object of the Committee of Inquiry that investigates his alleged sexual harassment of one of his students. As for Origen's castration, Professor Lurie briefly contemplates this choice as a possible solution to his unenviable sex life. Origen was an early scholar of Christian theology who was based in Alexandria. He was alleged to have castrated himself following his literal interpretation of Mathew 9, Verse 12 of the Bible.

The foregoing aspects of form in the novel, *Disgrace*, signify the richness, vigour and vitality of Coetzee's fiction. They also demonstrate his ingenuous exploitation of resources from diverse backgrounds in his fiction. This novel, however, exhibits a

noticeable departure in terms of style in Coetzee's fiction. Coetzee is widely famed for allegorical writing. His allegorical style is widely implicated in the charges of apolitical and difficult writer often levelled against him. Although allegorical to a large extent, *Disgrace* is easily the most straightforward and accessible of his works. This is made possible by the following observations about the novel. The novel makes use of the traditional linear plot whereby events are logically ordered, causality made obvious or hinted at and syntax uncomplicated. Coetzee also makes use of dialogue extensively between the characters. There is also minimal authorial intrusion while untranslated words and glossing are virtually non-existent. Where any character's thoughts are relevant to the development of the plot, the novelist graphically foregrounds the thoughts by italicising them. All these assist the reader in keeping track of the events as well as avoiding confusion, which the stream of consciousness device may occasion.

Consequently, quite unlike Coetzee's previous novels, *Disgrace* is a reader friendly text. The question which arises therefore is, why the change? To the extent that a good part of the narrative explores the new relations between Lucy, a white young woman, and her neighbour, a black farmer, an erstwhile farm boy, Petrus, the novel is a political one. Professor Lurie and Lucy are attacked on the latter's farm and Lucy is also raped by a gang of three (two black men and a black boy called Pollux) apparently instigated by Petrus. The attack sets the former professor thinking about the shift of power lever and its implications in the new South Africa. His extensive lamentations and obsession with the plight of her daughter and, by extension, of other innocent and trusting whites would later dominate the narrative. Petrus, now a landowner and his own master, offers Lucy, now pregnant from the rape incident, a deal: She should become his wife in return for protection. David, the father, is devastated, disapproves of the idea, insists that Lucy get rid of the pregnancy and leave the farm, probably emigrate to Holland or anywhere but Africa. Lucy settles for the deal instead. To the father, Lucy's refusal to press a case of rape against their attackers and keeping silent over the issue also implies conceding victory to the assailants and being put to shame by them. His own inability to save the situation during and after the incident is also viewed as shameful. Thus, he feels disgraced again. What all these connote is that the change of power base in the new South Africa has placed whites at the receiving end. The dilemma resulting from this socio-political reality is well illustrated in the

opposing views of daughter and father. It is from this disadvantaged position that Coetzee, the novelist, speaks through David.

On the strength of the above assumption, one can safely proceed to assert that the literature of the socially and politically disadvantaged or oppressed cannot but be political. Writings of the oppressed are rarely allegorical, except when directness exposes the writer to danger. Even though *Disgrace* is to a large extent allegorical, the texture of its allegory is rather thin and light. It is an allegory we describe as easily-see-through allegory. Therefore, we contend that the stylistic departure and *readerly* nature of *Disgrace* is a signifier of the ideological predilection of its author, Coetzee, who now belongs to the disadvantaged group in the new South Africa. Consequently, he cannot afford the luxury of a *writerly* text in the face of the urgent political message he has to put across. In other words, the political reality of his country influences his writing.

3.4 Conclusion

In the introductory chapter to the study, specifically in the section subtitled statement of the problem, a number of theoretical questions are posed. In the foregoing analysis, answers to some of these questions are offered. Indeed, this chapter demonstrates that with the change in socio-political realities in South Africa from 1994 there has been corresponding change in the literary space as well. In pre-1994, the Calvinist government laws ensured an almost absolutely effective censorship of some subjects in the country's literary space. One of such laws was the one against interracial romance or marriage, the Immorality Act. Those writings that violated such laws were promptly banned. Although no law specifically criminalised non-normative sexuality, the Calvinist pretension to religious righteousness and superior morals were sufficient to make writers impose self-censorship on their writing as far as subjects like this was concerned. Indeed, if a government could criminalise marriage between two human beings of opposite sex simply because of skin pigmentation, one can only imagine what its reaction to something as daring as same-sex romance would be.

With the introduction of the much vaunted 'most progressive constitution in the world' in 1996, South Africa makes available to her citizens freedom that is almost unqualified. Quite radically, the new constitution proclaims non-discrimination on the

grounds of sexual orientation for every citizen. Inexorably, individuals seize this freedom to indulge their fantasies or come out of their closets. Similarly, writers' imaginations hitherto restrained were involuntarily unfettered. The consequence is a bewildering engagement with forbidden subjects like non-normative sexuality, eroticism and sex obscenity, to borrow Lewis Nkosi's famous phrase, 'parading outrageously' on the pages of the new fiction form the country. In short, liberation in the political space in the country has not only engendered liberation in cultural practice, it has also liberalised sex and sexuality preferences of South Africans. Such are the impacts of freedom on the society and its writings! Interestingly, the textualisation of these new or hitherto suppressed subjects are also accompanied by new and ingenuous experimentations or appropriations of forms hitherto scarce in the culture of South African writing.

CHAPTER FOUR

Excavating Memories of Truth Towards Reconciliation

4.1 Introduction

Next to the general elections and the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as the first president of multiracial democratic South Africa in 1994, the most significant and historic event in the political history of the sub-continent from 1990s to date was the convening of inquiry into the injustice and human rights abuse of the previous decades under the aegis of Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The Commission, set up in 1995 by the then Government of National Unity led by President Mandela, was chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The Commission had its hearings publicly between 1996 and 1999. By its mandate, the commission was 'to help deal with what happened under Apartheid' (TRC website, 2007: par. 1). Specifically, it was to listen to the stories and testimonies of the victims as well as those of the perpetrators of apartheid injustices and brutalities for the benefit of objective understanding by the public. It was also to make recommendations on reparations for the victims and amnesty for the perpetrators. While they lasted, the hearings at the Commission generated interest not only in South Africa but indeed beyond. While the revelations largely attracted sympathetic television audiences every night, its procedures courted controversies in much the same way as the idea of compensation and reparation for victims.

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As at the time South Africa held its Truth and Reconciliation hearings, eighteen truth commissions had held in other parts of the world. None of these was public. Some social critics therefore quarrelled with its public approach. Others faulted the intermediary role of the translators or interpreters who were employed to make the testimonies of those who speak languages other than English available to the national and international audiences. They argue that some aspects of meaning or messages are compromised in the process of translation. For another category of critics, it is the idea of reparation that should be left out. They argue that reparation has the potential to undermine the spirit of reconciliation, which is the ultimate goal of the Commission. In spite of all these, the project has impacted positively on the social relations among

South Africans across the different divides. Nothing can be more illustrative of this than the view of a mother whose son was killed by an agent of the State during the oppressive years. Yael Farber (2008:7) introduces her foreword to the play, *Molora,* with the woman's view, viz.:

> This thing called reconciliation… If I am understanding it correctly… if it means this perpetrator, this man who has killed my son, if it means he becomes human again, this man, so that I, so that all of us, get our humanity back… then I agree, then I support it all.

Indeed, this woman's view echoes that of many who eventually embraced reconciliation. It, however, does not imply that every victim has been able to develop the capacity for forgiveness. Even for those who have chosen to forgive, forgetting is hardly possible. In fact, many have counselled against forgetting. The Chair of the Commission, Archbishop Tutu, articulates this position in the following words:

> The other reason amnesia simply will not do is that the past refuses to lie down quietly. It has an uncanny habit of returning to haunt one. 'Those who forget the past are doomed to repeat it' are the words emblazoned at the entrance to the museum in the former concentration camp of Dachau. They are words we would do well to keep ever in our mind…. We need to know about the past in order to establish a culture of respect for human rights. It is only by accounting for the past that we can become accountable for the future. (1998:7)

Evident in the observation of the Archbishop above is a confirmation of the view that discussions about South Africa will, for a long time to come, continue to border on the legacy of apartheid or race and racialisation (Geertsema, 2007). This ugly legacy and the Truth and Reconciliation project have interestingly become object of reflection and debate in an exciting creative imaginings and re-imaginings of the South African history. Indeed, this creative interrogation of history affords the critic a greater excitement and interest, given the kind of subtlety and creative novelties suffusing the works that have emerged in response to the TRC project.

Apparently due to the theatrical nature of the TRC hearings, the literary genre of drama appears to be writers' favourite in engaging issues around the project. In fact, David Coplan (2007: 376) has credited Rolf Solberg with viewing the TRC hearings as turning South Africa's past history into the 'greatest and longest-running theatrical event' in the country's history.

Most of the stories presented by the witnesses were distressing, harrowing, yet fascinating in an attention-compelling way. Private pain and tragedy are brought to the public domain as the hearings moved from town to town, and were also relayed on the television every night. Audiences in the country and beyond were invariably afforded vicarious experience of the disaster that was apartheid. In another paradoxical sense, the hearings put some people in the dilemma over a desire for revenge or forgiveness. This is because as perpetrators of abuse and other vices revealed more and more of their vile past in order to secure amnesty, so did the inclination to forgive on the part of the victims suffered extenuation. Even those who had nothing to do with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission or initially were opposed to it began to modify their position. As more people got increasingly attracted to the revelations at the hearings, the project provoked debates in different circles of the society, the cultural and literary ones being quite prominent. Several theatrical productions and scripted plays have been inspired or have drawn materials for their works from the witnesses' accounts and the processes of the TRC itself. The literary genre of drama in the new South Africa has played a significant role in this connection.

This section of our study selects five plays of the post-apartheid era for its exegetical disquisition. It explores the issues of memory, truth and reconciliation in the new democratic nation. By memory, in this study, we refer to the private experiences of individuals in the past; personal history, as opposed to the history of public events in the past or present. This private experience or history is bound up with memory. However, while the experience is private or personal, it is induced by external, often social and political, forces in the society to which the individuals belong. It is this peculiar memory of different individuals that the TRC requests victims and perpetrators of apartheid to share truthfully with the public in order to facilitate reconciliation between individuals, groups and generally in the nation. Before turning

attention to the plays for our analyses, we shall briefly examine the concepts of memory, truth and reconciliation.

Establishing distinction between history and memory, Pierre Nora (1989:8) notes that history is 'the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer' whereas memory 'is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present.' Not only do we share this view, it forms the basis of our exploration of the issue of memory against the backdrop of telling the truth in the quest for reconciliation, as artistically sublimated in the post-apartheid drama of South Africa. Numerous South African writings of the post-apartheid era, especially in the genre of fiction, have turned to history for materials or inspiration. Many dig into the recent past while others even reach for the distant epochs. Some of them document these past events while others revise or subvert them. The works under study in this section have some connections with South Africa's recent past. They are however not historical plays. They essentially attempt a creative capture of individuals' memories of the past. In further explications, Nora argues that in the excavation of memory, there should be a shift from the general to the personal, 'from the objective message to its subjective reception' (15). This 'subjective reception' approach appears to underpin the recollections and nature of truths revealed at the South Africa's TRC and in private musings and interlocutions among South Africans.

In the new South African writings, memory is almost synonymous with the traumatic past. In the plays under study, this is particularly so because we hear more from victims than from perpetrators of brutalities and human rights abuse. Indeed, there were more victims than perpetrators in the traumatised South African society of pre-1994. Probably because of the severity of the trauma or the nature of trauma itself, some have argued against recalling the past. They are of the view that doing so will only amount to a re-enactment of the painful experience (Adorno, 1986; John, 2000). On the other hand, some think it is not only good but also honest and healthy. For instance, Wulf Kansteiner (2002:188) is actually of the opinion that painful experiences of the past lose their pain once such experiences are shared with others and become a collective memory instead of being 'anchored in the life-worlds of individuals.'

The concept of truth is generally seen as a virtue and is strongly encouraged in every clime. It is also generally believed that truth is constant. However, there has been contention over what constitutes the truth. In his 'Introduction' to the trilogy, *Theatre as witness*, Amander Fisher (2008) identifies truth as comprising experiental, factual, forensic or historical truth. The forensic type appears to be the one that can be said to be constant. In his further explanation, Fisher speculates that the kind of truth purveyed at the TRC hearings is largely subjective because it is experiential. As we exegetically examine the plays selected for our study, the relevance or reliability of this line of thought shall be of serious concern.

The motif of reconciliation, explored in terms of its attainment, lack of attainment, challenges, desirability and strategies, appears to be the most recurrent in the new South African writing. This is not particularly surprising because the issue of reconciliation, between the erstwhile adversarial groups in the country, is the most important in the national agenda of the new dispensation. Accordingly, many creative writers have also deployed their craft in this engagement. The TRC sought truth and reconciliation. Its proceedings held in the open and were theatrical; hence, drama is preferred to creatively engage it. In this section of the study, we examine it against the background of its relationship with the relevant issues of memory and truth in the context of emerging dramatic texts in post-apartheid South Africa. The term reconciliation, which obviously refers to a harmonious coexistence between different groups, has been described by David Philips (2004) as a misnomer because there was no cordial relation between the different races in the country hitherto. If there was no such a situation, he contends, then we cannot talk of reconciliation but conciliation.

To a very large extent, this is incontestable, especially if we see the people as racial categories like he does. However, if we see people first as individuals before becoming members of a group, his argument becomes enfeebled. Certainly, there were people across the racial divides that had cordial relations with each other before things probably turned sour later on. Because of this, we shall stick to the term reconciliation. John Lederach (1998) has noted that reconciliation embraces the following processes: the unearthing of truth and the search for peace, justice and mercy. This lends support to the logic of examining memory, truth and reconciliation together.

In his editorial preamble to the plays in the anthology, *At This State: Plays from Post Apartheid South Africa*, Greg Homann (2009) notes the significant role theatre has played in the creative re-imagining of nations. He singles out John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*, Arthur Miller's *Death of a salesman* and Bertolt Brecht's *The Threepenny Opera* as plays that impacted profoundly on the configuration of the social formations of their times. This role is certainly not limited to the theatre of the West. In Africa, Ebrahim Hussein's *Kinjeketile* and Ngugi Wa-Thiongo and Micere Mugo's *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* have had a similar impact in East Africa. Needless to add, several plays of the apartheid years were remarkable for their anti-apartheid tropes and protest consciousness, which contributed immensely to the liberation struggle and, ultimately, to freedom for the subjugated majority. In the current post-apartheid epoch, theatre is, again, at the forefront of creative dialogue with the present and the past, as well as the projection into the future.

4.2 Critical Analyses of Selected Texts

Craig Higginson's *Dream of the Dog* is one of the post-apartheid plays that draws inspiration from the TRC and interrogates some of the issues raised by the activities of the Commission. The story centres on a tragic incident that happened in the Wiley's household some fifteen years before the present. Grace, one of the black girls in the service of the Wiley family, is killed by Richard Wiley in an effort to cover his breach of the Immorality Act, and deflect the certain shame miscegenation would bring on his family. Richard and Grace had been having a sexual relationship for some time before one of their intimate moments resulted in pregnancy. Because Grace would not abort the pregnancy, Richard settled for the option of murdering her by letting loose his dog on the poor girl. The dog viciously attacked Grace, leaving the poor girl in a pool of blood. Efforts to save her life were also inadvertently delayed by Patricia, Richard's wife. This sad incident was witnessed by Look Smart, the adopted son of Patricia, who had hoped to marry Grace some day. It is the memory of this incident with which Smart had lived for fifteen years. Having been so burdened for so long, Smart decides to visit the Wiley's family again on learning of their planned relocation, apparently to lay bare the ghost of the past. Smart, now belonging to the *noveau riche* class of the post-apartheid era, confidently reintroduces himself to Patricia, his erstwhile benefactor. In fact, he assumes superior airs as he addresses and talks to the old white

lady with ironic edge. Socio-economically speaking, there is a reversal of status between the two, which Smart deliberately draws attention to.

After the initial courtesies, Patricia taps into her memory of the young Smart, focusing on when the boy caught his first fish. She recalls instructing the young Smart on how to cast the fishing rod, how he battled, persevered and eventually caught a fish. She also recalls the boy's initial excitement, subsequent sadness and eventual decision to return the fish to the water. She adds that the young Smart didn't want to go fishing after this incident. In his own reaction, Smart notes that he cannot remember the day he caught his first fish. Despite the further details provided by Patricia, he still expresses doubts about the veracity of her claims. He notes that he would rather have eaten the fish than return it to the water, if his memory served him well. However, he eventually admits his remembrance of the day he caught his first fish, but points out that instead of returning it to the water, he actually killed the fish by smacking its head with a rock provided by Patricia. She, however, contradicts him and suggests that he might be thinking of some other day. This response by Patricia seems to suggest conscious manipulation of memory in the play. After this response, Smart clarifies his message in the following words: 'All I'm saying, Madam, is that I think we do far too much of this letting people off the hook. I am a far more effective fisherman now' (*Dream*, 151).

The difference in the above claims about the same incident therefore raises questions about the reliability of memory. Is this a consequence of senility on the part of a woman in her mid-sixties or that of failed memory on the part of a man in his mid-thirties trying to recall what happened during his teenage? It also questions the veracity of the claims. Is Patricia's memory the one reflecting the truth or Smart's? Is either of the two being deliberately economical with the truth? Since one cannot, with absolute certainty, affirm or contradict either of these possibilities, whatever answer comes up would have to be tentative.

In the Archbishop Tutu-led TRC, high premium was placed on truth-telling. In fact, the Commission decided who or who does not get amnesty and to what extent, based on the extent of truth or confession of the perpetrator of the apartheid agenda. In getting the truth from the victims, perpetrators or heroes of the struggle, no actual

investigations were carried out. The Commission relied on the stories of these people. The people themselves relied on their memories. If memories, as seen in *Dream of the Dog*, are as unreliable or indeterminate as depicted through the characters of Patricia and Smart, then the TRC project was, at best, a political cosmetics or a house built on sand.

These exchanges also suggest either of the following. Firstly, they suggest that Smart's earlier denial about remembering the day he caught his first fish is a lie. Secondly, the additional information regarding being given a rock to smack the fish's head by Patricia appears intended to expose the falsification or inaccuracy of her memory. An added and even more pertinent significance of Smart's speech is the implication that people should be made to pay for their crimes. This certainly negates the motivation behind the TRC. As events of the story further unfold, however, one would realize that Smart's remarks do not actually call for revenge. Rather, it calls for penitence on the part of the perpetrators of apartheid's injustice and oppression. His mission at the Wiley's house is apparently to prick their conscience by making them realise the evil of their past deeds. This desire for penitence, however, almost borders on revenge when, despite Patricia's apology over the cruel murder of Grace, Smart treats the verbal apology as inadequate and passionately tells Patricia:

> What I am saying, Madam, is I wish for your guilt. Darkness! I don't want you to leave this place without a backward glance. To spend your last days looking at… at the sea. With your mind all clear, your sleep easy. I want you to remember that dog like I remember that dog. I want you to feel like I feel, and be haunted and…and decayed away by it! (*Dream*, 164).

The first significant thing about this impassioned speech is that Smart has been living with a very bitter memory of the past. He has been traumatised by a cruel and inhuman experience on the Wileys' farm. According to him, he thinks about it everyday. This is the kind of agony shared and painfully expressed by the victims of apartheid's oppression and brutality at the hearings of the TRC. In Patricia's response, she does not only express understanding of what it means 'to die quietly' (*Dream*, 164), she actually digs into her own private memory which is steeped in bitterness and melancholy. She recalls unhappy circumstances surrounding her marriage, like the

loss of her only conception to stillbirth. Most importantly, speaking about the death of Grace, she observes: 'None of this is easy, Look Smart…I will never be able to take back that terrible thought I had when that young girl lay bleeding' (*Dream,* 163). Indeed, it is this sharing of personal memories of pain and bitterness which mainly characterised the hearings of the TRC.

Interestingly, Smart partly achieves his objective to see Patricia regretful of her past deeds and they get reconciled. As for Richard, Patricia's husband, he illustrates the recalcitrant, non-penitent and reactionary relic of the old order who probably longs for its return. Higginson's concern about penitence is further explored in one of the dialogues between Smart and Patricia. While admitting that the future belongs to the Smart's of this world in the new South Africa, Patricia considers herself as part of the faded past. To Smart, the idea of a faded past does not arise because it would suggest 'that there are no consequences to people's actions. And I find that idea… I find it repugnant' (*Dream*, 150). Several critics and commentators on post-apartheid South Africa have expressed similar sentiments (Mda, 2002; Tutu, 2008). The past must not be forgotten, if only to avoid its repeat.

When Richard comes face to face with Smart, he declines recalling his face or knowing him at all. After Smart's exit, he still feigns inability to recall who Smart really is until his wife firmly challenges the claim and accuses him of pretension. When Patricia tries to prod his memory about the person of Grace, Richard again feigns amnesia. Here, Richard's actions show how people can be selective or deceptive in their remembrance or about the information they confess. This, again, draws attention to the potential undermining of the TRC project. When Patricia mentions the name Rachel, their deceased daughter, his memory appears suddenly awakened. However, a moment later, he refers to the same Rachel as his mother. When his attention is drawn to this mix-up, he says that he mentioned daughter, not mother. To some extent, this may be suggestive of a genuine memory failure. For a man in his seventies, this is not totally out of place. Whether this is the case or not, the import is simply that some of the stories presented by victims and perpetrators of human rights abuse at the TRC are partial accounts of what actually happened.

In sharing the story of Grace's death, the accounts given by Smart and Patricia differ in some ways. For instance, while Smart recalls how strange and loud Grace wailed as the family dog attacked her, Patricia claims she heard nothing like that. Patricia also claims that she got a gun and fired it into the air so as to scare the dog off but Smart says there was nothing like that. Smart also notes that instead of Patricia allowing the dying Grace to be promptly taken to hospital in Patricia's Mercedes-Benz car, she had asked him to take the girl to the hospital in the back of the family *bakkie*. Patricia contradicts him, saying she never did; that the girl was taken straight away to the hospital in the car. Tongue in cheek, she would later add that she remembers nothing, and knows nothing about what happened or why it has to matter now. Certainly, these differing accounts illustrate the experiential subjectivity of truth or unreliability of the memory. As evident in Patricia's subsequent submission, this divergence of view may be symptomatic of intentional falsification and fear of facing one's horrifying past. In fact, Patricia further wonders why Smart is wasting precious time on issues that are dead when he already has a good life, and a brighter future well laid ahead of him.

Like many white reactionaries and apologists of apartheid, Richard ridicules the idea of confessing to past indecencies and crimes perpetrated by believers or agents of the apartheid ideology. He tells a story of an imaginary uncle who is trying to confess at the point of death. This uncle, called Pete, confesses to raping Richard's daughter. After hearing his uncle out, Richard dismisses the crime as a past event which should be forgiven and forgotten. He, however, adds that since the occasion is now for confession he would like to inform his uncle that he was the one who put the peanuts in his uncle's sherry trifle despite knowing that his uncle had allergy for peanuts. Through this anecdote, Richard contends that both sides of the apartheid divide wronged each other in the past. Therefore, there is no need for one side to feel victimised at the expense of the other, no need for one to feel overwhelmed by any sense of guilt, and no need for one to feel unnecessarily self-righteous. Invariably, he implicates man, and not necessarily any racial group, in the tragedy of apartheid. By encouraging the idea of forgiving and forgetting the past, he espouses the school of thought that advocates collective amnesia. The proponents of this school believe that, with the ugly and brutal past that apartheid represents, keeping memory of the past would be irreconcilable with the TRC's drive for reconciliation.

When Smart eventually broaches his mission, he accuses Patricia of complicity in the murder of Grace, and cites Beauty as a witness to the facts of the incident. Patricia does not only try to absolve herself, she refuses to accept the idea that her husband, Richard, actually masterminded Grace's death. To establish the veracity of Smart's claims, Beauty is asked to provide the details of all she knew about her sister's death. She should tell 'the truth.' In response to this demand, Beauty says Grace was killed by the family dog. Unsatisfied, Patricia insists that she should tell everything including what happened before the dog's attack. Beauty is adamant, also insisting that nothing else happened to the best of her knowledge. At this point, Smart points out that the truth is already known, but the girl disagrees and tells him that he doesn't know the truth. Patricia mounts further pressure on the girl. She pleads with her to give the details since she was 'the only one who saw the whole of what happened and still remembers' (*Dream*, 162).

Still defiant, Beauty observes that she was a small girl then and cannot be sure of what she saw again. However, with the assurance that she won't be blamed for anything, Beauty eventually provides the details of how Grace was killed, though not without promptings from Smart. Here, some pertinent issues need to be carefully looked at. Patricia relies on the memory of Beauty to get the truth about Grace's death. On her part, Beauty thinks that her memory may not be particularly reliable, given the time span between the incident and the time Smart visits the family. The question which arises, therefore, is how truthful is the truth from Beauty? This is even more pertinent when we consider the fact that she is being prompted with some pieces of information by Smart and, to some extent, by Patricia. In spite of all, the truth of Grace's death as far as Smart is concerned, has been revealed. Richard murdered the girl. His job is done and he can now leave Patricia with her conscience.

For Patricia, however, Beauty's information is unlikely to be the truth. This is why, after the departure of Smart, she asks Beauty to tell her the truth. In response, Beauty asks if she really wants to know the truth. This brief dialogue and further revelations by Beauty show that Smart actually knows only a fraction of the truth. The real truth, according to Beauty, is not about rape which Smart supposes it to be. Grace and Richard had been involved in a sexual relationship long before the incident of the dog attack. The relationship had been of mutual benefits to both, as Grace received money

in return for sexual favour to Richard, regularly. Grace needed the money for survival and was not really interested in Smart because he was not only too young for her but also because he had only words to offer her. Richard unleashed the dog on Grace because she was not ready to abort the baby she was carrying for Richard. This is the fantastic and disturbing truth Patricia had been ignorant of for fifteen years! Asked why she didn't tell Smart all of these, Beauty replies that he 'would not be able to hear something like that' (*Dream*, 176). The implication of this reply is that Beuaty thinks that telling the whole truth can sometimes be harmful, hence undesirable. In agreement with her, we also think that if the whole truth had been revealed to Smart it is most likely he would have become more embittered by the fact that he was never loved by Grace he had pined for in the first place. Again, the apology offered by Patricia, which helps in soothing his anger, would probably not have been offered. As far as it goes, the whole truth would also have let him realize that he is the butt of Richard's sarcastic anecdote about the so-called Uncle Pete. Rather than see Patricia as a betrayer, he would have seen Grace as the real betrayer.

Another pertinent issue in this connection is the dilemma in which the two different versions of truth put Patricia. Referring to Smart, she addresses Beauty in the following words: 'He has his own story. He's very convincing about it. Why must I now believe you?' (*Dream*, 176). By 'his own story' she means Smart's version of the truth which Beauty earlier corroborated. Beauty's response to the question posed at her is that 'you must find the truth for yourself' (*Dream*, 176). By this, Beauty is suggesting that everybody must find his or her own truth or believe what s/he considers to be the truth. This brings us to the issues of constancy and objectivity of truth. Is truth always constant? Is it always objective? As evident in this play, truth is hardly constant. If anything, truth is in a state of flux. It is also subjective. This illustrates the postmodernist view that human experience is unstable and indeterminate. Why is this so? It is so because each person's sense of truth is shaped by his or her perception of events. As such, each of the versions of the truth in the play is shaped by individual perception, thus confirming the postmodernist belief that knowledge has been relativized (Lyotard, 1984).

Accordingly, the truth on which the TRC relies is merely the experiential and the subjective, rather than the historical or scientific truth presumably given by the

witnesses at the hearings. For some, this is in order while, for others, it raises questions about its reliability. Is it fair to rely on this kind of truth to award reparation or grant amnesty? Would those accepting reparation or amnesty based on this kind of truth be able to live with it? Surely, these questions border on the ethical. However, if there are no deliberate distortions of facts while the subjective truth engenders and fosters harmonious and peaceful coexistence among the different groups of people in the society, then such truths need be embraced. This seems to be Higginson's answer to the controversy which surrounded the truthfulness of the truths at the TRC's hearings.

As expressly stated in the play, Smart's mission at the Wileys' farm is to make Patricia experience a sense of guilt, 'to be haunted and…and decayed away' by the memory of Grace's death. Interestingly and ironically, this seemingly vengeful disposition mainly brings about reconciliation between these estranged 'mother' and 'son'. After unburdening his heart and securing the witnessing voice of Beauty to corroborate his story, Smart feels done with his mission. Feeling moved by Smart's account and Beauty's witness, which lends truthfulness to it, Patricia is also constrained to share her own painful memories with Smart. She recalls the ugly circumstances leading to her marriage, her unhappiness in the marriage, the story of her stillborn daughter but, more importantly, her doting love and sacrifice for Smart and how he eventually began to treat her with terrible contempt before finally vanishing. She captures her frustration in the following words: 'Then I came to think of you as another dead child. I didn't want to think of you as taking from me and giving nothing back. It went against my idea of you' (*Dream*, 166). These memories and closing remarks touch Smart's conscience so sorely that he is visibly disturbed.

With the above scenario of mutual painful memories and misjudgment, the spatial, temporal and psychological settings for reconciliation are effortlessly engendered. Both now freely and warmly talk about the new development scheduled to take place on the land which the Wiley's farm currently occupies. They talk about taking a walk on the beach and other sundry niceties. The conversation below illustrates better:

> Patricia:
> But you *were* like my son. And I will be lonely there, in my house by the sea. I would like you to come and visit.

> Even if it is just to humour an old *gogo* [grandmother] with one or two marbles still rolling around inside her head.

> Look Smart (*smiling):*
> Perhaps I will come. I will come with clay animals I've made, so that you can look at them and think: its art.
>
> Patricia (*laughing*)*:*
> And I will make you tea and carrot cake. What I usually offer my guests. (*Dream*, 170)

Certainly, this exchange, marked by convivial mood, not only demonstrates rapprochement and reconciliation between the two, it also signifies the genuineness of the spirit which underlines the reconciliation. Both parties proceeded to this point from a place of their peculiar understandings of the past. By this, Higginson endorses the TRC project as a reliable instrument of reconciliation in a country hitherto peopled by violent, sworn and hate-filled adversaries. He also insists on the need for a mutual understanding of the psychology and peculiar history of each of the parties for a lasting and genuine reconciliation.

An unusual aspect of memory excavation also features in the play. We witness a recollection of some of the pleasant times shared together by Smart and Patricia. They talk about the excitement of gardening. Smart recalls his love for Patricia, which he claims to be greater than he had for his biological mother. Patricia also recalls Smart's excellent performance at school. They also talk about Smart's mother and so on. Although the major subject connected with memory in the play is quite distressing and particularly tragic, the recollection of fond memories like the foregoing indeed makes Higginson's play balanced. This is atypical of other works that draw their materials from South Africa's past. Such other works are either saturated by the unpleasantness experienced in the past or alibi for wrong deeds. They seem intent on attracting sympathy or absolution. With this sprinkling of mirth on an otherwise melancholic account, Higginson offers a more realistic basis for genuine and lasting reconciliation. The play presents one of the most damning indictments of the South African white folk in creative imaginings of apartheid years. Yet, it is one play capable of thawing

the frozen bitterness of individual victims of apartheid's brutality as well as the oppression of the marginalised majority. Here lies the greatest strength of the play.

Ubu and the Truth Commission, published in 1998 by Jane Taylor, is one of the early plays to interrogate the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) project. It is also one of such plays that directly draw materials from the TRC transcribed hearings. This is expressly admitted by the author in the 'Writer's Note' on the play. In presentation, the playwright also admits inspiration by the work of Alfred Jarry, a French satirist. Jarry's play, *Ubu Roi* provides the burlesque template as well as the name of the eponymous central character of the play.

Ubu and the Truth Commission is a documentary play about the activities of a State security agent in the service of apartheid government. It also presents the harrowing experiences of victims, relatives and friends of victims of apartheid's inhumanity and brutalities. The play parades Pa Ubu and Ma Ubu as the protagonist and antagonist respectively. Pa Ubu hardly spends time at home with his wife and the wife remonstrates bitterly and regularly about this. She thinks her husband is into some extra-marital affairs with other women. The truth of the matter, however, is that Pa Ubu is often away from home because he is a security agent for the State. As a security operative for the apartheid government, he undertakes undercover activities which involve arresting, torturing and killing those considered threats to the Calvinist State. In these tasks, he enjoys the collaboration of field agents, represented by Brutus, the three-headed dog in the play. He also finds a collaborator in Nile, the crocodile puppet, to destroy possible evidences of human rights abuse against him. Eventually, Ma Ubu discovers the nature and importance of her husband's job and feels proud of him. Nevertheless, she decides to keep the intelligence gathered on her husband as a secret weapon against him to secure her own future. Much of the play focuses on the dastardly undercover activities of Pa Ubu and his types, highlighting the testimonies of the victims or relative of victims of such activities and, ultimately, his own confession of the past.

In fidelity to the categories of witnesses at the TRC, the play parades survivors, victims and perpetrators of human rights abuse and other atrocities of the apartheid years. These witnesses recall their peculiar and sometimes similar experiences,

especially those of violence, pain and brutality. Of the seven witnesses' accounts given in the play, five are from survivors who witnessed the death and brutalisation of their relatives, friends, colleagues or neighbours. The remaining two come each from a survivor-victim and a perpetrator. For each of these people, the memory of their experiences remains a painful and traumatic one.

The first witness recalls the police suppression of black protest during which her son was brutally killed and mutilated almost beyond recognition. Introduced by the caption 'A bloodbath', the witness gives account of how Queenstown became a battleground for the policemen and the protesters who shoot 'at anyone and everyone' (*Ubu*, 11) leaving so many bodies dead that the mortuary could not cope. With so many bodies stacked over each other to check in order to identify her son, the witness is confident that no matter what has been done to him she would identify the boy because of the mark on his chin. By the time she saw him, with the mark on his chin still recognisable, she repeatedly declares' This is not my child' (*Ubu*, 13), expressing her indignation and bitterness at the inhumanity and barbarism of apartheid operatives. This is the bitterness she has had to live with since the death of her son. Testimonies like this become the metaphor of painful memory for most of the victims and survivors of apartheid brutalities, which were related live at the TRC hearings.

A similar memory of pain and bitterness is also recalled by another witness whose son was brutally killed. According to him, a white man with a red scarf shot his child, Scholar, with a rifle. To him, it wasn't even the killing that he has not been able to get over; it is the treatment of the boy's body. After the killing, the white man dragged the dead boy by the legs like a dog that is crushed by a moving vehicle on the road before he eventually dug a hole 'for Scholar's brains' (*Ubu*, 47). The witness' undying grief and pain are captured in the following words:

> The sun was bright but it went dark when I saw him lying there. It's an everlasting pain. I do not think that it will ever stop in my heart. They were treating people like animals…that's what makes me cry right now, …even a dog…you don't kill it like that, even an ant, a small little ant, you have feelings for an ant, but now, our children, they were not even taken as ants' (*Ubu*, 49).

These words, laced with impassioned tone, clearly justify the man's bitterness and painful memory. This is quite representative of the tone of some of the witnesses at the TRC hearings. Some cry so profusely that the Commission had to later employ professional comforters to manage such occasions whenever they arose. When the witness says the bright sun suddenly went dark as he beheld his child, he metaphorically implies a personal apocalypse, which most of the elderly blacks accepted as their fate while apartheid lasted. As part of the playwright's manipulative and punny use of words, the digging of a hole for scholar's brain also suggests not just a personal loss to the witnessing father but to the nation at large. The choice of the word brain, instead of body, implies that the feeling of loss was more about human capacity and intellectual endowment. The boy's name, Scholar, suggests this idea. Indeed, apartheid despoiled the black population of a sizeable proportion of its young, energetic, and gifted youths. In yet another person's painful recollection, he states that when he goes to check the corpses of some children to see if his was among, the bodies didn't have eyes, foreheads, hands and legs. They had been reduced to stumps. Testimonies like these were regular at the TRC hearings.

While the foregoing illustrates the painful memories of the blacks as a result of the treatment meted on them by the apartheid agents, another black witness recounts a similar and even more dastardly experience in the hands of fellow blacks. Apparently following an act of betrayal, the witness's son was killed by a mob of angry blacks. The victim-son of the witness had a tyre put around his body and doused with petrol. His father was given a burning match to set him ablaze. After firm refusals by the father, they set the boy ablaze by themselves and ran away. This is the kind of punishment blacks inflicted on any fellow black found to be in cahoots with the apartheid oppressors. The witness recalls how he tried to put out the flames with water, sand and finally succeeded with the use of a blanket, but which was already too late. With grief, he also recalls how he held the boy to his body while attempts by the boy to speak resulted in mere opening and closing of the mouth before he finally gave up. This account shows how the oppressed blacks contributed to the collective tragedy of the race and the painful private memories of individuals. Again, a woman witness recalls the tragic way by which his son was killed. Here is the way she describes it:

> The way they killed my son, hitting him against a wall and we found him with a swollen head, they killed him in a tragic manner and I don't think I'll ever forgive, in this case, especially the police who were involved and who were there. I wouldn't think anything, if ever I was to be brought as a maid, if I were to poison these white men's children' (*Ubu*, 55).

Like the account of the immediate witness above, this woman's memory of the past is saturated with bitterness and pain. While the former witness doubts if he would ever forget the incident, this one not only doubts if she would ever forgive those involved in the death of her son, she is ready to exact revenge if given the opportunity. This latter disposition underscores the depth of her pain and also illustrates the chances that the TRC might not have achieved total reconciliation between the victims and perpetrators of injustice, human rights abuse and sundry vile deeds in the apartheid years. However, the reduction in the rate of inter-racial violence after the TRC wound up its hearings suggests that the project was relatively successful. It received more worldwide commendation than condemnation. It has also been copied by governments in other countries. For instance, the Federal Government of Nigeria set up a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2000 to look into issues of human rights abuse during the military dictatorship of the 1980s and 1990s. The government of Rivers State and Osun State, two of the federating units in Nigeria, had also set up similar bodies to dig into the injustices and human rights abuses of previous governments in their States. Rivers State had hers between 2007 and 2009 while Osun had hers between February and September 2011.

As was the case at the hearings of the TRC where most of those who had painful memories to share or evidence to give were relatives or friends of victims who did not survive their experiences, the witnesses above are also relatives of dead victims. In the play, Taylor presents only one survivor-victim, a reflection of the negligible number of survivor-victims at the TRC hearings. This victim recalls how he was physically and electrically tortured by the security agents of the State in an attempt to get him confess a piece of information. His recollection is different from that of others because he still remembers his torturers. He claims to know the men who tortured him. When he declares this, Pa Ubu, the representative figure of apartheid brutalities in the play, shouts 'Communists!!!' while Shadow, the playwright's construct of Pa

Ubu's conscience, tells him: 'These voices will be heard. Ignore me at your peril' (*Ubu*, 57).

Because Pa Ubu does not provide a counter-account in an attempt to deflect the witness's claim, his shout appears to be a vacuous attempt at denying the truth. Indeed, during the hey-days of apartheid, the Calvinist government, its security agencies and the controlled press were always blaming the communists for acts of brutalities against innocent blacks or anyone considered an enemy of the government. Shadow's remark that the witness's voice will be heard unsettles Pa Ubu because he realises the threat of exposure inherent in it. He admits to feeling that a pitchfork is prodding his arse. This threat would later compel him to tell the truth about his past activities.

In his revelations, he describes the different methods by which the security operatives torture the truth out of their victims or kill them if they refuse to cooperate. The first one is tubing. It is a method whereby an inner tube of a tyre would be put over a detainee's face while a slit is made to let out the tongue. He is then suffocated until he tells the truth. If he refuses, he is beaten to death with iron pipes. The second method is to threaten the detainee with a gunshot by attempted firings. The gun is put to the detainee's head and the trigger is pulled. Meanwhile, the trigger is already contrived to jam. If the detainee still refuses to tell the truth after a repeat of the threat, he is beaten to death. Pa Ubu recalls a particular case when, after being beaten to death, the detainee's body is set ablaze. While the corpse was burning, the killers were 'drinking and even having a braai next to the fire' (*Ubu*, 45).

As a perpetrator's testimony, this kind of account is easily believable by the audience. It is the kind of truth the audiences at the TRC were always willing to commend and simultaneously condemn; commend for its apparent honesty and the courage of its teller, but condemn for the brutality and inhumanity it bears. Interestingly but ironically, the more this kind of truth is revealed by a perpetrator, the better his chances of getting amnesty. The TRC principle stipulates full disclosure as a precondition for getting amnesty for a crime that was demonstrably political in intention.

The question, which boggles the mind, however, is whether this provision couldn't have been exploited by those desperate to secure amnesty. In other words, was it not possible for amnesty hopefuls to have exaggerated their roles a little bit more in order to attract believability from the Commission and the audience, especially if they suspect that their story were being taken with a pinch of salt. Should this be the case, amnesty would have been granted on the basis of half-truth. This would also have validated the view that 'testimonies of partial truth appease many' (Homann, 2009:24).

The first issue around the discourse of truth in the play manifests metaphorically immediately after the first witness's story about the killing of her son. Pa Ubu is seen cowered under a large chair with his backside projecting out from under the chair in a dimly lit room. On the screen backdrop is an amination of a radio which continues transmogrifying into a cat and taunting Pa Ubu. Clearly, Pa Ubu is scared by the transmogrifying figure and its taunts. Ma Ubu enters, switches on the lights and sees her spouse under the chair with his rump sticking out. When she orders him to get out, he declines and responds by saying 'Go away, whoever you are. There is no one but us rats' (*Ubu,* 15). Eventually, he clambers out, blubbering with fear and requesting his wife not to tell 'them' that he is around. A critical look at the scene reveals the following. The commencement of the TRC hearings sends fear into the minds of perpetrators of atrocities during apartheid years. As the TRC, represented by the cat-radio figure, takes evidence and confessions, people like Pa Ubu, now represented as rats, run for their lives looking for safety. The switching on of the lights by Ma Ubu on her entry signifies the advent of truth as darkness disappears and Pa Ubu is fully exposed. The sticking out of Pa Ubu's rump also suggests the exposure of his dirty parts, his secrets. This incident would turn out as a foreshadow of what is to be encountered later in the play.

Following the exit of his wife, Pa Ubu gets on his kneels and prays to 'the blood of the lamb'(*Ubu,* 17) to set him free. While in this position, Niles, one of the collaborators in his undercover activities and which is represented by a crocodile puppet, comes to life and asks his boss whether there is another spat between him and madam. Pa Ubu's reply is that he had a vision where he saw 'the Great Truth approaching, a rope in its hand' and demanding that 'I speak of the truth of our land' (*Ubu,* 17).

Obviously, this is an expression of deep-seated fear about the implications of revealing the truth of the past. The rope referred to is a metaphor for justice or punishment.

During the TRC hearings, many perpetrators of human rights abuse and other atrocities were initially scared or reluctant to go and confess their crimes for fear of the likely revenge their past deeds might attract from their victims, even if the commission grants them amnesty. Almost certainly, those perpetrators who eventually did not attend the hearings to tell the truth of their vile past must have been paralysed by this fear, or felt too ashamed of their past. Niles offers his boss two options as possible ways out of his predicament. The first is to conceal the truth by keeping silent or tell the truth and get past his fears. Nile, however, warns that if he chooses the former but later found out, he should be ready to face the consequences. He also adds that if his boss settles for the latter, he should say the whole truth about his misdeeds because, 'If they should find any dirt under your finger-nails after you have had a complete manicure, they will chop off your hands' (*Ubu,* 17). For Pa Ubu, the past is so horrible and horrendous that telling the total truth would amount to placing his own neck in the noose by himself. It is unthinkable because it is 'a poor tailor who has to make his own suits' (*Ubu,* 17). He settles for silence, believing that if anything goes wrong later, he would rely on his friends in high places. In spite of Niles' preference for the converse, Pa Ubu sticks for silence. From their subsequent exchanges, it becomes clear that fear is the reason for Pa Ubu's reluctance to tell the truth, just as it was for many perpetrators of human rights abuse of apartheid years.

As speculated earlier, Pa Ubu symbolises most of the perpetrators of apartheid atrocities. Until some of the perpetrators realised that they were going to be linked to some dastardly acts in the past by some of those already giving testimony, they never come to voluntarily testify. This is what happened in the case of Gideon Nieuwoudt, a former operative in the Port Elizabeth Security Branch. He was involved in different cases of killing but refused to own up to his crimes. In fact, on one occasion he tries to frustrate his likely implication by a witness when he asked a law court to stop the witness from naming him in her testimony at the TRC Human Rights Violation hearings in East London in 1996. However, when the woman, the mother of Nieuwoudt's victim, got the opportunity to give her testimony, she implicated Nieuwoudt. His name was also linked with other high profile murders like that of

Steve Biko and the Motherwell Bombing. Eventually, he appears before the Human Rights Violation sub-committee and confesses to series of atrocities, some of which he was able to get amnesty on. The Motherwell Bombing however earned him a conviction – a twenty years jail term.

Taking the audience into confidence after he almost betrayed himself to his wife, Pa Ubu expresses his surprise at the TRC proceedings, describing his feelings in the following words: 'We are piously shocked by this confession nonsense. Gallons of blood and then gallons of tears to wash the walls clean' (*Ubu*, 21). This remark, though coming from an unrepentant perpetrator of atrocities, may not be totally dismissible. In a way, it hints at the hypocrisy of some of the amnesty seekers. It also suggests that the means by which amnesty is earned is rather cheap. His disdain for the idea of truth and reconciliation is ironically inscribed in the idea of being 'piously shocked'. How could somebody who had cold-bloodedly killed a lot of people and callously tortured many others claim a sense of shock at revelations of similar acts? Apparently, his sense of outrage during his dastardly and heinous acts was numbed. Truth-telling seems to have awakened it.

Despite his choice of silence, the truth of Pa Ubu's atrocious past continues to haunt him. His memory of the past is laden with regret. He admits that he would have to live with the haunting memory of the people he had killed until he dies. At this epiphany, he feels constrained to confess the truth. To do this, he needs the cooperation of Brutus, the three-headed dog he employs in the dirty aspects of his undercover operations. Each head disapproves of the idea, insists on silence and hopes that with time everything will be forgotten. Failing to persuade them to his side, Pa Ubu consents to their view because the 'Archbishop's plan may promise rainbows, but for us its heavy weather' (*Ubu*, 61). With this apparent understanding, Pa Ubu stealthily opens Brutus's, the three headed dog's suitcase belly and fills it with evidence documents while it is asleep. Metaphorically speaking, he has thereby muzzled the source of evidence against him, because, according to him, 'Our acts of violence are too awful for us to declare' (*Ubu*, 61).

After this, we have a trial and sentencing of Brutus in a court of law. Delivering his judgment, the judge declares that the head of political affairs is exonerated and to

retire with full benefits because he could not have foreseen how his vision would be implemented. The military head is 'sentenced to thirty years in the leadership of the new state army' because there is no evidence to link him directly to the atrocities. As for the dog, 'who allowed himself to become the agent of these ghostly deeds: you have been identified by the families of victims; you have left traces of your activities everywhere. We thus sentence you to two hundred and twelve years imprisonment' (*Ubu*, 63). Obviously, these sentences are meant to mock a penal system skewed in favour of the privileged. Two heads of the dog react disapprovingly to the judgment. They plead for amnesty and demand to appear before the Truth Commission because they 'have other stories to tell!' (*Ubu,* 63). Realising that if the dogs' request is granted he would be implicated, Pa Ubu kills them.

There are several implications to all of these. Firstly, the act of betrayal which characterised undercover activities of security operatives during the apartheid era is depicted as very much obtained in the survival struggle of early post-apartheid era, especially in the face of desperate efforts to come clean of possible indictments. Secondly, since material and human evidences that could expose Ubu's past are already destroyed, of what significance would his later confession be? It would be nothing more than another round of half-truth-telling. Thirdly, the verdict of the judge demonstrates the inequity and injustice of the post-apartheid penal system. Perhaps, Ubu's earlier theory about connections to people in high places is all that is needed to get justice subverted. In fact, when his wife threatens that she knows enough about his past to nail him, he brazenly responds: 'Not as much as you might think, Ma, it's a question of who you know, not just of who we knew. We've washed our hands so clean, they are almost spotless' (*Ubu,* 69). On the other hand, it may well be a reflection of the universal tendency to use the lowly-placed in the society as pawns in the power game of the privileged and the powerful. Indeed, the dogs' belated demand to appear at the Truth Commission to tell other stories is a signifier of loss of confidence and feeling of betrayal in the post-apartheid judicial system. Consequently, it would seem better to have a commission like the TRC where blames are not apportioned and no sentencing takes place.

Eventually, Pa Ubu decides to give his testimony at the Truth Commission. He steps on to the podium and speaks:

> I stand before you with neither shame nor arrogance. I am not a monster. I am an honest citizen, and would never break the law. Like all of you, I eat, and sleep, and dream dreams. These vile stories, they sicken me. When I am told of what happened here, I cannot believe it. These things, they were done by those above me; below me; those beside me. I too have been betrayed! I knew nothing (*Ubu*, 67).

In this testimony, Ubu neither owns up nor links self with any untoward act. In actual fact, he lives up to his earlier plan to 'blame all on politics and beguile the Commission' (*Ubu*, 57). While he tries to beguile the commission here, it is in the following speech that he passes the buck on politics. He declares:

> I love my family. But their future was being stolen from them. Our destiny used to be in our own hands. Then the international conspiracies against us cut off our arms. Where could we go, we other Africans? ...
> But how is an army to survive if it will not reward in public what it knows is done in secret? I tell you, I served in bloody…I served in bloody… I served in bloody good units. And I'm proud to have served with them…THIS IS MY COUNTRY. And I won't give it away without a damn good fight (*Ubu*, 69).

Certainly, these eloquent excuses do not justify the kind of barbarism we see in the testimonies of the victims. This offers little or no surprise because we have already been intimated of Ubu's plan to distort facts. This distortion appears to be the playwright's way of drawing attention to the unreliability of some of the evidences given at the TRC hearings, especially those of the perpetrators of evil. Obviously, nothing new is offered in Ubu's story. It's a known fact that the military and other security agencies of apartheid government were brutal and bloody in their operations. It is no secret that there were international arms and other embargoes on the country at some points in the history of the apartheid regime. Throughout his testimony,, there is nothing specific to personally implicate him in many of the atrocities for which the apartheid government in the country was notorious.

However, as noted earlier, the memory of the truth he refuses to disclose still haunts him. In a moment of unusual candour, he concedes: 'There's only one thing I will

have to live with until the day I die – it's the corpses that I will have to drag with me to my grave, of the people I have killed. Remorse, I can assure you, a lot, a hell of lot (*Ubu*, 69). This honest view reflects the general admission of guilt by the liberal white folk, either directly or vicariously, following the shocking revelations at the TRC hearings. Indeed, some of the revelations demonstrate the inhumanity and bestiality man is capable of. Ubu's sense of regret can be further gleaned from the hymn with which he rounds off his testimony, viz.:

> How dark is my day at noon, oh God,
> How unjust the sins that I bear
> despite all the dangerous paths that I trod
> To save my own people despair
>
> O the blood,
> O the blood of the lamb sets me free
> send a flood, send a flood
> Send your blood like a flood over me
> (*Ubu*, 69).

While this hymn recognises the excesses of the apartheid security operatives, exemplified in Ubu, as crimes against humanity and sins against God, it also invokes the spirit of forgiveness. This recognition of the need for forgiveness therefore establishes the dialectical relationship between truth and reconciliation. When the truth is confessed, genuine forgiveness is made easy, and reconciliation is engendered. Similarly, when there is genuine gesture towards reconciliation, truth–telling is encouraged.

Another issue which bears significant relationship to the authenticity of the truth in witnesses' accounts in the play and, by extension, at the TRC hearings is the destruction of evidence before an appearance is made before the Commission. As soon as Ubu becomes aware of a likely inquiry or revelations about the past, he is overwhelmed by apprehension. In an effort to pre-empt his exposure and indictment, he chooses to destroy all evidences that could link him with political crimes and human rights abuse of the past. Some of these evidences on paper and in film reels are destroyed by Ubu when he forces them down Nile's throat. This is metaphorically captured in the following words:

A bit of skull shattered in pieces
A pair of hands torn off at the wrists
Some poisoned scalps shorn of their fleeces,
Some half-burned skin injected with cysts.

…A piece of tongue that would not be silent,
A beaten back that ignored the ache,
A hand up-raised in gesture defiant,
A blood-red heart that would not break
(*Ubu*, 33-35).

These are what Niles describes as 'unsavoury' memories of the years gone by. It is much after the destruction of these kinds of evidence and the murder of Brutus that Ubu is able to develop the courage to appear before the Commission. This depiction appears to be Taylor's speculation about some of the amnesty seekers at the TRC. With the obliteration of material and human evidence, a perpetrator of atrocities is better placed to argue his application. By implication, some undeserving applicants actually got amnesty. However, the playwright stages a covert deal against this kind of people. Most of the material evidence Ubu believes are already destroyed have actually been taken by his wife who intends to keep and use them as leverage 'once her charms begin to fade' or 'to secure my old age' (*Ubu*, 45). This means that as long as such perpetrators and untruthful witnesses like Ubu are alive, for so long shall the ghost of their past, dog their steps, whether they are aware or unaware of it.

In the last scene of the play, we see Ubu and his wife, Ma Ubu, sailing off in a boat. They are later joined by Niles. The coming of Niles reminds Ma Ubu of her old friends, whom she is going to miss. However, she thinks that there is 'enough of the past. What we need is a fresh start' (*Ubu,* 71-75). Niles and Ubu also concur. This observation recalls, again, the view in some quarters that remembering the past would not help the reconciliation efforts. Those who share this view argue that continual reference to memories of pain, injustice and brutalities would only keep refreshing the wounds, thereby frustrating the healing process. As they sail on, one of the animated puppet characters in the play, the Vulture Puppet on a stick, flaps his wings, squawks, and the following text appears on the screen: 'My slice of old cheese and your loaf of fresh bread will make a tolerable meal' (*Ubu*,73). This text speaks to the future of South Africa, suggesting that the coming together of erstwhile adversaries could only be gainful now. This is the principle which informs the country's sobriquet-*the*

Rainbow Nation. The diversity in colour, language, culture and so on becomes a source of strength and an expression of beauty. It is also one of the ideas preached by the TRC.

The title of John Kani's play, *Nothing But the Truth,* easily invokes the idea of witnessing. However, it does not parade witnesses as seen in Taylor's *Ubu and the Truth Commission.* While Taylor's play directly engages the TRC project through expressive but creative appropriation of its materials, *Nothing But the Truth* cultivates only a tangential relation to the project. It seems to centralise the subject of sibling rivalry between two brothers. These brothers, Sipho and Themba, endowed with different personality traits, inhabit different social worlds. Sipho, the elder of the two, is the responsible, serious, diligent but taciturn, unrecognised and uncelebrated one. On the other hand, Themba is the carefree, bold, besotted, admired and celebrated one, and with a great gift of the gab. While Sipho was denied the opportunity of university education by his parents due to lack of funds, the father cashed in his life insurance policy to raise money for Themba's university education, supported by part of Sipho's earnings as a clerk. Sipho also supported the family with his income while Themba, after graduation, remained jobless. In his jobless status, he joined and remained active in the liberation movements; even while in exile he remained active in the liberation activities. Because of his liberation activism, especially his oratory skill, he became widely known, admired and highly sung. Consequently, rivalry, motivated by jealousy on the part of the older brother, subsists between the two. It is not the rivalry which however tore the brothers apart, but betrayal by Sipho's wife and Themba, his brother. Themba got involved in a sexual relationship with his brother's wife and was caught in the act and he had to run away from home.

This exploration of sibling rivalry and betrayal in the play is adroitly linked with the political project of TRC in the country. The subtlety with which the story of these brothers is meshed with the TRC hearings taking place at the time of Mandisa's arrival with the ashes of her father, Themba, from London is quite interesting and signifies artistic ingenuity. It further inscribes the dawning of a new era in South African theatre, where the private sphere becomes the template for exploring public discourse. Upon this realisation, one could argue that the play is no more personal than political.

In its political reading, the play becomes a site for a critical examination of the issues of memory, truth and reconciliation with which South Africans as a people grapple.

Thando, the only daughter of Sipho and who still lives with her father, works as a translator and interpreter at the TRC hearings. Consequently, conversations bordering on the activities of the commission and issues raised at the hearings regularly take place between the two. In one of such conversations, Thando informs her father about the monotony of her job, and especially about the numb feelings she has developed toward the otherwise outrageous revelations at the hearings. In agreement, the father points out that that is the reason for his decision to stop attending the hearings. But while Thando takes consolation in the fact that the 'truth does come out, and at least the families get to know what happened', his father disagrees, noting that they only get to know 'Their version' (*Nothing*, 6) of what happened This position of the father therefore raises some questions about the authenticity and reliability of the truth purveyed at the TRC hearings.

As seen in Taylor's *Ubu and the Truth Commission*, Sipho's observation lends weight to the view that much of the truth presented at the TRC hearings consists of half and partial truths, when not outright lies. As is the case in Taylor's play, amnesty seekers, like policemen, former soldiers and security operatives are implicated in this perjury. Later on, Thando too would corroborate the hoax, called truth-telling, by many an amnesty seeker. When the father raises the case of the Cradock Four, seeking to know whether those involved in their murder would get amnesty, Thando replies, saying only the judge could decide that.

The Cradock case has to do with the murder of four former United Democratic Front (UDF) activists, Mathew Goniwe, Fort Calata, Sparrow Mkhonto and Sicelo Mhlauli. They were killed while on a journey between Cradock and Port Elizabeth in 1985. During the TRC hearings, seven policemen admitted to being responsible for their death and applied for amnesty on the ground that they were trying to quell disturbances in the Eastern Cape. While government ministers at the time said that the act was not officially sanctioned, subsequent findings reveal that at a state security meeting held shortly before the death of the four UDF activists, a request to have Goniwe and Calata, two of the four, killed was made and noted in the minutes of that

meeting. A copy of the signal message authorizing their death warrant was also sent anonymously to the Transkei's Minister of Defence, Major General Holomisa who, in turn, sent the document to Transkei's Director of Military intelligence.

With documented evidence like this produced, the lie is put to the murderers' claim. This is probably what Thando recalls when she notes that 'One gets confused sometimes. Especially when so many lies are told. One loses perspective' (*Nothing*, 7). Not only does this confirm Sipho's distrust in the truth-telling exercise at the TRC hearings, it also espouses similar sub-texts in the other plays under study. However, this does not imply that every witness's account or every amnesty applicant's story is untrue or only partially true. Certainly, there must have been others who told the truth, at least as far as their memories could honestly serve them.

Mandisa, the daughter of Themba who comes from London with the remains of her father, also engages Thando over some of the fall-outs at the TRC hearings. One of her passionate concerns also borders on the question of truth or half-truth. She expresses strong doubt about the claim of Craig Williamson, an amnesty applicant who admitted to killing his wife, another woman and a child on the grounds that they were planning to topple the then racist government of South Africa. Mandisa is puzzled by this claim, wondering how two women and a child could be capable of overthrowing the powerful apartheid government of South Africa. She equally doubts whether Williamson had actually killed no more than these three people, given the fact that he is described as South Africa's super spy and secret agent abroad with a license to kill. In her judgement, Mandisa thinks Williamson shouldn't be walking free. He is a murderer, not an ordinary political criminal. When Thando points out that he is a free man because he has met the requirements for amnesty, Mandisa uses the opportunity to argue her view about the partiality of the truth confessed at the hearings. She asserts that Williamson 'told us nothing new except that he sent the parcel bombs. Who gave the order? Do we know that? Does that make him innocent?' (*Nothing*, 29).

The above assertion and questions are again used to show the fact that there is economy of truth in some of the applicants' confessions. Mandisa's observations, as shall be seen later, quiz the logic of the Judge's verdict in Taylor's *Ubu and the Truth*

Commission where political heads are exonerated and military heads have their services extended as a form of punishment while a field agent is punished by imprisonment because he is the one directly linked to the atrocities perpetrated. In other words, Mandisa, apparently echoing the voice of the playwright, argues that amnesty seekers tell half-truths in order to shield their powerful superiors. Unfortunately, there is nothing to signify whether this practice is informed by choice on the part of the amnesty applicants or by threats from the powerful figures behind their atrocious acts.

Mandisa is also outraged at the idea of amnesty for those who had committed blatantly wicked acts. She feels that the requirements for amnesty set out by the TRC are rather too cheap. She also thinks that the guilty should be made to atone for their crimes in some ways. Before going to the TRC hearings with Thando, she was warned that it's not easy to sit through the horror and gory details of what people were made to suffer during apartheid era but Mandisa declares herself a 'tough cookie' (*Nothing,* 22) capable of withstanding whatever it is. By the time she left the hearing, she had become visibly disturbed, and so moody that she would not utter a word on the journey back home.

As she tries to find escape in alcohol on getting home, Thando comments on her disturbing mood. It is eventually revealed that she is dissatisfied and unhappy at what she witnessed at the hearing. She snaps at Thando: 'That's all there is to it? No more. We can all go home. All is forgiven. Somebody died for God's sake. Somebody is guilty' (*Nothing*, 27) As Thando tries to explicate the rationale behind the TRC approach and principles, Mandisa snaps again: 'Then make me understand. Pretend I am an idiot. Explain it to me. A man sends a parcel bomb to two women and a child. It blows their guts out and he is not guilty of any crime' (*Nothing,* 27). Once again, Thando attempts an explanation but Mandisa swears : 'Damn you, Thando. This man murdered Ruth First in cold blood' (*Nothing*, 28).

We have quoted Mandisa's reactions above extensively in order to demonstrate the depth and intensity of her indignation and objection to the terms of amnesty by which the TRC operates. It is ironic to note that Mandisa whose mother once worked for Amnesty International at its Lagos, Nigeria's Office, is the one who now vehemently opposes the granting of amnesty to political criminals. By virtue of her background,

one would have expected her to have some ideas about political crimes and amnesty. Apparently, this seems not to be the case. On the other hand, it may well be that her reaction is informed by the illogicality of claims and motivations advanced by perpetrators of atrocities for their crimes. Indeed, many observers of the proceedings at the TRC hearings were similarly offended and outraged by some of the revelations at the commission's hearings.

Despite the hue and cry exemplified by Mandisa's reaction, the TRC's strategic approach to forging national unity and reconciliation, as enunciated in its mandate, is vigorously and persuasively argued by Thando. She informs Mandisa that South Africans had a choice. They could have settled for revenge or opted for Nuremberg-style trials. The Nuremberg Trials took place in the post 2nd- World War Germany to deal with those who violated human rights abuse and perpetrated other kinds of political crimes under the Nazi regime, as well as to prosecute the leaders of the Third Reich. Instead of these other choices, South Africa settled for forgiving the past, Thando argues.

With regards to the Nuremberg Trials, Sereny Gitta (1995) has observed that it was possible for the Allied Powers to prosecute and convict some of the Nazi leaders because of the balance of power. Since the Nazis were militarily defeated, the power lever fell in the hands of the Allied who then determined how things went.Placing this side by side with the South African experience of power shift, one can argue that the ANC-led new government which set up the TRC did so because it lacked the might to prosecute the powerful figures in the former white racist government who still had considerable clout in the security and military apparatus of the country. In fact, the interim Constitution which ushered in former President Nelson Mandela's government was negotiated between the last apartheid government led by Frederick de Klerk and the liberation movements. One of the significant features of the constitution is the 'postamble' clause which stipulates that

> …gross violations of human rights, the transgression of humanitarian principles in violent conflicts and the legacy of hatred, fear, guilt and revenge…can now be addressed on the basis that there is a need for understanding but not vengeance, a need for reparation but not for retaliation….

> In order to advance such reconciliation and reconstruction, amnesty shall be granted….
>
> 'Postamble', *The Constitution of RSA.*

In other words, the outgoing racist government had used his position of might to arm-twist the potential leaders of the incoming government into a deal which guarantees them, as perpetrators of human rights abuse, protection from prosecution. This speculation is lent additional weight by the fact that the liberation movements were initially reluctant to accepting the idea of amnesty. Its inclusion in the Constitution was not until after the first draft, which explains its 'postamble' status. In a nutshell, Thando's argument to the effect that the TRC's modus operandi is a matter of choice is, in actual fact, a Hobson's choice.

In continuation of her argument against the TRC, Mandisa alleges that the new black leaders sold out in the name of reconciliation because they 'were dying for international approval' (*Nothing*, 28). She wonders whether someone had warned them that the people might want revenge. In a counter argument, Thando speaks for the people and the new leaders of the country:

> We have a country to rebuild. A nation to take care of. An economy to grow, jobs to create, houses to build, clinics, hospitals, schools and our lives. Where would revenge get us except more violence? Besides we did not want to give those bastards the honour of taking up arms against us in their defence and call it a legitimate struggle. There was one struggle, the struggle for liberation, our struggle (*Nothing*, 28).

Obviously, Mandisa is still speaking from the position of indignation and disbelief about the enormity of evil man is capable of. Her vicarious urge for revenge is however excessive, making her appear no better than those she thinks deserve crucifixion. Thando's insightful and pragmatic defence, on the other hand, demonstrates her deep appreciation and understanding of what South Africa needs and doesn't need is her post-apartheid era. Her view also illustrates a position of ethical and moral superiority.

Thando sees her cousin's position as typical of that of outsiders who lack a proper understanding of the complex and peculiar situation of the South African people, especially that of the marginalised majority. She also accuses her cousin of selective anger and imbalanced assessment of the TRC process. She reminds her that the policemen who killed the Pebco 3 were refused amnesty; that Derby-Lewis and Janus Walus were in jail for the assassination of Chris Hani. In other words, she argues that not every perpetrator of atrocity was granted amnesty. She goes down the memory lane to intimate Mandisa of some of the harrowing experiences her people had had to wade through and, in spite of which they are still able to forgive and reconcile with their former tormentors. She speaks:

> We, who stayed here. We who witnessed first hand the police brutality. We who every Saturday buried hundreds of our young brothers and sisters shot by the police, dying in detention, dying because of orchestrated black on black violence, accept the TRC process. You have no right to question that. Mandela spent 27 years in prison. Is he asking for someone to be sent to Robben Island to spend years there as a payback? If all those who suffered can forgive, then so can you. If our president can ask us to work for a better life for all of our people, so can you (*Nothing*, 29-30).

In addition to recalling memories of pain, Thando challenges Mandisa to get over her bitterness and forgive. She adds that the freedom and democracy, which South Africans now enjoy, were made possible through the collaboration of all, black, white and coloured. Rather than do this, Mandisa dismisses her cousin's disposition and talk as the kind of attitude her father always talked about, "The generosity of the African people", which she considers as 'giving in too easily' (*Nothing*, 30). Given all the explications and persuasions form Thando, we can see that Mandisa remains obstinate. This obstinacy, rather than give us the impression that she deeply identifies with the suffering pains of the victims of apartheid brutality or the impression that she is justice-conscious, we are left with the view that she is an idealist. Thando's invocation of the role of all South Africans in the crush of apartheid and that of former President Mandela's statemanly and morally sound espousal of forgiveness and reconciliation is better illustrated with the following excerpt from his address to his compatriots on the assassination of Chris Hani, South African Communist Party leader in 1993:

> Tonight I am reaching out to every single South African, black and white, from the very depths of my being. A white man, full of prejudice and hate, came to our country and committed a deed so foul that our whole nation now teeters on the brink of disaster. A white woman, of Afrikaner origin, risked her life so that we may know, and bring to justice, this assassin. The cold-blooded murder of Chris Hani has sent shock waves throughout the world… Now is the time for all South Africans to stand together against those who, from any quarter, wish to destroy what Chris Hani gave his life for- freedom for us all (par. 1).

This statemanly and exemplary speech was made even before Mr. Mandela became his country's president. It underscores Thando's view that South African democracy was not won by blacks only. Indeed, it also captures the spirit of *ubuntu* which, according to Archbishop Tutu, underpins the TRC project. Ubuntu, as explained by Tutu, is an African philosophy which is predicated on the principle of mutual responsibility. ''It also means that my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in theirs…We say, a person is a person through other people'… I am human because I belong, I participate. I share'' (Tutu, 1999: 34).

In the playwright's use of the private sphere as template for the exploration of public and political issues, he uses Sipho's memory of his brother, Themba. After losing the post of the Chief Librarian of the Port Elizabeth Public Library to one of the young and recently returned exiles, Sipho becomes disillusioned with the new order he helped to install. The loss reminds him of how others have always taken away what belongs to him. The memory of how his younger brother, Themba, had always taken from him floods back. This is made more painful by Mandisa's suggestion to have Thando come with her to Johannesburg and possibly to London to spend a few weeks. This possible loss of Thando's company grieves Sipho acutely. He laments that even in death Themba is still taking from him. This prompts a query from Mandisa, wanting to know what the repeated reference to 'taking' is all about. Sipho is thus constrained to excavate poignant memories of the past. He recalls the death of his father, the failure of his brother to attend the burial, the usurping role of his brother's comrades in the liberation movements at the burial, his alienation on the occasion, the police disruption of the burial rites by firing teargas at the people and the eventual

interment of the corpse by only him and two others- the officiating priest and the undertaker.

With a tinge of jealousy, he also recalls the role of his brother in the liberation struggle as well as his influence on his own son, Luvuyo. The death of his son in the struggle activities also floods back with pain. These sad reminiscences do not spare the circumstances surrounding the separation between him and his wife, Thando's mother. At this point, Thando becomes interested, demanding to know why her mother left her at a tender age of eighteen months. Mandisa also demands to know what happened between her father and her uncle, Sipho. Mandisa's curiosity is particularly aroused because Sipho has dropped the hint that Themba left the country because of a fight between them. This leads to the revelation of the truths about the past, an invocation of the TRC hearings.

After asking the girls whether they really want to know the truth and they reply in the affirmative, Sipho declares stoically: 'Themba was sleeping with my wife' (*Nothing*, 49). As Mandisa exclaims and registers incredulity, Sipho clarifies his atatement by saying that Mandisa's father, Themba, was sleeping with Thando's mother, his own wife. While Mandisa finds it difficult to accept this truth as she sobs and tries to defend her father, Thando is perplexed. Sipho sits the girls down and provides the details of the incident. Starting, he declares: 'The truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me god' (*Nothing*, 49). He then tells them of how he returned home from work due to a pounding headache on a certain day only to meet his wife and Themba coupling on his matrimonial bed. He had walked away without saying a word but returned never to see them again! We have quoted the manner in which Sipho starts the account of the incident because of its significance. He is talking about a private matter but adopts the formulaic opening used in courts by witnesses, and which was also used at the TRC hearings. Is this meant to ridicule the TRC process or to lend weight to the account he wants to give? He had earlier expressed doubts about the reliability of the truths at the commission's hearings and here is adopting the oath which witnesses and confessors at the hearings usually swear to before telling their stories. As subsequent revelations would attest, the latter seems to be the case.

Following the above sordid revelations, Thando feels simultaneously disappointed and sympathetic with his father. She expected the father to have shared this painful memory with her, but she now pledges to stay with him, rather than follow Mandisa anywhere. On his part, Sipho feels that not telling her was better. By choosing not to tell her daughter the truth of his past, Sipho believes he was protecting her from the pain truth is capable of inflicting sometimes. This agrees with the view of those who argue against the TRC project because they think that it would cause more pain than heal.

The daughter, however, does not realise that her father is trying to protect her as she presses him for more information. Her father's reluctance and Mandisa's discouragement would not deter her until it is further revealed that her mother and her uncle had been in the relationship for three years before being found out. The implication of this is that Uncle Themba could have fathered her. By the time the truth dawns on her, she begs to the contrary: 'Tell me it is not so! I can't take this anymore' (*Nothing*, 51). The father, already in tears, laments that she was the one who insisted on knowing the truth. As she takes her exit, Thando also bursts into tears. In the name of finding out the truth, memories of pain are discharged. This is also probably the reason for Sipho's refusal to attend the TRC hearings or take the case of his murdered son there.

Having come to terms with the possibility of losing Thando, while having already lost the life-time ambition of becoming the Chief Librarian of Port Elizabeth's Public Library, Sipho feels his loss is now complete. In sheer disillusionment, he digs into his memory of the struggle for liberation, recounting his role and suffering:

> I went to the marches like everyone else. I might not have been detained. I might not have been on Robben Island. I did not leave this country, but I suffered too. The thousands that attended those funerals on Saturdays, that was me. The thousands that were tear gassed, sjamboked by the police, mauled by Alsatian dogs, that was me. When Bishop Tutu led thousands through the streets of white Port Elizabeth, that was me. I WAS THOSE THOUSANDS! (*Nothing*, 51-52).

These recollections are borne of frustration, as much as they reflect his anguish. The anguish and frustration in turn seem to ignite a desire for revenge. Apostrophizing, he shouts:

> No! No more! It's pay back time. The taking stops right here and now. I want everything back, Themba. I want my wire double-decker bus now. I want it back…I want my blazer back…I want my wife back…I want my daughter back…The taking must stop. I want my son back. De Klerk must come back from wherever he is. He has to tell me who killed my son and why. I want to know what this government is going to do about it' (*Nothing*, 52).

When his daughter cuts in to say that it is not too late to have the case heard, he replies that he is not talking about the TRC and amnesty hearings. He wants the case investigated, the murderer prosecuted and jailed.

The apparent seriousness of his crave for revenge, however, mutates into a travesty of sort when Sipho begins to make the following demands: the policeman who shot his son must be kept in jail for months, awaiting trial; the judge to handle the case must be black; the policeman's lawyer must try to prove that the killing had political motivation, but fail in the task; the judge must find him guilty of killing Luvuyo out of hatred for blacks and therefore sentence him to imprisonment for a day, a month or years; he must serve the term at St. Alban's prison outside Port Elizabeth; his head must be shaven and he must be stripped naked and searched to ensure that he doesn't hide anything in his arse before being taken into his cell; and he must also be given a prison khaki shirt and shorts, a grey blanket but no shoes. After all these, he must spend a night in his cell in the prison with the knowledge that he is doing so for killing his son. With these demands met, he would not only forgive the killer, he ''will agree that he be given amnesty because 'he has disclosed all'" (*Nothing*, 54). The ridiculousness of these demands and the innuendo inherent in the idea of disclosing all demonstrates Sipho's and, by extension, Kani's lampoon of apartheid's justice and penal system as well as the TRC. This is, however, lost on Thando, as she asks her father whether that would be sufficient to make him happy. Sipho is disappointed. He raves:

> You don't get it, do you? This whole fucking country doesn't get it. It's not about me being happy or not,

> forgiving him or not. It's about justice. That's what it's about. So that my soul can rest. So that I can say to myself 'yes, justice has been done' (*Nothing*, 54).

This text shows that Sipho is more concerned about justice, rather than revenge. All he appears to be interested in is to make the murderer of his son and, by implication, other perpetrators of human rights abuse and other iniquities during apartheid years to acknowledge their misdeeds and demonstrate contrition after going through the conventional process of prosecution. This sentiment aligns with the position of one of the wives of the Cradock Four, Nomonde Calata. In an interview reported in the *Washington Post* by Karin Brulliard (2009; par. 2) Nomonde had intoned: 'If these people get prosecuted and found guilty for what they did… that is the one thing that will set me free'. Most likely, there are numerous other victims who share the same feeling. This seems applicable to Sipho too.

In another comic development, Sipho insists on getting everything that belongs to him back, especially the job of the Chief Librarian of the Port Elizabeth Public Library. He has been denied the job on the ground of age, even though he is the most competent person for the job. He declares: 'I don't care what the department says about my age. If on Monday I am not sitting in the Chief Librarian's office with my name on the door, there will be no office for anyone, and no library for Port Elizabeth' (*Nothing*, 54). He threatens to blow the library up or burn it down. And if arrested, he will prove to them that his crime was politically motivated. Consequently, they would have no choice but grant him amnesty. When his daughter says she will get the police to stop him before he does such a crazy thing, he accuses her of plotting to sell him out. When she tells him that what he wants to do is wrong, Sipho replies that what they did to him was also wrong. Obviously, Sipho is trying to express his displeasure with the injustice of the new democratic order, for which he sacrificed greatly to bring about. Beyond this, however, is the ironic ridicule of the process of reconciliation embarked upon by the TRC. Just like people were burn or blown up by apartheid security agents and later claim political motivations for their crimes in order to get amnesty, so does Sipho argue his case sarcastically.

By the time Sipho is calmed down with effusive expressions of love by Thando and Mandisa, he is again overwhelmed with sad memory of the past, blaming his brother,

Themba, for still making his life a misery, even in death. Mandisa argues to the contrary, assuring her uncle that his father loved him, and that his thoughts before death was always bordering on him. She even suggests that her mother could be called on the phone to testify to her claims. In a sober mood, Sipho says he has 'waited so long to hear that' (*Nothing,* 55). When asked by Thando whether he no longer blames Themba for Luvuyo's death, he confesses that he had always known it was not Themba's fault but had chosen to continue blaming him as a way of coping with the loss. He says he has forgiven Themba for the pains he caused him long ago. In his words directed to Mandisa, he intones: 'All I wanted was for your father to come home, stand in front of me and say 'I am sorry, my brother' (*Nothing*, 56).

It thus appears, from the foregoing, that what Sipho and, by extension, other victims of personal or political injuries probably wants from those who had inflicted physical and psychological injuries or foisted painful memories on them is no more than acknowledgement of the wrong deed and a simple apology. This acknowledgement, in the opinion of Andre du Toit (2000: 135) is the truth which the TRC is supposed to be interested in and establish. For him, the political significance of truth as acknowledgment should be '…precisely that representative of the state and civil society should take public responsibility for the restoration of the human and civic dignity of victims whose suffering at the hands of the State or political agents had so long been denied'. In other words, du Toit sees any denial of victims' experiences not just by lies but even by silence as tantamount to robbing them of their human and civic dignity. In fact, it can also be seen as another infliction of pain on the victims. Certainly, nothing can be more hurtful than to be hurt and have the hurt dismissed as light or unacknowledged by the person responsible.

In his overtures towards reconciliation, Sipho forgives his brother for everything. He also forgives his wife and even blames himself for the affair between his brother and his wife. However, when Thando asks him whether he has forgiven the policeman who shot Luvuyo, Sipho does not answer. This again re-inscribes the need for acknowledgment of guilt before forgiveness can be obtained and reconciliation engendered. In other words, forgiveness has to be earned. In addition to relaying her father's love for Uncle Sipho, Mandisa also apologises on behalf of her father for what he did to her uncle and the family. Another vital thing about the disclosures and

forgiveness is that Sipho eventually dispenses with half-truths about his relationship with his brother by confessing to Mandisa that Themba was indeed a popular and widely admired hero of the struggle and that he was simply jealous of him on that account.

With this humble admission, Mandisa thanks his uncle for the truth. She then goes in to bring a photograph of her father and gives it to her uncle. Shortly after, Sipho also goes into his room, comes out with a photograph of two young boys and gives it to Mandisa. Inscribed on the photo is 'Sipho and Themba, 1954'. Again, Mandisa thamks him and he is embarrassed by her show of affection. Meanwhile, he has given his consent to the girls' planned trip to Johannesburg and seems favourably disposed to that of London. Thus, reconciliation is achieved in the family. By this emplotment, Kani uses the Makhaya family to provide the TRC, especially the perpetrators and victims of human rights abuse at the hearings, a model for true, genuine and lasting reconciliation. As observed by the Chair of the TRC, Archbishop Tutu at the opening of the Human Rights Violation Committee hearings, as well as in his book, *No Future without Forgiveness,* 'Forgiveness will follow confession and healing will happen, and so contribute to national unity and reconciliation' (1999:91).

Reach!, a play by Lara Foot Newton (2009) also engages the issues of memory, truth and reconciliation, also using the private sphere to explore a public discourse. It offers an exploration of the traumatic memory of the death of Jonathan by his mother, Marion Banning and Solomon Xaba, a witness to the murder. It also demonstrates the paradox in the power of truth, highlighting its capacity to cause pain as well as its healing power and capacity to engender reconciliation. Seven years before the present, Jonathan was invited home from school by his mother to be part of a family reunion. During the brief visit, he fell victim of the commonplace gangster violence in the country, South Africa. For seven years, his mother, Marion, has borne this painful memory. The incident has also estranged husband from wife, resulting in their separation. The daughter to whom Marion is addressing the narrative of the play as a letter is also alienated from her mother. Marion lives in her Victorian-style cottage in solitude.

In Marion's solitary existence, Solomon, the grandson of Thozama Sandy, shows up one day announcing his grandmother's instruction to come and look after her. After an initial cold disposition, the two gradually warm up to each other. They talk about different subjects, ranging from the past to the present and even to the future. During one of these talks Solomon abruptly announces that he was there when Jonathan, Marion's son, was killed. Marion is initially nonplussed by this revelation. In his recollection, Solomon goes ahead to give a blow by blow account of how Jonathan was killed by Douglas, Sticks and Arthur. According to him, Jonathan's hands were tied behind his back while he made drowning sounds and urinated in his pants before being finally shot. Before being shot, he had asked Solomon to tell his mother that he was not scared. This is the message Solomon comes to deliver after seven years. For seven years, he has lived with this gnawing memory, unable to summon the necessary courage to deliver the message. He articulates the psychological burden he has had to contend with to Marion in the following words: 'I've been coming here for years watching you - trying to find the right time. Carrying this thing with me. Walking with it. If you do not do this then you can become sick, you can be cursed with bad dreams. I think that's why I got so sick' (*Reach*, 63).

Solomon eventually decided to break the news following the teachings he received at his initiation into adulthood by his community leaders, as well as his cultural consciousness. In his Xhosa culture, the last person to see someone alive is supposed to speak at the funeral about what he saw and heard so that the living can be at peace with the whole story. Part of the teachings he received include the need to face one's responsibilities, instead of shying away from it. While this teaching about facing one's responsibility eloquently demonstrates the vitality of the African cultural heritage, the practice of having the person who was last to see another alive to speak at the latter's funeral signifies the importance attached to truth. Such a speaker is expected to tell what he saw and heard, as they were. As noted earlier, this would give everybody a peace of mind. From Solomon's speech above, we can see that not only did he not enjoy peace of mind for not speaking the truth about Jonathan's death; he actually attributes his ill health to the same reason. Thus, Jonathan's violent death becomes a metaphor for the violence and brutalisation of apartheid years. The repression of its truth caused Solomon's psychical sickness, which is also a metaphor for the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) that became rampant in the years

following the 1994 transition. The need for the revelation of the truth in order to bring about peace of mind and reconciliation is thereby emphasised. These observations form the major parts of the TRC mandate.

Indeed, clinical psychologists have attributed or linked different kinds of bad health conditions to the state of mind of the patient or negative and unpleasant memories. When Marion asks Solomon whether he would no longer have bad dreams now that he has delivered the message, the boy replies in the affirmative. In spite of her initial hurt about the delay of the truth and the message from her son, Marion feels a lot better after the revelation. She is finally about to extend olive branch to her daughter, Ann, who had accused her of choosing 'to stay with a dead son rather than leave (sic) with a healthy daughter and two grandsons' (*Reach,* 65). Indirectly, the knowledge of the truth also facilitates reconciliation between mother and daughter.

The unpleasant memories, which inhabit Solomon's and Marion's brains, indeed speak to the TRC project. The diseased conditions of these protagonist and antagonist in the play become a metaphor for the South African nation before the activities of the TRC. Just like these two characters, other survivors of the brutality of apartheid had lived with poisonous memories before the opportunities for cathartic witnessing, confession and truth-telling were made available through the TRC project. The national psyche which, hitherto, had been contaminated by racial prejudice and rendered steadily diseased over decades is thus provided healing opportunity through truth-telling, reparation and amnesty to the different categories of participants at the TRC hearings.

Although *Reach!* ostensibly speaks to the TRC project, the story is set in the post-apartheid era, specifically in 2009. This may suggest that it is not addressing the injustices and brutality of the Calvinist government of yore. Indeed, the violence, which brought about Jonathan's death, has nothing to do with the apartheid government and its agents. Yet, it is connected to apartheid - its legacy of violence. In an apparent echo of the playwright's voice, Marion laments the prevalence of violence in the country while trying to figure out the reason for her son's murder when she says:

> This country has been breeding murderers for the past century. Isn't that clear? There doesn't need to be a

> reason. Anger, despair! That's the reason! That's the motivation. Isn't it obvious? ... If we can't distribute wealth, then at least we have succeeded in the equal distribution of violence. Does that make sense? Is there any sense in that? I don't know, perhaps there is. Perhaps there is (*Reach,* 62-63).

While violence was extensively and intensively characteristic of apartheid, blacks were predominantly its victims, whites mostly being the perpetrators. During the transition period and immediately after it, blacks became more of perpetrators, visiting violence on fellow blacks and whites. Marion's lamentation above must therefore be seen as an articulation of the frustrations of the white populace about the direction of things in the new South Africa. Jonathan, the victim of the senseless post-apartheid violence is a white boy. Although there is nothing concrete to identify his murderers as white or black, the witness to the crime and current confessor is a black boy. As far as it goes, he was also an accomplice in the murder crime. With this scenario, the playwright presents us with a reversal of the dominant experience at the TRC hearings whereby most of the victims were black while perpetrators were white. Through this emplotment, Newton seems to argue that truth and reconciliation must not be undermined or dichotomised along racial lines. Thus, the view that a particular race is the victim and the other is the perpetrator is challenged. The playwright's second and even more significant argument is to the effect that truth and reconciliation is not a finite matter; rather, it is a continuous process. As long as injustice is part and parcel of everyday life in the country, people from the different divides must continue their quest for truth and genuine reconciliation. In fact, Timothy Murithi (2006:27) has described the reconciliation in the country as 'fragile'.

Besides the painful memories of the murder of Jonathan, there are also the haunting memories of the consequences of the murder on the family. Following the death of Jonathan, mother and father are estranged from each other. Apparently before the death of the boy, the mother had pulled him away from his father and doted on him. The only thing the father and his son ever did together was playing chess. After his death, the father would sit staring at the chessboard and cry. This would only annoy the mother. Eventually, barely a year after the murder incident, both parted ways. Memories of how things deteriorated so badly between the two, and her management of it, continue to haunt Marion.

In her lengthy and unending letter to her daughter, Anne, Marion regrets this past deeply. On one occasion, she asks Anne: 'Do you think I might have been nicer to your father? I sometimes imagine that things could have been better, perhaps if I had…reached out a little…' (*Reach*, 36). On another occasion, she wonders: 'Perhaps if I had given Jonathan and dad more space your father would not have felt so isolated- you never know, he might even have been able to be a bit stronger, to hold me a little. Sometimes isolation is not only about geography' (*Reach*, 42). This repeated use of 'if' clearly underscores her acute sense of regret. She later rounds off her lamentation by blaming the failure of her marriage on mutual inability to reach out to each other between her and her husband, Frank. All these expressions of regrets, lamentations and other incidental pieces of information can actually be interpreted as Marion's confession. She is actually telling her daughter the truth of her infelicitous past. By implication, she is also trying to attract the sympathy of her daughter, as well as her forgiveness. In closing the letter, she pleads: 'Anne dear, I wish we could put our differences aside now' (*Reach*, 65).

Hitherto, the death of Jonathan and the mother's morbid obsession with the pain of it as her personal pain has also drawn a wedge between mother and daughter. Hence, we can see that the latter part of her epistle to Anne is an attempt at reconciliation. In a way, the playwright uses this to advance the theory that truth, forgiveness and reconciliation are not virtues required in interracial relations or public domains only. They are also crucial in the peace and harmonious relation at the family level.

Another perspective to the issue of truth-telling in the play is the impact of truth on memory. Much of the truth revealed at the TRC hearings is unpleasant both to the victims and the witnessing audience. In fact, the pain of the truth or its capacity to inflict injury on an otherwise healthy but indifferent others made some people to elect the bliss of ignorance. They refused to be either active or passive participants in the TRC project, even though there are good reasons for them to be involved. For some, it would amount to refreshing or bruising a wound that is already half-healed. This is the case with Marion. By the time Solomon confesses his privy to the murder of Jonathan and shows a willingness to cooperate with the police in order to bring the two surviving of the three murderers to book, Marion would have none of that. In her

view, reopening the case because she has stumbled on the truth would only bring back painful memories and give sensational and overzealous journalists a scoop to feed on. Perhaps, sensing the discomfort of Marion about the truth he has revealed, Solomon apologises and points out that he did not want to make her 'heart sore again' (*Reach,* 64).

The same thing is illustrated when Marion claims that Jonathan told her that there was no need for her to revisit the issue of his being left behind at a science museum by his teacher during an excursion. While in Grade Two, Jonathan had been mistakenly left behind at a science museum visited by his class in company of their teacher. His mother, Marion, had had to search for him and eventually found him at the museum. She had also talked down on the teacher on the phone. The next day, at school, she assaulted the teacher and talked down on her again. Jonathan was unhappy about the scene his mum had created and wondered: 'Mom, why are you still angry? I have almost forgotten about it' (*Reach,* 65). The foregoing scenarios argue for the wisdom of letting bygones be bygones, a view which some South Africans, mostly whites, believe is necessary as a condition for lasting reconciliation. As observed earlier, another school of thought, dominated mostly by blacks, argues to the contrary, insisting that remembering the past is a non-negotiable antidote to a repeat of the ugly past.

Although not much of this is depicted in the play, Marion also talks of her good memories of the country. When Solomon exhorts her to go and stay with her daughter in Australia due to the growing insecurity in the country, she despises and rejects the idea, noting that it would mean that her life had been worthless. She then adds, 'At least here I have my memories. Jolly good ones…My life has been full here. Painful but full! ...I have seen this country through good and bad and good and bad. I was even a little involved in the struggle. Not bravely so, but involved' (*Reach,* 40). Some of her good memories include occasional loving moments with her husband, her idolised son, adventure in anti-apartheid activities and her secret smoking escapades with Thozama, Solomon's grandmother. These recollections demonstrate the fact that in spite of the violence, gloom and seeming prescience of apocalypse which characterised the socio-political landscape of the last years of apartheid, some oases of goodness still existed.

Two minor confrontations take place between Marion and Solomon in the play. The first occurs when Solomon takes Jonathan's shirt from one of the boxes in the garage and wears it. Marion verbally attacks him and he is shaken. The second occasion is after Solomon confesses his knowledge about the murder of Jonathan and the identity of the perpetrators. Marion remonstrates with him for not coming out at the time with the information to nail the murderers. However, on both occasions, it takes her little or no time to forgive and get reconciled with the boy. In the spirit of reconciliation, Solomon returns in a little over two weeks with a television set to keep the company of the elderly Marion and to watch the 2010 Soccer World Cup together in her apartment. In the post-apartheid era, nothing has brought greater sense of unity and togetherness to South Africans than sport. In 1995, South Africa hosted and won the World Rugby Cup for the first time. When the Captain of the country's team was commenting on their success, he attributed it to the strong and fabulous support given to the team by the over sixty-thousand South African spectators at the stadium. The then South African President Mandela also sported the Captain's Jersey number at the opening ceremony of the game. Rugby in South Africa is almost exclusively associated with the white folk, especially Afrikaners.

During the 2010 Soccer World Cup too, hosted by South Africa, the bond of togetherness and oneness was further strengthened, as every national, black, white and coloured proudly sported the national colours and blow away at their *vuvuselas* – the country's gift to the soccer world. Thus, the temporal setting of the play in the year of the greatest feeling of solidarity and brotherhood in the country is also significant. Apparently, Solomon's idea of bringing a television set to Marion so that they could watch soccer together is the playwright's way of exploiting a unifying factor to preach her message of reconciliation.

The reconciliation between Marion and Solomon takes on quite a poignant yet affectionate tone when, at the end of the play, Marion asks the boy: 'Solomon, my boy, do you have to continually use that old subservient term, Mies Marion? It's what your grandmother called me' (*Reach*, 67). In his response, Solomon declares: 'Mies is not always a subservient term, Mies Marion. Mies can also be a term of…of care. Of caring'. (*Reach,* 67). By her speech above, Marion is suggesting that a racist term of

address, which undermines the dignity of the subjugated, like 'Mies', should be done away with. In other words, she admits the equality of races. Ironically, however, she had used the subservient term 'My boy' to refer to Solomon earlier in the play, and the boy had accused her of racism. Then, she had explained the use in the following terms: 'Oh, for fuck's sake! 'My boy' is not only a racist term. 'My boy' can just as well be a term of endearment…Of care. Of caring'. (*Reach,* 41). Indeed, in numerous instances in the play, she also refers to her own son, Jonathan, as 'My boy'. Solomon also admits that his grandmother called him *Nyana wam*, 'My boy', when she was alive.

At the end of each of the above occasions, both show understanding with each other and expresses excitement at the incipience of care from an otherwise adversarial other. This clearly shows the depth and genuineness of the reconciliation between the two and, by implication, between their respective races. However, if this is not yet the case in reality, Newton is perhaps advocating it. In addition, the use of the terms 'Mies ' and 'My boy' illustrates the idea that language is arbitrary and that meaning is a function of social construct.

This bonding witnessed between Marion and Solomon at the end of the play virtually crystallises into something like mother-son relationship. This is unlike what happens between Patricia and Look Smart in *Dream of the Dog* where Smart is actually treated as a son by Patricia before he left the farm. When they resolve their differences, their relationship is presented as that of equals, the age gap notwithstanding. In Newton's *Reach!*, however, the equality seems undermined by this mother-son picture. This is disquieting because if we see Marion and Solomon as representative characters, then blacks are, again, unwittingly placed at a disadvantaged position. Thus, the white is the matured, the experienced, the wise and the guardian, while the black is the young, the inexperienced, the one to be guided and, perhaps, the one to be used as a pillar of support only in times of need.

The last play for examination is Farber's *Molora*, which is adapted from one of the Greek classical plays, the *Oresteia,* by Aeschylus. The trilogy centres on the curse placed on the House of Atreus, the violence and cycles of revenge into which the family is sucked and the eventual stoppage of vengeance as a means of settling scores by the elders of Athens under the guidance of the Greek goddess of reason and

protection, Athena. For killing their daughter, Iphigenia, as a sacrifice, Clytemnestra plots and kills her husband, King Agamemnon, on his return from the Trojan War. To avenge the death of his father, Orestes kills his mother, Clytemnestra. For this crime, the Furies, goddesses of Revenge and Remorse, pursue Orestes in order to kill him in turn as punishment. This is the point at which Athena intervenes, constitutes a jury of elders who listens to both sides and eventually tempers justice with mercy as Orestes is acquited. In a nutshell, the personalised and vindictive approach to getting justice by the principle of 'an eye for an eye' paves the way for a jury system whereby mercy is privileged over harshness.

For a period of nearly five decades, South Africans of different racial groups were also sucked into a spiral of violence and vengeful disposition to settling differences. In the last decade of the forty-six years during which apartheid lasted, incidence of violence and reprisal attacks increased geometrically as the oppressed majority intensified its armed struggle and guerilla activities while the minority white government met 'fire for fire'. When both sides realised the futility and retrogressive consequences of their subtle and open confrontations, they opted for peaceful negotiations. After a period of four years, the negotiations culminated in the first democratic elections of 1994 and a peaceful transfer of power from one erstwhile foe to the other. Despite this peaceful shift, which was widely regarded as 'miraculous', apprehensions still hung in the air about the possibility of implosion. It was feared that with power in the hands of the hitherto oppressed and brutalised group, reprisals and revenge might took over the land. Indeed, this was a pervasive and genuine fear. Fortunately, the setting up of the TRC to manage the challenge of dealing with the pains of past injustices, brutalities and injuries by the new government came to the rescue. Through this play, the author of *Molora* partakes in what is generally believed to be South Africa's continuous search for ways of dealing with the past. It is a materialisation of her deep desire to explore 'the cycle of violence and the dilemma of survivors who have to choose between the impulse to avenge and the impulse to forgive' (*Molora,* 10). Aeschylus' *Oresteia* provides the appropriate template for the exploration. In the play, Elektra and Klytemnestra replace Electra and Clytemnesrta in Aeschylus's *Oresteia*.

Executed after the fashion of the TRC hearings, the play begins with Klytemnestra's testimony of truth about the murder of her husband. She takes a position behind a

table at one end of the stage, reminiscent of the TRC hearings' setting, and provides a blow by blow account of how she struck Agamemnon down with axe three times and dispatched him to the world beyond. She however rationalises her action as borne of justice. At the opposite side behind the other witness table is Elektra who has been listening to her mother's confession. In her perplexity, she wonders which of her mother's long list of evils she could begin or end with. She merely ends up pointing out that her mother's deeds have poisoned and terrorised her, and that she deserves to be paid back only 'with blood for blood' (*Molora,* 24). Like most of the witnesses at the TRC hearings, Elektra is cast as a relative of a victim. Often at the TRC, most of the victims belong to the class of people who can neither speak English nor Afrikaans. As such, their testimonies are translated by the TRC-employed translators. In the play, Elektra's initial lines and most of the subsequent ones are rendered in one of the native African languages and later translated into English. On the other hand, Klytemenestra speaks English all through. By this linguistic strategy, Farber tries to situate the play in the context of real TRC processes.

After the foregoing testimonies, much of the rest of the play re-enacts memories of the tragic past. Klytemnestra acts out the murder of Agamemnon while Elektra screams in pain upon the discovery of the death of her father. The next section, sub-titled EXILED, depicts Elektra's recall of how she saved her brother, Orestes, from becoming another victim of murder in the family. She reminisces:

> It is seventeen years since she hacked my
> father like a tree with an axe
> HACKED HIS HEAD IN TWO WITH AN
> AXE – AND SPLIT HIS BRAINS INTO
> THE SOIL]…
> I saw her and Ayesthus -her lover- dance
> in his blood that night.
> I tried to help him - but I was only a child
> …. I stole my little brother Orestes from his
> bed that night (*Molora,* 28)

Elektra not only implicates Ayesthus, her mother's lover, as accomplice in the murder of Agamemnon, she also recalls her ineffectual effort to save her father. The torture she suffered in her mother's hands in the intervening seventeen years is also recalled.

Her stoic endurance of the pain of the torture invokes the revelations about experiences of torture and its different methods at the TRC hearings. Methods like that of wetbag, electronic torture and others were illustrated by perpetrators at the TRC Human Rights Violation sub-committee hearings.

In her next round of testimony, Klytemenestra poses a number of questions and equally proffers answers as follows:

> What is guilt?
> What is memory?
> What is pain?
> Things that wake me in the night…
> By day I stand by what I have done
> But at night I dream-
> and dreams don't lie (*Molora*, 32).

These questions and answers are expressions of the psychological trauma she has had to battle with, especially at night when every soul is at rest. While she has the capacity to brazenly live with the memory of her criminal act during the day, she is usually overwhelmed by pain and guilty conscience at night. According to her, not only did Agamemnon kill their mutual daughter as a sacrifice, he had also killed her former husband, as well as a child by that man, before taking her for a wife. With these unjust and vile acts, it seems logical and perhaps fair to punish such a cruel man in kind. Unfortunately, the killing of Agamemnon in revenge does not remove the bitterness in Klytemnestra's life. She also lacks peace of the mind. Transposing this on the South African historical experience, Farber simply demonstrates the futility of revenge, Yet, she recognises the dilemma in which the victims of brutality are placed. This, she captures in the anguished reflection of Elektra:

> The years pass-
> and the grass grows over the grave of a
> loved one. They told me I was caught in
> grief. People said I must just move on.
> But how? How could I forget?
> How can we move on until the debt is paid?
> (*Molora*, 33-34)

Klytemnestra and Elektra also invoke the debate over truth's subjectivity. Elektra asks, 'Mama, if I speak gently-can I say my truth?'(*Molora,* 39). By the time she is done with her request, her truth includes the idea that the evil her mother perpetratesd were not to avenge the death of any daughter but for selfish adulterous reasons. For the mother, however, revenge 'is and will always be men's only truth' (*Molora,* 42). This divergence of opinion with regard to what constitutes truth recalls Amanda Fisher's (2008) and Greg Homann's (2009) contention about the nature of truth. It is subjective and experiential.

Elektra's second testimony laments the pain of memory as well as comments on the inclination of some people to bury the past as if it never happened. It further invokes revelations about the novel and deadly methods of torture described at the TRC hearings. Below is part of the testimony:

> Years passed between us
> Mother and daughter,
> But I was not permitted at the table
> …No-one ever talks about the night you
> spilled my father's blood.
> It is as though the past never happened.
> But a daughter remembers
> …. Everyday you tried to break my strength.
> Everyday you tried to destroy my spirit
> …. Please demonstrate for this commission
> how you tried to get information out of
> me as to my brother's whereabouts'
> (*Molora,* 43-44).

In addition to the earlier observations above, this testimony also alludes to the plight of the victimised blacks during the apartheid years. Like Elektra here, they were denied the dignity of man and despoiled of their rights in their own land. As noted about *Nothing But the Truth* and *Dream of the Dog,* the propriety or otherwise of forgetting the past as a catalyst for genuine reconciliation is, again, raised here. Farber also appears to be of the view that the past needs not only be remembered, but also talked about. In an interview with Fisher (2008: 24) she expresses a profound belief in speaking as a means of healing. She thinks that 'Until you've told your story - even if you intellectually understand you have been wronged-the memories may remain a source of secrecy, pain or shame' (*Molora,* 24). Consequently, if victims are asked to

forget their past or desist from talking about it, it's like punishing them again, causing them more pain by not acknowledging the previous one. Considering the way the conflict in the play is finally resolved, it would seem that Farber's panacea to injuries of the past is forgiveness, talking about or remembering the injuries notwithstanding. She exhorts: 'All who pay attention to this house of/trouble hear these words./Carve them on your heart that we may/never forget (*Molora*, 57).

The importance and moral superiority of forgiveness and reconciliation over revenge is extensively explored in the play. Time and again, Elektra talks about revenge. She sees revenge as justice and as a means of obtaining freedom from the bondage and subjection into which her mother and step-father put her. Even when Klytemnestra who, from hindsight, knows the pain and the haunting guilt of taking another's life, counsels against killing as revenge, Elektra insists on it. Even when Orestes decides to back out of killing their mother, she again insists that 'There can be no forgiveness!' (*Molora*, 76) and tries to kill the mother by herself alone. The Chorus however intervenes, overpowers her and restrains her from killing Klytemnestra. She and Orestes finally embrace and the cycle of revenge is broken. The Diviner among the women of the Chorus, apparently speaking for the playwright, steps forward and prays for reconciliation and 'UNITY BETWEEN BLACK AND WHITE as well as the grace to enable them 'SPEAK THE TRUTH' (*Molora*, 78).

In a nutshell, Farber deplores the idea of revenge as a reaction to injustice. In addition, she endorses and commends the embrace of forgiveness and reconciliation among her compatriots. The contextualisation of perpetrator and victim experiences in the play within the same family is the playwright's metaphorical presentation of the South African nation as one family. Since membership of a particular family is not informed by voluntary choice of its members, the argument seems to be that South Africans must learn to live together, as a family, in peace, unity and love, regardless of whatever differences they may have.

4.3 Aesthetics

A consideration of the formal aspects of the plays also reveals an interesting, novel and creative deployment of dramaturgy. Besides their peculiar stylistic qualities, the

plays generally abandon the agit-prop tendencies of the plays of apartheid years, where protest against the socio-political injustice is privileged over aesthetics and entertainment. In one or two of the plays where there appears to be strong political or ideological underpinnings, the playwrights still plot their stories in such a way that the interaction between character offers a dialogic perspective to the issues.

In a rather novel offering, Foot Newton executes her story using quasi-epistolary form in the dramatic encounter between Marion and Solomon. The dramatic actions in the play are interspersed with fractions of a rather long letter from Marion to her daughter, Ann, who lives in Australia. It begins with the conventional salutation of endearment, 'My darling Anne' and apologies for failure to have written much earlier. After providing brief information about home, Solomon's arrival disrupts Marion's writing process and the dramatic confrontation ensues. The dramatic exchanges between Marion and Solomon are, after each of the pauses in the letter writing processes, commented upon or rehashed in the letter by Marion for the benefit of her daughter. In the reconciliation sub-theme of the play, the letter becomes the apt instrument for its realisation, to a reasonable extent. The information about the murder of Jonathan provided by Solomon relieves him and, more significantly, relieves Marion of the anguished memory of that tragic incident which, in turn, makes it easier for her to extend the olive branch to Ann in the conclusion of the letter. It is assumed that with its apologetic tone, Ann would not find it difficult to understand and forgive her mother. In short, the appropriation of a form conventionally associated with prose-fiction provides the needed link between mother and daughter to achieve reconciliation. It also inscribes the experimenting spirit in the new South African writings.

As a play, the story of *Reach!* is supposed to be dominated by dialogue and action. Indeed, dialogue predominates. However, action is lacking. Rather than have action to drive the story and provide excitement, the play is inundated with narrations in form of anecdotes. Most of the anecdotes are related by Marion. For instance, there is the story about Jonathan's abandonment at the science museum and the spat with his teacher. Another is the one about her husband's incredibly long fart at the hospital he was taken to on an occasion of emergency. We also have some from Solomon. He narrates how his grandmother caught, cooked, ate two mooses and escaped arrest by policemen

at the Oxtin village. Another one from him recalls his encounter with a certain white mlungu woman who wanted to buy 'Hollandaise sauce' and chickens at his former place of work. These anecdotes are, for the most part, diversionary and make the play somewhat drab and passive. Nevertheless, some of them engender humour. Perhaps, its overall lack of excitement derives from the seriousness of its subject. Yet, it lacks the emotionally gripping stuff of which serious plays are made. Unfortunately, rather than enrich the play, this prosaic use of anecdotes in the story weakens its pace and vitality.

The play also makes use of symbolism, which impacts greatly on the trope of memory in the story. While Solomon is trying to help Marion paint her living room, he has to remove the pictures hung on the wall. When he gets to that of Jonathan, she insists that the photograph be left where it is. Marion gets all sentimental as the picture of the poor boy brings back memories of him. Jonathan's shirt also evokes similar emotion and recollection when Solomon comes out of the garage where garden equipment is kept wearing Jonathan's yellow shirt. Initially seized by anger, Marion later goes soft and tender, quietly lamenting '…oh my god, it's nearly seven years. Seven years without my boy…' (*Reach*, 55). As Solomon apologises and offers to leave, she implores him to stay and have the shirt, and also confesses: 'Of course you can wear it. I just…I just got a fright. For an instant I saw Jonathan… I bought him this shirt for his graduation. I remember it well' (*Reach*, 56). With Marion's emotive expression, the memory of the boy's brutal murder also floods back to Solomon's consciousness and he begins to cry. Though for different reasons, both appear to be re-mourning the dead Jonathan. Losing themselves in a mournful tenderness, Solomon leans his head against Marion's shoulder while she puts an arm round him for comfort as he continues to sob. She also rocks him forth and back. All these are provoked by the symbolic implications of the yellow shirt.

In terms of setting and characterization, *Reach!* exhibits loyalty to the old practice of using minimal number of characters and restricted or minimal locale prevalent in the plays of apartheid years. The characters are only two. The spatial setting is confined to the 'kitchen/lounge area of a Victorian-style cottage somewhere near Port Alfred, Eastern Cape' (*Reach*, 32). These features are shared by Higginson's *Dream of the Dog*, which parades only four characters and has the physical setting confined to the

'sitting room of a farmhouse in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands (*Dream* , 142). In addition, it also makes use of unity of time as all the events in the play happen in a day. In the details of the immediate physical setting of the play, the playwright describes the room as having 'faded Persian rugs' as well as animals' skins 'scattered over the floor' (*Dream,* 142). The walls are also said to have 'cloudy damp stains' (*Dream,* 142). These descriptions appear allegorical of the kind of memory and the nature of truth we encounter in the play. We witness instances of faded memory and tainted truths. These descriptions therefore signify a site of unreliability and contestations.

Higginson also makes deliberate use of ambiguity in his play. During one of the conversations between Patricia and Look Smart about the past, Smart's artistic talent comes up for discussion and Patricia points out that he had 'something magical' (*Dream,* 153) in his touch. Smart appears unconvinced but does not talk. But as Patricia goes ahead to draw his attention to the falling darkness and expresses the hope that her husband would soon be back, Smart says he 'wouldn't count on that' (*Dream,* 153). The question is, what would he not count on? Is it the claim that he had a magical touch when it comes to arts or the speculation that Patricia's husband would soon be back? His apparent lack of conviction about the claim of his magical touch may well be referring to what he would not count on. This is particularly so because he had earlier dismissed what Patricia calls arts as far from being arts. On the other hand, he may be suggesting that Patricia's husband will not make it back home. This is because Patricia has earlier noted that their neighbourhood is insecure and that Priscilla Johnson, one of their neighbours 'was murdered only last week' (*Dream,* 152).

Similarly, ambiguity is noted during Patricia's interrogation of Beauty about the truth of Grace's death and the role of her husband in it. After implicating Patricia's husband in her account, Beauty asks the lady of the house, Patricia, whether she still wants him. The question is: Does she want him just back into the house or want him back as her husband, despite his vile deeds of the past? This is unclear. The ambiguity is further complicated and made to have bearing on the earlier instance when Patricia suddenly turns attention to Smart and asks, 'What have you done to him? Hmm?' (*Dream,* 163). Apparently, Patricia's apprehension of the situation is

that something bad has been done to her husband, especially in the light of Smart's earlier seemingly veiled warning not to expect his return soon. These ambiguities create suspense in the play and aesthetically enrich it. In addition to other artistic devices in the play, they indeed demonstrate the conscious attention to form which some of the post-apartheid South African plays parade.

In the singular instance of humour in the play, a sarcastic anecdote is related at the expense of Smart, the symbol of upwardly mobile *nouveau rich* blacks in the post-apartheid South Africa. Smart is at the farmhouse to excavate the memories of ill-treatment, abuse and indignity he and other blacks, especially Grace, who was murdered in cold blood, suffered in the hands of this white family. His intention for doing this is primarily to make them acknowledge their wrong deeds and then apologise. At the secondary level, he is intent on showing that in spite of the ill-treatments and indignities visited on him in the past, he has amounted to success. Realising that Smart is around to seek confession and apology, Richard tells a story of an imaginary Uncle Pete who confesses his crime of raping Richard's daughter to him on his death bed. Having accepted the confession and forgiving his uncle, Richard also confesses that he was the one who poisoned him. By this cruel joke, Richard suggests that neither of the sides, the whites or the blacks, owes the other apology and forgiveness for the evils of apartheid.

Another aspect of form, which is of great significance in the play, is the use of present tense in relating past experiences. In Smart's account of the death of Grace, he uses the present tense. Here is one of several examples:

> Suddenly Grace is a double Creature. Half woman, half dog. She utters a sound so terrible I don't even recognize it as her, as coming from her. But it brings a dozen farm workers into the garden within seconds. We gather around, worshippers around some ancient sacrifice, silent with terror. Whenever I try to approach, the dog swivels around so that Grace stands between us. And Grace, she is wailing in a strange, song-like way' (*Dream,*158).

On the other hand, when Patricia recalls the same incident, she uses the past tense. For instance, in response to Smart's account above, she notes: 'I didn't hear that. I

was getting the gun. I tried to get a clear shot. Didn't you hear the shot I fired into the air? (*Dream,* 158). This difference in the choice of tenses is used by the playwright to show the attitudes and effects of the incident on these people. For Smart, the event is as fresh and painful as it was fifteen years earlier when it happened. This explains why, despite the time lapse, he still feels obligated to revisit the issue. On the other hand, the incident ended for Patricia fifteen years ago when it actually happened for it causes her neither pain nor regret. By extension, the playwright illustrates the attitudes of victims and perpetrators to the same issue of oppression and brutality and the bases for these attitudes.

Unlike the foregoing, two other plays in this study owe one thing or the other to some precursor texts. *Ubu and the Truth Commission* was not only inspired but borrowed a number of elements from the classic French play, *Ubu Roi* by Alfred Jarry. Jarry's play is a satire on power, greed and the proclivity of the bourgeois of his time to abuse their privileged position. Farber's *Molora* is an adaptation of Aeschylus's *Oresteia,a* trilogy dealing with revenge and justice. Each of these plays offers a fascinating amalgam of aesthetic elements balanced by deft handling.

As a burlesque, which finds inspiration in the farcical world of *Ubu Roi*, *Ubu and the Truth Commission* largely attempts a ludicrous treatment of an otherwise serious matter, using dramatic confrontations in the Ubu family. In the first and second scenes of the play, a puppet which is near the centre stage is making a pot of soup. As Pa Ubu strides in, he kicks the soup-maker and does not register any feeling of wrong doing. However, when his wife enters, he pretends as if he has stubbed his injured foot on a stone and exclaims: 'Pschitt!!' (*Ubu,* 1). His wife reprimands him for using such a nasty word and, soon, they begin a dance-like chase, snarl at each other and eventually begin a fight-dance. Pa Ubu would later attribute the cause of his injury to the inability of his wife to tidy up the house while he is away attending to the affairs of the State. Ma Ubu, the wife, would rather he worried about the state of his own affairs. Much later, we would realise that the puppet making a pot of soup actually represents victims of apartheid brutality and inhumanity while Pa Ubu represents the perpetrators. It is issues of unjust and brutal treatments like this, which constitutes object of serious enquiry by the TRC that the playwright uses Pa Ubu and his wife to trivialise.

Travesty is made of truth in particular in Act 2, Scene 2, which is captioned as 'The Light of Truth' (*Ubu,* 15). Pa Ubu cowers under a large chair in an effort to escape the taunts of a radio, which keeps transmogrifying into a cat. When his wife enters, he switches on the light and announces that she can see her husband's rump sticking out under the chair. This discovery, which signifies the revelation of truth, becomes again subject of trivialities between wife and husband. Pa Ubu tells his wife that it is rats that are under the chair but the wife says the rat 'has only two legs!' (*Ubu,* 15). When the wife sits on the chair, Pa Ubu accuses her of trying to suffocate him with stench from her backside. Their innuendoes about the dawned truth continue.

As briefly noted above, puppets are used in the play in place of human characters. These puppets act the roles of the witnesses testifying before the Truth Commission, either as victims or as perpetrators. While the use of puppetry can be seen as an index of artistic ingenuity and innovation in the new South African theatre, it is actually motivated by ethical consideration. According to William Kentridge in his 'Director's Note' on the play, there was an awkwardness in using real actors to play the witnesses because the play makes use of others' stories as 'raw fodder" (*Ubu,* xi). Using a real actor would therefore not only raise ethical questions of responsibility to those whose stories are being used but also place the audience in the dilemma of whether 'to believe in the actor for the sake of the story' or 'not believe in the actor for the sake of the actual witness who existed out there but was not an actor' (*Ubu,* xi). In spite of this honest admission, one can still give the credit for the use of puppetry in the play to an imagination that is both fertile and sensitive. Besides human puppetry, the play also makes use of non-human puppets. We have a crocodile made out Ma Ubu's handbag. We have a vulture puppet who acts as a single chorus. Finally, we have the three-headed dog which invokes *Ubu Roi's* Palconcents, agents of diabolical activities. In this play, they are Pa Ubu's collaborators in his brutal and deadly undercover activities. The role of the crocodile is to assist in destroying evidence capable of linking Pa Ubu to his dastardly past.

Closely related to the use of puppetry is the use of non-naturalistic elements in the play. There is the use of a projection screen, which bears animated sequences as backdrops to ensuing events in the play. Some of these include the Ubu mannekin, an

all-seeing eye, the Chorus lines and selected pictorial images. Certainly, all these serve to reinforce stage actions. However, they also undermine the naturalness associated with drama meant for performance. We seem to end up having a technologised theatre.

There is symbolism in the characterization strategy employed in the play. The puppet witnesses who testify as victims or relatives of victims are presented as blacks for they speak in one of the local South African languages or the other and have their speeches translated into English. The only perpetrator's testimony in the play is given by Pa Ubu who, on the occasion, speaks in Afrikaans. This distribution of role, using racial stereotypes, illustrates the widely held assumption about the oppressed and oppressor relation in South Africa. To be certain, there must have been cases, no matter how few, where the extensively oppressed blacks are also guilty of human rights abuse or other kinds of atrocities. This is unrepresented in the play, and therefore questions the balance in the six black victims versus one white perpetrator ratio configured into the play.

The playwright's exploitation of the resources of language in *Ubu and the truth commisssion* is particularly remarkable. From aphorisms, play on words, poetic expressions, code-switching, vernacular to profanities, the play offers, in the context of South African playwriting, un unusual linguistic and aesthetic variety. The intermittent chorus from the Vulture Puppet comes in form of aphorisms. Some of these include: 'After the third fire on the roof, keep a bucket on the stairs' (*Ubu,* 5); More killers than saints have dined with princes' (*Ubu,* 19); 'It is enough for the zebra to know about grass' (*Ubu,* 35); 'High tide may vary, but low tide finds its mark' (*Ubu,* 59) and so on.

Instances of punny and witty use of words also abound in the play. When Pa Ubu tells his wife that he has spent all day attending to the affairs of State, she retorts, 'You shouldn't worry about the affairs of state, but the state of your affairs!' (*Ubu,* 3). In another instance, Pa Ubu and Niles have the following exchange:

NILES: I'd advise you, speak before you are spoken to

PA UBU: Never! A man is a man of honour, or a man is not a man.
NILES: A man is a not a man when his necktie is made of rope (*Ubu*, 19)

With the three-headed dog as Chorus, Pa Ubu breaks into a song, part of which is as follows:

PA UBU: We'll avoid the pious call, as we've put Tu and Tu together
CHORUS: Tu Tu Tu tu
PA UBU: The Archbishop's plans may promise rainbows but for us it's heavy weather
CHORUS: Tu Tu Tu Tu (*Ubu*, 61)

This play on words is intended to provoke humour in the play and it does accordingly. Another aspect of language in the play is poetic choice and arrangement of words. Songs in the play are rendered poetically as the following few lines demonstrate:

Not any old dog is a man's friend
who'd service and obey as I intend
To get what I need
I selectively breed
'Till his parts make the whole in a singular blend (*Ubu*, 7).

Vernacular and code-switching are also put to use in the play. In an imaginary conversation with one of his superiors, Pa Ubu shifts between Afrikaans and English, viz.: 'Hello ja, General. Nee, sekernie. Alles is in order. Presies, ja. Ja General. Over and out' (*Ubu*, 9). In another conversation between Pa Ubu and Ma Ubu, following an attempt by the latter to expose the former publicly, they respectively use Afrikaans and Xhosa languages in their verbal confrontation. This appears motivated by the need to exclude the listening public from the couple's domestic spat and reasons for it. As for the code-switching by Pa Ubu, privacy might also be the motivation. However, the polyglossic reality of postcolonial societies cannot be ruled out. The need to translate the seven witnesses' testimonies from their languages into English for the benefit of many and for documentation purposes strongly supports this line of thought.

Another aspect of language which patently borrows from Jarry's *Ubu Roi* is the use of profanities. The play is saturated with swear words like 'Shitter Bugger', 'Shittabursh', 'Buggershit', 'Pfarrt', 'Pshitt', 'Pschitt' and so on, with most of them coming from Pa Ubu. The use of these words inexorably generates scatological images in the play. In Jarry's play not only are similar words commonplace, characters also bear such names as 'Pissweet', 'Pissale' and the likes.

Like the Greek play from which it is adapted, *Molora i*s aesthetically and significantly enriched by the role of Chorus. In the play, the Chorus even performs greater roles than we have in Aeschylus's *Oresteia.* In addition to their commentary role, the Chorus performs a number of roles specifically assigned to them individually. In the TRC hearings in which the writer attempts to situate the play, there are two categories of audience: the members of the commission, who listen to the witnesses' stories, document them and use them to take necessary political decisions with regard to the Commission's terms of reference. There are also the members of the public who attend as second order witness or voyeurs in the painful stories of others.

In *Morlora*, the Chorus fully assumes the first role and partakes in the second one. They also intersperse the play with (Umngqokolo) split–tone singing of traditional Xhosa women. Sometimes, one or two members of the group actively assume character role in the play. For instance, one of them acts the role of Ma Nosomething, the woman who takes the young Orestes away to exile to raise. Two of them also act as attendant midwives to Klytemnestra when giving birth to a snake. The women of the Chorus are also responsible for physically restraining Elektra from killing her mother, and appear to be spiritually responsible for discouraging Orestes from the same act. While Orestes contemplates how to execute his plan, the Chorus lift the table on which Klytemnestra sits and raise her aloft in a gesture that gives her away as a 'sacrificial lamb' or 'drunken Queen in her chariot' (*Molora*, 61).

As hinted earlier, the play is suffused with songs. These songs are sung or performed by the Chorus as a group. Occasionally, one or two members of the group simply play musical organs like *isitolo-tolo* (Jew's Harp), *Uhadi* (calabash Bow), *Umasengwana* (Milking/friction Drum), *igubu* (traditional drum) or *umrubhe* (mouth Bow) and so on as musical backdrop to the unfolding events. The songs and, especially, the solo play

of a musical organ provide a tense, sombre and tragic atmosphere, which pervades the story. The only exceptional instance is when Orestes returns from the initiation rites in the mountains and does the 'Dance of the Bull'. On this occasion, they ululate, sing rapturously, encircle him and break into stick fighting. Indeed, this is the only event in the play that is not characterised by a tragic atmosphere. Generally, these musicals enrich the story.

Like in Taylor's *Ubu and the Truth Commisssion,* the characterisation strategy, in depicting the perpetrators and victims of oppression and injustice, accounts for the racial distribution seen at the TRC hearings. At the hearings, the perpetrators are mostly whites while the victims are mostly blacks. In *Molora*, Klytemnestra is a white lady while Elektra is a black girl. We are not told of Orestes' pigmentation but we can safely assume that he is also black like his sister, especially given his initiation experience in the mountains. This representation is clearly unfaithful to the ancient Greek trilogy. However, as an adaptation, the new story is free to appropriate and discard elements of the original it finds useful and irrelevant respectively. It is free to preserve, revise or even subvert the original story. This is what the playwright has fully taken advantage of. Obviously, Farber is more interested in the message the resolution of *Oresteia* offers than any other aspect of the play. In her view, to which we totally subscribe, what South Africans need at the historical moment in question is forgiveness and reconciliation. Vengeance would only continue to breed endless cycle of violence.

Similarly, translation of speeches made in the local African language, Xhosa, into English is characteristic of the play. As seen at the TRC hearings, the victims are the witnesses whose speeches have to be translated. In *Molora*, it is usually the speeches of Elektra. She either speaks in Xhosa or has her speech translated or she mixes or switches between the two codes. The perpetrator, Klytemnestra, speaks English, the white language, always except her first speech which is translated from English by the Translator into Xhosa. Although the subsequent ones are not translated into Xhosa or any other African language, the first one is of symbolic significance. Since the playwright actually set out to use English to writer her play, it would become absurd to have speeches made in English translated into other tongues. By this, the English language, like Afrikaans in *Ubu and the Truth Commission,* is re-inscribed as language

of oppression. As the colonial overlords privileged it over the local languages in their days, so is it still placed above them in the post-colonial or post-independence era.

In its formal enrichment, the play also makes use of allusion, biblical allusions to be specific. Klytemnestra subjects Elektra to torture, pushing her face into bathing water with a view to getting information about the whereabouts of Orestes. Elektra endures the torture in a way that recalls the resilience and courage of political activists of apartheid years. Realizing that Elektra is unprepared to give in, she invokes the Biblical curse of Ham on her daughter. Many white racists around the world use this Biblical reference as the ground for the subjugation or enslavement of black Africans, and same reason to keep them under subjugation. This is the main reason the Calvinists in South Africa adduced to justify apartheid. Apparently, Klytemenstra is using the same reason to abuse and deny the black Elektra her rights. Starting with the story of how Ham saw the nakedness of his drunken father and informs his brethren, Klytemnastra grabs her daughter's hand and continues:

> Cursed be your children.
> The servants of servants shall they be unto their brethren.
> The seed of your hewers of wood
> For the Lord thy God is a jealous God
> And your dark descendant shall live in slavery…All the days of their lives
> (*Molora*, 31).

Although the validity of this scripture (Genesis 9:20-27) as referring to black Africans has been challenged, it still forms the basis of many white racists attitude to blacks. In his work, as in the Bible, Goldenberg (2003) observes that Noah, the patriarch and father of Shem, Ham and Japhet, actually cursed Canaan, not Ham. If Noah cursed Canaan out of the four children of Ham, then not all Ham's children are curse-bearers. Logically therefore, if black Africans are children of Ham, then certainly not all of them are curse-bearers. Consequently, any argument condemning every African to slavery or as curse-bearer does not hold water.

Molora's stage setting and plot structure invoke the Greek *agon*, a kind of debate or challenge, as well as the TRC hearings where witnesses are often paired as victim and perpetrator. Klytemnestra is at one witness table overlooking the other witness table

where Elektra is positioned, with each giving her testimony. The venue is also a bare hall, reminiscent of the simple venues where the TRC hearings were conducted while the South Africa's TRC activities lasted. This binary structure underscores the divergence of perspectives, which the protagonist and the antagonist bring to bear on the same subject. Klytemnestra finds it necessary to murder Agamemnon but her daughter faults and condemns it. The daughter would later on advance argument in favour of vengeance but the mother advises to the contrary when she tells her daughter, 'Do not choose to be me' (*Molora*, 77). The structure also affords the audience the uncomplicated task of juxtaposing the two sides and drawing inferences or making judgment as the case may be. In other words, it makes comparison of perspectives easier.

In the classical Greek tragedy, the plot of plays often relies on errors of judgment and irony for dramatic impact. This is another of the stylistic devices appropriated by Farber from *Oresteia* to great effect. Ola Rotimi does the same thing in his adaptation of Sophocle's *Oedipus Rex*, and these devices contribute in no small measure to the success of his play, *The god's Are Not Blame.* In *Molora*, dramatic irony is well deployed by Farber. After Orestes's presentation of the ash of the supposedly dead Orestes, Klytemnestra exults at the news, declaring that: 'the stock of our ancient/masters is perished, root and branch. And/the ancient bloodline is blotted out' (*Molora*, 49). She goes further to address Orestes that 'It must be strange for me not to grieve/the death of my only son. But he, who sprang from my own life, has been the/terror of my dreams (*Molora*, 50). She expresses this excitement and relief in the belief that Orestes is actually dead, not realizing that he is the one right in front of her. The audience is, of course, aware of this and pities her. A similar situation plays out when she tells Orestes that for seventeen years he has not seen her son and will never see him again. Elektra too feels hopeless with the news of Orestes death whereas her hope has actually arrived and alive. These incidents of dramatic irony heighten the audience's curiosity and interest as well as contribute to the built up of tension in the play.

In literary adaptations, the writer of the new work usually reworks the content and, or aspects of form of the original work to suit his or her own creative impulse. Farber goes beyond this in her play. She does not only appropriate texts verbatim from her

source of adaptation, she does same from other precursor works. Numerous texts are lifted from *Oresteia.* Similarly, she lifts directly from related works from other Greek playwrights. The opening lines by Klytemnestra are taken from *Agamemnon,* the first play of the trilogy: 'A great ox/As they say-/stands on my tongue (*Molora,* 22). Some of the other examples from the trilogy include the following from *The Libation Bearers: '*The brooding fury finally comes-/leading a child inside the house/to cleanse the stains of blood from long/ago' (*Molora,* 47). 'My plan is simple/I am expected at our mother's *table*/after dark. Though she know me as a/stranger-we will eat as a family tonight' (*Molora,* 60). While these are verbatim imports from the original text there are several other adapted or rehashed speeches from the original play. Equally, there are adapted and verbatim import of text from Sophocle's *Electra,* Euripide's *Electra* and William Shakspeare's *The Merchant of Venice.* The following examples are taken from Sophocle's *Electra* and Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* respectively to illustrate:

> Indeed you have my leave
> and if you always addressed me in such a
> gentle time, you would be heard without pain
> (*Molora,* 39-40)

> if you prick us-do we not bleed?
> If you tickle us-do we not laugh?
> If you poison us-do we not die?
> And if you wrong us…
> Shall we not revenge? (*Molora,* 66).

Certainly, the playwright's wholesale lift of texts from these other sources is not for want of ideas or expressions, it is a deliberate stylistic strategy. The choice of this style demonstrates the intertextual paradigm of the new writings. The appropriated texts also point to the fact that contemporary issues and challenges are not really new, they have always been with man. This incorporation of verbatim texts also bears witness to the resourcefulness of the playwright as much as it inscribes the tendency for intertextual experimentation with form in the post-apartheid South African writing.

4.4 Conclusion

In the previous chapter, we conclude by commenting on the influence of freedom on the post-apartheid fiction. Clearly, the discussion so far in this chapter has no bearing

in that direction. On the contrary, it focuses on the challenge posed by freedom. The erstwhile socially and psychically divided people of South Africa are now equally free. With memories of the ugly past haunting their consciousness, how is reconciliation going to be forged between the erstwhile adversaries? By keeping silent over the past, by recalling or talking about the past, by telling the truth of the past, by forgetting the past, by forgiving the past or by doing some or all of these? These are the issues explored in the foregoing analyses. With reference to some of the questions raised in the introductory chapter of the study, the plays examined here reflect not only some of the challenges faced by South Africans following the transition to multi-racial democracy in 1994, they also show how writers are creatively illuminating and refracting the changing realities of their society. The plays particularly offer disquisitions on the need and strategies for achieving enduring reconciliation among the different racial groups following the political death of apartheid in 1994. One is particularly impressed by the creative adaptations of classical plays by two of the women writers studied here.

CHAPTER FIVE

Realities of Disillusionment

5.1 Introduction

As we have noted earlier in the study, the transition to multiracial democracy in South Africa was, at the cultural front, accompanied by innocent concerns and even apprehensions about the likely direction of post-apartheid writing. Earlier on, we have also noted that Bernth Lindfors is credited with the speculation that post-apartheid literature would soon appropriate the garb of disillusionment with which early post-Independence African writings from sub-Sahara up north was identified (Abubakar, 1999). Lindfors's insightful and foresighted speculation has, in the light of emergent writings from the country, become prophetic. Indeed, disillusionment has become a dominant theme in the literary enterprise of the post-apartheid era. Nowhere else has this preoccupation been given so much attention in the new writing as in the genre of poetry.

Shortly before the enthronement of multiracial democracy in the couuntry, great expectations had justifiably been built by the socially, politically and economically deprived. When the dream of bliss would therefore refuse to manifest, feelings of betrayal, indignation and disillusion welled up. These feelings, apparently bottled up initially, would later erupt with a volcanic temper, as will be seen in the poetry of the new era presently. To be certain, poetry lends itself more powerfully to emotional expressions than the other genres of literature. It is, therefore, little surprising that the genre is mostly employed in engaging the subject of disillusion, a subject that can hardly be divorced of emotion.

This section of the study examines how South African post-apartheid writers appropriate the amenability of poetry to express what William Wordsworth describes as 'powerful feelings' to register their disappointments and frustrations with the new realities in their country.

5.2 Critical Analyses of Selected Texts

As it is often the case in all societies where liberty and equality are denied people for years, expectations were high following the collapse of apartheid in 1994. Dreams and visions bordering on the utopia became popular not only among the black folk, but across all classes of the hitherto disadvantaged. In his aptly titled poem, 'Simple !!!!!! Visions,' Sandile Dikeni captures the general mood as he projects a vision of a society where:

> the streets shall change
> from alleys of danger
> to valleys of peace
> from masters of malice
> to prophets of justice
> (*New Century*, 376)

In these simple lines, Dikeni captures the basic evils on which apartheid thrived, that is violence, insecurity, fear, hatred and injustice. The choice of the word 'shall' underscores the confidence of the poet in the conviction that a better future is assured. To also show that the benefits of the new order will not be exclusionary, the poet writes:

> whites shall not be drowned
> nor will they be tanned
> or banned
> only humanised
> (*New Century*, 377)

.

In several other instances in the poem, the poet envisions national renewal, even in the lives of animals. All these are used to reinforce the security of the optimism generated in the wake of apartheid's demise. To be certain, this is a legitimate expectation. What the people, however, seemed unexpecting are some of the challenges and, sometimes, both witting and unwitting betrayals of hope. With the euphoria of liberation having settled, a new reality dawns. In the literary circle, the consequence of this is the emergence of the poetry of disillusionment.

The theme of disillusionment, as gleaned from different collections and anthologies of post-apartheid South Africa poetry, recalls the post-Independence experience of

several West African countries, which is particularly depicted in the works of prominent writers from that region, especially Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ayi Kwei Armah and Sembene Ousmane. Arising from the socio-political realities depicted in such works, Ravenscroft (1973) describes them as writings of post-Independence disillusionment. Expounding on this view further, Ime Ikiddeh (1986:37) argues that the disillusionment syndrome 'caries with it disappointment in unfulfilled hopes, leading to mixed reactions of frustration, anger, cynicism, even self-contempt.' Writing about the West African novel, Jude Agho (1995) also opines that 'The post-colonial literature of Africa is replete with the seeds of disillusion, dissociation and alienation (24). To say that all these apply to post-apartheid South African literature finds validity in its poetry, as we shall demonstrate presently. Like the way the West African novel has been deployed to expose the neo-colonial proclivities, excesses and ineptitude of the emergent leaders of post-independence West Africa, and the betrayal experienced thereby, some South African writings today also interrogate the socio-economic, moral and political realities of their society vis-à-vis pre-liberation expectations.

Ostensibly piqued and frustrated by the goings-on in his new South Africa, the poet, Vonani Bila, asks time and again: 'Comrades, Don't we Delude Ourselves?' This question, posed in his poem of that title, adumbrates the falsity of the hope hitherto kept by the people. Rhetorical, the tone of the question is also sneering. Indeed, the poem reveals instances of dashed hopes, aborted dreams and revolting realities. Obviously incensed by the continued enjoyment of social privileges by apartheid patrons and apologists at the expense of the disadvantaged black majority, the poet attempts to provoke the consciousness of the people to the new reality. Rather than have a redistribution of wealth to fairly benefit the victims of apartheid, the poet observes that the converse is the case. He writes of the Calvinists:

> Volkstaters, volkstaters, crying skulls of Orania out their lungs
> The country's mines, Conglomerate and farms they control,
> Then with bellies, drinking wine,
> Eating boerewors in bosberaad
> (*It All Begins*, 202)

These lines show that the white minority are still in control of the economic power at the expense of the black majority. Thus, the economic prosperity looked forward to as

a corollary to political emancipation has become a mirage. The non-white majority are, therefore, still trapped in their woes. By an eclectic use of tropes, the poet captures the destitution of the non-whites, viz.:

> Poverty grinds the poor in the bundus of Elim,
> Bare-skinned children have nothing on their mouths,
> Victims always get a raw deal in this world,
> Fat cheques, perks and sex is for leaders -
> Them and their first world comfort in third world Africa –
>
> (*It All Begins*, 202)

With the metaphor of grind, the crushing and excruciating nature of poverty in which the majority find themselves is exposed. The children's condition of lack and starvation is equally objectified in the verse. This brings up pictures of malnourished children, with its concomitant repulsive imagery. With a combination of antithesis in the last line, and contrast between the first two and the last two lines, the poet also foregrounds the terrible lot of the disadvantaged majority. The poet feels so strongly about this situation that he brushes modesty aside and employs invectives in attacking the privileged whites and their wealth. He informs us: 'the apartheid lunatics, mavericks, damagogues, / I tell you, swim in the millions and billions and zillions' (*It All Begins*, 203). Expressing his frustration further, he juxtaposes the foregoing with this:

> My Mother, a farmworker toiled.
> My Father, a mineworker toiled
> Azania, Azania, will justice ever be done?
> (*It All Begins*, 203).

The rhetorical question posed here also underscores the disappointment of the poet with post-apartheid realities. Yet, he is not done. Still on the economic betrayal, the poet laments the increased exploitation of his people. Rather than experience a reversal of exploitation after the ascension of majority rule, what is witnessed is its exacerbation. Hear the poet:

> Sour exploitation sky rocking,
> Black children used as spray beacons on treacherous white farms,

You die on the farmland, who bothers?
Your life is bought like the land settlers stole.
India shops pay peanuts. – They are here for business broer!
Land issue a bone of contention,
But who'll afford the expensive land on the market?
Yet I can't understand why the government buys its own land
(*It All Begins*, 203)

Economically speaking, the black majority are at the receiving end, even after gaining political leverage. The experience of the exploitation is not only sour; it is reaching for the sky. Black child-labour is not only the order of the day; it finds a similitude in slavery since 'life is bought like the land settlers stole' (*It All Begins*, 203). Even other non-whites, the Indians, collude in the exploitation of the black as they pay their workers peanuts in the name of doing good business. This is particularly despairing when placed in the context of the historical collaboration between the two races to rout apartheid. Though this may not be totally surprising since this tendency to exploit blacks on the part of Indian shop-owners dates back to the apartheid era, yet it is not out of place for the blacks to think they have come a long way together, hence the disappointment.

At the social front, the poet also inscribes disillusionment in his verse. He laments 'sexism, classism, tribalism, repotism,/like a ruthless hawk, peck sobukwe, Biko's compromised nation - /Africans, where have we gone wrong?' (*It All Begins*, 203). The *ism's* of vices highlighted above as characterising post-apartheid South Africa is another instance of vision subversion. By likening social evils to ruthless hawks, the poet draws our attention to their destructive capabilities. The idea of 'compromised nation' also suggests that people's expectations have been traded away. And, linking the expression with some symbolic and heroic figures of anti-apartheid struggle further underscores the subversion of the dreams of such heroes. The rhetorical question – Africans, where have we gone wrong? – speaks of the poets and, by implication, his people's absolute disenchantment with the current realities of their society in particular and Africa in general. Again, this calls to the mind the endemic evils of tribalism and nepotism depicted in the post-Independence writings of African writers like Armah and Achebe.

The disappointment engendered by certain actions and inactions of the new political class also forms a major thrust of Bila's poetic engagement with post-apartheid realities of his country. During the apartheid period, black leaders gave their all to the struggle. Many found themselves in jail time and again; some even lost their lives or those of loved ones; all with a view to securing emancipation and better life for their people. In return, the followers were not only always ready to protect and defend their leaders; many did also that the cost of their lives. Such was the situation till victory was achieved in 1994. Naturally, this mutual loyalty and reciprocal selfless service was expected to continue and probably grow better with the attainment of majority rule. Regrettably, this has not been so. The companions and comrades of the struggle days have now becomes strangers; one alienated from the other. The one is snugly ensconced in his or her Olympic height palace, the other is condemned to his or her dingy room in a shanty town. Whereas the mass of followership wallow in lack and penury, the new coterie in whose hands the treasury of the country is placed basks in surfeit of affluence. The poet informs us that while 'Victims always get a raw deal in these world/Fat cheques, perks and sex is for leaders' (*It All Begins,* 202).

The image of leadership evoked above is indeed reminiscent of those depicted in other post-colonial African societies, especially those of immediate post-Independence era. Achebe's *A Man of the People,* Armah's *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* provide veritable examples of works that expose the political lability that the early new black leaders constituted. As the societies depicted in these and similar works writhe under economic and political pains, so appears post-apartheid South Africa. Bila seems to grieve for his country when he intimates: 'Azania bleeds and groans and moans/The wounds of liberation betrayal are gushing and gaping' (*It All Begins,* 203). The consonance in the choice of groans and moans, as well as the alliterative gushing and gaping adds little or no musicality to a poem that actually lacks lyricism. What these expressions do is to underscore the agonised condition of the masses of South Africa.

All these, to the poet, are consequences of insensitive leadership that has emerged after apartheid. Instead of actual majority rule, a clique of the elite appropriates sovereignty for selfish ends. This is what the poet draws attention to when he says:

corporatism swells on red mother earth,
Pacts between elites are confused as rdp
E- e, a hi swona!
It's new colonialism.
It's pure capitalism we abhor
Haves always climb bread and butter ladder,
Havenots, ek tel djou
(*It All Begins*, 205)

Here, the poet warns that the coming together of the elites in many different groups must not be seen as a way of developing the rural areas as often claimed, but as another way of putting people in bondage. The idea that everybody would have a say in the way government is run after apartheid has become another lie. He further observes that the people have powerful forces to contend with. In a despondent tone, he laments:

Azania fighting a losing battle,
Liberals have watered down umzabalazo at Kempton Park,
The people shall govern just a dying illusion,
Black economic empowerment breeds black economic chasms
(*It All Begins*, 203)

One of the salient things that crystallise from these lines is that there is inequitable distribution of economic privileges between the different races, and even among blacks, hence the acknowledgement that Azania is 'fighting a losing battle' (*It All Begins*, 203).

Still obsessed by the political disillusion in his country, the poet considers the role of the erstwhile communists in the current political dispensation and finds no hope for the people in them. The communists had played very crucial roles in anti-apartheid struggle. Now, they seem complacent. We are told that 'the left, like a land iguana, is in slumberland' and asked, 'will it ever wake up?' Indeed, the communist referred to here must be seen as a symbol of the opposition groups, not just the South African Communist Party. Therefore, we can see that opposition parties in South African politics today are not keen on interrogating the way the country is run any longer. Thus, the disillusionment becomes complete. And this is clearly evident in the following lines:

The sun has risen,
But that terrible drought has no mercy,
It's killed all my father's cattle.
Now, I watch ladies and gentlemen
Pulled aboard the gravy train,
Pain rock through my weary face,
I weep like a halt-burnt witch
Asazi!
Aredzi!
Comrades, how long?
How long?
(*It All Begins*, 205)

While the risen sun in the extract is a metaphor for the ascendancy of liberation, the 'terrible drought' without mercy hints at the non-realisation of dreams dreamt, resulting in the waste of supposed inheritance, which is the good life 'my father's cattle' represents metaphorically. With this scenario, people are lured into 'the gravy train' (a source of easy money), which is criminality. This brings grave agony to the poet and, by extension, all those who had looked forward to a better and saner society in the post-apartheid era. By weeping and asking rhetorically, 'Comrades, how long?' the hopelessness and disillusionment's completedness is re-emphasized.

As demonstrated in several instances above, Bila shows that the people's dreams of egalitarianism is more or less a stillbirth in another of his poem entitled, 'Mandela, Have you ever wondered?' The poem draws attention to the unsavoury realities of the new South African society. It tells of the 'sickly- frail street children', picked up 'dead' and the 'detoured souls'. While efforts are made to reverse this situation by 'rehumanising' the sick, 'pick up' the dead and 'placing detoured souls under the caring, golden sun', the poet points out that the 'Weight of the ugly brutal past/threatens to suffocate us' (*It All Begins*, 34). Yet, while this is the reality some people face, others luxuriate in hedonistic lifestyles. The poet asks:

Have you ever wondered?
As we patch centuries –old
Fresh, gaping wounds,
Closing pockmarked cannonhole-ridden
Buildings that once eroded life like ebola
That so many relax in cosy gardens-

Under electric red duvets and make love?
(*It All Begins*, 34)

Certainly, this unhealthy stratification is not what people anticipated. What seems to have happened is hardly different from that of immediate post-Independence sub-Sahara Africa up north where the new black leaders appropriated the privileges of their ex-colonial masters at the expense of their own people. Interestingly, the poem is addressed to Nelson Mandela, as clearly indicated in the title, when he was the president of South Africa. Towards the end of the poem, the poet asks him again:

Have you ever wondered
As you scratch your skin
Searching for your uniqueness- your own self
That the triumphant crowd retires to ghettoes?
Have you ever wondered?
(*It All Begins*, 34)

From this, it is evident that people's hope of a new dawn probably through the repossession of the forcibly taken land, was misplaced. It is quite paradoxical that the victorious masses, who have apparently won back their land, have no real home to go to. Although as noted above, the poem is directly addressed to the former President Nelson Mandela, it is not by any means targeted at his person. It must be seen as directed to the entire political class of which Mandela was the symbol at the material time. What, perhaps, makes the disillusionment syndrome more disconcerting, as indicated by the poet's repeated use of rhetorical questions, is that the new leaders are not just blacks, they are leaders who had also experienced the 'ugly past' first hand. And the victims are still blacks! This is further borne out by the fact the leaders who have come after Mandela are preponderantly blacks; yet, the lot of the black masses still remains unenviable. However, this is not to say that only the black people experience disillusionment in the post-apartheid South Africa.

In Seitlhamo Motsapi's 'river robert', the inscription of post-apartheid disillusion is taken a notch higher. What is especially fascinating about this beautiful verse is the recurrent ironic edge to its execution, a quality that stands it out from poems with similar or same subject in the anthology *It All begins*. One of the issues on which people's disillusion borders is peace. In the years before the demise of apartheid, South Africa had become one of the countries with the highest rate of violence and violent

crimes in the world. This is a corollary of the violent reactions to the oppressive and repressive measures of the Calvinist State in form of riots, revolts and guerilla insurgencies of the anti-apartheid groups, especially from the 1970s upwards. When the initiator of the violence – the State – decides to sheath swords by negotiating away its infamous system, expectations were high that not only would violence abate, but that peace would eventually find anchor in the land. In seeming fulfillment of this vision, Motsapi does not tell of one incident of violence in his poem. Rather, he intimates us time and again, 'we are at peace here' (*It All Begins,* 209). Below are the fist two stanzas of the poem:

> we are at peace here
> even while our lungs are full
> of secret wars
> & primordial fears bruise our suns
> we are at peace here robert
>
> with hope upon our heads
> & songs sprouting out of our sins
> we bless the lacerations
> (*It All Begins,* 209).

A close reading of the above discloses that the peace in question is graveyard peace. There is no peace in the land afterall. Fears and secret wars have actually supplanted it. The poet's idea of peace is therefore an ironic mockery of political leaders' platitudes about the return of peace to an erstwhile troubled country. In the second stanza, the poet speaks of hope being 'upon our heads', which suggests that hope has actually become a burden, rather than making light of burdens. His idea of 'songs sprouting out of our sins' (209) also presupposes a celebration of turpitude. Yet, all these are made to appear as blessings. In a particular instance, the poet says: 'we bless the lacerations.' In another instance, he says: 'we blessed our lacerations & our deformities' (209) Again, he says: 'we bless the belligerent strangers/who stay on in our throats/ long after forgotten festivities' (209). To be certain, these are ironic maledictions, rather than benediction. However, this may not dawn on the reader until placed in the context of what follows or comes before, viz.:

> I have one eye full of dreams and intentions
> the other is full of broken mirrors & cracked church bells I
> have one eye full of rivers & welcomes the other is full of
> flickers & fades (*It All Begins,* 209)

With the use of contrast in depicting the difference between what the poet envisions and what he actually beholds, as seen in these lines, the dichotomic relation between what was expected by the people and what they currently experience is made clear. Contrary to the hope for goodies, distress and deception are experienced. With these lines, one becomes better positioned to apprehend the implication of the poet's prayers.

In a way that aligns with the foregoing writers' observations, the poetic lens of Prophets of da City, a group of performance poets led by Ishmael Morabe, also captures some of the disappointments the majority of South Africans have to contend with since the collapse of apartheid in the poem 'Understand where I'm coming from'. Apparently speaking the mind of the silent majority, he declaims:

> Dulce et decorum est
> Pro patria mori
> I'm sorry that's not for me
> Why should I fight for a country's glory
> When it ignores me.
> (*New Century*, 450)

These lines demonstrate the incipient lack of patriotism that appears to be gaining currency steadily in post-apartheid South Africa. Surely, this is a grave sociological and psychological challenge in the country. And, this development is particularly disturbing because the poet seems to be speaking for the underprivileged blacks who had sacrificed a great deal to have the country liberated from the shackles of internal colonialism. That this category of people is the one now turning its back on the country speaks quantum about the level of their disillusion. But, a pertinent question, reminiscent of one widely credited to Abraham Lincoln, a former US President, can be raised: Why can't the speaker (and those he seems to be speaking for) make himself more relevant to his country, or incapable of being ignored by her? While this is a good poser for the poet-persona, it may well be charitable to accept his view as an expression of sheer frustration.

Still expressing his disenchantment with his new society, the poet provides us this grim picture:

> Besides, the township's already a war zone
> So why complain or moan

Cause your home is not much worse than your neighbour's
Cause everyone's looking for handouts and favours
And it's not a funny sight, cause money's tight
(*New Century*, 450)

From these lines, it is evident that even though a particular war (socio-political/apartheid) has ended, another one, which is economic, is fiercely raging. To etch this forbidding image in our memory, the poet records further:

A whole factory got laid off the other night
Now unemployment makes men sell poison
To boys and girls in your neighbourhood
But who's gonna pay for food
Forget about a politician or millionare
Thinking he will care about your ass in Soweto
Or Mitchell's Plain
And the bitch 'll claim he sympathises
(*New Century*, 450)

The betrayal of people's hope of a better life is, again, depicted here. How economic problems beget social ones is also foregrounded. This is the lot of the South African masses. The political leaders people are wont to look up to, we are told, are hypocrites. Thus, no source of redemption is in sight. In fact, the poet warns: 'So … don't look to the one who put you there in the first place' (*New Century*, 450). By this, he implies that the leaders are the cause of the people's disappointment and frustration. Consequently, this situation forces them into alcoholism, despair, pain and crime. And, as 'the crime rate increase/…tomorrow became a blind date' (*New Century*, 450). Even as the present is hopeless, so is the future uncertain, the Prophet eventually prophesies.

In the piece, 'In the Name of Amandla', the thoroughly disenchanted poet laments the failure of liberation to bring about desired changes. In his lengthy declamations, he chronicles the unchanging and frustrating realities of his society at different fronts. In the five-stanza poem of unequal lengths, he picks the first bone with the plight of children and their education. Using an imperative mood, he challenges his audience and compatriots: 'In the name of *Amandla*/Tell me what has changed in this village'. To him, nothing has changed as children are still starving and cannot go school

because 'There's no food in the kitchen' (*Handsome*, 92). Even where we have those who manage to make it to school, the school is nothing to write home about. We are informed that 'the school has no desks, textbooks & windows' (*Handsome*, 92) even in winter. Certainly, no serious kind of learning can take place in a setting like this. Interestingly, the country's 'leaders sent their children to private schools' (*Handsome*, 92). What seems to boggle the poet's mind here is that the new black leaders have elected to entrench the practice of social stratification of old where the children of the powerful are privileged at the expense of those of the powerless. The major difference now appears to be that it is not informed by colour consideration. In other words, the post-apartheid order is also characterised by inequity and injustice. This is further inscribed in the same first stanza where the poet observes that 'Another hungry child' is knocked down by a rich man's car' (*Handsome*, 92) while the rich man that people thought 'would rot in prison' merely 'contributed a cheap coffin' (*Handsome*, 92) and went scot-free.

Each of stanzas two and four of the poem partly focuses on the state of social amenities in the country. Insisting that freedom has not brought about any corresponding change in the quality of people's lives, the poet registers his displeasure in the following lines:

> In the name of *Amandla* Tell me what has changed in this village the tap is dry Coughs hot air The pump is off Granny has no cash to buy diesel She walks distances to draw dirty water In the still pool In the poisoned dam Where people share water with animals
> (*Handsome*, 92)

The above lines depict the lot of the people, especially blacks, in the new South Africa, despite the transition to multi-racial democracy and in spite of the country's much vaunted progressive constitutions in the world! The hard-won democracy and progressive constitution, unfortunately, have not been able to better the lot of the vast majority of people in the rainbow nation. This is the poet's disappointment and expression of betrayal. Further sadly, it is not only the water situation that has remained frustratingly unchanged, the same thing goes for the energy issue. The electricity system is not only still weak, 'It stops when it rains/It flies away with the

wind' (*Handsome*, 93) and when it is winter it would be totally cut off from 'poor black man in arrears' (*Handsome*, 94) who would then be forced to use firewood to cope with the cold. For the old grandma who suffers from the pollution engendered, 'She will cough blood clots' while the 'Health worker at the clinic will give her panados' (*Handsome*, 94). This is another sad comment on the health service available to the black folk in the new South Africa.

Other areas of life announcing the poet's feeling of disillusionment include the economic and cultural fronts. Hopes of a better and more prosperous life have become a mirage. He talks of mothers who are dependent on their own mothers and husbands who are unemployed. He describes his abode and his people's lifestyle, occasioned by abject poverty, in appalling details. In doing so, his disillusion is again underscored by the refrain which introduces each stanza. He speaks:

> In the holy name of *Amandla*
> Tell me what has changed in this village
> Our RDP house leaks when it rains
> We can't fit, it's a toilet
> We hear & see them making love
> In a room divided by a curtain
> There can't be any secrets
> We sleep in the kitchen
> …
> Verwoerd, my enemy, built much bigger houses
> (*Handsome*, 94).

The metaphor of a toilet in this extract says everything about the untoward living condition referred to. A toilet is usually not very spacious and is associated with filth. It is certainly not a place where one would desire to stay for long, let alone use as a room. Due to the smallness of the size, the kitchen becomes another bedroom for the young ones, while the single room is partitioned into two by a curtain with a view to getting a non-existent privacy for the adult couple. However, the most significant thing about the poet-persona's remarks is the near nostalgia for the apartheid era. By comparing the apartheid era's housing situation with the current one is, in a way, condemnatory of the latter and it is quite poignant. It recalls the yearning for the return of colonial rule or military rule in the independent sub-Saharan countries up-north following people's disillusionment with the first generation of post-

Independence African leaders in the 1960s and 70s, especially in West Africa. Indeed, this feeling further objectifies the poet's disillusion and betrayal.

Bila also appears disappointed by the continued disparaging of the traditional African cultural value of respect for elders. He notes that liberation has brought no positive change because when 'Magogo takes a taxi to town/Young ones don't want to sit next to her/They say she smells of urine' (Handsome, 93). She is also called a 'cheque' by her daughters. Magogo is an affectionate term used to refer to a grandmother among most black South Africans. With the black majority apparently no longer under the influence of white dominance, it is expected that African values would be reasonably restored, if they do not become dominant. For the poet here, the contrary seems to be the case.

A comment on the use of refrain in the poem is, perhaps, necessary. As noted in most instances above, the refrain employed by Bila holds the key to the interpretive analysis of the poem. Unusually placed, for it comes at the beginning of each stanza, rather than its end, the placement actually foregrounds the gravity of the poet-persona's feelings. The imperative mood in which the refrain is couched is further significant for it underlines the poet's certitude about his claims. As if all elements of the stylistic beauty of the poem are packed into this refrain, the word 'Amandla' is symbolic while 'village' is metonymic. Literally meaning power, Amandla seems invested with divinity and invokes such. This is because the widely known world religions like Christianity and Islam are known for such expressions as 'In the name of Jesus', 'In the name of Allah' and so on while invoking God's power. Amandla in the poem can therefore be conceived as not just referring to any ordinary or political power but a divine one. This is further lent credence in the last use where there is a minor adjustment and it reads: 'In the holy name of Amandla' (Handsome, 94). As for the word village, Bila is certainly not referring to his Shirley village in Limpopo, he is actually referring to the entire South African nation where the demise of apartheid was supposed to bring about heavenly goodies, especially for the blacks.

As we have in 'In the Name of *Amandla'*, 'Horrors of Phalaborwa' another poem by Bila, makes an ingenuous use of refrain. Although inscribed as an independent stanza, the refrain begins the poem and intersperses the other five stanzas making it up. This

and other stylistic parallels are noticeable in the two poems. However, it is their thematic contiguity that is of interest at this juncture. 'Horrors of Phalaborwa' provides an account of the barbaric treatment and eventual murder of a black farm worker by his white boss in post-apartheid South Africa. The innocent farm worker is tied to a tree by his drunken boss and then severely battered by the boss and his friends as a kind of sport. The poor farmhand is later loaded into the back of a van, driven into a bush and fed to beasts. This is the horror referred to by the poet. In the new and apparently liberated South Africa, barbarism like this still takes place. Certainly, this is disturbing. It is even more troubling when we realise that the poet actually refers to the incident as one of the many examples of the 'countless tales of shame' (*Handsome,* 17) in Phalaborwa and, by extension, South Africa as a whole.

It is the above experience and, perhaps, other similar ones which, for the poet, subvert the hope of a peaceful and multiracial post-apartheid South Africa where human dignity and mutual respect across all divides are considered done deals. It is also what informs the lamentations and disenchantment of the poet in the 45-line stanza poem. Here is one of the ways he puts it:

> Eleven years into liberation-
> I have no gracious dream
> Eleven years into liberation-
> There is no rainbow dance
> No straight distance we can walk
> (*Handsome*, 20).

In these lines, Bila articulates the feelings of dashed hope and disappointment of many of his compatriots. The lofty dreams built in the twilight of apartheid years about the future by many have evaporated. The struggle, liberation and toyi-toyi dances of yore have dissolved into nothingness while the path ahead seems crooked. Consequently, the poet-persona turns to his ancestors for a re-liberation of the supposedly liberated order. He intones his supplication to the ancestors respectfully:

> *Tsika, tsika*
> Eleven years into liberation-
> Wrench free working hands
> Of underpaid, regimented workers
> Whose sweat earns them shame
> In their unreturned land
>
> *Tsika, tsika*
> Eleven years into liberation-

Wrench free the backs of people
Hunched at dawn
Broken at sundown
(*Handsome*, 20).

Indirectly, these prayers further objectify the oppressed condition of the black people in the post-apartheid South Africa. Majority of them are still the hewers of wood and drawers of water on their own land, earning peanuts from their sweat in the sun. Apparently, they have not even benefited from the land re-distribution policy promised by the new government. In short, nothing seems to have changed. Bearing testimony to this view, the poet-persona observes again:

Eleven years into liberation-
What I can show the world
Is the rural poor's share
Of the liberation dream-sun-
A broken light
A broken hoe
A broken hope.
(*Handsome*, 20-21).

Clearly, the poet's feeling of betrayal and sense of disillusion is unmistakable. They are not only expressed with passion, but also laced with indignation. This explains why he thinks he 'can't wait in hope/for sudden change' as 'the new South Africa is free decay' (21). He would therefore 'stay in the trenches/… in the combat streets/…to sting/ sting like a wasp' (*Handsome*, 21). In other words, the battle for a true liberation of the sub-continent, where people's hopes and aspirations will not remain a mirage, is far from being over.

In 'Mr President, Let the Babies Die' Bila continues with his inscription of disappointment with the new leadership of his country. Contrary to the responsive and caring leadership expected of those put in power through the majority votes of the common people, the country's political palace is peopled by insensitive, inept and self-centred lot. We are told of fat men parliamentarians who 'sleep in broad daylight' since they have 'lost the dream to free the starving bellies of the masses' (*Handsome,* 37). We are also told of disillusioned peasants 'who labour under the burden of tax'

(*Handsome,* 37) and cannot afford to take their leaders 'seriously anymore' (*Handsome,* 37). In an ironic twist, the poet-persona implores protesters and the complaining public not to trouble Mr President because 'He has an important meeting in Washington DC' (*Handsome,* 37). Rather, they should buy him a private jet and houses in cities across the world, not minding the price and burden this would cause the people. The President also attends an important meeting in Geneva where 'He must brush shoulders with the high and mighty' and 'dollars will overflow from his table/Bread and butter!' (*Handsome,* 37). On the other hand, the masses can only sell their 'breasts and thighs for a living' *(Handsome, 38).* The image of an irresponsible and profligate leadership depicted here of post-liberation South Africa is also reminiscent of that depicted of post-independence Kenya by Henry Barlow in the poem, 'Building the Nation'. Barlow also ironically exposes the inept leadership of his country when he tells his audience that his country's leaders build the nation.

Using an apostrophic strategy, the poet addresses his country's president, drawing attention to the gap between what was promised and what is obtainable. He reminds the President that 'You told us victory is certain, /That the people shall govern…' (*Handsome,* 37). Today, however, 'bodies decompose in run-down public hospital' (*Handsome,* 37). The hospitals lack doctors, electricity, water and medical equipment, while 'mothers give birth in open bushes.' Children in the ghettoes suffer and die of Aids, cholera, kwashiorkor and marasmas. The question is, where is the victory or where is the interest of the people taken care of in the new governance?

Most of those who emerged the leaders of post-apartheid South Africa are ex-political prisoners and former exiles. The first president of the era, Nelson Mandela, is the iconic figure of this class of people. Since most of these people were considered heroes and heroines of the struggle for liberation, their return home or release from jail was, therefore, welcomed with celebrations. It is also because of their heroic antecedents that they were trusted with the leadership of the new country. However, after blowing horns and strumming guitars to welcome these great sons, daughters, brothers and sisters home, the people would soon realise that they had misplaced their hope. The poet captures this experience when he observes: 'We did not know the mind got frozen in prison winter/ We shouted power to the people!/But business sucked the power of the state' (*Handsome,* 38). The implication here is that the so-

called heroes and heroines have become changed persons; the prison experience seems to have drained the kindness and humanity in them and they have become more concerned about their own economic interests at the expense of the people who put them in power.

Bila's 'Dennis on the March' is a tribute to the heroic exploits of the well-known South African poet, Dennis Brutus, in the liberation struggle as well as his continued fight against social injustice and bad governance in the post-apartheid era. The poem was written to commemorate the eightieth birthday of the literary giant. Somehow, Bila's disillusion about the socio-political realities of his country sneaks into his poetic celebration of the literary icon. Perhaps this is because these realities undermine the 'stubborn hope/ for a better tomorrow' (*Handsome*, 40) which Brutus had always nursed about his country.

Beginning with encomiums on the great deeds of Brutus in the fight against apartheid during its excruciating years, Bila moves progressively to praise his enduring spirit of activism in the current post-apartheid era. He writes of him:

> Even today
> At the age of eighty
> You still march
> In the streets of jo'burg
> Feet firm on the ground
> Though in the smothering sun
> Of squeezed dreams
> You march with the hungry patriots
> Whose harvest of freedom
> Is but dust (*Handsome*, 40-41).

The last six lines of the above extract clearly show a reality in dissonance not only with the optimism of Brutus hinted at earlier on, but also with the expectations of the generality of the people. When the poet-persona talks of 'the smothering sun of squeezed dreams' (*Handsome*, 41), there is more to the alliterative construction. Not only are people's dreams of a better life becomes unfulfilled in the new era, the idea of being 'squeezed' suggests a deliberate dissipation of the opportunities for their fulfillment. The sun, which ordinarily symbolises a life-giving force and source of warmth, is here presented as a destructive agent. The masses that had also been

instrumental in facilitating the enthronement of freedom have nothing to show for their sacrifices. The disappointment in the new order is further underscored when the poet-persona speaks of Brutu's protest 'not against the draconian pass laws/ or botha's total strategy' but his 'stern words/ into… former comrades' blocked ears. (*Handsome*, 41). The inference one can make here is that the former activists who are now the new leaders have become worse than their apartheid predecessors. In Bila's thinking, they are 'gucci socialist/with treacherous sickness/… who now disown their people/ravaged by throbbing pain' (*Handsome*, 41). These are certainly not the kind of leaders the people looked forward to in the post-apartheid era. Rather than have honest, altruistic and responsive leaders, the people are sentenced to making do with selfish, indifferent and uncaring leaders.

The poet's disenchantment with the post-apartheid social realities is again depicted in the plight of the masses seen in the poem. Described as the underclass in the factories, townships and alex shacks, these people's impoverished status and ill-treatment by the political leaders are eloquently echoed when the poet-persona notes that they 'can't eat gear promises' and 'won't breathe nepad hollow air' (42). Gear (Growth, Employment and Redistribution) refers to the South African government 1996 strategy to strengthen economic development whereas NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa Development) refers to the initiative of African leaders to encourage good governance and development in the continent. The poetic voice, by these allusions, simply draws attention to the hopeless condition of the peasants in his so-called free country. The uselessness of the freedom is further underscored in the following lines:

> though Mandela is free
> rivers of typhoid
> & cholera flow freely
> & consume the poor of the world
> …
> you march in step
> alongside the landless peasants
> the evicted & the unemployed
> (*Handsome*, 42).

To the poet, the attainment of freedom has not brought about the desired changes. On the contrary, it has brought pain and misery. The hope of re-gaining lost land by the peasants is made illusory, while the number of eviction victims and the unemployed

soar. Similarly, 'filthy shack tin-roofed camps grow/along modern throughways/ & drifting highways' (*Handsome*, 43). These are the new social realities of a people who had patiently and passionately anticipated a new era of bliss. As their hopes become dashed, the scale of illusions falls off their eyes and poet Bila captures all in his verse.

In the poem entitled 'Seymour,' written in memory of Donald White, Chris Mann, takes us through the blissful and pastoral life of some white South African farmer during the apartheid years. He does this in the nine stanzas making up the first two sections of the poem. His description of Seymour and the life of Donald White's family in these sections vividly capture the rustic, but happy and almost utopian country life of his dead friend's family. Recently, the poet-persona, 'wanting a break, a drink, a phone' (*New Century*, 407), decided to visit the small haven called Seymour. At the small hotel where he hopes to satisfy the above desires, he discovers rather surprisingly that:

> The co-op's door had been torn off
> Its row of window panes smashed in
>
> The public phone hissed on its hook
> A drunk snored in the empty bar
> face down among a slew of quarts
>
> The radio in the hotel foyer
> was gabbling on about football
> being played before a Joburg crowd
>
> The manager appeared in socks,
> declined my bid to purchase tea
> yawned and scratched a shirtless chest
>
> (*New Century*, 408)

This picture totally contrasts with that of the past when Donald, his 'farmer friends and families/ would motor up the mountain pass' (*New Century*, 408) and have a great time at the hotel. Juxtaposing this picture with that of the blissful past as depicted in the early part of the poem, the poet-persona seeks to expose or draw attention to the disorderly, chaotic and gloomy present. Indeed, he inscribes a subversion of past hopes when he recalls that the current realities had always been the fears entertained

by the white folk like his friend, Donald, before the transition to multi-racial democracy in the country. He intones:

> It was the nightmare of your caste
> the post-uhuru slide from hopes
> of jobs, clinics, houses and cars
>
> to run down courts and hospitals
> armed thieves and dark imaginings
> of plague, looting and malls on fire
> (*New Century*, 408).

As the fears of the white folk become confirmed, the poet-persona becomes disillusioned. As he also decides to leave the disappointing scene, he recalls seeing the 'grey-blue eyes' of Donald returning to hunt him 'with a laugh' and even asking him: 'So? Didn't I warn you?' (*New Century*, 409). Clearly, these are a mockery of blacks' leadership qualities. Although the hotel manager is not identified as a black man or woman, the fact is that the degenerating changes noted about and around the hotel were not there in the apartheid years. Besides, if we go by the excuse of the poet-persona that 'we're different/ and hands long bound are always limp' (*New Century*, 409) then one can hazard the guess that the manager is actually black. The poet's alibi on his behalf seems to be that his disconnect from leadership experience in the past explains his current failure.

Besides the degeneracy of the small hotel, there is even no noticeable development in Seymour village. It still has only one street, which 'was much the same' (*New Century*, 408). Disappointingly, livestock in the village have also fallen on hard times as we behold listless goats and 'stock that grazed a rubbish dump' (*New Century*, 408). Despite these disenchanting and poignant realities, the poet's disillusion appears not to be total. Rather than absolutely surrender hope, he decides to start

> scheming like the hunter-gatherers,
> the pastoralists who came before
> ways to survive in that landscape,
> to extricate vision from sight
> and track the eland through the thorns
> (*New Century*, 409).

Unlike most of the other poets, he seems to be of the opinion that, in spite of the 'post-uhuru slide' into idleness, indifference, drunkenness and crime, a reversal is possible. It is possible to build a new dream from the present realities.

Unlike most poets of his generation who express disillusionment with the socio-economic and political realities of the new South Africa, Mzi Mahola's disillusion is more concerned with the 'rotten morals' (*Dancing,* 62) and loss of traditional cultural values of his contemporary society. In the poem 'Too Late', he expresses his disappointment at the pervasive moral decay in his new rainbow nation. He also proposes to find ways around it, but ultimately realises the futility of such efforts. In his words, he notes that 'We've gone beyond the point /Of teaching our young/ The word respect' (*Dancing,* 30). He describes the young as 'empty of compassion'. He also concedes that the hybrid elites who have been 'Blinded by Western wisdom' are responsible for laying the foundations as well as encouraging the adoption of foreign values. They have even gone as far as binding our hands so that '… we may not reroute/The wave of erosion' (*Dancing,* 30). In spite of this despairing scenario, the poet still thinks:

> Maybe before I retire
> To my ultimate room
> I might as well help
> In building the nation
> (*Dancing,* 30).

How does he plan to do this? He says:

> I will teach
> To kill with tenderness
>
> I shall give to rapists
> Roaming without ears
> Crumbs of humanity
> (We have nothing left)
> To show a bit of respect'
> (*Dancing,* 31).

Clearly, these lines show that the poet is not simply talking about respect in terms of reverence or honour for the superior or the elderly but about respect for life, human dignity and other positive values in the human society. Without saying so in as many

words, the poem comments on brutal fatalities in form of violent murders and assassinations for which South Africa has become notorious. Similarly, it hints at the rate of rape incidents in contemporary South Africa, a rate unequalled by any other country in the world, which also explains the astounding ratio of one to five HIV infections among teenagers and young South African adults today. In the last four lines of the poem, the poet painfully notes:

> We cannot stop them anyway
> From their bestial feelings
>
> It is too late
> Too late to turn the tide
> (*Dancing*, 30).

This is where his disillusionment comes full circle. Although the hopelessness expressed in this conclusion appears connected with rapists' deeds, it indeed extends to other criminals and abusers of others' rights and dignity. This is unmistakably coded in the poet's decision to teach murderers to 'kill with tenderness' (*Dancing*, 30)., rather than ask them to stop killing outright.

In another of his poems, 'When I'm King', Mahola's disenchantment with moral degeneration in his society is given ventilation. Here, he draws attention to the revolting practice of middle-age and old-age men, especially leaders, to take young and teenage girls for wives. In an ironic execution, the poet informs us that sooner than later he would declare himself a king so that he can enjoy some of the privileges, which accompany that status. Even though now when he is not yet a king, he imagines his life as one:

> I should rule by example
> By marrying a juvenile
> In her prime
> To resuscitate my life
> (*Dancing*, 48).

However, since he is currently a commoner, people would condemn a step like that as 'child abuse and abominable' (48). Unfortunately, this abominable act becomes an adorable one when leaders are concerned. Consequently, he notes:

When I become King
A sire of good stud
I will not be accused of molestation
Lavish praises and adoration
Will be heaped on me
For sowing rare seed

(*Dancing*, 48)

In reality, this practice of the old marrying the young has assumed an alarming trend among the South African nouveau rich, the privileged and powerful blacks of the post-apartheid era. To Mahola, this is not what was expected of the new crop of elites in the country. As noted in the previous poem, the high sense of morality with which blacks are hitherto known is now thrown to the dogs. The new black leaders are a bunch of disappointment, not only at economic and political levels, but also at social and moral levels.

In 'People change' and 'No more flowers left', the disillusionment with the new realities in the new nation is the focus. In the former, Mahola laments the sacrifice of moral rectitude for moral depravity. According to him,

In the past
when we came
across a corpse
we changed course
or crossed our hearts.
today we tilt its head
prise its mouth open
to rob it of its gold-
sheated teeth

(*Dancing*, 56).

Surely, the obvious case of robbery referred to in the poem is condemnable. What is even more reprehensible and disappointing is the idea of robbing the dead. The old practice of respect for the dead appears to have no place in the new order. Indeed, the moral decay of the new order appears unsurpassable. In the other poem, Mahola laments again:

In the past it was a tragedy
For a girl to have a child
New it is a shame to be a virgin;
Every child suckles a child

(*Dancing*, 63).

This is a reversal of moral values. To the poet, it seems as if modern cultural practices have come to permanently dislodge the traditional ones, with a rather unfortunate consequence. And, we are not only disillusioned, we are equally helpless. He pursues this theme further in 'Young Adults'. In the piece, he observes that today's children no longer laugh like those of the past. They only play computerised games instead of playing with locally made toys that inspire mirth. In addition,

> They go to taverns
> And become parents
> At the age of twelve.
> They meet with death
> Sooner than we did
>
> (*Dancing*, 64).

With this kind of consequence, the tone of disillusion in the poem gives way to that of indignation. The poet is quite angry at the turn of events.

In 'Illusions' and 'Mirage', as the titles suggest, one is wont to expect an exploration of illusion or mirage as an idea, or the illusory nature of some idea, concept or thing. Indeed, Mahola does not disappoint as he comments on the illusion associated with husband-wife relationship in the former and dwells similarly on that between a man and his ancestors in the latter. However, his thesis in the final analysis inscribes disillusion. In 'Illusions,' the poet-persona had expected to enjoy a blissful life after finding the woman of his life. Now, the converse is the case. Now, he suffers emotional and psychological discomforts. He also experiences economic drain. Totally disillusioned, he contemplates asking his dead parents why he was not forewarned about the likely disappointment to be encountered in marriage. In one breath, he would go to his father's grave and ask why marriage has brought 'scuff on my neck' (*Dancing*, 33). In another breath, he would go to his mother's grave and ask why his wife's eyes 'Burn holes in my wallet' (*Dancing*, 33). He would also like both of them to tell why he hears 'yells of chimpanzees/when the woman of my heart/ Approaches' (*Dancing*, 33).

In the other but related poem, a man expresses his disappointment with his ancestors who continually demand sacrifice of him. After heeding the calls and meeting the

demands of his ancestors, the man laments the fact that they have only made his family's life more harrowing and miserable. The man also notes that his child's head is filled with madness while his wife laughs to herself. From the dead parents he demands to know:

> Why is the owl still hooting on my roof?
> Why are bees invading my house?
> Why are ants dancing in my room?
> Tell me
> Why is the reptile cuddling in my hearth?
> Why do flies sing while we sleep?
> Why do vicious dogs maul me in my dreams?
>
> (*Dancing*, 34).

Ordinarily, in African cosmology, the ancestors' primary responsibility to the living is protection from evil machinations of the supernatural elements. The living is also expected to have a good relationship with his ancestors by regular sacrifices to them. As seen in the poem, the living keeps his side of the contract while the ancestors renege on theirs. Consequently, the man is not mildly disappointed; he is greatly disillusioned about the power and integrity of his ancestors. He therefore further asks:

> Tell me,
> Why we never know it when you're happy
> Why you never thank my offerings'
>
> (*Dancing*, 34).

Perhaps, the ancestors live only in the imagination of *Sangomas*, the traditional priests. So far, in all the poems by Mahola discussed above, it is only in 'Mirage' that the poet-persona's voice is hardly heard. We hear it only in the first line of the poem, which reads: 'the *Sangoma* bellowed' (*Dancing*, 34). The other voices in the poem belong to the Sangoma and a living relative of some ancestors. Again, so far, in all his previous poems, the sense of disappointment and disillusionment has been associated with the poet-persona. In 'Mirage' it is associated with a character in the poem. Can we then say that the character is Mahola's alter-ego? Or, is Mahola, like in the other poems, seeing the character as another example of African moral renegade that the postmodernist culture of the new South Africa continues to spawn?

Interestingly, despite the overwhelming inscription of moral disillusionment in his poetry, one of the poems in the collection, *Dancing in the Rain*, also offers an insight into socio-political disillusion in post-apartheid South Africa. 'There Will Be Signs' captures the affluent and extravagant lifestyle of the nouveau riche black leaders of the post-liberation era while also commenting on the betrayal of hope experienced by the marginalised majority. Describing the new black leaders, the poet says:

> My fat-necked potbellied brothers
> Glide in cars of the future
> Marry mechanical women
> With names like Computer and Jacuzzi.
> They melt behind iron curtains
> In dream houses with swimming pools,
> The envy of white folk
>
> (*Dancing*, 44).

On the other hand, they offer the commoners 'tribal bones/Brushing their words with honey' and prescribe them 'the past/From which they flee' (44). Not only this, the new bourgeois:

> …speak a language
> Which is the heart of domination
> And send their children
> To the best institutions
> To lift them above the lot
>
> (*Dancing*, 44).

The language of domination referred to here simply means the social privilege conferred on the new bourgeois. The difference in the type of schools attended by the children of the newly rich and the poor also signifies the social stratification of the new era. More importantly, it is reminiscent of the apartheid policy of segregation, except that the new segregation is dictated by economic might, rather than skin pigmentation. In a rhetorical question laced with sarcasm, the poet-persona who is also the voice of the marginalized says: 'Soar high, brother; Isn't this what we fought for?' (*Dancing*, 44). This ironic half-statement, half question encapsulates the persona's feelings of betrayal and disillusion. Having expected so much and getting next to nothing, the poet in sheer despair asks his 'fat-necked potbellied brothers' (Dancing, 44) again:

> Is it right
> That we should adopt

Ways of lizards
And not also learn to fly?
Is it right that we should backtrack
While the world around is changing?
(*Dancing*, 44).

Rather than offer some balming words, the persona is asked to go back to his roots and stay there for good.

Lesego Rampolokeng's 'Welcome to the New consciousness' also comments on the post-apartheid realities in a way that draws attention to people's disillusion and disenchantment with the new socio-political order. As the poet-persona welcomes everyone to the 'New consciousness', which is the post-apartheid era, he is quite uncharitable in his sarcastic tone. He declares how the era utilises everyone:

some fertilise the soil
some are food for lies & lice
some's only toil is in pigsties
some sit in the power tower
some shit in a flower show
some cower from hate's gleam
while some meet the NEW DREAM
with a scream
(*It All Begins*, 29).

Certainly, the kind of utility ascribed to some, apparently the majority, by the poet is not the one they looked forward to. Not only does Rampolokeng present us with a society stratified into the privileged and the unprivileged categories, the plight of the latter now seems worse than it once was. The masses are depicted as working machines whose toils are not even appreciated. On the other hand, the new *lords of the manor* place themselves on Olympian heights. For those who meet the NEW DREAM with excitement they would soon get disappointed. And so would many others because by the time 'the war is done the gore is won' (*It All Begins*, 29). After so many years of struggle for liberation, the so-called liberated have no better than 'gore' as their gain.

Continuing with his lyrical rendition of the painful realities of the post-apartheid era, Rampolokeng identifies hypocrisy, violence and sexual obscenity as other disappointing characteristics of the new order. He speaks of *toyi-toyi* boys who 'throw

stones by day & sow moans by night' as well as those who 'speak the lyrics/ of violence/in tongues of silence' (*It All Begins,* 30). The moral decay and hypocrisy of the new era are captured in the following lines:

some are hypochristians
some are wine-drunken catholics
taking a tumble on the bible
casting a coy look at the prayer book
while some live in rotten sperm of jackal laughter
some strip to their souls
& show their holes
some burrow like moles
& if you're hip
you can hop to the top
jump into the mine
& pump up the drum & bass line
(*It All Begins,* 30)

Clearly, the poet takes umbrage at the turn of events in his society. When he, therefore, rounds off the poem the way he started by welcoming everyone to the 'new consciousness' and insisting that everyone is utilised, he adds that the new consciousness is of 'derearranged senses' (*It All Begins,*30). In fact, the poet's idea of opening and closing the poem with 'WELCOME' to such realities as revolting and disappointing as the above is a conscious but subtle strategy of denunciation.

Rampolokeng's displeasure with the social realities of the new era is repeated when he informs us that:

some play the death-game
some are too lame for the shame
of this sham-change
some are just deranged small change
while some cringe & some whinge
(*It All Begins,* 30).

Describing the transition from apartheid to multi-racial democracy as a 'sham-change' appears almost too damning a verdict. However, if we consider the feelings and attitudes of the other poets under study to the current realities, Rampolokeng's verdict may not be an exaggeration. The change's disappointment is further inscribed in the

'shame' it has brought in its wake. Undoubtedly, this must be the shame experienced by some blacks at the failure of their folk in political power to engender positive and admirable changes in the society. Rather than achieve these to restore the dignity and pride of the black race, political decisions and leadership of the country by the blacks have recently given those who think blacks are incapable of self-governance or good governance the reason to insist on the validity of their view. For instance, the second president of post-apartheid South Africa, Thambo Mbeki, against scientific evidence, argued that the cause of AIDS is not just a virus but malnutrition and poverty. The consequence was the failure to appropriately tackle the pandemic, resulting in South Africa having one of the highest incidences of HIV/AIDS infection in the world today. South Africa is also rated as the country with the highest incidence of rape in the world today. All these bear testimony to Rampolokeng's view of the sham-change in his country. Indeed, his disillusion and frustration with the change is captured in the image of the mentally incapacitated evoked by the word 'deranged' in the last extract above.

In the poem titled 'Reconciliation', Kelwyn Sole bares his views about the issue of reconciliation between the victims and perpetrators of human rights abuse during apartheid years. Following the demise of apartheid, the new Government of National Unity led by Nelson Mandela put in place a commission, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, to look into the issues of human rights abuse of the past with a view to bringing about personal and national reconciliations in the country. As noted in Chapter Four of this study, diverse reactions welcomed the setting up of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, its processes and its aftermath. In this poem, Sole comments about its aftermath. He argues that the promise of reconciliation given to the people, apparently the white folk, is a mere illusion. Today, the poet sees in the land brutal murders, as illustrated by that of a woman he 'almost loved' and those of 'two close friends', which appears to be examples of the vengeful attacks on whites by some disgruntled and misguided blacks in the twilight of apartheid and early after the transition to majority rule. For the poet, this happens despite the assurance of reconciliation offered by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

In a disappointed and ironic tone, the poet declares 'that all is now well/except inflating prices' (*It All Begins*, 32). Given the picture above, certainly all is far from

being well. Indeed, there is a reversal to the Hobbesian State of nature which the apartheid era represented. In addition to this state of insecurity and brutality, there is also economic downturn. Apparently attributing the economic disaster in the country to profligacy, the poet speaks of the 'lifesized doll/ of our country's President,/ dressed up as Father Christmas' (*It All Begins,* 33). The doll-like statue which is erected at 'the till' of the country interestingly 'can't seem to stop itself/from beaming' (*It All Begins,* 33). Although the poet draws our attention to the economic indiscretions of the new leaders through these images, the tone of his presentation is more significant. It shows his disappointment with the new political and economic realities of the post-apartheid era. Still being ironical, the poet speaks of the new economic reality in the following words:

> What everything costs
> is now clear:
> and it's hard to feel
> despondency or grief
> inside a supermarket (*It All Begins,* 33)

With an earlier reference to 'inflating prices', one would naturally expect a measure of displeasure with the current costs of things. Consequently, the idea that all is well, which the expression 'it's hard to feel/despondency or grief' at the point of shopping suggests, is a painful mockery of the economic reality engendered by the new political order.

In a poetry volume put together by Umuzi, an imprint of Random House Struik Ltd., thirty-one patently political poems are collected under the title *Letter to South Africa: Poets Calling the State to Order*. Inspired by a colloquium entitled 'Letter to South Africa' at the 2010 Poetry Festival in Stellenbosch, South Africa by Marlene van Niekerk on behalf of the University of Stellenbosch's Department of Afrikaans and Dutch, these poems are meant to speak to South Africa in a way similar to Allen Ginsberg's poem entitled 'America'. Not only do the poems fruit in consonance with the expectation of Umuzi, which is to call the state to order, a sizeable numbers of them advance the thematic exploration of disillusionment seen in the other collections and anthologies so far examined.

Mapo Masheane's 'South Africa (You've Lied to Me)' is one of such poems, which inscribe the people's disappointment, loss of confidence and feelings of betrayal by the new democratic order. Personifying South Africa as a young by of sixteen, the poet recalls the official date of transition to multiracial democracy, April 27, 1994 and remind the supposedly sixteen year- old boy that it was the day his father was released, apparently from the apartheid bondage, and when his mother came out singing, celebrating and ululating. Now at 16, we are told, the boy bleeds and cries 'like never before' (*Letter*, 117) as his grandmother's and grandfather's expectations and dreams have not come to reality. The poet expresses her wonderment over the sad reality of the South African post-apartheid era thus:

> South Africa 16 years still you talk of unspoken revolution
> South Africa it's more than a decade and still you reflect
> Skeletons of naked pain
> South Africa can you speak of the 70s and 80s?
> Can you remember Steve Biko?
> Do you know of Tsietsi Mashinini?
> Have you written about Solomon Mahlangu?
> Soweto June16, 1976, can you smell the dust- the bullets and the tears? (*Letter,* 117).

The poem, apparently written in 2010, sixteen years after the end of apartheid, draws attention not only to the disappointing state of things in the country but also to the pain it has caused. To the poet, the pain seems particularly acute because the post-apartheid realities or, more specifically, the leaders of the new era have made the sacrifices of the dead heroes and heroines of liberation struggle become vain. Biko, Mashinini, Mahalangu and several school children massacred during the Soweto riots of 1976 are recalled for reference and emphasis. This recollection of unsung heroes' names appears intended to prick the conscience of the new but apparently inept and indifferent leaders because they actually owe their privileged positions to the sacrifices of these people. The use of several rhetorical questions clearly underscores the depth of the poet's frustration and indignation at the turn of events.

In the third stanza of the poem, Masheane presents South Africa as a teenager who is not putting his freedom to good use, as a pretender to big status in international politics and economy. While she desires to have South Africa not forget where *he* is coming from, she however goes ahead in the fourth stanza to inscribe more aspects of

disappointment wrought by the new order, as well as the hopelessness of the situation. In one breath, the poet asks rhetorically again:

> South Africa how can you be famous and well known
> Yet sell wooden toilets to your siblings?
> How do you sleep at night when
> the poor have still to taste your promises?
> How do you show your teeth and laugh
> At the distress of your peers? (*Letter*, 118)

Multiracial democracy had promised empowerment, egalitarianism and abundant life. Apparently, these have remained promises, which make the poet totally despondent about any possibility of reversal. Again, the failure of leadership is implicated in the unchanging and miserable circumstances of the citizens. The impression we make of the leaders is that of a bunch of hypocrites. In a tone suffused with pessimism, Masheane observes:

> South Africa I listen to your unfinished prayer
> I see how your dreams have nowhere to land
> I see how they are stuck inside matchbox shacks
> How they hang on washing lines behind big fences
> South Africa how can you be a third and a first world
> Divided only by the tongue? (*Letter*, 118)

In addition to despair which is clearly discernible in these lines, Masheane intimates us with the fact that two worlds still exist in post-apartheid South Africa- obviously the better for the whites and the new black elites, and the other for the rest. The average black man in the new order now has to contend with class, rather than colour. The metaphor of 'matchbox shacks' speaks of his penurious and precarious condition. This is in spite of government initiatives like Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) and land redistribution projects.

Archiving the binary realities between the new leaders and the commoners, the poet informs us that while the former 'wear silky suits with square shoes'/…throw parties and eat sushi' (*Letter*, 118), the latter have their ktchen tables filled with ants. The former 'smoke cigars and mingle in front of our screens/ Talk this million and that tender/While women and mothers and daughters die of HIV/AIDS' (*Letter*, 118). Here, the poet singles out the female person as the greater victim of the inept

leadership of the new South Africa. This is brought home clearly when she notes: 'South Africa you shame and despise my kind' (*Letter,* 118). This seems to allude to the plight of South African women suffering form AIDS in the face of former President Thabo Mbeki's alleged view that poverty was the cause of AIDS. For this and other reasons, the poet is disappointed and laments thus:

> Your have killed hope from my eyes
> And here I am weeping like an orphan
> I am painting images of a brother I do not know
> I am crying for the land of my forefathers
> The land they have shed their bloods for
> This piece of land they no longer possess
> This very home that has cast me out (*Letter*, 119).

The lines above, indeed, capture the entire message in the ninety-three line poem. The poet is absolutely disillusioned. Even without telling us that the land makes her angry, indignation is quite palpable in the poetic tone. Despair is also written large between the lines. Frustration and alienation are subtly inscribed. Using the metaphor of sibling to talk of painting the images of a brother she does not know, the poet unmistakably foregrounds her estrangement from her country in the new era. Again, she recalls the priceless but vain sacrifices made by her forbears to secure a home which, in the final analysis, casts her out.

The last stanza of the poem, however, clearly and best articulates the poet's disillusion with her country, especially with the leadership of the post-apartheid era. Its quotation would be illuminating, viz.:

> South Africa you have lied to me
> You promised us that liberation makes diamonds to grow from trees
> And that the colour of our skin can
> Teach us to forgive and forget
> That there is no need for us to toyi-toyi
> Or witness our mothers run the streets unpaid
> You told us things would change
> Have we moved on from the past? (*Letter*,119)

Indubitably, lines 2-4 of the stanza are hyperbolic. They are a commentary on the eloquence of the political and campaign rhetoric of those who now lead the country. The reference to such speeches here shows the poet's growth from political naivety to

awareness. Now speaking with the benefit of hindsight, she dismisses those promises as lies. If the promise that liberation would make diamonds grow from trees or that the colour of skin would make one forgive and forget past pain and injustice are exaggerations or mere soap-box rhetoric, what about the promises that things would change, that there is no need for toyi-toyi, that mothers would not run the streets unpaid? There is no gainsaying plain language here. If these cannot be realised in sixteen years, then one is inclined to share the poet's view that it is been lies all along. The poet's conclusion in form of a rhetorical question, therefore, becomes germane. Obviously, no answer is expected for all the answers are already provided in the stanzas leading up to this. Thus, the cycle of disillusion, as far as the poet is concerned, is complete.

In 'Motherland', Siphiwe Ka Ngwenya's attempt at grasping the realities spawned by post-apartheid South Africa seems fated for futility. Not only are his expectations unmet in the new realities, his probe into their nature and reflection on personal and patriotic sacrifices yield only frustration. Speaking to South Africa in a dispirited voice, he begins:

> I offered you my soul
> But you threw my offerings down the hellhole
> Are you the one I thought I knew
> Are you new
> Draped in rainbow colours
> From the snake queues
> and scorching sun
> I cast my vote
> to be your sacrificial goat (*Letter*, 86).

From these lines, it is clear that the poet-persona has given so much to his country. It is therefore legitimate for him to expect something in return. Hence, he asks for 'buttered bread', 'a job/ and not recession' (*Letter*, 86). Having taken all the pains and troubles to install a democratic government through the exhausting process of voting, his gain is to be deserted and left to "wander in the streets/ Homeless/ Laboured by the pavements" (*Letter*, 87). In a tone laced with frustration, he asks: 'Where is my land/ Where is my gold/ Where is my culture (*Letter*, 86). Land, gold and culture here respectively stand for spiritual, economic and social wealth. All these are now beyond the reach of the poet. Perhaps this is because he is black, for he accuses her

motherland: 'You burned me at the stake/ For being too dark for your eyes' (*Letter*, 87).

In spite of all these infelicities, the poet-persona occasionally hopes for a new day. He intimates: 'South Africa/ You with your grinning smile/ Sometimes I wake up in the morning/ Overwhelmed with a will to see another day (*Letter*, 87). By another day here is implied a departure from the current order, not just the next day. Unfortunately, subsequent intimations actually suggest that the persona is merely taken in by the 'grinning smile' which appears to herald a positive prospect. This is because we soon learn that in government circles intelligent or brilliant ideas are unacceptable 'For those who fatten their pockets/ With the loot of our triumph/ For those who gang-rape/ Mutilate woman/ and babies' (*Letter*, 87). Contrary to the vision of Eldorado many had envisaged as a natural consequence of victory over apartheid, these unsavoury realities are the order of the day. In making his disillusion seem hopeless, the poet addresses his motherland thus: ' Tell me/ Before your bullet ends my heartbeat/ did I transform into an animal' (*Letter*, 87). While the idea of transforming into an animal appears a preposterous and exaggerated way to register angst or even sarcastically lampoon a failed system, the more important point here is the metaphorical death anticipated from the disappointing realities in the land.

Despite the disappointment, the poet-persona acknowledges her inviolable allegiance to her motherland, viz.: 'sometimes I am like a jilted lover/ harbouring no wish to be divorced from you/ A baby not yet severed an umbilical core/ I cannot turn my back on you' (*Letter*, 87). This conclusion is significant for two interrelated reasons. One, it underscores the poet-persona's loyalty and patriotic feelings for her motherland. Two, it implies the poet's preparedness to work towards reversing the current trend as well as the fact that all hope is not lost yet. Nevertheless, his disappointment with the current realities is unmistakable.

For Leon de Cock, it is not so much about things changing for the worse in the post-apartheid era or having expectations and hope betrayed, it is much about things remaining the same. In his poem, 'Just Take it', he stridently harps on the culture of expropriation by those in privileged positions, especially those in political power, using guile or might. He undertakes a historical excursion into how the Khoisan, a

native tribe, which had first contact with white people, was violently dealt with and dispossessed of their land, how each of the Afrikaner and the British struggled to take advantage of the mineral wealth of South Africa at the expense of the other. With this backdrop, de Cock goes on to reflect on the interest of apostles of civilization, development and democracy in the new South Africa. We are informed that while preaching these values, 'they shove their pockets full of though' (*Letter,* 41). As South Africa's movement towards multiracial democracy gathered pace in the early 1990s, neo-colonial interests at home and abroad became champions of civilization, development, democracy and governance in the anticipated era. Here, the poet observes that their interests were motivated by personal gains. The crucial point is however made later where the poet adds:

> They lie, they always lie
> Because, really, all they want is to take everything
> They just want your stuff
> They just want your stuff
> First it was the English
> Then the Boere
> The Boere with their apartheid stories
> and then it was Inkatha and the ANC
> Has anything changed? (*Letter*, 41)

The implication of the poet's submission here is that contrary to what people expected, there is actually no change in the way different governments have been running the country. The new black leaders and their capitalist collaborators have only continued with 'business as usual'. While the poet has no illusions about the incapacity of the new leaders and their proclivity to continue in the old way of 'Just take it", the same is not true of the average citizen. Contrary to expectations, nothing has changed.

Other features of the new era noted as characteristic of the old one in the poem include the use of connections to get things done, corruption in high places, intolerance of opposition, and insensitivity to criticism and so on. With the high moral ground from which the heroes and heroines of the liberation struggle who now people the new government come, a lot was expected. From what de Cock details in 'Just Take It', this expectation is far from being met. In fact, we are told that most of these people "use the BEE fig-leaf/to cover their shame" (*Letter*, 41). BEE is an acronym for Black Economic Empowerment programme introduced by the black majority government to

bridge the economic gap between the privileged minority white and the disadvantaged majority black.

Marius Crous's 'South Africa, You' laments the moral, political and economic degeneration of the country, the opulent and extravagant lifestyle of the new political class and the alienation and widening gulf between the black populace and the black leaders of the country. These realities contradict the expectations of the people about the new order. The poem details some of the characteristics of the new South Africa where the streets parade many exotic cars like 'bmws and wabenzis', where people display 'crystal-crusted watches always running late' and sport 'low-cut dresses and giorgio armani suits' (*Letter,* 28) and ministers enjoy 'a braai of stud-stock vleis and papa' (*Letter*, 28).

Despite the foregoing images of affluence and economic prosperity, the post-apartheid era is said to be 'bathetic pathetic like the shoeless starved wearing feather boas' (*Letter*, 28). Clearly, this is the opposite of what people anticipated. The presentation of images of opulence earlier presented now seems to be a deliberate ironic strategy. In fact, an ironic hint is already dropped in the idea of 'crystal-crusted watches always running late' (*Letter*, 28). Of what use are such obviously expensive watches if they do not give accurate time? The disappointing reality of the new South Africa is captured in the ungainly, revolting and terrifying images metaphorically engendered in the following lines:

> Suid-Afrika
> you are a fat woman in a turquoise tracksuit
> leading a toyi-toyi choir
> an overturner of garbage bins on motor car bonnets
> a panga man pulling faces at the security camera
> a twelve-year-old aborting her love-child
> you are a handlebar moustache moering the moffies
> a peroxide blonde with a Rottweiler on either side
> a revolver next to the remote (*Letter*, 28).

These images are not only disapproving, they fluently comment on the disappointing turn of things in the multiracial rainbow nation. Toyi-toyi used to be a dance of the struggle days, which was symbolic of protest and defiance. This is the dance being led by 'a fat woman in a turquoise track suit' (*Letter,* 28). The images of bungling or

clumsiness associated with the choir leader here may well be metaphorically extendable to the leaders of the new multiracial government, especially since their qualification for leadership borders only on moral stature, rather than knowledge of governance or experience. Perhaps, this is why they are also 'an over turner of garbage bins on motor car bonnets' (*Letter*, 28) – a kind of misfit.

In the third stanza of his poem, Crous goes further to depict South Africa as a nation and her political class as 'a leader admiring his own ass/who's profess to rather kill himself than commit suicide/a porker playing fiddle at the charred remains of a school/a nurse/ disconnecting machines to make a cup of tea' (*Letter*, 28). Whether referring to South Africa's pretended leadership of Africa or to the political class in the country, this seems an uncharitable verdict. Perhaps, it is an expression of the poet's lack of fascination with euphemism. The clear message, however, is that this kind of leadership is neither the desired nor a desirable one.

To further illustrate the betrayal of people's hope we are intimated about a certain 'herd of overfed official cars/ with a Kitsch gold tissue box in the back window' (*Letter*, 29) making their ways into the rural areas with the message to banish hunger and poverty. At their destination, there is wining, dining and sharing of 'hundreds of thousands of rands later' (*Letter*, 29) among the comrades. There are so talks 'of jackets for pals and mansions for mistresses'/ as well as 'the gagging of the mail and guardian' (*Letter*, 29). With transferred epithet in 'overfed official cars', the poet inscribes the superfluity of privileges and opulence enjoyed by those in the corridors of power. Their extravagant and hedonistic lifestyle is also commented on. Their repressive inclination is also hinted at. All these representations are aimed at showing not just the ineptitude and profligacy of the leaders of the new order, they are also to register people's disappointment in them, as well their nostalgia for the former leaders, if not system.

With barely veneered indignation, the symbol of political authority in the land, the President, is castigated by Tumelo Khoza for failing the people. In his poem entitled 'Mr President', Khoza expresses bitter disenchantment with the socio-economic realities of South Africa, blaming the president for virtually every problem in the country. In an accusatory tone, he starts: 'How are you helping us, Mr President/

When you take flights overseas to meet/With the most notorious murderers of our land?' (*Letter*, 94) The notorious murderers here is a metaphor for the neo-colonial powers who lack scruples when it comes to the pursuit of self or national interest at the expense of justice or fairness to other countries. George Bush is cited as an example. For the poet, it is people like George Bush who murder, that is, kill the growth potential of developing economies such as that of South Africa. In one of his direct addresses to the President, the poet asks:

> Mr President please,
> Tell us, what do *you* do for my people and me
> When your promises are hand-painted on kasi walls
> Yet these streets you never walk,
> When we believe you,
> Yet you always talk the same broken fraud
> In articulated tongues…
> We are starting to yawn (*Letter*, 94).

These lines say many things about the poet-persona's disillusion. The first two lines speak eloquently of the poet-persona's disappointment with the President's performance. Contrary to what he, and perhaps others, had expected, the President's promises have turned empty. The next four lines comment on the misplaced confidence of the poet-persona and his people in the ability of the President to deliver. Now, the realities on ground have put the lie to their hopes and expectations. With the benefit of hindsight, they have seen the fraud in Mr President.

In a combination of accusatory and pleading tones, the poet-persona laments the new realities and requests the President to do something about them. He speaks:

> The nation's unprotected erections cum, Mr President, with disease
> Mr President, don't you see?
> Your people plead
> Your people need you, sir
> Help them,
> remove the infested blur,
> Prove to us your concern;
> Be the moon to us,
> It is dark with curse (*Letter*, 94)

Apparently, in the first line of the above extract, the poet is referring to the infections occasioned by sexual promiscuity and licentiousness. Elsewhere in the poem, direct

reference is made to high incidence of HIV/AIDS casualty in the country. The pleas which follow this recognition may well be a request to the President to do something fast about the pandemic, but the more important point is that aspect of the request which demands the President to 'Prove to us your concern' (*Letter*, 94). This is an indirect way of saying that so far the leadership has failed and disappointed the people. The idea that the atmosphere is 'dark with curse' (94) confirms this. Hence, the further plea: 'Be the moon to us' (*Letter*, 94). As if to corroborate the disappointing gloom which has taken over the land, the poet-persona observes again:

> What do you do to help the dying youth?
> We are falling apart in cracks of doom,
> Sinking in sacks of loose panties and puke-
> Drugs and alcohol are starting to rule (*Letter*, 95).

The question in the first line shows the helpless condition of the people while the succeeding two lines provide vivid images of the degeneration being experienced. That the verbs in the two lines are in the progressive form underscores the continuous dimension of the degeneracy. By noting that drugs and alcohol are 'starting to rule', there is a suggestion that this had not been the case before. Again, this shows that the current development is another disappointing feature of the post-apartheid era. To drive home this point more persuasively, the poet-persona draws a comparison between the quality of life of the President and that of the citizens (and to convince us that the political class is responsible for the current mess). Addressing the President, he observes:

> Do you see
> The toothpick bodies
> Found in darkened allies
> While your life is jolly?
> You have all the luxuries
> An increased salary,
> Words to suit your vocabulary,
> Perhaps then you'll understand us clearly (*Letter*, 95-96).

Here, we have a picture of the suffering masses or some of their corpses captured in the metaphor of 'toothpick bodies' in sharp contrast to that of luxury life of the leaders. The last two lines of the extract, together with few other lines which follow, inscribe the indifference of the President. This indifference not only begets lamentation over

the betrayed hope, it also provokes resentment in the poet-persona. He articulates his feelings and those of others:

> Our dreams are hanging on gripless ropes,
> We are slipping, Mr President
> Changing and cannot COPE
> Yes, we know you know this Mr President
> But are your eyes still closed?
> But…
> we do vote…
> what!
> Is this some kind of joke?
> ANWER (sic) US, MR PRESIDENT!
> (*Letter*, 96)

These lines capture the frustrations and disenchantment of the people. For the poet-persona, these untoward realities are particularly painful because the people put those responsible for their lots into power through votes. In his conclusion, the disillusionment is brought into clear relief where the poet confesses that the people 'feel deceived' and 'raped with lies' (*Letter*, 97). He then poses the rhetorical question: 'Is this how you choose to use your freedom machine? (*Letter*, 97).

Sara Dias, in 'Mzansi, My PTSD', catalogues many aspects of South African post-apartheid experiences, which are tell-tales of fortune reversals, dashed hopes and disillusion. From frightening murder statistics, violent attacks, profligate spending, poor service delivery, lack of transparency in government, unemployment, increase in rape incidence to the exodus of nationals and the concomitant brain-drain, we see a recurrence or a worsening of situations, contrary to expectations. It is these realities that seem responsible for the poet's PTSD (Post- Traumatic Stress Disorder). PTSD is a condition which became prevalent in South Africa following the excavations of horrendous inhumanities of apartheid as well as the manifestations of unnerving realities of the new era after the 1994 transition to multi-racial democracy. Mind-boggling atrocities and brutalities were unearthed on both sides of the parties to the struggle. This claimed a lot of political causalities including the former wife of former President Nelson Mandela, Winnie Mandela.

Similarly, liberation also gave rise to another wave of violence, insecurity and terror, which were occasioned by vindictive tendencies, loss of privileges and inter-tribal rivalries. Commenting on the post-apartheid sorry realities, Dias observes:

> Mzansi, we know why your libraries are full of tears.
> Mzansi, you are writing the same history books.
> Fear is the politician's lifeblood.
> Threats. Axe-grinding. Subterfuge. Back-stabbing.
> Deliberate distractions. Court jesters.
> Mzansi, can you not be different? After '94 we thought we were special, different. (*Letter,* 57)

Here, the poet notes that there has been no change in the real sense of the word, as the new leaders are not any different from their predecessors. Rather than turn a new page of history, it is still the same history being re-written. When the poet, therefore, wonders why Mzansi cannot be different after 1994 as expected, he is ventilating his frustration and disillusion with his country. Mzansi is a Zulu nickname, meaning the South, for South Africa. These interrelated feelings of frustration and disillusion are further underscored by a number of rhetorical questions put by the poet-persona as he asks about when truth, accountability and good governance would prevail in the land. He talks about people's riots, demonstrations and protests against bad governance, which have yielded no positive result. In a conflation of accusatory and sarcastic tones, the poet notes that the leaders lie to the people, as well as buy their ways into cornering power. Ironically, he quips: 'Your promises will be fulfilled when pigs fly and your Jesus comes a second time (*Letter,* 58). Here, the poet laments the political deceit and corruption that have become the defining traits of those in the corridors of power. They promise the heavens and the earth only to renege and disappoint the people. From the tone, it is easy to see that the poet is totally disillusioned. By saying that the leaders' 'promises will be fulfilled when pigs fly'(58) is to tell us that the promises will never be fulfilled, as this is impossible. Although the reference to the second coming of Jesus as a possible time to have the promises made redeemed seems to offer hope, it appears more of what has been described as playful blasphemy (Raji-Oyelade, 2001) meant to underscore the futility of expecting anything good from the political leaders of post-apartheid South Africa.

In the same *Letter to State,* Julian de Wette introduces her poem, 'Honourable Members' with a quotation from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* where Caliban notes that he would cry to go back to sleep and dream again because it is in his dreams that he sees riches. This prefatory note subtly hints at what would become a major pre-

occupation in the poem. The socio-political realities in the country are such that living in a dreamland offers more bliss.

de Wette has always been uncomfortable and disappointed with what goes on in the country's parliament in the name of law-making. He once thought of going to the parliament to 'tear it apart' due to the members' acts of pretence and deceit. Now that a new era has come, he expects a positive change. Unfortunately, the new backbenchers choose to fill their 'gross appetites once forced to fast/when death's dark angel sauntered past/and left a syndrome now in play' (*Letter,* 49). The new backbenchers here apparently refer to the greenhorns brought into the parliament as a result of the political change in the country. They are those who had no place in the system when apartheid held sway. They have however embraced the practice left by the old order, which include pretence and corruption. The poet laments why nobody can get rid of these practices in what he calls 'the House of Wrath' (*Letter,* 50). Rather than give privilege to law-making, parliamentarians devote attention to 'sweet tenders, sweetheart contracts signed/enough to boggle any mind (*Letter,* 50). We are told of their dealings with 'offshore banks' and hording of credit in the family' (*Letter,* 50). Interestingly, any complaints against these practices attract the invocation of the so-called lawmakers' role in the struggle for liberation. In other words, they are, like the poet notes earlier, filling 'appetites once forced to fast' (*Letter,* 49). Their struggle activities were an investment now yielding bullish returns. The poet implicates all of them:

> None around the through is without taint
> the image of what was fought against-
> and as they strut their Spivey stuff
> retrieved scuffed gold balls from the rough
> don't grieve your heart or shake your head
> the old ways are not nearly dead (*Letter,* 50).

The crucial point here is not just the fact that all the new lawmakers are stained or corrupt, it is the fact these people had fought against these same practices in the past. They have also followed in the heels of the luxury lifestyle of their predecessors. The hope that multi-racial democracy would bring good governance and abundant life for all is misplaced, for the old ways continue. The poet's admonition that we should not grieve our heart or shake our head at a sorry state like this, however, is surprising. If

the tone of the poem is anything to go by, the poet himself is sorely grieving for his country. And here lies the ironic edge she brings to the execution of her verse. Indeed, she is asking us to feel sorry for the country.

An added cause of disappointment with the new leadership is its members' recourse to 'the race card dealt for private gain' (*Letter,* 50) and their subversion of moral tones of AMANDLA! Days? During the apartheid years, colour conferred privilege on the White folk. In the new dispensation, colour is also used by the black folk to gain undue advantage. The only difference is that while the former is recognized and sanctioned by the law, the latter is not. The point, however, is that the much-vaunted racism is not encouraged or practised by the whites only. Wherever it serves the Blacks well, it is subtly employed. Consequently, the idea of equal rights and opportunities for all, promised by multi-racial democracy, is an illusion after all. Rather that live the high moral rhetoric of AMANDLA! days, these leaders exhibit greed and deceive their people. They overwhelm their people 'with pre-election sacks of samp/and promises of loos that flush/instead of squatting in a bush-/while vowing to field a winning team/with scenarios scrounged from the old regime' (*Letter,* 51). Having deceived the electorates by bags of samps, a staple food in the country, as a gesture of care, plus sundry other promises, they merely appropriate the strategies of the old regime to win elections. This is no change at all, let alone a positive one! For the poet, this is not the kind of democracy that he looked forward to. It is a democracy characterised by deceit and intolerance of opposition. In his frustration, the poet asks: "How could we tell with queries ducked/that democracy would self-destruct?" (*Letter,* 51).

To further inscribe the deceit, which finally culminates in disillusion, the poet informs us that the propagandists 'lull livid squatters in their camps/extol the merits of paraffin lamps/ and flood the airwaves night and day/with: *Human rights have come to stay!'* (*Letter,* 53). These hypocritical propagandas are deployed even when questions are not only frowned at, but attempts are also made 'to gag frank tongues that might oppose/lies and scandal in the House' (*Letter,* 56). Apparently referring to sex scandals in the corridors of power in his country, the poet, in his frustration and disappointment, grows nostalgic for the past as he notes that the best way to check the excesses of the new leaders in this regard is to bring back the immorality Act' (*Letter,* 56). In rounding off, the poet wonders 'how freedom beguiled us with its mask/and why, with

such perfected art, it drives the peoples far apart' (*Letter*, 56). The idea of 'peoples' obviously refers to the different racial groups in the country. Rather than bring them together as the TRC project of the government envisaged, the opposite is the truth. This, again, is another illusion removed.

Using a suggestive phrase borrowed from the initial part of the cliché, 'the more things change, the more they remain the same', as the title, Sindiwe Mangona wastes no time in registering her disenchantment with the post-liberation realities of her country. She starts:

> South Africa I have loved you all life long
> But April 1994 is but a dim dream today.
> Twenty years is more than enough.
> I can't stand the waiting.
> I can't feed on empty promises (*Letter*, 101).

These are the first five lines of the poem, and they contain the kernel of Mangona's preoccupation in the work. By plunging directly into this concern, she shows impatience with the new order. She actually makes this very clear by noting that two decades is enough to wrought positive changes in the land, and that she can't continue to wait. Indeed, Mangona, through these few lines, articulates the feelings of many a South African, especially the Black population, which had expected radical transformation of their lots in the new dispensation. The transition form oppression to liberation, which April 1994 symbolises, has failed to translate into better life for the people. The poet would later present us with a catalogue of unchanging realities and worsening ones in her beloved country. She talks of lack of transparency and accountability in governance, poverty, violence, insecurity, rural-urban drift, education being in a shambles, 'thieving government officials' (*Letter*, 102), 'contaminated' (*Letter*, 103) parliament, rape, inefficient police, deceit, corruption, and 'predictions of heaven' (*Letter*, 101).

Most of the foregoing degenerate and untoward developments are not merely listed, questions are raised about them. Let us ponder some:

> South Africa when will we end the internecine?
>
> When will you take off your blinkers

Address the problems from the root
Look at the graves of those you starve
The loyal who vote you in time and time again?

when will you look at yourself and see yesterday's drama?
(*Letter*, 101)

By presenting these issues through rhetorical questions, the poet seems to imply that the situations are hopeless, for no answers are anticipated. The last question further inscribes the poet's disillusion. From the poet's observation, the beaches and the mountains are no-go areas, rape is interminable, insecurity is commonplace, history is repeating itself and she thinks: 'Apartheid made me want to be a saint' (*Letter*, 102). Whether she wanted to be a religious saint or simply wanted to live an upright life, this nebulous implication invites a less significant attention than the nostalgic import of the statement. By some strategy of indirectness, the poet is hinting at a comparative betterment of apartheid years.

In his own address to South Africa, Marius Swart begins rather light-heartedly when he jokes to the effect that he has nothing left to give his country 'apart from the car guard's R5 in my back pocket, on the 17th of September/in the year of our Lord, soccer, sex workers and Jackie Selebi, 2010' (*Letter*, 154). The year 2010 was the year South Africa hosted one of the greatest crowd-pulling events in the world, FIFA Soccer World Cup. The event led to a sharp rise in commercial sex activities in the country. It was also the year that witnessed the celebrated case of Jackie Selebi a prominent figure in the post-apartheid government. Selebi was implicated in serious cases of corruption and was eventually jailed. Swart's references to Selebi and the rise in the incidence of sex-work, which took place the same year, are innuendoes meant to draw attention to the ugly realities of the post-apartheid era. His subtle exposure of these realities is made keener by the deliberate inscription of the year as that of 'our Lord' (*Letter*, 154). By bringing religious register into his text, an impression of godliness or righteousness is foregrounded. This is clearly, however, at cross-purposes with inscriptions of sex-work and corruption. Thus, the barely veneered mockery crystallises.

As typical of most white poets in their commentary and representation of the post-apartheid realities, Swart's disappointment does not derive from betrayal of

expectations. It is about the level of degeneration, which has taken place within a short time! Here are some of his lamentations:

> South Africa, what has become of your technicolour rainbow
> angel'swings?
> just look how much weight you've lost, look at your bleeding gums
> smell that rotting breath and just listen to that wrenching cough.
> who and what are you really, my land?
> Look at your reflection on the wings of the flies that hang around the
> orphans.
> and in the eyes of herds of Rhodesian refugees that trample your
> borders.
> is there any gas left in your lighter, South Africa?
>
> (*Letter*, 154)

Here the idea of diversity as a source of strength and signifier of beauty, which the sobriquet 'Rainbow Nation' stands for, is depicted as non-existent or vanished. Not only this, the image of the country evoked by the diction here is that of a sick country, a country suffering from malnutrition or a deadly disease like tuberculosis. It recalls the images of emaciated refugees and orphaned children with which sub-Sahara Africa has come to be associated on the screens of CNN and other international news media. Moving away from such revolting metaphors as used above, the poet asks a rhetorical question, wondering whether there is still any energy left to drive the country. He also wonders whether the little possibly left has also not been left at the mercy of a 'BEE compliant company' (*Letter*, 154). BEE is an acronym for Black Economic Empowerment initiative of the successive post-apartheid governments.

Commenting on another aspect of the South African reality, which not only contradicts what is familiar, but is also disappointing, the poet speaks of neo-colonial interest of the far East, especially China, in the post-apartheid South Africa. He laments that 'the Chinese have even captured the old Karoo' and are 'taking all our resources' (*Letter*, 156). Obviously, the new political order is being blamed for this. Interestingly, he asks:

> but what resources do we actually have?
> a few hundred thousand orphans, no electricity, a hell of a nice
> constitution, a media with castration anxiety, raping babies as a
> national sport and a polygamist for a president? (*Letter*, 156).

Initially, one is inclined to see the first question as another in the poet's list of rhetorical questions. However, when he proceeds to present a list beginning with 'a few hundred thousand'(*Letter*, 156), this inclination changes and one looks forward to

being intimated with whatever few 'goodies' there is left in the country. Surprisingly, the list turns out to be a catalogue of 'disasters'. While this ingenuous structure is an effective use of anti-climax, it is even more fascinating for its clever ironic edge.

5.3 Aesthetics

In his lament over the disappointment and ugly realities of post-apartheid South Africa in 'Horrors of Phalarbowa', Bila invokes the spirit of his ancestors on two different occasions to help re-liberate the land. Addressing the ancestral spirits on one of the occasions, he invokes:

> *tsika, tsika*
> wrench free the backs of people
> eleven years into liberation
> hunched at dawn
> broken at sundown (*Handsome Jita*, 20).

In a similar context, he uses the words *tsika tsika*_ again. *Tsika* is an ixTsonga word of homage to refer to the ancestors. The use of the word, together with *makongoza*, is informed by their cultural significance and probably due to a lack of word with adequate corresponding meaning in the English language. Thus, despite the poet's obvious competence in English and adoption of same as vehicle of his poetic expression, he conveys aspects of his cultural roots in his mother tongue. This illustrates linguistic pluralism, which has come to be a prominent feature of the literature from the margins, using the language of the centre.

If cultural fidelity influences the poet's diction in the foregoing, the same cannot be said of some of his other poems in the collection. In 'Comrades, Don't We Delude Ourselves', for instance, there is extensive melange of multiple lingos. Let us consider one or two excerpts for illustration, viz.:

> Nothing for mahala, Mr Mashonisha has warned us.
> wasekhaya, heita, hoezat daar?
> Black petty bourgeoisie escape village witches;
> like ma-gents, ba tsamaya ka s' lahla,
> Oh sweet nanana, oh mzekezeke!
> Like township majitas;
> Ba tsamaya le di roll-ons, oh sweet16-valves!
> Ba shapa mkagakga in power juwish,
> (*Handsome Jita*, 20).

What we have here is a combination of several languages, ranging from English, Africaans, xiTsonga, Sepedi to Tsotsi-taal, a street language also called isiCamtho. In other instances, languages like isiXhosa, isi Ndebele, isiSwati and isiZulu are also combined with English or with English and Afrikaans in Bila's poetic renditions. This linguistic strategy is clearly a reflection of the multilingual nature of South Africa. More importantly, it shows the struggle taking place in the linguistic space of a postcolonial culture. The consequence, as Ashcroft at al. (1989) posit, is syntactic fusion, glossing, abrogation and other strategies of appropriation in postcolonial writing. In the sampled context, as in many other instances in Handsome Jita,' the poet provides footnotes where expressions in languages other than English are glossed. Yet, there are also instances where such expressions are left un-glossed.

These styles of linguistic pluralism and glossing are also employed by Mahola in some of the poems in *Dancing in the Rain.* In 'State of emergency', for instance, there is the following dramatic presentation captured in English and Afrikaans, viz.:

> One of them shouted
> And I was stopped.
> Em waar gaan jy nou?
> Ni ever nie
> Net omdie hoek, sersant
> jy kan nie.
> Jy moet by die roadblock deur ry
> There is no need for that, sir.
> Otherwise I'll be late. / I got out of the car and ran.
> skiet hom! (*Dancing*, 9)

The use of different languages by the poetic characters in the dialogue may easily be seen as a strategy of identity, with Afrikaans symbolic of the white apartheid apologists, while English represents the other divide. However, the fact that the Afrikaans speaker starts his speech with English calls this possibility into question. It would therefore seem more logical that the use of two different languages in this context is an unwitting inscription of the struggle for visibility between two imperial languages. From *Letter to the State* there are further examples of linguistic pluralism and glossing. For reasons of variety, Mboneni Muila's Holala Emsanzi Pluckfontein would be used for illustration. This is because it offers a combination of isiCamtho, a

street language derived from many local languages and English. Here are a few lines from the poem:

> emthonzeni schema geleza
> in the stone heart of learners
> who cannot find their route site
> home emzansi afurika
> rea vaya bus terminus
> from a colourful backyard kasi
> of greater Soweto (*Letter*, 124).

Like in the previous examples, the isiCamitho expressions here are also glossed as footnotes. This deployment of polyglot capability is not just a coincidental or mere experimenting feature of post-apartheid poetry. It is indeed a reflection of the linguistic manifestation of the struggle to resist the centre by the margin. It is also a signifier of the liberalisation of the creative space in the country, as well as that of rapprochement between the hitherto compartmentalised writings of people of different racial backgrounds.

With open or ironic mockery, satiric impulse runs through some of the poems. From the title of Bila's 'Mr. President, Let the Babies Die,' ironic mockery is already woven into the piece. Although the curious phrasing of the title immediately invites special interest, its ironic import comes into bold relief on a close reading of the poem. We are informed about fat men in the parliament who sleep in broad daylight since they have forgotten the need to make laws which will improve the lot of the starving masses. We also get the hint that this does not go down well with some people who, consequently, embark on street protests and demonstrations to express their displeasure with the goings-on. Such people are, however, admonished not to inconvenience Mr. President because 'He has an important meeting in Washington DC' (*Handsome Jita*, 37) and another in Geneva where 'He must brush shoulders with the high and mighty' (*Handsome Jita*, 38). Obviously, these are satirical attacks on the insensitive and irresponsible leadership of the post-apartheid era where leaders are more interested in vacuous international attention and personal vainglory at the expense of real development in the country. Yet, we are told that the symbol of this leadership, Mr. President, deserves to be rewarded or spoilt a little for attending the 'important meeting' on behalf of the country. To do this, the people must "Buy him houses in all

the cities of the world…/…a private jet, a balloon' so that he can '… jump. Clap and stomp like a well- fed baboon' (*Handsome Jita*, 37). The poor who labour under the burden of tax are told not to 'worry about the price' (*Handsome Jita*, 37) given the country's ties with the G8 and the US. Again, this is an ironic attack on the profligate tendencies of Africa leaders in general and those of post-apartheid South Africa in particular. The poet's ridicule of these leaders is made quite acerbic by the image of immature childish conduct with which they are identified. When the idle but extravagant lifestyle of the leaders – former exiles and prisoners whom the people had blown horns and strummed guitars to welcome – is juxtaposed with the plight of the masses who had anticipated improved standard of living on their assumption of power, the irony of situation in the poem crystallises more powerfully.

Many of the other poems examined in the study also rely on irony. In Mahola's 'There Will Be Signs', the poet details the opulence in which the leaders of post-apartheid South Africa live. It is so great that it is the 'envy of the white folk' (*Dancing*, 44). They also send their children to 'the best institutions/To lift them above the lot' (*Dancing*, 44). With all these at the expense of the masses, the poet quips, 'soar high, brothers;/isn't this what we fought for? (*Dancing*, 44). Obviously, the people did not fight to enthrone inequity and exploitation. So, when Mahola asks whether this isn't what they fought for he is being ironical. This ironic strategy makes the exposure of the so-called new leaders' excesses very sharp. It also engenders ill-will towards them. In 'When I'm King', Mahola also makes an adroit use of irony. He speaks of ruling by example when he becomes a king. He plans to do this by 'marrying a juvenile/in her prime/To resuscitate my life' (*Dancing*, 48). A man who is 'fiftyish' is intent on marrying a juvenile as well as setting it as an example for others! This is another indirect attack on the rich and highly placed men who chase after young girls or take them as new additions to their harem. Black leaders of post-apartheid era implicated in this practice. In fact, this was one of the campaign issues against the incumbent president of the country Mr. Jacob Zuma. He is a self-confessed and publicly known polygamist. By noting that he would take a juvenile for wife when he becomes king, the poet's dart at the political class appears aimed specifically at the president.

With a rich combination of devices like pun, irony, antithesis, rhyme, invective, repetition and vulgar diction, Rampolokeng's 'Welcome to the New consciousness'

launches an unapologetic and unrestrained satirical barbs at the realities of the post-apartheid era. The New consciousness to which we are welcomed is the multi-racial South Africa where freedom, equality and abundant life were expected, especially by the hitherto disadvantaged and oppressed. Unfortunately, what the poet's lens captured in the land is a picture of 'derearranged senses' (*It All Begins*, 30) where everyone is utilised. But, utilised for what? We are presented with contrasting roles: 'some fertilise the soil/some are food for lies & lice; some sit in the power tower/some shit in a flower shower; some have ejaculation for lunch/&some count on cunt & cum'(*It All Begins*, 29).We have more, viz.: 'some are just deranged small change/while some cringe & some whinge', ' some are hypochristians/some are wine-drunken, catholics/taking a tumble on the bible' (*It All Begins*, 30). These are the features of the new consciousness to which the poet gleefully welcomes everyone. These are not only opposites of what people anticipated, they are far from what could be welcomed with a scream. Not only is the poet drawing attention to the irony of his people's situation, he is ironical in his presentation. He declares: 'the war is done/the gore is won' (*It All Begins*, 29). Apartheid has been dislodged, but replaced with something that is hardly better.

In 'Mzansi, My PTSD', Sara Dias catalogues a series of political disappointments, economic frustrations, social challenges, crimes and sundry other problems which have taken over the land in the post- apartheid era. All these are being contended with despite promises to the contrary by political leaders. This failure to fulfill their promises eventually attracts the indignation of the poet as she sarcastically observes that the promises 'will be fulfilled when pigs fly and/ your Jesus comes a second time' (*Letter*, 58). Obviously, pigs cannot fly. For a poet who does not 'believe in gods' and wont say the 'Lord's prayer', the idea of Jesus' second coming does not arise. Consequently, she is merely ridiculing political promises as empty promises. In an ironic mockery of God-consciousness, she prays, 'Bless the children who blame the teacher/bless the parents who blame the teacher./Bless the minister of education who blames the teacher' (*Letter*, 59). This mock-prayer is a subtle satiric exposure of the buck-passing and degeneration in the educational system of the country. The mock nature of the prayer is made clear when she tells children to 'stay in school, pick up a book and learn/ for Mzansi's sake, don't wait on those who pretend to govern (*Letter*, 59).

In the parliament, lawmakers are preoccupied with 'sweet tenders' and sweetheart contracts' that can 'boggle any mind' (*Letter*, 59) while the business of law making is pushed aside. This is one of the disturbing concerns of de Wette in 'Honourable Members'. While drawing attention to this directly for the most part of the poem, he also satirises the lawmakers in some breaths. On one of such occasions he sarcastically observes:

> Is it hard to cop a stint
> in the nation's famous parliament?
> Catch forty winks beside your mates
> and snore through testy law debates
> or even when, at question time,
> the frontbench froths: *There is no crime*
> *If anything, it is down since last*
> *we lectured you on evils past* (*Letter*, 51).

Here, the poet ridicules the parliamentarians, the so-called honourable members. Rather than get busy with law-making for the development of the country, some of them are busy sleeping, even while serious arguments rage! This is meant to show the height of irresponsibility among some of the country's lawmakers and, by extension, the entire political class in the country. The parliamentarians' hypocrisy and ineptitude are also ridiculed through their claim that there is no crime, only to later say that its rate has reduced and giving the credit for its reduction to themselves. To end the poem, de Wette salutes: 'Honourable members, Patriots all!/sit down, relax-and watch pride go before the fall' (*Letter*, 56). With irresponsibleness, hypocrisy, inefficiency, corruption and so on, the lawmakers are far from being honourable and patriotic. Such appellations as honourable and patriots are clearly sarcastic in this context. The mockery underlining the poet's irony is brought into bold reliefs with the idea that they should sit down and relax, which is promptly followed by the warning that pride goes before the fall.

Our view that the above lampoon extends to cover the entire political class finds credence in the veiled reference to the country's current president, Mr. Jacob Zuma who has a notorious penchant for romantic affairs with women. We are informed that 'wherever he turns, he finds a lair /to perform such pressing official engagements/ as

result in serial nuptial arrangements. /Bank clerk, farmer or staff nurse/lobola is met by the public purse/and earned him a reputation: a caliban to lead the nation (*Letter*, 51). Here, certainly, is another ironic edge to de Wette's poetics. How do serial wedding arrangements and 'pressing official engagements' go together? It is either the President privileges serial and nuptial arrangements over official engagements or makes nuptial arrangement during every official engagements. Whichever is the case, this is an ironic illustration of what a leader is not supposed to be.

Another stylistic feature, which is hitherto unfamiliar in South African poetry is the appropriation of slang. The liberation of creative space following measures aimed at terminating apartheid in the late 1980s and early 1990s encouraged artistic productivity in music, theatre and poetry. The surge in poetic productions specifically revolved around oral performance. In this creative endeavour, the poetic voices employed a conversational style, colloquial expression, slang and rap tendencies in their works. Indeed, these qualities made their poetry very appealing to the common folk. Some of these oral or performance poets have continued with their craft in the post- apartheid era and have written such verses as good enough as to be included in literary anthologies. A mixture of standard codes with slang characterises their poetry. In 'Understand Where I'm Coming From' by Prophets of da City for instance, standard French and English are imbricated with slangy English expressions. Some of the slangy expressions which intersperse the poem are found in the following lines:

> But who's gonna pay for food
> you gotta be black, you gotta be strong
> You gotta be one
>
> How can I preach, preach, preach, teach, teach is what I wanna do
> I gotta do
>
> (*New Century*, 450-451).

In addition to coming across as slangy, American slang specifically, these lines also exhibit the appropriation of rap culture. Consider this other example:

> Forgive and forget
> Nah, it's easier said than done
> Cause who stole the land from the Black and uhmm…
> Beware of the handshake of a damn snake and wait

before you fall 4 the okey dokey mate 2 negotiate
And motivate towards whatever but I hope you make
the right choice… (*New Century*, 45)

Obviously, the language here is far from being formal. It may also not appear poetic in the literary sense, but it is certainly rhythmical. What the poet does here is to simply transfer his oral form to the scribal form. This looks like an elastic use of poetic licence almost to the point of impunity. The use of figures 4 and 2 instead of 'for' and 'to' is also signifying of colloquialisms and pop culture influence in the new poetry.

Similarly, this features is observed in the poetry of Bila and Seitlhamo Motsapi. Bila informs us in 'The Graduate' that for six months after graduation he writes applications for jobs without getting one because ' the corporate world dictates/gotta no experience' (*It All Begins*, 31). In Motsapi's 'mah boy stah", this linguistic style is taken a notch higher. Here are a few lines for illustration:

i yagree
like all nigahs
started sinning in church
velvet staccato Baptist holler
while brother X pianod we
way' yond river Jordan (*It All Begins*, 12)

Perhaps, it is necessary to note that this linguistic form is not indicative of incompetence but a reflection of social reality or conscious experimentation, for these poets are well educated and fluent in English, as other pieces of their work testify.

One of the defining characteristics of modern African poetry, specifically from sub-Sahara Africa, is its appropriation of oral tradition aesthetics. With the exception of Masizi Kunene, this is not exactly so with the modern poetry from South Africa. On such rare occasions when we encounter this feature in the poetry from the country, it is usually in a translated work from one of the indigenous languages. Perhaps this is due to the country's over-exposure to the Western culture and artistic tradition. It may also be due to the often-repeated excuse of incapacity for the luxury of aesthetics in the face of urgent political imperatives. It is, however, interesting and refreshing to observe that, though minimal, post-apartheid poetry by new and young black writers is laced with this stylistic feature. Two oral aesthetics observed in some of the poems under

study are proverbs and wise sayings. In the poem titled 'Impassable Bridge' by Mahola in *It All Begins*, the poet-persona who has been coldly treated during a telephone enquiry for his former bosom friend, who is now a parliamentarian, leaves the message that 'poisonous mushrooms /sprout under rotten logs'. In response, the MP's secretary who answered the phone call retorts, 'And lizards don't fly/for their food/ They crawl' (*It All Begins*, 35). These expressions are illustrative of traditional African proverbs meant to advise or warn. Not only this, they speak metaphorically to the parties in the conversation, expecting them to interpret the message and apply same to their lives, which is in tandem with the advisory function of proverbs.

Similarly, the poet in 'Dancing in the Rain' tells himself that ' it does not help to cry/when it thunders' (*Dancing*, 53). In 'New Proverbs', also from *Dancing in the Rain*, the poet, apparently meditating over the paradox that is life, juxtaposes traditional proverbs with contemporary but creative, if humorous, proverbial expressions. On one hand, he notes that 'a tree may yield in abundance/ But it can never enjoy its fruit'; 'Many hands build a house,/But few are destined to cuddle at its hearth (*Dancing*, 54). On the other hand, we are told that 'Those in front/Did not warn those following/that words crush men's testicles (*Dancing*, 54). Another proverbial expression in the poem says: 'He taught his girls skills/ in hide and seek/She fell pregnant and hid the source (*Dancing*, 54). These latter examples illustrate what Aderemi Raji-Oyelade (1999) describes as postproverbials. This use of proverbs is quite significant. The former examples not only demonstrate the richness of African rhetorical resource, their combination with western poetic idioms inscribes the element of hybridity inherent in postcolonial writing. The latter examples illustrate a subversion of received wisdom. They query and deconstruct traditional age-old wisdom in a manner also intended to generate humour, but not necessarily to ridicule.

Closely related to the use of proverbs are expressions describable as wise sayings. In 'There Will Be Signs' from *Dancing in the Rain* for example, the poet asks rhetorically, 'is it right / That we should adopt/ways or lizards/And not also learn to fly? (*Dancing*, 44) This sounds like a proverb. However, whether it is one or not, the wisdom inherent in the expression is clearly foregrounded by its thought-provoking nature. Interestingly, the poet is questioning the wisdom in his country's backtracking when the world is advancing. In 'Hearken My Children', we are told that 'Wisdom

eludes those / Who use theirs lavishly' and that 'The life of the wise is tranquil (*Dancing*, 32). No doubt, these are wise sayings. Using expressions like this, in addition to aesthetically enriching the poem, underscores the inseparability of form and function in African arts. Wise sayings or proverb in arts are certainly not just for ornamental purposes.

5.4 Conclusion

In the words of Jude Agho (1995: 24), the 'post-colonial literature of Africa is replete with the seeds of disillusion'. This view is apparently expressed against the backdrop of represention of post-Independence disappointments and neo-colonial experience of ordinary Africans decades after attaining self-rule. With the black majority rule, South African post-liberation realities have also confirmed Agho's thesis. As can be seen from the foregoing, what we have is a disturbing picture of frustration, cynicism and despair occasioned by the ineptitude of the leadership in the country.

The political change from apartheid to multiracial democracy, rather than transform the lives of the majority, has left them lamenting their lot. This does not imply that there is absolutely nothing positive for the majority in the new order. Rather, it is the fact that most of their expectations are far from being met. Secondly, most ordinary people see the new black leaders as opportunists who are quick to appropriate the privileges and opulence of their white predecessors at the expense of the common folk. For members of the common folk, specifically the black, the sacrifices of their loved ones and other heroes of the liberation struggle have amounted to virtually nothing! As for the white folk, their disappointment lies not at all in what to gain since they actually anticipated loss of privileges. Theirs lies more in the rising level of violence, insecurity and infrastructural degeneration in the country. They had ceded power in the hope of bringing an end to the incidence of violence and insecurity in the land.

CHAPTER SIX

Summary and Conclusion

This chapter summarises the main points of our study. In line with the structure of the work, an overview of the salient thematic concerns of each of the genres of prose, poetry and drama as seen in the selected post-apartheid South African texts is isolated. In each, the dialectical relation between creative writing and the social milieu of its emergence is highlighted. The chapter comments on the intersections across the three genres represented in the work.

In the prose section of the study, the selected texts clearly demonstrate the influence of freedom on people's tendencies as well as on imaginative creations. Prior to the dislodgement of apartheid in 1994, and the subsequent institutionalisation of a new constitution in 1996, it was virtually impossible to imagine writings as sexually daring, provocative, and subversive as seen in these texts. Not only do most of them blatantly comment and depict 'abnormal' sexuality, they actually celebrate it. The writers' comments sometimes appear like gay activism. The level of eroticism displayed by most is equalled only by what obtains in x-rated films. Another amazing aspect of the shocking depictions is that black writers, as well as black characters, partake of it. This seems surprising because these apparent 'immoralities' are often thought to be exclusively whites. As reflected in some of the works, the reality of non-normative sexuality in post-apartheid South Africa is public knowledge. Thus, what South African fiction writers of the new epoch are simply doing is illuminating the social history of their milieu, while making the most of the uncensored cultural climate available. In the light of this, our hypothesis that the socio-political changes in South Africa are likely to influence creative writings in the country is confirmed.

Besides establishing sex and sexuality as a major and popular theme in post-apartheid fiction, as well as a signifier of thematic change occasioned by political change, the study has also established the appropriation of unusual stylistic strategies by South Africa fiction. For instance, we have the use of multiple narrative points of view,

fragmented plot, linguistic vulgarism, code-switching, meta-fictional narration, intertextuality, surrealism, 'multiple lingo' and so on. To be certain, these forms are scarce in the old literature of struggle and racism.

In the dramatic genre, the topical and socially relevant theme of truth and reconciliation is not only inscribed as another signifier of change in South African literature, it also establishes a link between literature and the society. Unlike the prose fiction where the influence of freedom is palpable, here it is the challenge posed by political liberation which constitutes the thematic preoccupation of the writers. With freedom now available to both the erstwhile oppressors and oppressed on equal terms in the new era, and with the haunting memories of the ugly past dogging their sub-concious, how can harmonious relation be ensured? In their different ways, the playwrights dig up memories of old wounds, pains and sometimes joy, but all agreed on the need to forgive the past, come together and build a peaceful and united nation. The plays draw from the spirit, content and processes of the Truth and Reconcilaiation Commission set up by the government of former President Mandela to facilitate interpersonal and national reconciliations. They also dramatise and bring to life in sharp reliefs the dilemma of victims over vengeance or forgiveness, as well as regret or indifference of perpetrators of human rights abuse about their deeds. Again, the plays evince the inseparability of the text of imagination from the text of life and vice-versa. Thus, we have what can be described as a 'contest of text and context' (Adeeko, 1992:7), which is quite illustrative of all postcolonial writings.

With respect to the formal properties of the plays, one quality stands itself out. This is the creative adaptation of classical plays like *Oresteia* by Aeschylus and *Ubu Roi* by Alfred Jarry. While the thrust of the adaptation of the former focuses on content, that of the latter draws from form. Not only do the concerned playwrights make a fascinating job of their efforts, the fact that they are women makes a comment on post-apartheid South African writing. Like Barbara Adair, the only woman novelist of the four studied in the prose fiction section, Yael Farber's and Jane Taylor's stylistic ingenuities in their plays suggest that women writers in the post-aparthied era are showing greater interest in experimentation with form than their men counterparts.

The poetry section of the study clearly recalls the post-Independence disillusionment writing of sub-Sahara Africa up north. Aptly entitled 'Realities of Disillusionment', it highlights the people's disappointment and disenchantment with the new socio-economic and political realities of the new rainbow nation. Juxtaposed with the dreams and hopes of an Eldorado offered by the termination of apartheid and enthronement of multiracial democracy, inscriptions of frustration, disappointment and betrayal suffuse the poems, bringing into relief commoners' renewed pain, sadness, cynicism and sometimes anger at the new leaders of the country. Strident voices of bitter complaints against renewed economic injustices between the different races making up the country reverberate through the poems. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, these voices are predominantly those of blacks. This is not surprising because they were the ones hoping for a better life. Generally, the poems are some kind of regret and lamentation over the outcome of freedom attainment.

As observed in the poems, stylistically speaking, not much can be said of the poetry of the new era. However, some of the black poets exhibit unmistakable departure from the aesthetic sterility of the black poetry of yore. For instance, Rampolokeng's poetry is imbued with lyricism and word-play hitherto unknown to black South African poetry. In fact, he is famed for the oral performance of his poetry. A group of famed black poets of the oral performance mould, Prophets of da city, saturates their poetry with linguistic innovations, combining standard code with slangy expressions, Americanism, code-switching and so on.

Extrapolating from the foregoing, our study does not only establish the major thematic and stylistic devices in the selected works, it goes further to demonstrate this as contingent upon the political change of 1994 in the country. It also argues that these are not only iconic of the shift in the thematic preoccupations and stylistic strategies of the post-aparthied South African writing but also of the dialectical relation between arts and the society. A very vital observation in this connection is that each of the thematic thrusts preserves a link with liberation or change. Inscriptions of sex and sexuality are made possible by the repeal of former censorship laws and the spirit of permissiveness of the new laws of the land. Reconciliation is a challenge thrown up by liberation while, for many, disillusionment is the 'gift' of liberation.

One of the uniqueness of this study is its venture into the three major genres of literature at one fell swoop. This attribute tends to make the work look a bit too ambitious. However, two considerations can easily obviate such a feeling. First is the delimitation of each genre to a specific theme. Secondly, and more importantly, as a work that focuses on the literature of a period, representing the different genres places it in a balanced and better perspective.

Although our contention is that the themes examined in this study are some of the markers of change, as well as dominant ones in the new South African writing, since the texts studied are purposively sampled, it follows logically that not every theme in the new writing is captured. Consequently, we would like to suggest that South African post-apartheid writing offers scholars one of the most fertile literary soil for critical cultivation in contemporary Africa. Finally, we submit that South African literature is no longer monolithic in its thematic concern; and no longer circumscribed by the psychology of struggle or race-consciousness in a way that engenders aesthetic sterility.

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