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Onderhoud

'n Onderhoud met Kirby van der Merwe oor *Eugene*

Kirby van der Merwe & Hein Willemse

Hein Willemse het op 31 Maart 2022 tydens die 26ste Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees op Oudtshoorn hierdie onderhoud met Kirby van der Merwe gevoer. Die kunsredakteur van *Die Burger*, Laetitia Pople, het dit aanvanklik aangevra en die berig is op 5 April 2022 onder die opskrif "Roman 'Eugene' eindproduk van 20 jaar se beplanning" op netwerk24.com gepubliseer. Dieselfde berig, met 'n aangepaste opskrif, "Machismo én matriargie belig", het op 7 April 2022 in druk in *Die Burger*, *Beeld* en *Volksblad* verskyn. Hierdie weergawe van die onderhoud is ná die aanvanklike publikasie per e-pos-korrespondensie aangepas en aangevul, en opnuut vir vloei en duidelikheid geredigeer. Voordat die aanvanklike opname opgeneem is, het die gesprek spontaan oor die uitgeeproses en redigering gehandel. Die opname begin dus in die middel van 'n gesprek wat reeds aan die gang is.

HW: Dit klink vir my of die boek 'n bietjie anders uitgedraai het as die manuskrip?

KvdM: Ja, dit het. Struktuurgewys, aanvanklik, het ek Bertolt Brecht se vervreemdingstegniek ingespan, aangesien ek sy gedig "Van arme B. B." as motto gebruik. Die manuskrip is met dié vervreemdingstruktuur ingedien vir NB-uitgewers se 2021 Groot Afrikaanse Romanwedstryd. Dit het in dié vorm die derde plek in die kompetisie gehaal. Dié struktuur was volgens 'n eerste leserverslag egter té vervreemdend en ek en my uitgewer Nèlleke de Jager het besluit om so ver dit moontlik sou wees die struktuur lineêr te maak om lesers tegemoet te kom. Ek wil tyd spaar. Jy kry die skrywers wat die redakteurs tydsaam probeer oorreed, 'n láng tyd voor hy uiteindelik sy darlings skiet. Ek sê net, ék doen die skryfwerk. Dink julle dit werk nie? Klaar. Uit en gedaan. In dié proses is 'n paar tonele rondgeskuif en 'n paar sterk tonele is uiteindelik weggelaat. Dié stukke is nie verlore nie. Dit kan net so as kortverhale gepubliseer word. Ek glo skrywers moet hul redakteur ten volle kan vertrou en ek respekteer die uitgeeproses, laat die proses vlot verloop en spaar my eie en die redakteur se tyd. Ek sit net voet neer indien redakteurs die pad byster raak.

HW: Ek hou van die verkapping van die verhaal en dit gee die roman 'n totaal ander struktuur as wat jy dit chronologies sou vertel.

KvdM: Dit was die idee. Dié "verkapping" binne 'n raamvertelling.

HW: Noudat jy van redigering praat. Daar's plek-plek waar ek opgetel het dat daar 'n woord is wat uit die taalregister val. 'n Woord wat nie heeltemal in die ideolek van 'n karakter val nie. 'n Mens moet fyn lees om dit agter te kom, maar dit het in een of twee gevalle vir my geklink na 'n woord wat 'n subredakteur vervang het …

KvdM: Ek sou graag dié spesifieke gevalle bekyk as jy dit uitwys, want dit het nie in die finale bladproewe opgeval nie. Dalk het dit te doen met die vervreemdingselemente wat ek ingebou het, soos die afwesigheid van aanhalingstekens én [omdat] die teks dalk as outobiografies gelees word dat dit dalk die leser verwar en skrywer, buiteverteller en die karakter Eugene opklits. Byvoorbeeld, ek is deur 'n boekeredakteur in 'n Q&A [question and answer-sessie] gevra waarom ek op 'n eerstepersoonsvertelling besluit het, terwyl *Eugene* 'n buiteverteller het.

Maar jy het dalk 'n punt. Ek woon sedert 2004 in Johannesburg. As joernalis skryf ek in hoë register koerantjoernalis-Afrikaans. Om *Eugene* te skryf, moes ek weer in die Kaap kom woon en my brein herbedraad om in gemaklike omgangstaal en die verskillende Kaapse registers te skryf. Toe ek pas terug in die Kaap is, hoor

Kirby van der Merwe is 'n veelbekroonde joernalis, kunstenaar en skrywer.

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ek iemand by 'n garage sê: "Toe't ons lekke gestap en lekke ga-iet". Toe besef ek met skok 'n mens verloor die aanvoeling en die oor vir taal en plek as jy te lank weg is. Ek het verleer. Terug in die Kaap kon ek weer die dialek en taalritme hoor en dit praat om dit te kan skryf.

In *Eugene* kom karakters uit die 50's, 60's en later aan die woord. Hulle praat outentieke óú Afrikaans, soos ek dit onthou, van die tyd, die taal van my kinderjare in die werkersklas woon- en krotbuurte in die Paarl. Afrikaans voor die toepassing van die Groepsgebiedewet en die slum clearance mense uitgesif het. Tot in die laat-60's het mense van regoor die land in dié slums, krotbuurte en noodkampe saamgewoon, mense uit die uithoeke van die platteland wat gelok is na die groot dorpe en industriële gebiede. Nes inkommers van Mosambiek, Kenia, Tanzanië, Indië en in een geval 'n Franssprekende gesin uit Madagaskar. Die omgangstaal was Afrikaans met 'n skoot Engels, Xhosa, flaaitaal, en flertse Fanagalô, Swahili, Arabies, Indonesies en Hindi. En natuurlik heelwat verhewe Bybel-en-*Die Burger*-woorde. Daar was lae van taal.

So, om terug te kom by jou vraag, ek het dalk self 'n verhewe woord in 'n karakter se mond gelê.

HW: Wat vir my in Eugene uitstaan, is die tekstuur, die detailbeskrywings … Daar moes heelwat terugdink, terugwerk gewees het … Wat vir my getref het, is jou beskrywing van plekke, die ruimtes: Tiervlei, die Kaap, Johannesburg, die botaniese tuine—al daardie plekke, veral die detail daarvan staan uit. 'n Belangrike element is daai terugkyk binne die raamvertelling, waar jy teruggaan na die verlede. Die detail van onthou wat deel van die storie is. Is dit nie?

KvdM: Die detail, ja, van die eerste lesers van die manuskrip en my uitgewer is ook daardeur getref. Aanvanklik wou ek ouer familielede en sibbe uitvra oor die verlede. Ek het die idee baie gou laat vaar. Dit was tydmors. Die antwoord op die meeste vrae was: "nee, ek kan nie onthou nie". Die ouer geslag, ai, kinders is nie toegelaat om grootmense se tande te sit en tel nie en hulle het gefrons toe ek hulle begin uitvra. Toe het ek op my eie geheue staatgemaak en ek is verstom oor die byna bodemlose poel van onthou. Dit is asof ek onbewustelik sedert my kinderdae die verlede geboekstaaf het. *Eugene* is dus eie onthou.

As jy in plekke soos Paarl, Kaapstad of Athlone gaan rondstap en jy vat iemand saam wat nie die plek ken nie, dan sien hulle net wat hulle sien. As ek daar stap, byvoorbeeld in Athlone se ou sakekern, dan sien ek [dinge] beweeg, wat die persoon saam met jou, nie sien nie: mense, tye, die verlede, wat in jou brein gestoor is, wat jy nie besef is daar nie. Of as ek in die Paarl stap, in my grootworddorp, dan sien ek die *slums* van die 50's en 60's, die grondpaaie, rygoed. Nou lyk die plek anders: middelklaswoonbuurte met teerstrate. Die wêreld is anders. Ek kyk deur lae geskiedenis na dieselfde plek. Ek kan na 'n straathoek kyk en sien wat nou daar gebeur, én terselfdertyd onthou, sien, wat op dieselfde hoek gebeur het in die 80's, 70's, 60's. Selfs die goed wat gebeur het wat jy vir niemand kan vertel nie, maar dis in jou geheue.

Ek sou jongmense aanraai om gebeure en gedagtes op te teken, want niemand gaan dit vir jou onthou nie. As kind het ek hoofsaaklik toegang tot die Bybel, gesangboek en vrouetydskrifte soos *Kyk*, *See* en *Keur* gehad. Fotovervolgverhale, *Chunky Charlie* en *Ruiter in Swart*, was groot gunstelinge en ek dink dis dalk die matriks vir Eugene. Die plek-plek graphic novel-elemente daarvan. Iewers in die teks sê Eugene hy wil een dag gruwelike ghetto-stories in vintage *Penny dreadful*-formaat op goedkoop papier uitgee. Ek wou Eugene in 'n stadium in dié formaat doen. 'n Oorblyfsel van dié idee is die toneel waar Eugene se ouers met hul motor deur die relings van 'n brug bars en in die rivier beland. Dit is geskryf soos 'n toneel uit 'n graphic novel, 'n cartoon met speech bubbles en byklanke. So wou ek die 1962-Paarl-*riots* in al die *Penny dread*-likheid daarvan dokumenteer en teken.

Tog, ek moes my weerhou van té veel detail, want ek hou van 'n geslypte, gestroopte teks. Ek het net genoeg gee om Eugene se binnewêreld en pleksin te vestig.

HW: Die manuskrip het dus oor die tyd en ná die kompetisie heelwat ontwikkel …

KvdM: Ja, die roman was eintlik daar, die tekstuur van daai tyd en goed wat ek baie duidelik onthou. Daar het natuurlik karakters en storielyne bygekom om dit fiksie te maak. Die probleem is nie die tekstuur nie, maar om minder te gee, dat jy nie te veel in die detail ingaan nie. Ek het agtergekom dat ek oor al die jare sekere goed onthou, eintlik vashou.

Ek het aanvanklik 'n ander roman geskryf, maar geweet dit gaan nie werk nie. Ek het ook 'n novelle geskryf wat publiseerbaar is, maar eintlik ook maar vingeroefeninge was. Met Covid-19 het ek besluit: ek gaan daai roman en novelle absoluut ignoreer, ek gaan glad nie terug na daai tekste nie. Toe het ek die nuwe boek koud begin skryf. So die roman en die novelle wat in die laai is, bevat nie die idees wat ek aanvanklik gehad het nie. So dié boek,

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ironies is die boek wat ek aanvanklik beplan het, twintig jaar terug. Intussen het trends gekom … as jy nie die ding onmiddellik klaar skryf nie, dan begin die boek waaraan jy skryf, al die trends en goed saam te sleep. Dit mors jou tyd en die idees verander die hele tyd. In dié geval het ek net gaan sit. Die idees wat daar is, is die idees wat daar is. Die ironie is dat dit die boek is wat ek aanvanklik beplan het, maar deur tyd en trends van vergeet het.

HW: Wanneer 'n skrywer vanuit 'n marginale omgewing, byvoorbeeld 'n breër swart omgewing, skryf en die meeste van sy lesers is middelklas wit, is daar nie die gevaar dat hy 'n exoticism of working-class-voorstelling pleeg nie? Die boek werk vir jou wit leser omdat dit exotic black life voorstel? Is daar nie daardie gevaar nie?

KvdM: Ek is intens daarvan bewus. Edward Said se *Orientalism* lê immers op my bedkassie. Tog, ek het nie met 'n wit leser of enige leser in gedagte geskryf nie. Myns insiens het elke skrywer die één boek wat hulle móét skryf. *Eugene* was myne. En dan is die skryf daarvan die belangrikste, alles anders is sekondêr, vir my altans. *Eugene* was 'n stryd met my skryf- en uithouvermoë en kophou, want vir my was die skryf van *Eugene* 'n ultra-marathon gekruis met 'n boksgeveg. So, daar was nie tyd om gepootjie te word deur konsepte en diskoerse nie. Ek het doelbewus die nostalgie van trauma en armoede gesystap. Maar as 'n skrywer uit die ghetto en krotbuurte kom, hoe systap jy dit?

Ek beskou jou byvoorbeeld as die ideale leser, wat dit die beste kan oordeel. Die reaksie op die teks gaan interessant wees, dié van mense wat die pyn, trauma, plesier van die struggle en grand apartheid beleef het én dié van wit, swart, bruin of 'n jonger geslag wat geen benul van die ghetto-lewe of die struggle het nie.

HW: Jy lees teen die agtergrond van …

KvdM: … van jou eie ervaring in. Jou ervaring word dan deel van die ervaring van die lees van die teks. Iemand soos jyself wat 'n tydgenoot van Eugene is sal sekere goed raaklees. Soos die spel tussen Coke en guava juice.

HW: O, ja … Sandile Dikeni …

KvdM: Ja, Sandile se gedig "Guava Juice" waar guava juice metafoor is vir 'n petrolbom.

HW: Ja, ek het die verwysing raakgelees. Daar is eintlik 'n hele klomp verwysings wat interessant is in daai opsig. Noudat jy daarvan praat, watter invloede is daar? Wat is die invloede wat jy na jou skryfwerk bring? Op die verskillende vlakke: visueel, skrywers, joernaliste, omgewing en konteks ensomeer.

KvdM: Heinemann se African Writers Series, Multatuli se *Max Havelaar*, die Romeense skrywer Herta Müller en beslis Salman Rushdie se werk. Ek is vandat ek onthou 'n waarnemer. Ek kom uit 'n gesin waar kinders moes werk so gou as wat jy 'n stuk gereedskap kon vashou. Van 'n graaf tot 'n hamer tot 'n troffel, wasgoed was en stryk. Agter die kospotte van kleins af. Dit was 'n anderse, harde manier van kinders grootmaak. So, ek is voorberei om 'n ambagsman te wees. Ek benader, sien, kuns en skryf, joernalistieke werk as ambag. Ek doen dit net.

HW: Wat vir my interesssant was—natuurlik is die boek fiksie—maar ek dink nie jy kan ontken dat daar outobiografiese elemente is nie, byvoorbeeld jou beskrywing van die '76-voorval op bladsy 146… Ek weet dat jy op die voorblad van The Cape Argus *was. Is dit 'n direkte verwysing?*

KvdM: Die roman is fiksie, maar daar is beslis outobiografiese elemente, persoonlike ervarings. Die genoemde tonele is my eie ervaring.

HW: Die karkasse …

KvdM: Ja, die tollies wat agter by die oop deure van 'n vleistrok uitswaai terwyl die bestuurder oor 'n stuk oop grond probeer wegkom van betogende studente wat die afleweringswa met klippe bestook. En die eerste keer toe ek as student tydens die 1976-studente-onluste onder die onlustepolisie se karwatse, knuppels en rubberkoeëls deurgeloop het.

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HW: Dit is ook wat ek met "tekstuur" bedoel. Jy herken in 'n sekere sin die naturalistiese elemente daarvan. Dit is hoe dit gebeur het. Maar samehangend daarmee is daar wat ek 'n magies-realistiese element sou noem. Veral aan die begin, en dan iewers teen die einde word die bobbejaan as 'n soort magies-realistiese element toegevoeg. Die rede waarom ek dit magies-realisties noem, is omdat dit herinner aan die Suid-Amerikaanse skrywers wat bonatuurlike elemente as gewone, normale verskynsels in hulle tekste deurvoer. Benewens die bobbejaan-element, is daar bonatuurlike elemente soos die vertellings en geloof in tokkelossies, en die karakters wat glo dat die bonatuurlike teenwoordig is. Dis 'n magies-realistiese element wat voortspruit uit die breë bruin of swart mondelinge tradisie …

KvdM: Jy weet, die beste idees val in my kop wanneer ek in stilte ente op my fiets ry of lang ente in die berge stap. Dié idees ignoreer ek nooit. Byvoorbeeld, die bobbejaan was nooit beplan nie. Die bobbejaan het homself aangemeld en dit sou dom wees om 'n gegewe bobbejaan in die bek te kyk, as ek dit só kan stel. As ek vir iemand sou sê, terwyl ek aan die manuskrip geskryf het, daar is 'n bobbejaan in die boek, sal hulle sê, "Wat 'n ridiculous idee is dit? Dit kan nie werk nie. Magiese realisme is tog passé."

Ek sien die bobbejaan eerder as Eugene se manier om sy trauma te verwerk. 'n Hallusinasie. Eugene se kop raas ná die polisie hom met die Coke-bottel oor die kop gemoer het. Eugene assosieer 'n glas Coke-bottel as 'n instrument van pyn en vernedering teenoor die plastiekbottel guava juice-en-broodrolletjie-combo wat trooskos is. Op 'n manier wil hy sin maak van die wreedheid wat teenoor hom gepleeg is. Hy wil die uitwerking versag. Hy kan eintlik nie regtig sê wat met hom gebeur het nie.

Tog was Márquez se *One Hundred Years of Solitude* 'n merker. Ook die Nigeriese skrywers soos Amos Tutuola se *The Palm-wine Drinkard*, Chinua Achebe se *Things Fall Apart*, Ben Okri met *The Famished Road*. Selfs die Ghanees Ayi Kwei Armah se boek *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. Ek het doelbewus in die teks die magiese onderstroom laat opborrel.

Dié oerstories wat asof vanself uit die grond aanmeld. Vorige geslagte én die huidige geslag het, dink ek, 'n sellulêre geheue van die bobbejaan wat snags oor die huise se dakke hardloop en sy ketting agter hom aansleep, tokkelossies, slimmense en vuilgoed. Wit mense natuurlik ook, want dié onderstroom slaan deur in ouer Afrikaanse romans, memoires en gedigte.

HW: Ja, oorgeneem uit die vertellings van tradisionele inheemse gemeenskappe.

KvdM: Presies, maar ook saamgebring uit Europese tradisie en uit die Ooste saam met die slawe. Die bekendste is seker "Klein Riet-alleen-in-die-roerkuil", die Boesmanvertellings wat Eugène N. Marais in sy *Dwaalstories* opgeteken het.

HW: Deel van die tekstuur van die roman, is die musikaliteit daarvan, in taalritme, maar ook as musiek. Is daar enige musikale invloede?

KvdM: My ouers het, nou dat ek daaraan dink, nie in musiek belanggestel nie. Daar was nooit plate, klassiek of andersins in die huis nie. Ek het wel die draadloos in die agtergrond, maar daar was baie agterjaartbewoners op ons erf wat van Marabi en Jive en African Jazz tot Jim Reeves gespeel en gesing het. Dit was die hoogbloei van veral Amerikaanse mannekore, soos die Soul Stirrers wat verskriklik gewild was. Daar was plaaslike soul singers. Die plaaslike rock-groep The Invaders se die 7-singles *Shockwave* en *Icecream and Suckers* is oor en oor gespeel tot die naalde stomp op die plate se groewe uitgewerk is. In die 70's was dit natuurlik LM-radio deurnag. Ek het grootgeword in die doodsnikke van die hippie-era en midde die proto-punk, punk en reggae-musiek van die 70's en 80's. As tiener het ek obsessief na Beethoven geluister tussen die mengelmoes van musiekstrome. Vanaf my twintigs was dit Richard Wagner. Deesdae luister ek weinig na musiek. In 'n kar luister ek glad nie musiek nie.

HW: Hoekom Wagner? Dit is swaar … dis nou behalwe sy politiek …

KvdM: As ek inspirasie soek en die enjin wil opfire, dan luister ek Wagner. Finish en klaar. 'n Mens sou ook Wagnerisme, soos Alex Ross dit saamvat in *Wagnerism: Art and Politics in the Shadow of Music*, kan inlees. In die hele stuk teks soos hy is, as jy na Wagner luister, is daar deurgaans klein *leitmotifs* neergelê … neergelê en uiteindelik kom hulle dan teen die einde bymekaar uit.

HW: Ek aanvaar die idee van komposisie as sodanig [het ook implikasies vir die skryfproses]. Hoe verskil hierdie skryfproses van dié van Klapperhaar slaap nie stil nie?

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KvdM: Terloops: Daniel Hugo het tydens 'n RSG-onderhoud verklaar dat *Klapperhaar* die eerste roman in Afrikaans met rotsklim as sentrale tema is. *Klapperhaar* het 'n vrou as hoofkarakter. Dit verskil van Eugene in tema, aanslag en skrywerstem. Met *Klapperhaar* het ek op die ingewing besluit ek skryf 'n roman. Tot dan het ek gedigte publiseer en enkele kortverhale. *Klapperhaar* ondersoek institusionele geweld en mag […]. Die uitgelewerdheid van slagvarke aan slagters eggo die posisie van onmag, ondergeskiktheid en uitgelewerdheid van die karakters en die gemeenskap. Eugene daarenteen is 'n karakter met 'n eie stem, hy is hardegat, totaal contrarian en gemaklik met sy outsider-skap.

Met *Klapperhaar* het ek besef 'n skrywer se ras en herkoms bepaal hoe na die manuskrip gekyk word en hoe die redigering daarvan dit vir die mark posisioneer. Ook hoe resensente daarna kyk. Ek het destyds met *Klapperhaar* 'n resensent oor die kneukels moes raps omdat hy na my verwys het as 'n 'bruin skrywer'. Ek moes verskeie keer tydens onderhoude dit duidelik stel: Ek is 'n skrywer, nie 'n bruin skrywer nie.

Destyds is verwag, dink ek, dat die mark net gereed is vir 'n eksotiese ware lewensdrama outobiografie sodat wit lesers hulle kan verkneukel in die skreiende armoede en absurde disfunksionele ander; die bendes. Met *Klapperhaar* het ek dié idee opgestuur met 'n teks vol literêre verwysings en 'n tong-uitsteek na gekanoniseerde Afrikaanse skrywers en Afrikaanse roman- en radiovervolgverhaal-tropes. Ironies genoeg het ek met *Eugene* moedswillig juis 'n gangster-boek geskryf.

HW: Dis nie 'n boek wat op skool voorgeskryf gaan word nie. Daarvoor is die taal té rof, té robuus.

KvdM: Ek dink dit moet juis voorgeskryf word. Dit is 'n onbevange teks wat kaalkop die ware houding, attitude van die tyd, skrywer en die karakters weergee. In die taal soos dit gepraat is sonder om myself te sensor. En jy sal nie aan dié taal kan peuter nie …

HW: Nee, jy sal nie … want die taal is wesenlik aan hierdie boek, né.

KvdM: Inderdaad. Daarom is dit té robuus om op radio gelees word.

HW: Nee, dit sal nie op RSG voorgelees word nie. Die arme tannies sal hulle heeltemal beskyt, as ek dit so kan stel. Dit is interessant wat jy sê van Klapperhaar *teenoor hierdie boek—dat dit geskryf is sonder inagname van uitgewers óf lesers óf wie wat ook al daarvan sal dink.*

KvdM: Ek het geweet ek moet hardegat wees en hardegat skryf. Ek sien té veel tekste waar mooiskryf die lees van daardie boeke 'n verskriklik stryd [maak]. Toe ek jonger was, kon ek 'n boek lees, weggevoer word, sit en skud van die lag. Ek weet nie wanneer laas ek weer so totaal weggevoer is nie. So, ek het eintlik 'n boek geskryf wat ek sou geniet om te lees as jong leser. 'n Boek wat my vermaak, skok, en my op reis vat deur 'n onbekende wêreld.

HW: Dit is juis wat die boek maak …

KvdM: Ja, plek-plek rof en onbeskof, maar met 'n sterk verhaallyn en onvergeetlike karakters wat ek dink lesers lank gaan bybly.

HW: 'n Kerndeel van die boek is die taal en taalgebruik.

KvdM: Ek kon eintlik meer flaaitaal gebruik het. Mense dink flaaitaal is net in Soweto en Sophiatown gepraat. Tot ek een dag Louis Molamu se *Tsotsi-taal: A Dictionary of the Language of Sophiatown* onder oë gekry. Ek het vir *Huisgenoot* 'n onderhoud met hom gevoer en besef daar is weinig in sy boek wat vir my vreemd is of wat ek nie verstaan nie. Dit is presies dieselfde flaaitaal wat ek as jong kind geleer het vóór die skeiding van mense deur die Groepsgebiedewet.

HW: Jy weet, een van die strategieë met dialekvorme is dat dit vervreemdend inwerk. Dit is 'n strategie van vervreemding, sodat jy as leser onmiddellik sê, "Ek moet na die taal kyk. Ek moet kyk na hoe die taal gebruik word as deel van die storie." Dit is wat in hierdie geval natuurlik gebeur. Die oomblik wanneer jy daardie kwaliteit en aard van taal het, dan sê dit vir jou, "Kyk na die taal. Kyk wat daar gebeur."

KvdM: Absoluut.

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HW: Toe ek jou vertaling van die Bertolt Brecht-gedig lees, het ek besef dat 'n kernfaset van die roman is dat hierdie 'n manneboek is. Dis 'n manneroman. Hoekom?

KvdM: Ja, ja, daai "gentlemen" wat met hulle voete op sy tafel sit. Ek weet nie. Ek dink die goed kom so half uit die [onderbewuste]. Sekere boeke bestaan mos. Hy moet net ge-channel word, amper. As ek die boek moet oorskryf, sal ek dit nie kan doen nie. Dit is amper onmoontlik, dink ek. Hy bestaan soos hy is en jy kan amper nie aan hom verander nie.

"Van arme B. B." is, soos jy seker weet, die slotgedig van Brecht se *Hauspostille*, sy eerste digbundel. Mens sal dit seker vertaal as "huispreke" of as "'n handleiding vir huisgodsdiens", 'n bundel preke of vertellings wat bedoel is om te stig—die morele pas aan te gee vir gebruik in gesinsverband. Soos dié van Martin Luther in die 16de eeu, wat die skrywer daarvan bekendstel en veral sy deugdelikheid beklemtoon. Eugene, en ek as skrywer, tree in gesprek daarmee, maar, in lyn met Eugene se aard, word dit opgestuur, geparodieer.

Maar dit is 'n ander soort "gentlemen" as wat Brecht in gedagte gehad het. Hier is 'n destydse ghetto-gentlemen: Die uncles, ooms en ouer nefies wat ek geken het. Die ghetto se machismo. Die grootmanne en diknekke wat ek as kind geken het. Dít is die manne wat daar beskryf word, wat in hulle jongdae gehang het aan die busse en trems se agterligte soos in Distrik Ses byvoorbeeld. Die manne wie se skoensole vol metaal studs was en wat snags die teer skop dat die vonke spat en slaggereed was met 'n *Three Star* weekend-special Okapi [mes]. Die manne wat 'n tyre lever en crowbar gryp en dit die praatwerk laat doen. Daai manne is almal daar, hulle praat saam. Die pa's is nooit so nie. Dit is altyd die uncle. Hy kom van die werk af Vrydag, maar hy loop nooit met 'n bottel wyn nie. Hy stap baie steady en sy bottel is netjies toe. Hy is nie 'n geletterde man nie—hy loop met 'n briefcase, maar jy weet die bottel is daarin. Die gentleman-skollie teenoor die gewone skurk en straatskollie. In Eugene se woorde: "Netjies gecollar en getie, maar hy skop jou gou in jou poes."

HW: Wat gebeur dan met die vrouekarakters?

KvdM: Die vrouekarakters is bleddie sterk in die boek. Ek sê altyd vir mense: ek kom uit 'n wêreld wat eintlik 'n matriargie is. Mense dink dis 'n manswêreld. Die vrouens beheer dit. Die man gaan werk. Hy kan nie by die huis sit nie, hy moet gaan werk. Dan bring hy sy pay-pakkie op Vrydag. Dan vat sy vrou dit. Dit moet toe wees. Dan maak sy dit oop. Dan gee sy vir hom sakgeld. Sy hou die geld.

HW: Nee, dit is so.

KvdM: Hy sal niks sê nie. Ek glo dis 'n ding wat uit die Ooste uit oorgekom het, daar uit Indonesië. Sekere gemeenskappe op Java, Sumatra en Flores is matrilinieêr, vroue is gelyk aan mans. Die vroue beheer die sake. In dié geval, as jy na al die vrouekarakters kyk, dan sien jy hoe sterk hulle eintlik is. Vroue is in beheer van sake en huishoudings soos vroue in die Kaap altyd was. Hulle was dikwels aan die spits van sake, selfs in die struggle.

HW: Die element van verraad is 'n tematiese element. Wat is dit rondom verset en verraad wat jou getrek het?

KvdM: Verraad is 'n universele tema. Die noodlot, byvoorbeeld, het my 'n streep getrek deur my in 'n huis sonder boeke te plant. Dit was 'n soort verraad. Pa is sub B uit die skool en Ma is st. 5 uit om te gaan werk. Ek sê dit met binnepret en humor, maar ek sou kon doen met ryk boekgeleerde ouers. Eugene besef van jongs af dat hy niemand kan vertrou of staatmaak nie. Hy word dan self soos die spreker in "Van arme B. B.": "Hier het julle iemand op wie julle nié kan vertrou nie." Dit word 'n leitmotif van verraad.

Een van die temas in *Eugene* is verraad tussen boesemvriende en oud-politieke aktiviste. Nou, al het ek in 'n revolusionêre dampkring en die struggle grootgeword het en vriende gehad wat later as aktiviste landuit is, én al was ek as student en later by die meeste massavergaderings, studente sit-ins—behalwe begrafnisse in Crossroads omdat ek nie eie vervoer gehad het nie—was ek nooit by enige politieke sel of organisasie betrokke nie. En ek gaan myself nie nou betrokke skryf nie.

HW: Jy was nie 'n voorbok nie.

KvdM: Ek was 'n doodgewone tiener en jong volwassene wat polities aware was en totaal ingekoop het in die idees van die Black Consciousness Movement. Ek was by mass meetings, massaoptogte, by reggae- en jazz festivals … eintlik vir die plesier en die girls as enige politieke drif. Maar ek moet eintlik self na die teks kyk om te sien wat

nog daaruit kom. Hoekom is daar 'n beheptheid met verraad? Ek kan nie vir jou volle antwoorde deurgee nie. Dit is vir my nodig om dit te gaan soek.

HW: Ek dink dit is 'n onopgeloste kwessie in die roman. Die Eugene-karakter is 'n baie komplekse karakter. Daar is die dubbelslagtigheid van 'n plattelandse kind met 'n urban cowboy-teenwoordigheid. Iemand wat in 'n wêreld beland waar hy heeltemal onseker is, byvoorbeeld sy trip Johannesburg toe en dan onmiddellik weer terugkeer. Totale onsekerheid. Die moontlikheid van verraad, die moontlikheid van verset. Uiteindelik is daar nooit werklike verset nie. Dit is 'n poging tót verset … maar dan hierdie verraad wat verraad is weens iets wat nie gebeur het nie. Wat waarskynlik glad nie gebeur het nie.

KvdM: Ek het gepraat met mense, mense wat sê hulle was in die struggle, mense wat buite die landsgrense was, maar niemand vertrou mekaar nie. Niemand. As joernalis het ek gepraat met mense wat in die parlement is of met mense wat in die struggle was. Hulle vertrou jou glad nie. Hoekom vra jy? Wat wil jy weet? Wat is jou bona fides? Daai goed is altyd daar en niemand vertrou op die ou end mekaar nie. Dis vir my baie moeilik om met mense van 'n sekere tyd te praat, want niemand vertrou mekaar nie. Dis die vreemdste ding.

Ek is getref deur die onderlinge wantroue tussen voormalige comrades, aktiviste wat met die Special Branch en spesmagte te doen gekry het. Daar was immers byna altyd 'n impimpi en polisiespioen in eie geledere. Daar is altyd 'n scape goat, uitverkoper, het ek agtergekom wanneer ek na oud-aktiviste luister. Die ouers van aktiviste en soldate wat slagoffers was, soek antwoorde, soek scape goats. En dikwels is die ou wat verantwoordelik gehou, uitgerangeer en verdoem word, dalk heeltemal onskuldig.

In 2001 het Winnie Mandela 'n onderhoud aan my toegestaan. Maar ek moes deur die een firewall na die ander voordat ons oorkant mekaar gesit het. En sy het met haar body guards vir die onderhoud opgedaag. Soveel jaar ná die ontbanning van die ANC het sy nie vigilance en protocol verslap nie.

Ek sê altyd, spottenderwys, ek het die perfekte geaardheid en persona vir 'n spioen en terroris. Iemand wat onopgemerk, onder die radar, in groepe beweeg en waarneem. Ek is die soort mens met wie ek oorlog toe sal gaan: Iemand wat doekvoet beweeg, fiks én stoïsyns, uiters plofbaar wanneer dit nodig is en game. Soos die ouroekers sou sê: 'n Ou met 'n varkhart, in teenstelling met iemand met 'n leeuhart. Die karakter Eugene is nie ek nie, alhoewel ek outobiografiese gebeure en ervarings fiksionaliseer. Eugene het geen ooghare vir helde nie. Hy dismiss byvoorbeeld in die begin van die boek die rugbyheld Joost van der Westhuizen se heldebegrafnisdiens. Hy verkeer onder geen illusie dat helde voete van klei het nie en, wanneer die ding dik kom, jou sonder skroom onder die bus sal gooi nie. Een van die deurslaggewende stukke, vir my, wat die uitgewers uitgesny het, skets 'n kinderervaring waar ek Eugene se sinisme ten opsigte van helde weergee.[1]

Dan is daar die telefoongesprek wat ek gehad het met iemand wat destyds 'n medestudent op Hewat was, kort voor ek *Eugene* begin skryf het. Byna vier dekades ná 1976, beweer hy hy was 'n voorbok in die struggle en studentepolitiek. En hy stuur vir my 'n foto na my selfoon ter stawing. Op dié koerantfoto staan hy skuins agter die studenteleier Anwar Ismael van Worcester, ingeprop in die massa studente tydens 'n optog. Sy verskyning naby Anwar is nou die bewys van sy noue bande met studenteleiers en sy betrokkenheid by die struggle. Ek was daar en dit is nuus vir my. Ek verskyn self op 'n klomp koerantfoto's van dié tyd. Dit kan maklik op microfiche bevestig word, waar ek as bloedjong student met 'n plakkaat en 'n gebalde vuis verskyn. Al het ek die studenteleiers geken. Ek en Anwar was Boland-fietsrenjaers, en ons groep uit die Paarl het elke tweede Saterdag by hulle aan huis gekuier. Ek kan dit nie as bewys gebruik van my aktivisme nie.

Dit het my aan die dink gesit, hoe die verlede en betrokkenheid geplooi, gelieg, verdoesel en ontken kan word vir watter doel ook al. Die motto van *Eugene* is juis doelbewus gekies as die sleutel tot Eugene, die karakter. Alhoewel Eugene die apartheidsfigure Eugene Terre'Blanche en Eugene de Kock oproep, selfs die skrywer Eugène Marais wat met bobbejane assosieer word, verwys die naam eintlik na Bertolt Brecht. Brecht se doopnaam is immers Eugen. Brecht self was 'n kommunis en sy werk en dramas was in diens daarvan. Agitprop.

Eugene is dus omgekeerde agitprop, as ek dit so kan stel. Agitprop sonder dat die leser oor die kop gemoker word daarmee. Ek volg die moeiliker roete: Woede verbloem agter 'n stiff upper lip en unruffled houding. Eugene is stoïsyns, die volmaakte terroris en spioen wat niemand van 'n sinistere agtergrond of aksies sou verdink nie.

Eugene ís 'n struggle-boek. 'n Leser, oud-politieke joernalis en Afrika-kenner, sê die boek is verkeerd gepitch. Dit bewys hoe die uitgewery sekere skrywers se werk vir die mark pitch.

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HW: Ons moet afsluit. Ons het sommer met die deur in die onderhoud in geval. Gewoonlik moet jy darem aan die begin iets sê oor jou agtergrond …

KvdM: Ek is 'n boorling van die Paarl, was op Laerskool Ebeneser en matrikuleer aan Hoërskool Noorder-Paarl. Op 18 my eerste solo-uitstalling van tekeninge gehou en alles verkoop gekry. Ek was van toe af bevriend met die kunstenaar Peter Clarke tot sy dood en deel van die groep struggle-artists van die 70's en 80's. Ek het deelgeneem aan groepsuitstallings soos die Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty exhibition, 1984 en die End Conscription Campaign exhibition wat deur die polisie gestop is. Een van my tekeninge was 'n wenner van die uitstalling en kunskompetisie wat by UWK gehou is. Dis deur die Universiteit aangekoop. Wat daarvan geword het, weet ek nie. Toe word ek taal-en kunsonderwyser totdat ek in 1996 die onderwys verlaat het om *Klapperhaar* te skryf.

HW: Kollege. Wat was die invloede? Daar was mense soos Richard Rive toe jy op kollege was.

KvdM: Ten spyte van sy arrogante narsistiese self, was Rive 'n groot invloed. Hy was sonder twyfel die beste onderwyser, dosent wat ooit my pad gekruis het. Ek was sku vir klasse, so nou en dan gesig gewys, want die lewe buite was baie interessanter. Ek was meer gereeld in die Kismet bioscope in Athlone en in pubs al het ek tot vandag toe nooit alkohol gedrink nie. Rive het gedink dié onverantwoordelikheid was baie snaaks. Ek het hom beïndruk met 'n kortverhaal wat ek geskryf het, wat hy afgemaak het as average, natuurlik, maar in die personeelkamer, hoor ek, vertel hy van die wonderlike talent. Hy het my ingespan om te help met die transkribering van Olive Schreiner se handgeskrewe briewe vir sy boek oor *Olive Schreiner: Letters 1871–1899*. Ek het toegang tot sy boekery gekry en swart Amerikaanse- en Karibiese skrywers en digters ontdek, van Langston Hughes tot Aimé Cesaire. En hy het my voorgestel aan skrywers soos Jan Rabie, Uys Krige, Elsa Joubert en haar man [Klaas Steytler], Jack Cope, Guy Butler en ander.

HW: Jou ouers …

KvdM: Eugene se ouers is losweg op my eie ouers gebaseer. Hulle het egter nie soos Eugene se ouers in 'n motorongeluk gesterf nie. Hulle was wat vandag as entrepreneurs bekend staan. Destyds was hulle net mense wat met enige ding sou handel dryf soos Eugene se ouers. Hulle het hulle hande stomp gewerk, soos hulle sê. My ouers se leuse was: Niemand het nog ooit van werk doodgegaan nie. En vandat ek 'n kind was, moes jy werk, want wie nie werk nie, kry nie kos nie.

HW: Die entrepreneur is nogal 'n interessante element in die roman. Aan die een kant is daar hierdie kanalla-ding van die ma wat die vrou met haar kinders wat buite sit, inbring. Dan aan die ander kant hierdie ding van make do—kry die trok, doen hierdie ding, sorg dat ek my petrol of wat ook al kry, en bou dan 'n besigheid. Daardie soort van make do-element.

KvdM: Hulle moes net. Die apartheidswetgewing het ontelbare struikelblokke in plek gestel om mense soos hulle tot die werkersklas te beperk. Maar hulle het geveg om hulle "eie baas" te wees.

HW: Die prikkels vir die karakter Eugene? Wat het die karakter ge-trigger?

KvdM: Ek wou aanvanklik, soos by *Klapperhaar*, 'n vroulike hoofkarakter hê. Toe kom die Covid 19-inperking. Ek het gaan sit en die roman koud begin skryf. 'n Medestudent se sogenaamde politieke betrokkenheid was die prikkel om 'n manlike antiheld te skryf, en die groot dryfveer was NB-Uitgewers se Groot Afrikaanse Romanwedstryd. Die sluitingsdatum vir inskrywings was 31 Augustus, vyf maande vanaf inperking. Die manuskrip wat vir die romankompetisie ingestuur is, was so goed as wat ek dit in die beperkte tyd, vyf maande, kon skryf. Ek het gedink ek het genoeg geskryf om die beoordelaars te betower. Die belangrike newekarakter Bella is nie in die oorspronklike manuskrip nie. Sonder Bella sou die finale teks byna fataal verskraal wees.

HW: Dankie, Kirby. Ek het die roman baie geniet. Ek het gedink dit is 'n interessante boek. En ek dink dit staan uit wat die tekstuur betref. Dit maak nie verskoning dat hy daar is nie. Die karakter met al sy problematiek en psigiese struggle kom inderdaad sterk deur. Dan is daar die element van 'n wêreld wat aan die een kant verdwyn, maar andersins ook aanwesig bly.

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Aantekening

1. Die gedeelte wat uit finale teks gesny is: “Eugene is as seuntjie van heldeverering genees. In 1967 gaan woon hy vir die jaar by sy ma se tante op ’n plaasdorpie. Die tannie dink hy moet wegkom van slegte invloede in die ghetto. Daar stap hy elke dag na die skooltjie in die middedorp saam met ’n groep kinders van plase aan die buitewyke van die dorp. Hulle kom soggens langs die teerpad bymekaar en stap in ’n groep in dorp toe. Na die laerskool. En smiddae stap hulle as ’n groep terug. Die teerpad loop teen ’n lae helling op dorp toe. In die somer op pad huis toe swem die groter seuns kaalgat in die vlak poel in die spruitjie wat onder die teerpad deur loop. Daarna loop en rumoer die atlete, die rugbyspelers, grootbekke en kaartmanne in die middel van die teerpad verder. Waterslange en paddas hou in die poel onder die lae brug. Afskuwelike goed. Die slange vreet die paddas. In Februarie, die warmste tyd van die jaar, droog die spruit op en soos die water verdwyn, dwing dit slange en paddas nader aan mekaar tot hulle in ’n bondel saam in die modder wriemel. Soggens ry drie boertjies, twee broers en hulle suster met hulle trapfietse op die teerpad van hulle plaas af by Eugene-hulle verby na die hoërskool in die dorp. Vreemde wesens op fietse. Die seuns in skoolbaadjie, withemp en skooldas, styfspannende grys kortbroek, kniehoë kouse en bruin skoene. Smiddae as Eugene-hulle ná skool rugby oefen en later as gewoonlik huis toe stap, steek die boertjies hulle van agter verby. Die broers kom vinnig teen die skuinste afgery met hulle baadjiepunte al flappende in die wind. Hulle suster weer, trap met lang stadige hale. Sy’s lank en lomp soos ’n reier. En soos sy haar fiets trap, wys die bleekste melkwit bene. Dan koggel en skree die ouer seuns: Reier, reier! Die boertjies ignoreer die plaaskinders wat jil en koggel en skater. Die suster ry met ’n strak gesig verby. Een van die ouer meisiekinders sê: Daai boertjies gaan julle opdonner. Aag, ek bang’ie ’n boer nie, sê Eugene se held, ’n mannetjie in standard vyf, maar groot vir sy jare—hy’s die skool se atletiekheld, rugbyheld skopkoning. Hy swem die vinnigste, speel kitaar en hy vang slange en padda met sy kaalhande onder die bruggie. Eugene is trots op sy held en sy side-kicks wat die durf het om die uitgegroeide boertjies te tart en hulle suster te koggel. Tot een middag. Die kaartmanne loop en raas in die middel van die pad. Die Boertjies kom verby gejaag en hulle suster sweef verby. Later, toe Eugene se helde nog kordaat kaal onder die bruggie staan en pronk, kom die twee boertjies teen die rivierwal af, elkeen met ’n knuppel in die hand, een van die eenkant van die brug, een van die ander kant af en sonder ’n woord begin hulle inlê met die knuppels. Eugene se helde koes en keer en probeer wegkom. Maar die boertjies het hulle aanval dae, miskien maande, beplan. En bo op die pad wag hulle pa met ’n sweep. En soos sy helde kaalgat onder die brug uitpeul, loop hulle hulle in die sweep vas. Kom hier julle hotnots, skree die boer. Eugene se helde hardloop straataf, kaalgat met lywe vol knuppel- en karwatsmerke oor hulle lywe, sonder dat hulle een hou ingekry het. So val die helde.”

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Essay

Journals editing, editor recognition, and impacting disciplines

Keyan G. Tomaselli

"Why edit (a journal)?" When asked this question, some have responded thus: "To get promoted". This anecdote underpinned a panel discussion at the 2021 National Scholarly Editors' Forum (NSEF) on "Whether research (and editing) should be fun". Organised under the auspices of the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf), this annual meeting involves editors from all 320+ journals registered in South Africa, though thanks to electrical loadshedding and other considerations, less than 100 could participate at any one time. The panel was organised and chaired by Phillip de Jager of the Department of Finance and Tax, University of Cape Town. He is associate editor of *Meditari Accountancy Research*, the *Journal of Accounting in Emerging Economies*, and the *South African Journal of Accounting Research.* This is a discipline where its professors tend to show greater allegiance to the profession than to the university, with attendant implications for (lack) of research and publication (Venter and de Villiers 1246).

The editor of the Australian *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* wrote in a special issue dedicated to its two recently deceased founders that she was advised not to expend her energy editing a journal, as she is "sacrificing" her own time "to support others" (Allmark 330).

In light of uncollegial Key Performance Indicator (KPI) crassness, de Jager hoped that the NSEF panel would generate discussion on academic citizenship. That is, why editing should be valued and encouraged by both academics and professionals in contributing to the greater goals of the common good. But as Herman Wasserman, editor-in-chief of *African Journalism Studies*, observes: publishing is a passion and even a "form of activism to a contemporary environment where the enterprise has become much more pragmatic and 'professionalised'". In today's publishing environment, he continues, "there is such a proliferation of journals that sometimes their individual identities, histories and characteristics become obscured or flattened out". He concludes that "Archival work is an important resistance against this flattening" (Wasserman and Tomaselli).

In South Africa alone the proliferation of journals in disciplines like law, management, education, and religion to mitigate overcrowding page allocation is a notable feature of an overtraded environment (ASSAf, "Twelve Years Later: Second ASSAf Report on Research Publishing in and from South Africa"), not to mention alarming tendencies towards textual recycling and plagiarism (Thomas 1). The shift to supply open access publishing (in contrast to demand-led publishing where journals themselves take the risk and absorb the costs) is a feature of the current publishing environment where the author pays (from funders, via institutions, and from DHEF incentives). This inversion might see a rebalancing with less overcrowding across bona fide publishers.

My own colleagues sometimes ask why I edit the self-funded *Critical Arts: North-South Cultural and Media Studies*, particularly since my own Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) publication incentives have largely sustained the journal's administrative office for decades, along with some support from the universities in which the journal has been housed, thereby subsidising the authors published in its pages.[1] Some authors, however, still complain about being invoiced for even minimal page charges which they can access from their own, or their institution's, research funds.

The early radical *Critical Arts* arose from a particular moment before the DHET system was instituted. The well-designed popular culture literary magazines *Speak* (1977–1979) and *Staffrider* (1978–1993) coincided with the *Critical Arts* planning stage in 1979 (see South African History Online).[2] *Critical Arts* was offered the defunct *Speak*'s subscription list by its outgoing editor, Eve Bertelesen. To my astonishment, most of *Speak*'s subscribers

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enthusiastically renewed prior to the first number of *Critical Arts* actually appearing, indicating loyalty to an epistemological cause. *Critical Arts*' pedestrianly-designed first 1980 number, produced on a golf ball typewriter and printed in A5 reduced stapled format, attracted immediate global attention. This impact was primarily thanks to the influence of the inherited *Speak* readers and *Critical Arts*' promotion by the subversive De Jong's Bookshop opposite Wits University, the Market Theatre Bookshop in Johannesburg, Open Books in Cape Town, the international subscription agencies, and the nascent indexing facilities. Crucially, the exhausting foot stepping work done by individual board members such as Susan Gardner, Trish Gibbon, and Ian Steadman in particular in promoting the journal on their respective campuses and at conferences underpinned *Critical Arts*' exposure and reach through global disciplinary networks. The backing of then co-editor John van Zyl, one of the founders of the Wits School of Dramatic Art where I then worked, had cemented the publication's stability and potential reputation within the academic enterprise.

The second number attracted articles by André Brink, Nadine Gordimer, and J. M. Coetzee. One could not have asked for a more propitious launch. In due course, Njabulo Ndebele, Stephen Gray, Nick Visser, David Maughan Brown, Tim Cousins, Peter Horn, Eve Bertelsen, Joe Muller, and internationally, Ntongela Masilela and Stuart Hall, amongst others, joined the early editions as guest editors, authors, and/or editorial board members.

The experience for me as a then unknown novice editor was exhilarating, as our editorial board and authors shared a foolhardy desire to change the world, or at least, South Africa.[3] They enabled 'group formation', a form of association through which members conferred externalities on each other. Such a group experience is implicitly described by Hein Willemse in discussing the phases and political and administrative challenges through which *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde* has travelled (5–8). Such self-reflection and critique are perhaps all too rare in academic publishing.

If a journal is a self-constituted group, endeavouring to create new knowledge, then it operates like a club. As a knowledge club, this model balances the positive externalities of a shared resource (readers, citations, referees) against the negative externalities of crowding (decreased prospect of publishing in that journal) (Potts *et al*. 75), which has indeed come to pass in today's publication-obsessed world, and which has seen the alarming rise of predatory journals offering immediate publication—for a price (both financial and reputational).

At *Critical Arts* we were on a heady roll, though differently to *TL* that—by its own admission—did not always respect "critical distance" from "political powers of the day" (Stander 13). We recklessly took on epistemic hegemonies, institutional gatekeepers, and holy cows. Intellectual dissidents found a space and our authors fundamentally contributed to the re-shaping of the disciplines allied with the journal. One trajectory of 'de-colonisation' in academia started with *Critical Arts* authors from its first 1980 numbers with sustained critiques of received Enlightenment-derived high culture and positivist paradigms in literature, drama and theatre, education, and media studies. This trajectory was initially documented in a multiple-authored occasional paper titled *Retrospective* (Tomaselli *et al*.).

With reference to de Jager's comment about editing for the sake of promotion, my editing work did actually threaten to *impede* my promotion within a few months of first publication, as it had transgressed my line manager's Arnoldian epistemological preference. He was, however, over-ruled by the dean. Thirty years later, a particularly irritated 'line manager'—a self-proclaimed (anarchic) postmodernist literary scholar—alleged that producing the publication constituted a distraction from teaching. His actual intention was to hijack the journal—unsuccessfully—during the heady 2004–2005 days of the University of Durban-Westville/University of Natal merger when a culture of lawlessness had permeated the entire institution (Chetty and Merrett).

Producing the journal largely exhausted us as we were also the typists, typesetters, layout artists, proof-readers, and envelope and stamp-lickers who made personal deliveries to local book shops. However, the journal *was* a key factor in my being head-hunted first by Rhodes University (1981), then Natal (1984), and finally the University of Johannesburg (2015). Promotion was not my objective, but a most welcome by-product of publishing and editing. The founders of the journal are now handing over to the younger cohort who are just as enthusiastic as were we originators, but they are facing manic managerialism that sometimes impedes unfettered creativity and conceptual risk-taking (Tomaselli, *Contemporary Campus Life: Manic Managerialism, Transformation and Academentia*). The open-ended self-regulatory environment that characterised the 1980s has been systematised via DHET and ASSAf oversight of the total South African journals environment. While a necessary degree of instrumentalism is always present, ASSAf has in recent times revealed an openness to flexibility of publishing paradigms and peer review approaches. These were particularly on display during the de Jager-led panel discussion in November 2021.

Though our universities nowadays seriously undervalue the pro bono backroom work often done by editors who are the conduit for the R2.4 billion of DHET funds annually, it is unclear whether the crucial work they will be doing in our increasingly metrics-obsessed world and journals expansion will pay off in similar extraordinary ways.[4] *TL* survived a rough patch in the early 2000s (Pieterse 147–9), while the predatory journals vitiate the environment for everyone (Mouton and Valentine 2). According to Mark Gibson (366), a previous editor of *Continuum*, scholarly journals would be in much greater trouble were it not for the 'tempered radicals' who are prepared to support them despite this undervaluing of editorial work. He adds: "it is hard to see where the obsession with 'billable units' is going to end up. I would hesitate to advise young academics today to take on editorial work. Too much time taken away from publishing their own 'outputs'". However, where will individuals publish if new generations of editors, like Allmark Panizza, are discouraged from taking on unrecognised work? "It's a perverse cultural economy", concludes Gibson (Gibson and Tomaselli).

In South Africa open access platform support via ScIELO is offered via ASSAf. But the journals themselves rely mostly on their own production, editing, design, journal web pages, marketing, and financial resources. These are much appreciated by, for example, the 85-year-old *TL* that now publishes in four languages (Afrikaans, Dutch, English, and French) and which had survived earlier rough patches (Van Niekerk 126–7).

What struck Gibson is the disjuncture between the impressive fronts presented by the commercially-published journals—in relation to the fragility of the human infrastructure on which they depend (356–8). Editorial work like commentaries, book reviews, and research letters—what ASSAf describes as "added value" sections—draw few institutional benefits and allocations to editing are begrudging ("Twelve Years Later" 35). The central problem is amplified by the DHET reward criteria that exclude journals, editorial work, and value-added items from publishing incentives and KPIs. As Gibson emphasises, an editor's opportunity costs subtract from the time available for generating measurable units of 'performance'—the discrete article (356–8). The contradictions that ensue from this form of "academic capitalism" (Striphas 9), enhanced by the well-intended and highly successful DHET incentive system, sometimes results in the unethical leveraging of DHET funds—as has been reported at every recent NSEF meeting.

Other than the National Research Foundation's scientist rating criteria that valorise publication in top journals, whether accredited or not, the peer reviewed article, legitimised in South Africa by DHET accreditation, is the local gold standard, the basic unit of currency in the contemporary research economy. The labour that supports journals—editors, referees, editorial boards—is, however, still relegated to the realm of the hidden and unappreciated.[5] Yet, as American editor Ted Striphas suggests, editorial work often feels not so much princely as proletarian (4–5). The "hyper-visible products that calibrate our value" (Coetzee 102) where just a few volunteers are solely responsible for all editorial activities often results in erratic publication, as is described by Henning J. Pieterse of *TL*:

> In 2002 het daar geen uitgawe van Tydskrif verskyn nie. Die redes daarvoor was finansiële oorwegings en die feit dat dit heeltyd basies net ek en Piet was wat alles moes hanteer—keuring, saamstel, finale proeflees, ens. Ek gaan nie 'n apologia pro vita mea hier probeer gee nie. As ek reg onthou, was ek teen die einde van 2002, na 24 uitgawes van die blad, redelik op moedverloor se vlakte en op die punt om die blad eiehandig te sluit. (148)

The consignment of editorial work to invisibility "removes the need for the beneficiaries of such labour (us) to appreciate or acknowledge the labour—part of the effect of invisible labour is precisely to delete traces of itself" (Coetzee 18). Yet, one of the enduring instrumentalisms proposed by some at ASSAf is that editors should not publish in their own journals as they risk allegations of self-interest and misconduct with regard to the DHET incentive. While policing excessive and opportunistic self-publication of the kind that has been continuously identified by the Centre for Research, Evaluation, Science, and Technology (CREST) in a minority of named journals is absolutely necessary, it also needs to be recognised that editors themselves shape paradigms and disciplines via their work, especially when they compose guest edited volumes on specific topics. My own field of cultural studies emerged from one such experiment led by the British *New Left Review* where the editors dialectically and vigorously battled out their positions between structuralism and culturalism. In many instances these germinal scholars drawn from multiple disciplines were themselves the publishers, the editors, the authors, and the readers (see Hall 184–5) and they generated a huge publishing industry in the UK that significantly impacted the Humanities across the Anglo-Saxon, South African, and Scandinavian academic worlds. Since DHET-style financial reward was not on offer the only policing required was integrity, rigorous peer review,

and the extraordinary energy of dialectical argument and debate. These occurred within the participating knowledge clubs. Editing was considered a fundamental activity, whether or not it was measured by performance management calculations.

The professional support that editors receive from their multinational publishers is often vitiated by the lack of recognition, let alone support, from their own institutions, though this seems to be changing at some universities responding to the open access environment.[6] For many legacy journals, however, partnering with corporate publishers has proven one way to secure long-term sustainability, not to mention tactical global exposure for their authors. Hustling for resources is one of our tasks which comes with its own contradictions and considerations in balancing commercial and scholarly interests.

In addition, the populist allegation is that editors, the seniors in academia, often deny entry to emergent scholars, being the supposed inheritors of closed networks claimed to narrowly dispense academic largesse (see Tomaselli, "Perverse Incentives and the Political Economy of South African Academic Journal Publishing"). So, the predatory journals are seen to be one way of breaking with this supposed exclusionary hegemony, as was discussed at the NSEF meeting. ASSAf journals evaluation panels recurrently ask about mentoring of emergent scholars and editors, often asking for 'student sections'. *Critical Arts* prefers not to segregate papers on a hierarchy of value, but we did during 2021–2022 manage a year-long National Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences-sponsored training programme for post-doctoral fellows that took the 20 selected abstracts for a special issue to submission, and for those that made the peer review cut, to publication within 18 months.

So, where is the fun? In the frisson, in the action, in making a difference, anticipating the future. And, in facilitating successive generations of scholars in the *Critical Arts* pages who were to become international thought leaders, including two Nobel Prize winners, NRF-rated researchers, professors and deans, vice chancellors, deputy vice chancellors, and even a cabinet minister. As Lauren Dyll, *Critical Arts* editor designate, explains:

> stepping along the way to group formation and a knowledge club becomes part of the fun. A sense of belonging is key, as on an individual level is a feeling of one's own connectedness in communication with a group (be it a special issue or the actual *Critical Arts* editorial team). And more, in a world of many feeling 'isolated' (Covid, or even the thrust towards people more inclined to pursue mediated or online social groups/relationships), being part of a publishing group or club can be rewarding (Dyll and Tomaselli).[7]

Dyll adds that "It may sound idealistic but to be part of the 'movement' to facilitate, promote, and curate good research (critical, innovative publications) is to be part of that 'club' kick-started by previous generations of authors who became literary giants in their own rights".

That's the fun, that's the task, and that's the future. The epistemological troublemakers of today are the sage editors and institutional capacity builders of tomorrow. Editorials like Jacomien Van Niekerk's on 85 years of *Tydskrif* are imbued with enthusiasm for a conceptual cause, a discipline, and knowledge generation—not just the facilitating of DHET incentives to their universities and authors. As Robin Crewe, who previously headed the ASSAf publication committee, observes, another "'benefit' of an editorship is the overview of a segment of scholarly work; both the good and the bad—I sometimes think that this insight is valuable for the editor's own scholarly development" (Crewe and Tomaselli). Enhancing professional exposure and scholarly stature should indeed be the objective.

As with the experience of the cottage industry process that characterised the inaugurations of both *Continuum* and *Critical Arts*, and during different periods of *TL*, at the core of their respective successes was the "daily, nightly, joyful and serious physical effort that was [their] initial impetus: a genuine delight in bringing published media and cultural exchanges to those who happened to care" (McHoul). Similarly, founding editor Arnold de Beer wrote about another initially "small" in-house journal, *Ecquid Novi: African Journalism Studies*, of the journal's beginnings around his family's kitchen table in the late 1970s, with his family doing all kinds of work: "my mother-in-law writing up subscription cards and my 12-year-old daughter placing the journal in envelopes to mail and doing general filing" (qtd in Wasserman 106–13).[8]

It's been a great ride from the small to the global. Our protégés who do care can now continue the breathtaking experience of riding the editorial roller-coaster into the choppy future. We are committed to the institution of academia, within the framework of accounting principles in both senses of the word.

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Endnotes

1. *Continuum* and *Critical Arts*, as is *African Journalism Studies*, mentioned below, are all licensed to Taylor & Francis. The two South African journals are additionally served by UNISA Press and National Inquiry Scholarly Services. Both have benefitted along with the 50 South African journals that this public-private partnership has elevated into the global arena.
2. The current editor of *South African Journal of Science* (SAJS), Leslie Schwartz, once worked on *Speak*, speaking of hybrid knowledge clubs and interests. The creative 'contradictions' are that he, a humanities scholar, has published in SAJS, and a scientist (a psychologist, actually) once worked on a radical culture magazine.
3. Ntongela Masilela wrote, for example, that some issues like "English Studies in Transition" (vol. 3, no. 2, 1984), edited by Nick Visser and "Recuperating the San" (vol. 9, no. 2, 1995) "were defining moments in South African academic studies. They either opened or re-opened in a fresh way unfamiliar epistemological territory; they redefined in a new way historicity in relation to the present; they narrowed in a consequential way the space between intellectual struggle and political struggle" (40–1).
4. The total sum paid out between 2012 and 2019 was R16 billion, according to Chief Mabizela, Johann Mouton and Marthie van Niekerk during a presentation at the National Scholarly Editors' Forum (NSEF) on 11 November 2021.
5. ASSAf breaks this mould as its five yearly journal evaluations by discipline do assess editorial performance, but not once have any of its reports admitted to the contradiction that it is editors who are institutionally undervalued while they are ones who are thoroughly assessed by ASSAf panels of peer reviewers (see ASSAf, "Peer review panels").
6. A caveat: while *Critical Arts* is a self-funding operation, periodic support has been provided by the institutions in which it has been housed.
7. In thanking his team on his retirement as editor of the *South African Journal of Science*, John Butler-Adam comments tongue-in-cheek: "And then, of course, there are the Journal's readers who even read Leaders. No Editor-in-Chief could survive without the consideration of such an interdependent community—of which it has been an honour to be a part" (1).
8. Sometimes small journals arise to address specific moments and then fade. *Con-text*, edited by Butler-Adam and Gibbon from the University of Durban-Westville, produced only two issues (1989). Butler-Adam, who served as editor of the *South African Journal of Science* between 2013 and 2019, reports that "a lack of interest from staff members, in what was still a predominantly right-wing institution (few contributors), brought publication to an end. Our friends and colleagues in the 'left wing' had too many other battles to fight, as did we. It was, perhaps, the product of a premature optimism" (Butler-Adam and Tomaselli). While the journal is lost, academic sharing sites give the articles published in it a new lease of life.

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Essay

Coming to Afrikaans

Mark Sanders

My earliest memories of Afrikaans come back to me in the form of names. My mother has taken my sister and me along to visit a friend of hers, also a nursing sister, at a house in Plattekloof, perhaps owned by her boyfriend. It is a hot summer afternoon, and we take a dip in the pool. Lean and tanned, with dark hair, the boyfriend is addressed affectionately by my mother's friend as "Bokkie." Is it his actual name? Or is it a term of endearment for her lover? I think I assumed then that it was his name. This was probably wrong, but, connotations of the primal scene aside, my mistake touched up against a boundary—between the language of love spoken among adults, and the language one is learning as a young child. But also between the English I grew up with, and another language with its own world of relations and emotions. Somehow this boundary never made itself felt *en famille*, when Afrikaans-speaking uncles, aunts, and cousins in Port Elizabeth switched to English when they wanted to make us feel welcome. The names that come back from those family visits are "Fielies" and "Stompie." The names of the family's little dogs, they never raised the sort of questions that "Bokkie" did. They were never ambiguous. Can a dog have a nickname?

It is perhaps surprising that, with our PE relatives, on my mother's side, we felt less of a boundary: this is English, this is Afrikaans, and alludes to another world entirely. For our PE relatives were, in some sense, as Afrikaans as one could get. Gentle Uncle Jannie, who worked as an industrial psychologist for the SAR, was staunch in his nationalism (other members of the family gossiped about his having belonged to the Ossewabrandwag, but, if he had, that was something in the past). Uncle Jannie let me, an avid young philatelist, look at his collection of stamps and envelopes commemorating the centenary Ossewatrek of 1938, and I was allowed to page through his copy of the *Ossewa-gedenkboek*. I was too young to want to read any of the books without pictures, but he also had a shelf of Afrikaans literature of the same era. Perhaps as much because of the books' distinctive illustrations as their unusual one-word author, Mikro is the one name I recall.

Both of my adoptive parents were bilingual in Afrikaans and English. My mother because her own parents were, respectively, Afrikaans and Irish, from the Eastern Cape. My father because he grew up in Rawsonville, the son of Jewish immigrants (or refugees) from Lithuania, whose stepfather owned a shop in this small town near Worcester in the Breede River Valley. His milieu as a boy would have included both white and brown speakers of Afrikaans; I remember him referring to a child minder of his by the name of Piet Mossie. After he came back from the War and dropped out of the University of Cape Town, he found work as a traveler for a general wholesaler in Cape Town. Like other restless young men who had been demobbed, what appealed to him was the independence of being on the road. His Afrikaans came in handy when he visited shopkeepers in the country, just as his country upbringing gave him an easy affinity with them.

I grew up in Sea Point, went to Sea Point Boys' Junior School, and then to Sea Point Boys' High. I grew up speaking English, and took Afrikaans as a second language for Matric. Getting high marks in the subject was easy. But when I went to UCT, it never crossed my mind to take Afrikaans en Nederlands. Having wanted to study philosophy and Xhosa, I ended up taking English when the classes for Xhosa Intensive turned out to be at the same time as the lectures for Philosophy I. This was, as I relate in my book *Learning Zulu: A Secret History of Language in South Africa*, the beginning of the long detour I took before devoting myself to learning an African language. The closest I came to enrolling in Afrikaans en Nederlands at UCT was when, trying to figure out a way of eluding military conscription, which I would have faced after graduating, I spoke with Roy Pfeiffer about emigrating to

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the Netherlands. In the event, I remained in Cape Town, took Honors in English, and, as the threat of arrest for not obeying the call-up evaporated around 1990, the idea of learning Dutch also fell by the wayside. But other, more personal, reasons made me wish to leave. Awaiting the results of my applications to PhD programs in the United States, I enrolled for an MA in Literary Studies at UCT. I took the module in comparative South African literature. Chris van der Merwe introduced us to early Afrikaans literature, and J. M. Coetzee, André Brink, Dorothy Driver, and Stephen Watson did much to stimulate us toward comparison. Coetzee drew in his sessions on his *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa*, which was already a touchstone for me—a guide to what was possible when Afrikaans literature was as carefully analyzed as literature in English by a scholar attuned to linguistic nuance. Inflected by linguistics and semiotics, to be sure, Coetzee's intuitions were those of an old-school philologist. The first time I heard the term "comparative philology" was is his classroom remarks. André, Dorothy, and Stephen, all engaged black South African writing.

It is at this juncture that coming to Afrikaans as a student is inseparable from how Afrikaans came to me in my personal life. Shortly before leaving for the United States, having plucked up the courage to trace my birth mother, I would be faced with the real possibility of seeing myself not just as somebody with an Afrikaans side to his family, but as being Afrikaans myself. My birth mother, although she spoke perfect English, was, to cut a long story short by eliding various complications, Afrikaans. Visiting her and her family, who were unbelievably welcoming to me, on one of my trips back, a neighbor came over, and on meeting this stranger whose presence was never explained, asked me: "Is jy 'n Boer?" (Are you a Boer?) Maybe I said something like "Ek weet nie," (I don't know) because he replied, in his good-natured way: "As jy Afrikaans praat, is jy 'n Boer" (If you speak Afrikaans, you're a Boer). This was in the 1990s, when white Afrikaners were searching for a post-apartheid cultural identity, and "Boer" appealed to some people as a name for it. After he was told, "Hy's familie," (He's family) he did not probe further. But I could not help asking myself existential questions. His reply had stated a minimal criterion for belonging, and, despite my not speaking a fluent idiomatic Afrikaans, I seemed to have met it even if I would never have claimed it myself. Was I in fact, therefore, really a Boer?

Asking myself such questions hardly resonated at Columbia University, where I was now a PhD student in comparative literature. Although identity politics, as it evolved under US multiculturalism was then strongly in evidence, the identity with which I was struggling was not one that it was meaningful to assert, even if it was safe to do so, which it was not. Simply being a white South African required, in the American academy, what is today called virtue signaling; the alternative, in the broader community, was for racists to claim one as one of their own. But my self-questioning, including an ineluctable sense of complicity, influenced the work I was to do for my doctorate. Having come across a reference to "lojale verset" (loyal opposition, or loyal resistance) and N. P. van Wyk Louw in a novel by Etienne van Heerden (but I also believe I heard the name "Van Wyk Louw" much earlier: inexplicably, I associate it with "Bokkie"), I began reading Louw's essays from the 1930s. After a friend in South Africa told me about Gerrit Olivier's excellent critical study of Louw, I began to discern, in the term "complicity," an *Ansatzpunkt*, or starting point, in Erich Auerbach's sense, for a dissertation in comparative literature. I had also grown interested in Martin Heidegger, who as rector of the University of Freiburg, in 1933 publicly aligned himself and his institution with National Socialism. I never quite convinced myself that, although the question of complicity is central to both cases, that there was enough of a similarity between Louw's advocacy of apartheid and Heidegger's Nazism.

The stronger links, I realized, were between South African intellectuals who supported or opposed apartheid. When I reworked my dissertation, I added a chapter on Steve Biko, who, in *I Write What I Like*, famously sought to remind the "black man [...] of his complicity in the crime of allowing himself to be misused and therefore letting evil reign supreme in the country of his birth" (28). Frantz Fanon became newly important to me, as did Karl Jaspers, whom Fanon and Biko both read. I read more widely in Afrikaans, adding a full chapter on Breytenbach, but also making reference to figures as various as Keet, Cronjé, and others. My discussion of Heidegger was condensed to a few pages in an introduction, where I laid out a theoretical framework taken up from Derrida. The result was my first book, *Complicities: The Intellectual and Apartheid*. It caught on among literary scholars in South Africa, and, in 2005, I was invited to deliver the annual N. P. van Wyk Louw memorial lecture at the University of Johannesburg. Although a couple of pieces on the fiction of Marlene van Niekerk followed, it was not long until I threw myself into learning Zulu, a project that occupied me for several years.

Approaching Afrikaans literature as a comparativist means that my reading and scholarship have not unfolded in linear fashion. Coming to Afrikaans has thus been a taking leave and a coming back, a grasping and

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a letting go—as the dancer takes and releases their partner's hand. That is the metaphor I borrow from Friedrich Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, where the eagle and the serpent, Zarathustra's animal companions, speak back to him his thought of the eternal recurrence of the same (*ewige Wiederkunft des Gleichen*). The rhythm of that *Wiederkunft* is, in their words, like the grasping and letting go in the dance: "*Oh Zarathustra* […] *Solchen, die denken wie wir, tanzen alle Dinge selber: das kommt und reicht sich die Hand and lacht und flieht—und kommt zurück*" (272). In R. J. Hollingdale's translation, this passage is rendered as follows: "O Zarathustra […] all things themselves dance for such as think as we: they come and offer their hand and laugh and flee—and return" (234).

Just last month, as I was preparing for my inaugural visit as extraordinary professor, an honor that I can hardly begin to acknowledge, by reading some recent Afrikaans fiction recommended to me by Andries Visagie, when I had also begun writing a piece about cycling in the footsteps of Nietzsche, I had occasion to return to N. P. van Wyk Louw's 1938 essay, "Die ewige trek," (The eternal trek) which I analyze in detail in *Complicities*. I had just started reading again, after more than thirty years, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, which I read in Hollingdale's English translation in my late teens, and selected as my prize in high school for excellence in English and Afrikaans. This time I was reading *Also sprach Zarathustra* in German, which allowed its words to resonate profoundly with those of Louw. The keyword, of course, is the cognate word "ewig," or "ewig," in German. I wish that Johan Degenaar, who generously gave me a few hours of time at his home in Stellenbosch as I began my doctoral work, and whose lectures on Nietzsche I heard in Grahamstown at the festival, were still here to give his view. Louw's idea of an "ewige trek," it seemed clear to me now, was a variation on Nietzsche's "ewige Wiederkunft," or "ewige Wiederkehr." The Nietzschean aristocratism of Louw and his circle is well known to scholars (and is evident in other of his essays from the 1930s, like "Die aristokratiese ideal" [The aristocratic ideal] and "Gelykmaak en rangordening" [Making equal and rank-ordering]), but, with only the recollection of a schoolboy's reading of *Zarathustra* in translation to go on, I had never, until this summer, grasped the profound significance of this particular reinscription.

Originally published in the magazine *Die Brandwag*, Louw's essay was written on the occasion of the 1938 centenary trek. Compared with the nationalist propaganda one finds in the *Gedenkboek*, by C. M. van den Heever and others, Louw's essay is a study in critical subtlety—a perfect example of what he termed *lojale verset*. Identifying three successive historical "keerpunte" (turning points)—the decision to trek into the hinterland, the declaration of war against Britain, and the choice of Afrikaans over Dutch—Louw argues for the stripping away of "alles wat enkel tydgebonde aan die historiese instansie is" (everything that is uniquely time-bound to the historical instance) (95). Although he acknowledges that, at least at the first of these "keerpunte," national consciousness could scarcely have existed, he is still prepared to posit an "ewige trek van die volk," (eternal trek of the *volk*) and "een volkswording" (98, 102) (one becoming of the *volk*). In short, Louw transgresses the rules of metaphysics by giving the ontological "same"—that which is "ewig" in its recurrent "krisis" (crisis) or "ewig op trek" (eternally trekking) (98, 95)—a name. That name is, of course, *volk*. Although it is through and through historical, *volk* is never subject to the stripping away of the "historical instance," or "historical instantiation," never subject to phenomenological *epoche*.

Among Nietzsche's formulations one can certainly find names for the "same," such as "Sein" or even "Mensch," in the chapter I am reading from *Zarathustra*. But Louw's setting to work is of a different order, bringing to mind the use that Nietzsche's work was put by the German reactionaries—which laid the foundation for his appropriation by the Nazis. Louw was not a Nazi, even if he equivocates, in "Die ewige trek," regarding the very recent German annexation of Czechoslovakia. At the heart of this equivocation is *volk*, in an uninterrogated political and cultural-nationalist sense. Although Louw would distance himself from National Socialism, he never relinquished his investment in the *volk*, or loosened the grip that the idea of *volk* had on him. When, as extraordinary professor in South African language, literature, culture, and history at the University of Amsterdam in the 1950s, he advocated apartheid separate development, a multiplicity of *volkere* (nations) was the unquestioned theoretical basis for his influential notion of *voortbestaan in geregtigheid* (continued existence in justice, or survival in justice).

All of this needs to be remembered, but what strikes me rereading both Louw and Nietzsche now is something else: the way in which comparison can bring forth, not only superficial affinities, but more profoundly shared problems and predicaments. What I refer to is the political use of philosophy—or of metaphysics specifically. This is where comparative literature meets deconstruction. A reader of *Zarathustra* could say that the "same" that recurs should, if the rules are being properly followed, never be given a name, even if it is (*Mensch*, for example, or even *Sein*), but it is in the *kehren* and *wiederkehren* (turning and returning), the *kommen* and *wiederkommen* (coming

and coming again) that what we posit as an entity abides (and does not). The entity under erasure, in Derridean terms, in other words.

A reader of Louw could equally say: yes, there are *keerpunte* just as there is a *Wiederkehr*, and that there could thus be a recurrence of a "same." But that we can even go a step further, and strip away the name that Louw gives it. And we can also, drawing on our philological knowledge (Nietzsche himself was a professor of philology before his health failed), then say that "trek," like the German "Zug," with which it is cognate, is also "trace" in the deconstructive sense—the non-origin on the basis of which the origin is constituted, the non-entity on the basis of which the entity is posited. In a passage in "Die ewige trek" that I had overlooked until just the other day, Louw writes beautifully, with uncannily Nietzschean echoes of precipices and ravines, that

> *Die volk loop soos 'n slaapwandelaar wat langs gevaarlike kranse en skeure gaan, en op elke draai kan hy afstort en vernietig word. Maar hy weet nie van die gevare nie, en dit is alleen wanneer die spoor agterna gesien word, dat mens gewaar hoe hy tussen die afgronde deurgevleg het.* (96)
>
> The volk is like a sleepwalker walking close to dangerous cliffs and ravines, and at every turn he could fall and be destroyed. But he does not know of the dangers, and it is only when one sees his spoor afterwards that one realizes how he had threaded his way amongst the abysses.

Derrida liked to link "trait" in French with "Spur" in German. Here we have the Afrikaans cognate "spoor", also a loan word in English. I would like to think that this personification can be undone as a metaphor. Just like an animal's, the existence and action of the sleepwalker are posited on the basis of its "spoor." But why a sleepwalker, and why indeed a *volk*, when what is material is an action, and not even an entity?

I do not know how these few reflections resonate with you today. And I do not really want to enter a lesson. But you know, perhaps better than I do, that the detachment of Afrikaans from the idea of *volk* in the political sense, is what has opened the possibility for new experiments in Afrikaans literature, from the linguistic hyper-localism and macaronic writing of Ronelda Kamfer, to the cosmopolitanism of an S. J. Naudé or an Eben Venter, with their constant translation between languages and worlds. The writer reaches out, or she reaches inward. Afrikaans traces. The philological imagination can follow, it can join in the dance. And it can leave—no, it must be *free* also to leave. And perhaps it is here that an allusion to early Afrikaans literature that a few of you might recognize might not be out of place. Of the characters of Oom Jan Vasvat and Neef Daantje Loslaat, I know whose hand I would rather take.[1]

Acknowledgement
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Note
1. I allude to figures from Jan Lion Cachet's *Sewe duiwels en wat hulle gedoen het.*

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Language, education, and transformation in Bianca Marais's *Hum If You Don't Know the Words*

Gail Fincham

Language, education, and transformation in Bianca Marais's *Hum If You Don't Know the Words*

In this article, I analyse Bianca Marais's debut novel *Hum If You Don't Know the Words* (2017). I consider first its relation to the historical events of the Soweto Uprising of 1976, and then examine its methods of composition. The issue precipitating the Soweto Uprising, when hundreds of black schoolchildren were gunned down by the police, was the refusal of blacks in Soweto to be taught in Afrikaans rather than in their home languages. Their revolt was both tragic and triumphant: tragic because of the sacrifice of young lives, triumphant because it marked Sowetans' new power to insist on their ownership of language. In the spirit of this linguistic autonomy, Marais celebrates the power of language to create intercultural and intergenerational encounters, scripting dialogue which marries social diversity with linguistic elasticity. In this marriage her writing is strongly consonant with the work of the Russian linguist and philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin, whose text *Art and Answerability* examines the ethics of writing and helps the reader to piece together the agency of the implied author. Searching for the perspectives of the implied author reveals Marais's political activism as well as her mastery of dialogue. Her novel belongs to the tradition created by writers in the 1970s and 1980s—when apartheid was in full force—to anticipate a post-apartheid world. Marais's novel illustrates a political, cultural, and linguistic reinvention through its manipulation of narrative. **Keywords:** Soweto Uprising 1976, language ownership, Bakhtin's *Art and Answerability*, implied author, narrative manipulation anticipating post-apartheid world.

Introduction: Historical background

Bianca Marais's debut novel *Hum If You Don't Know the Words*, published in 2017, is a *bildungsroman*—a story of courage, growth, and change—rooted in the tragedy of the 1976 Soweto Uprising. Drawing on one of the most violent events in South Africa's apartheid history, Marais scripts two narrators—a nine-year-old white child, Robin Conrad, from the mining town of Boksburg near Johannesburg, and a middle-aged black schoolteacher, Beauty Mbali, from the Transkei. After Robin's parents are murdered during the Riots, Beauty, who has travelled to Johannesburg to search for her daughter, Nomsa, is hired to look after the orphaned child. Although an experienced schoolteacher, Beauty accepts this domestic work in order to earn the pass that will allow her to remain in Johannesburg while she searches for Nomsa. Despite its evolution amid the most oppressive manifestations of an apartheid-divided society, the relationship that develops between Robin and Beauty challenges the racism with which Robin has been brought up and results in a form of communication struggling to free itself from the social and racial oppressions of apartheid. That this novel should be a *bildungsroman* rather than a trauma narrative, considering the tragedy from which it is born, is remarkable.

> Reported in many newspapers around the world, the Soweto Riots of 1976, represented by the photograph of a dying Hector Pietersen in the arms of his weeping siblings, caused international shock waves. The following is a journalist's account: During the early hours of 16 June 1976, thousands of schoolchildren marched in Soweto in protest against a government instruction that Afrikaans had to be used as one of the media of tuition in secondary schools. They were fired on by police [...] Enraged by the use of force to smash a peaceful protest, the students went on the rampage. (Holland 6–7)

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Holland reports that by the end of the first week one hundred and fifty lives had been lost in Soweto alone. By October the following year seven hundred people had died in countrywide anti-apartheid protests. Over 90 per cent of the dead were younger than twenty-three years.

The student Uprising of 1976 resulted not only in the sacrifice of many lives, but in political power for black youth: "1976 marks a key transition point from which stage political activism became a prominent feature of the lives of many young South Africans. This trend intensified in the 1980's as youth engaged the state in their schools and colleges, and on the streets" (Finchilescu and Dawes 99).

However, the students' new power resulting from the 1976 Uprising was bought at a heavy price. During the 1980's the ANC and its protest movements urged schoolchildren to vacate their desks. Thousands of Sowetan schoolchildren, chanting the slogan "Liberation Before Education", abandoned the inferior schooling offered them by the government. These young people, "ordinary citizens swept up by the tidal wave of history" (Apte 53), became a lost generation.

The precipitating cause of the Soweto Uprising of 1976 was the government's demand that students in Black schools be taught in Afrikaans rather than in indigenous languages. This was the final insult on top of the system of overcrowded schools and under-qualified teachers which meant that almost no black pupils achieved Matric—3% as opposed to 70% amongst white pupils (Holland 57). Yet the Uprising also created a sense of camaraderie that was subsequently lost. In the words of social activist Bongi Mkhabela, "1976 was beautiful rather than sad. You saw the collective consciousness of a community, its togetherness; workers, kids, teachers all going the same way forward, together. They may not have had academic ways of articulating where they were going, but they all knew. They knew what was frustrating them: the Bantu Education system" (Mkhabela qtd in Holland 62).

Hum If You Don't Know the Words is built around the events of the 1976 Soweto Uprising. In Marais's novel, Robin Conrad's parents are murdered during the Uprising, Beauty comforts dying schoolchildren fired upon by the police, and Beauty's daughter Nomsa, sent to Johannesburg to complete her education, joins the thousands of young people in Soweto who abandon their apartheid-blighted education. Subsequently, she joins uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK), the movement of young people committed to the armed struggle who are trained outside the country by the ANC. The ethical issues of this commitment are foregrounded in the letter Beauty sends to Robin:

> It does not matter how often I am told that Nomsa is where she wants to be and what a good soldier she is. I know my daughter. I know that under the passion and the aggression beats a heart that knows the difference between right and wrong; a conscience that will grapple with the implications of bombing train stations and municipal buildings; a heart that will question the morality of hurting innocent people to make a political statement. (*Hum If You Don't Know the Words* 394)

Nomsa's letter to her mother confirms the moral awareness of which Beauty has written:

> I know that in order to be an effective soldier, I need to completely turn my back on you and everything you have ever taught me. There are things that need to be done, terrible things, and many people will be killed. The few acts I have already committed keep me awake at night, and make me question who I am and the person I am becoming. It is my greatest fear that one day I will wake up and be someone you would not recognise, or even worse, someone you could not love. (*Hum* 405–6)

Marais's creation of Nomsa's story registers the shift that has occurred in the implementation of sabotage by uMkhonto we Sizwe since its creation by Nelson Mandela. Mandela writes:

> Since the ANC had been reluctant to embrace violence at all, it made sense to start with the form of violence that inflicted the least harm against individuals: sabotage.
>
> Because it did not involve loss of life, it offered the best hope for reconciliation among the races afterwards. We did not want to start a blood-feud between white and black. Animosity between Afrikaner and Englishman was still sharp fifty years after the Anglo-Boer war: what would race relations be like between white and black if we provoked a civil war? Sabotage had the added virtue of requiring the least manpower. (336)

Stephen Watson comments: "liberation movements seldom create liberatory (still less libertarian) cultures if only because their struggles demand a high degree of conformity, as well as suppression of individual dissent—precisely the habits of mind that are inimical to any real flourishing of the arts" (160). Nomsa's story in Marais's novel dramatizes the conflict between political commitment and humanitarian awareness facing MK members.

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But the passion for knowledge amongst black schoolchildren can transcend this conflict, leading to a healing connection between individuals as well as to the boycotting of inferior education. Marais depicts a creative friendship between the white Robin and the black Asanda. Rooted in humanistic encounter, reciprocity, and respect, this friendship has little to do with formal education:

> Asanda and I had more in common than any other person I'd ever met. We both liked kwela music and loved to dance. We'd both had a twin sibling who we'd lost, and we both spied on people and acted like detectives. Both of us loved learning new languages and we both respected Beauty and wanted to do right by her. Each of us was also trying to make things right in our own way. In another time and place, Asanda and I could have been best friends; in another lifetime, he could have been my boyfriend. (*Hum* 400)

Approaching the novel

Hum If You Don't Know the Words belongs to the tradition of novels set in the South Africa of the 1970s and 1980s—when apartheid was its most oppressive—that anticipate a post-apartheid world. Most striking here are André Brink's *A Dry White Season* and Miriam Tlali's *Amandla*, both drawing on the events of the 1976 Soweto Uprising. Another example of a text powerfully anticipating political freedom is J. M. Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K*. The novel's continuing importance is reflected in the fact of its adaptation as a theatrical and multi-media presentation incorporating the Handspring Puppets and playing at the Baxter Theatre in February/March 2022. Like the texts mentioned, *Hum If You Don't Know the Words* dramatises the power of language to alter consciousness in intercultural and intergenerational encounters. It graphically illustrates Njabulo Ndebele's claim that: "In few countries in the contemporary world do we have a living example of people reinventing themselves through narrative" (Ndebele 27).

Writing about the consciousness created by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) that accompanied the transition to democracy, Ndebele remarks: "What seems to have happened is that the passage of time which brought forth our freedom has given legitimacy and authority to previously silenced voices" (20). While this is not the forum to consider the morality of the TRC—the issue of forgiveness in exchange for confession of crimes against humanity—it is incontestable that the years of the TRC hearings created a new space for previously silenced voices. Ndebele speaks of "the movement of our society from repression to expression" (20). Marais's novel captures the first impulses of this movement twenty years before the TRC hearings. She gives speech to such "previously silenced voices" as Beauty Mbali's Sowetan family, the thousands of black schoolchildren determined to escape state control, and the racially mixed collection of independent-minded people who befriend Robin in Yeoville. Referring, like Ndebele, to previously silenced voices such as these, Brink remarks: "fiction writers who wish to return to the silent or silenced landscapes of the past have to tune in to the new perceptions of what constitutes history" ("Stories of history: reimagining the past in post-apartheid narrative" 32). This history in Marais's novel, though it predates the transition to democracy by two decades, illustrates the development of a strong resistant subjectivity that counters the tyrannies of apartheid.

In "Preparing Ourselves for Freedom" Albie Sachs writes: "What we have to ask ourselves now is whether we have an artistic and cultural vision that corresponds to this current phase in which a new South African nation is emerging [...] [instead of being] trapped in the multiple ghettoes of the apartheid imagination" (246). Marais's novel, published in 2017, looks back to the South Africa of the 1970s and 1980s when freedom from state control seemed impossible. Yet her protagonists are able to shape a new "artistic and cultural vision" that counters "the ghettoes of the apartheid imagination". Her novel illustrates the power of language to create new realities through dialogue despite the oppressions of apartheid. This political agenda co-exists with literary naturalism; as Kelly Hart contends, Marais's dialogue is "engaging, reveals character, enhances plot and also sounds natural".

I turn now to the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, whose theorisation about language helps us to understand the socio-linguistic transformations depicted in Marais's novel. Explaining why Bakhtin's work remains important to writers and readers, Pam Morris remarks: "At the centre of all his thinking is an innovative and dynamic perception of language. Due largely to the impact of structuralist linguistics and subsequent development of deconstructionist theory, a concern with language as production of meaning has been pushed to the centre of twentieth-century Western epistemology" (Morris 1).

Bakhtin tells us that a writer's ability to use language creatively depends on understanding and responding to the words of others:

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> For the prose artist the world is full of other people's words, among which he must orientate himself and whose speech characteristics he must be able to perceive with a very keen ear. He must introduce them into the plane of his own discourse, but in such a way that this plane is not destroyed. He works with a very rich verbal palette. (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 201)

My reading of *Hum If You Don't Know the Words* centres on Marais's use of language shaped by a speaker's dynamic relationship to her or his environment. The way this relationship is shaped alerts us to the (concealed) manipulations of the author. To investigate the structure of Marais's novel, I use the concepts of dialogism and heteroglossia which Bakhtin formulated in 1941, as well as turning to his preoccupations with the work of the writer in his earlier book *Art and Answerability* (1919), which addresses the structure of a text as it is conceived by the author.[1]

Given that language is dynamic for Bakhtin, with new and unpredictable meanings constantly arising out of the dialogism and heteroglossia of speakers' interactions, meanings are not determined by Marais's authorial control over her novel. Her presence is all but invisible in her text, so that as readers we can only guess at how she manipulates her storyline. We are dealing here with the concept of the implied author, where we as readers collaborate in unlocking the text's meanings. Jeremy Hawthorn explains:

> The term [implied author] has entered into current critical vocabulary and is used to refer to that picture of a creating author behind a literary work that the reader builds up on the basis of elements in (or reading experiences of) a literary work. [...] Seymour Chatman argues that what we get from the concept of the implied author "is a way of naming and analysing the textual intent of narrative fictions under a single term but without recourse to biographism". (Hawthorn 25)

To Hawthorn's description of the implied author above should be added that authors write themselves into their texts in many ways. As readers we hunt for elements in the novel that speak to the implied author's concealed though not completely invisible presence.

It is this "way of naming and analyzing [...] textual intent" defined by Chatman that I undertake in juxtaposing aspects of Marais's novel against Bakhtin's *Art and Answerability*, an early Bakhtin text which explores and clarifies the functions of the author. Bakhtin writes that "language is not self-evident and is not in itself incontestable [...] it is uttered in a heteroglot environment [...] such a language must be championed, purified, defended, motivated" ("Discourse in the Novel" 332). I turn now to this defence and motivation originally put forward in *Art and Answerability* and suggest ways in which this text illuminates the power of language in Marais's novel. I focus on three topics in *Art and Answerability*, namely: *the excess of seeing*, *sympathetic co-experiencing*, and *love and growth*, the latter topic taken from the section entitled "The Inner and the Outer Body" in Bakhtin's text. I first quote Bakhtin's explanation of these terms, and then suggest their relevance for *Hum If You Don't Know the Words*. *Art and Answerability* is illuminating for the reader because it maps a "consummating consciousness" governing the construction of the whole text. Suddenly we glimpse what none of Marais's protagonists can, on their own, show us: the interplay between political control and creative freedom. This interplay can only become apparent from a position "outside" the novel, a position that none of its characters can command.

Marais's *Hum If You Don't Know the Words* through Bakhtin's *Art and Answerability*

The excess of seeing

A central concept governing the author's manipulation of a novel is what Bakhtin calls "the excess of seeing". While Marais's novel shows us how her characters view the world, this seeing is always enclosed within the author's wider vision. Bakhtin remarks:

> The excess of my seeing must "fill in" the horizon of the other human being who is being contemplated, must render his horizon complete, without at the same time forfeiting his distinctiveness. I must empathise or project myself into this other human being, see his world axiologically from within him as he sees this world. I must put myself in his place and then, after returning to my own place, "fill in" his horizon through that excess of seeing which opens out from this, my own, place outside him. I must enframe him, create a consummating environment for him out of this excess of my own seeing, knowing, desiring, and feeling. (*Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays* 25)

Marais creates two very different narrators to dramatise her story of growth and change: a nine-year-old white child and a middle-aged black school teacher. Their alternating narrations draw the reader into their disparate

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worlds. Robin comes from the middle-class white mining town of Boksburg on the Reef; Beauty's home is in a rural thatched Transkei village which she leaves to travel to Soweto in her search for Nomsa. Eventually, after twenty-nine chapters of alternating separate narrations, Robin and Beauty meet and talk; their discussions change Robin's world-view.

In the opening two chapters, Marais as implied author has to accomplish an ideological feat: to involve the reader in both narrators' "distinctiveness" so that they are convincingly individuated, but also to signal some problematic areas of their consciousness. Robin is an energetic and intelligent child, a tomboy who wants nothing so much as to be part of the games played by Boksburg's Afrikaans-speaking boys. She cannot identify with girls her own age because they imitate their mothers' preoccupations with cooking and babies. An only child, Robin is particularly aware that she frequently doesn't fulfil her parents' expectations, so she invents an imaginary twin sister with whom she frequently talks and plays. Marais "enframes" Robin and "creates a consummating environment" for her by showing the reader her youth, energy, and near-total lack of understanding of the racial, linguistic, and gender constraints that characterise her politically fractured home situation. Because she is only nine years old, the reader accepts this lack of understanding.

The case with Beauty is very different, as befits a highly educated protagonist. Beauty is fiercely loyal to her rural community in the Transkei, stressing how different their values are to those of white city-dwelling South Africans. She describes her thatched rondavel as follows:

> Our homes are borderless just as the world was once free of boundaries; there would be no walls or roofs at all except for the essential shelter they provide. Privacy is not a concept my people understand or desire; we bear witness to each other's lives and take comfort in having our own lives seen. What greater gift can you give another than to say: I see you, I hear you, and you are not alone? (12)

But Marais brings home to the reader the "boundaries" and "borders" of Beauty's Transkei by telling her story in the present tense throughout. Robin's story, by contrast, is told in the past, the tense of completed action. As Rayyan Al-Shawaf comments in a *Toronto Star* review of the novel, Beauty's present-tense narration conveys a sense of immediacy. It also, and perhaps more importantly, signals Marais's recognition that, because of apartheid, the Transkei has a damaged past and an uncertain future. This is because the South African regime has never compensated the homeland's inhabitants for drought, flood, soil erosion, or diseases which destroy livestock. Beauty, like many other women in her community, is left alone after her family's cattle die, a single mother to her daughter and two remaining sons. Her husband Silumko becomes a miner in Johannesburg, labouring in appalling conditions for eleven months of every year in order to support his family. These facts emerge as Beauty teaches Robin about her life. Yet despite hardship, loss, and grief, Beauty never ceases to rejoice in her trips home:

> I look out over the place of my birth and my spirits lift for the first time in many weeks. I am happy to trade in the electricity, running water and plumbing of the city for this rural landscape where water must be fetched from the stream, cooking is done over fires and only a candle can cast light into the darkest shadows. It is a place where time stands still. (249)

This excerpt draws our attention to the ideological complexity of the implied author's stance. Marais lives in the city of Toronto and writes this novel for a South African audience, mostly city-dwelling whites. But at the time her text is set, this readership, with the few exceptions of political activists working to improve the lives of black people, is largely unaware of its privilege. Black people are employed as maids and gardeners with very little understanding on their employers' part of the hardships they endure under apartheid. Beauty, travelling from the Transkei to Johannesburg, may not use toilets on her journey because these are reserved for whites, and must carry a pass at all times or risk imprisonment. Urbanisation thus holds no allure for her. Perhaps this is why, in contrast to the "maids and madams" ethnography of Johannesburg, Beauty's classless community in the Transkei is portrayed so positively.

Is Marais's idealisation of the rural Transkei, site of erosion, poverty, and loss, intended to challenge the values of urban whites within a capitalist economy where many black people still work as servants? Or does she want, like J. M. Coetzee, to deconstruct the binary between "high European culture" and "so-called primitive cultures"? Coetzee writes:

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> What structuralism did for me—and here I have in mind anthropological structuralism and Jakobson's work on folk poetry—was to collapse dramatically the distance between high European culture and so-called primitive cultures. It became clear that fully as much *thinking* went into the production of primitive cultures. Human culture was human culture, unchanging, more or less, beneath the changing forms of its expression. (24)

We know that Beauty, as a highly educated protagonist, is a thinking person. But what her affection for the Transkei—to which she will return with Nomsa at the end of the novel—*means* is not spelled out by the implied author, whose "excess of seeing" contains puzzles which readers will solve in different ways.

A less cryptic example of the implied author's "filling in" of the horizon of a character occurs in Beauty's narration of the office room hidden behind the bookshelf panels in the library of the activist Maggie's Houghton house. Here the author empathises with, and projects herself into, Beauty's consciousness. Highly educated and familiar for years with the words and actions of Mandela, she has been prevented by apartheid from seeing any images of him:

> As I move farther along the wall, I skim past dozens of photographs that, if discovered by the police, would incriminate my hosts to such an extent that no trial would ever be required to send them both to prison. I keep scanning until I notice a photo I have never seen before. […] Maggie is much younger in it and she is standing next to a tall, handsome black man who looks to be in his thirties or forties. […] He looks familiar but I cannot place him, and I assume that he is an American actor or politician […] "Who is he?" […] "That's Rolihlahla Mandela" […] "The village where he grew up is very close to mine. I have heard so many tales about him, such great stories about such a great man, but I have never seen what he looks like." "Well. I suppose that's to be expected with the ban on reproducing his image. That's exactly what the government wants". (*Hum* 168)

Visual representations of political leaders familiar to the white reader but censored during apartheid from a black readership are here clearly described in the implied author's "excess of seeing". This visualises a space of secrecy and subterfuge to escape apartheid censorship. While the functioning of such censorship is familiar to readers, what is more difficult to understand is how this censorship can be implemented. Publications for black people may be forced to omit politically rousing visual material. But what about posters and television, or printed material in the white houses where black servants work? Are wealthy white activists like Maggie and her husband Andrew not able to buy off police should they find censored images in their possession? Can they not bribe them with expensive imported alcohol and tobacco as they did when Beauty was held up for not carrying a pass? Here the implied author's "excess of seeing" is infiltrated by her "knowing, desiring and feeling". These sentiments register the enormity of state censorship. Fortunately, such censorship cannot be as effective as the architects of apartheid desired.

Sympathetic co-experiencing

The author, by definition outside the text, enacts what Bakhtin calls *sympathetic co-experiencing* with the characters of a novel: "a sympathetically co-experienced life is the life of another human being, (his outer as well as his *inner* life) that is essentially experienced *from outside*" (*Art and Answerability* 82). A heart-rending example of the implied author's "sympathetic co-experiencing" occurs when Beauty comforts the wounded and dying children in the River of Blood caused by police brutality during the Riots. The children are completely alone; not even their parents know what has happened to them. Beauty promises that their mothers love them and will come to them, and their responses are no less poignant for being matter-of-fact:

> *Zanele.* Twelve years old. She is bleeding from the ear. *Goodness.* Her lips tremble and her tears are hot against my skin but she still manages a smile. *Kidebone.* Her lips are shiny with Vaseline. *Jabu.* Fourteen years old. He is the man of the house after his father died in a rockfall underground. *Fumani.* Wonders if I am an angel. *Thandeka.* Asks if I have seen her younger sister. *Sipho.* Has never met his father. *Kleinboy.* Says he is late for school. (*Hum* 42)

This exchange imagined by the implied author is heard by nobody except Beauty and the reader.

A happier example of the implied author's "sympathetic co-experiencing" is the sequence in which Robin is given a surprise party on her tenth birthday:

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> Almost everyone who mattered most to me was in the same room. Beauty (smiling broadly), Morrie (hair more poofy than usual), Mrs Goldman (bearing gifts), Victor (wearing an aquamarine bow tie because I'd told him once that aquamarine was my favorite color), Johan (minus his stitches), Wilhelmina (no longer a baddie!), and Maggie (no longer my only guardian angel). Black, white, homosexual, hetero-sexual, Christian, Jew, Englishman, Afrikaner, adult, child, man, woman: we were all there together, but somehow that eclectic jumble of labels was overwritten by the one classification that applied to every person there: "friend". (277)

Here the reader is aware of a commentary too sophisticated to be composed by a ten-year-old. The syntax, such as constructing affectionate descriptive parentheses, expressive phrases like "eclectic jumble of labels" and the ability to construct conceptual contrasts such as homosexual/hetero-sexual, when neither term is clear to Robin, alert us to the presence of the implied author.

In this author-dominated passage, we are made aware of the previously silenced voices of which Ndebele and Brink write. Marais's novel gives voice to a number of remarkable individuals whose lifestyles have no legitimacy within apartheid but whose friendships with Robin change her world. First, there is her mentor Beauty, from whom she learns to question everything she has been taught about class and race. Morrie Goldman, removed from school because of anti-semitism, now lives at home and strikes up a close friendship with Robin; they have many very funny conversations about Judaism. Then there is the Afrikaans-speaking social worker Wilhelmina whose liberal politics have resulted in her husband's mysterious death. She comes to Robin's assistance when the child develops scarlet fever and Beauty, *in loco parentis*, cannot as a black servant take her to hospital. Victor, member of a gay fraternity, teaches Robin that running away is never an option, no matter how barbarously one has been treated. Finally, the white activist Maggie, who works to protect blacks from apartheid, runs constant risks to her own safety. As a reviewer remarks, the members of Robin's and Beauty's circles are "alternately funny, warm and intriguing, yet because they are Jewish or gay or simply progressive in their views, they are outcasts in this intolerant society" (Jones). Yet it is these "outcasts" who dominate the novel and shape Robin's *bildungsroman*. As Brink writes, "History provides one of the most fertile silences to be revisited by South African writers, not because no voices have traversed it before, but because the dominant discourse of white historiography [...] has inevitably silenced, for so long, so many other possibilities" (Brink "Interrogating silence: new possibilities faced by South African literature" 22). Marais's novel substitutes for history's "fertile silences" the courageous and engaged voices of the friends who celebrate Robin's surprise birthday party.

Love and growth

Bakhtin writes of the importance of parental love for a child's development:

> The words of a loving human being are the first and the most authoritative about him; they are the words that for the first time determine his personality from outside, the words that come to meet his indistinct inner sensation of himself, giving it a form and a name in which, for the first time, he finds himself and becomes aware of himself as a *something*. Words of love and acts of genuine concern come to meet the dark chaos of my inner sensation of myself: they name, direct, satisfy, and connect it with the outside world. (*Art* 49–50)

But Robin has lost these "words of love and acts of genuine concern" because both her parents have been killed. How is she to develop in the absence of the formative words which "name, direct, satisfy and connect [her] with the outside world"? It is in this context of loss and grief that we are shown most clearly the power of language, and the agency of the implied author. Marais, writing a *bildungsroman*, must move Robin beyond the elaborate charade centring on clothes, decorations, and gimmicks she enacts with her aunt Edith after her parents' death in order to avoid remembering and speaking of them. She must learn to mourn. But Robin does not yet understand that loss, grief, and mourning are universal experiences: "Later in life when I became acquainted with psychology textbooks, I was surprised to discover that there was a whole branch of study dedicated to what I'd experienced; it wasn't the unknowable pit I'd thought it was" (134). While Robin must still learn to grieve, Marais has thought a great deal about death and mourning: "My experience of grief is that [it] isn't something you get over [...] It isn't a process you go through to come out healed on the other side [...] the best you can hope for is to learn to live with it so that the burden of it gets easier to carry with time" (Marais and Johnson).

If parental love is what stabilises an individual, Robin is initially unable to access it. Deeply traumatised after the deaths of her parents, she cannot make herself remember or speak of them. It is only when Robin at last visits

the Yeoville library that she confronts the fact of her orphanhood, suddenly realising that she has no parents to sign for her: "So I did then what I hadn't done in the six weeks since I lost my parents; I surrendered and gave in to my grief, and I sobbed like the frightened and abandoned child I was" (*Hum* 195).

This collapse is the first step towards Robin's learning to mourn her parents' death. The implied author shows us that mourning must be learned, its enactment dependent on both auditory and visual cues. Robin listens to the Dolly Parton album which contains the song "Jolene" to access her mourning, as the song shares her mother's name: "It didn't matter that the song was about a woman who didn't look like my mother at all. It also didn't matter that it was about a woman taking another woman's man. I was enthralled with it and relieved that I could get to howl my mother's name over and over again in a socially acceptable context" (204).

The implied author also leads Robin to mourning her father by drawing the shapes he found on her face: "I re-created the constellations that my father had found hidden among my freckles: the Big Dipper (looking like a kite trailing a piece of string), the Southern Cross (the easiest to draw) and Orion's Belt (requiring the most freckles of all)" (204). Through these author-assisted rehearsals of mourning, Robin is led closer to the moment that she will, with Beauty's encouragement, be able to speak directly to her parents: "Mommy and Daddy, I miss you very much". She finishes: "I want you to know that I'm happy and I'm very well taken care of. So you should be happy too. I love you very much" (329). These simple but heartfelt words mark a turning point in Robin's acceptance of her parents' death. They are made possible by the way in which the implied author has afforded the child access to auditory and visual memories.

Could Marais have based these dramatisations of memory on her own reading of Jacques Derrida's *The Work of Mourning*? In the essay entitled "Roland Barthes", Derrida writes of the expressive power of a photograph:

> The Winter Garden Photograph: the invisible *punctum* of the book. It does not belong to the corpus of photographs [Barthes] exhibits, to the series of examples he displays and analyzes. Yet it irradiates the entire book. A sort of radiant serenity comes from his mother's eyes, whose brightness or clarity he describes, though we never see. The radiance composes with the wound that signs the book, with an invisible *punctum*. At this point, he is no longer speaking of light or of photography; he is seeing to something else, the voice of the other, the accompaniment, the song, the "last music". (43)

Bakhtin writes: "[w]ords of love and acts of genuine concern come to meet the chaos of my inner sensation of myself" (*Art* 50). Beauty has given Robin a "heart-shaped locket […] [with] black-and-white pictures inside: my dad's face […] on the left and my mother's on the right […] the photos […] taken on their wedding day" (*Hum* 256). The implied author here scripts a further cue to grieving, in addition to the Dolly Parton song Robin listens to incessantly, and her recreation of her father's drawings using her freckles. These cues assist Beauty in teaching the child how to grieve. She moves from a photograph to "the voice of the other, the accompaniment, the song, the 'last music'" (Derrida 43). That Robin does not yet fully apprehend the significance of this music and this drawing diminishes neither their power nor their ability to speak to her grief.

Conclusion

Guided by Bakhtin's *Art and Answerability*, I have investigated some of Marais's positions as implied author in *Hum If You Don't Know the Words*. If language issues—the government's refusal to allow black schoolchildren to learn in their own languages—precipitated both the tragedy and the triumph of the 1976 Riots, Marais's text begins to suggest a new potential of language to bring communities together. Bakhtin tells us that a protagonist's "consciousness […] feeling and […] desire of the world […] are enclosed on all sides, as if within a band, by the author's consummating consciousness" (*Art* 13). Approaching this "consummating consciousness" by searching for the implied author is potentially illuminating for the reader because it results in a perspective outside the novel, a perspective not available to any of its characters. We are shown how Marais as implied author creates a *bildungsroman* which celebrates individuals' ability to transcend apartheid. Brink writes:

> I recognise the regenerative powers of South African literature: not simply to escape from the inhibitions of apartheid but to construct and deconstruct new possibilities; to activate the imagination in its exploration of those silences previously inaccessible; to play with the future on that needlepoint where it meets past and present; and to be willing to risk everything in the leaping flame of the word as it turns into world. ("Interrogating silence" 27)

This is surely a fitting tribute to Marais's novel as she turns words into world.

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Notes

1. I append definitions of the central Bakhtinian concepts of dialogism and heteroglossia, and a brief explanation of why they are less useful to my analysis than the concept of the implied author developed in *Art and Answerability*. Dialogism: "Every utterance is the product of the interaction between speakers and the product of the broader context of the whole complex social situation in which the utterance emerges" (Volosinov 41). Heteroglossia: "refers to the conflict between 'centripetal' and 'centrigugal', 'official' and 'unofficial' discourses within the same national language [...] Every utterance contains within it the trace of other utterances, both in the past and in the future" (Morris, "A Glossary of Key Terms" 248–9). The concepts of dialogism and heteroglossia can only offer partial keys to our understanding of Marais's text because if all utterances contain the traces of other utterances, "both in the past and in the future", they must also stage warring ideologies. In short, they must embody contradiction. While these terms register the interactions of speakers' words within any text, the concept of the implied author is, by definition, outside the text, so must be separate from the words of any character.

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In die gees van die Dionisiese: Marlene van Niekerk se aanhangersbrief aan Freddy Mercury

Marius Crous

In the spirit of the Dionysian: Marlene van Niekerk's fan mail to Freddy Mercury

Drawing on Nietzsche's dichotomy between the Apollonian and Dionysian principles pertaining to classic tragedy, in this article, I consider the poem "Fan mail Freddy Mercury" by Marlene van Niekerk, from *Kaar* (2013) from that perspective. The poem deals with the rock musician Freddy Mercury and from my reading is shown to be exemplifying the Dionysian spirit through Mercury's movements, his performance and his vocal range. From my reading of the text it is evident that there was a strong fusion of the Apollonian and Dionysian in the life and work of Freddy Mercury. Despite his rebellious spirit and his negation of the faith of his childhood, culture dictated that he be buried in his faith. Van Niekerk, with her insight into the philosophy of Nietzsche, adds another dimension to the poem when she invokes Zarathustra, Nietzsche's prophetic figure, to be distinguished from the historical god of the Zoroaster faith. The metaphorical language used by the poet suggests her Dionysian playfulness. **Keywords:** Apollo versus Dionysus, *Kaar*, Marlene van Niekerk, Nietzsche.

Inleiding

In hierdie artikel gaan ek, aan die hand van die Duitse filosoof, Friedrich Nietzsche, se tweedeling tussen die Apolliniese en Dionisiese, die gedig "Fan mail Freddy Mercury" —'n gedig oor 'n sangkunstenaar in Marlene van Niekerk se bundel *Kaar* (2013)—ondersoek. Ek gaan aantoon in watter mate die gedig die wisselwerking tussen die Apolliniese en Dionisiese illustreer. Willie Burger ondersoek die Apolliniese en Dionisiese aan die hand van Van Niekerk se roman *Triomf* en, waar relevant, sluit ek by sy bespreking aan.

Die gedig word gelees om die Apollinies-Dionisiese tweedeling te illustreer, maar ook die rol wat hierdie digotomie speel met betrekking tot musiek, aangesien musiek die grondslag van Van Niekerk se gedig vorm. Ten slotte sal ook aangetoon word in watter mate die Apolliniese intellektuele digter haarself oorgee aan Dionisos se verleiding.

Burger (4) omskryf die terme Apollinies en Dionisies soos by Nietzsche soos volg:

> Nietzsche se *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) handel hoofsaaklik oor die wisselwerking tussen dié twee gode en hul simboliese attribute. Binne die estetika en die kultuurfilosofie dui die terme *Apollinies* en *Dionisies*, volgens Van Gorp (1984:30), op twee polêre geestestipes, wêreldbeskouings of kunstenaarstipes. 'n *Dionisiese* instelling (afgelei van die god Dionisos) is een van "roes, extase en bedwelmend zinnelijke beleving. Felle bewogenheid, expressieve vormgeving en het verlangen naar ontgrenzing creeren". Hierteenoor dui *Apollinies* (afgelei van die god Apollo) op "een houding waarop rede, begrenzing en evenwicht hun stempel drukken".

Ek betrek spesifiek 'n teks uit *Kaar* oor musiek, want daar moet in gedagte gehou word dat Nietzsche se oorspronklike titel *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik* (*The Birth Of Tragedy Out Of The Spirit of Music*) (Cox 495) was. Die teks is geskryf tydens Nietzsche se vriendskap met die komponis Richard Wagner en word selfs aan hom opgedra. Nietzsche (*Birth of Tragedy* 20) sluit die inleidende gedeelte van die boek af deur 'n vermaning aan sommige lesers te rig:

> [They] will be shocked at seeing an æsthetic problem taken so seriously, especially if they can recognise in art no more than a merry diversion, a readily dispensable court-jester to the "earnestness of existence": as if no one were aware of the real meaning of this confrontation with the "earnestness of existence." These earnest ones may be informed that I am convinced that art is the highest task and the properly metaphysical activity of this life, as it is understood by the man, to whom, as my sublime protagonist on this path, I would dedicate this essay.

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Onmin tussen Nietzsche en Wagner het egter mettertyd daartoe gelei dat die belangrike posisie wat aan die komponis toegeskryf word, verwerp is. In 1888 het Nietzsche begin werk aan sy *Nietzsche contra Wagner*, maar dit is eers later gepubliseer aangesien Nietzsche 'n geestelike ineenstorting gehad het. Lees 'n mens Nietzsche se opmerking in die voorwoord, naamlik dat hy Wagner as een van sy siektes beskou—Wagner "belongs only to my diseases" (*Contra* xxx)—word jy reeds voorberei op wat mag volg. Nietzsche (*Contra* 70) spreek veral kritiek uit op die opera *Parsifal*: "For "Parsifal" is a work of rancour, of revenge, of the most secret concoction of poisons with which to make an end of the first conditions of life, it is a bad work. The preaching of chastity remains an incitement to unnaturalness: I despise anybody who does not regard 'Parsifal' as an outrage upon morality". Nietzsche kritiseer Wagner se moralistiese inslag en meer spesifiek sy terugkeer na Christelike waardes en verwerping van die Dionisiese en die dekadente. In een van sy aforismes, in die afdeling "Wagner's Teutonism", vergelyk Nietzsche (*Contra* 87) vir Wagner met ander Duitse komponiste en kom tot dié gevolgtrekking:

> That which is un-German in Wagner: He lacks the German charm and grace of a Beethoven, a Mozart, a Weber; he also lacks the flowing, cheerful fire (*Allegro con brio*) of Beethoven and Weber. He cannot be free and easy without being grotesque. He lacks modesty, indulges in big drums, and always tends to surcharge his effect. He is not the good official that Bach was. Neither has he that Goethean calm in regard to his rivals.

Die rede hoekom ek hier aan die begin van my ondersoek na die stryd tussen die filosoof (wat ook gekomponeer het) en die komponis verwys, is om die leser bedag te maak op die subjektiewe aard van Nietzsche se tweedeling—waarvan die komponente in die volgende afdeling van die artikel teoreties sterker gefundeer sal word. Sodra Wagner nie meer inpas by Nietzsche se teorie nie, word hy verwerp, verkleineer en selfs as on-Duits ("un-German") beskou.

Aangesien die indeling van tekste as synde Apolllinies of Dionisies problematies kan wees, veral met betrekking tot klassieke musiek, gaan ek in my bespreking grootliks fokus op 'n gedig wat handel oor rockmusiek en popsterre. Selde sal popmusiek as Apollinies beskryf kan word.

Dit is alombekend dat musiek 'n sentrale rol in Marlene van Niekerk se werk speel, en in *Kaar* word veral verwys na klassieke komponiste soos Giacinto Scelsi (51), Sofia Gubaidulina (128), Monteverdi (142), Bach (143, 163), Scarlatti (152) en Messiaen (206). Die titel van die gedig "Heavy metal in Bagdad" (123) verwys na 'n dokumentêre film wat in 2007 gemaak is oor 'n Irakese "heavy metal band" genaamd Accrassicauda.

Dit word problematies wanneer 'n mens moet besluit of Bach Apollinies en of Scelsi se moderne musiek Dionisies van aard is. So is Monteverdi, wie se musiek Apollinies mag klink, in sy tyd as Dionisies beskou. Volgens Ulusoy (245) word kontemporêre Dionisiese musiek veral geassosieer met "punk, hard-core, metal, straight edge, grunge, old-school rap, electronica, post-punk, alternative rock". Dit word hoofsaaklik gekenmerk deur selfekspressie en die kunstenaar se uiting aan individualiteit.

Dit verklaar hoekom ek in my bespreking gaan fokus op die gedig "Fan mail Freddy Mercury" (96), wat, soos die titel reeds aandui, handel oor die popster van die rockgroep *Queen*. Snyman (2013) som die aard van die gedig soos volg op: "In 'Fan mail Freddy Mercury' (96) word die wêreld van pop-kunstenaars ontmitologiseer, maar in die oomblik van ontmitologisering word hulle binne die grense van die gedig opnuut mites van ons verwarde tyd."

Die gebruik van die term *aanhangerspos* ("fan mail") in die titel berei die leser daarop voor dat ons in hierdie gedig heel moontlik 'n brief aan 'n bekende persoon deur een of ander aanhanger gaan vind. Wanneer iemand as bewonderaar aan 'n bekende persoon skryf, impliseer dit dat jy nie noodwendig verwag om 'n brief terug te ontvang nie. Gewoonlik lees die selebriteit se personeel die briewe en stuur 'n foto, met 'n elektroniese handtekening daarop aangebring, terug aan die aanhangers.

Van Niekerk rig nie haar gedig direk aan Freddy Mercury 'n boodskap in briefvorm nie, maar bied eerder aan die leser 'n verslag waarin sy haar bewondering vir hom illustreer.

Teoreties benader: Apollo versus Dionisos

In 1872 verskyn Nietzsche se *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik*. Die heruitgawe van die teks in 1886 word ingelei deur 'n selfrefleksiewe opstel waarin hy sekere van sy vroeëre opvattings bevraagteken en die titel heet nou *Die Geburt der Tragödie, Oder: Griechentum und Pessimismus (The Birth of Tragedy, Or: Hellenism and Pessimism)*. In 'n latere uitgawe, in 1905, word die inleiding verskaf deur Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche, sy suster wat ná sy dood kopiereg op sy werk verkry het.

Vir die doel van my studie gebruik ek die aanlynweergawe van *The Birth of Tragedy*, soos vertaal deur Hausmann en vrylik beskikbaar op die webtuiste *Project Gutenberg.*

Tussen droomsfeer en dronkenskap

Die Apolliniese beginsel in die Griekse tragedie word, volgens Nietzsche (*Birth of Tragedy* 22), geassosieer met orde, harmonie en die "plastiese kunste" ("die plastischen Kunst"), terwyl die Dionisiese beginsel met onder meer musiek geassosieer word. Die *plastiese kunste* (plastic art) word soos volg omskryf in die *Merriam Webster Dictiona*ry: "1: art (such as sculpture or bas-relief) characterized by modelling: three-dimensional art; 2: visual art (such as painting, sculpture, or film) especially as distinguished from art that is written (such as poetry or music)."

Na aanleiding van hierdie indeling meen Nietzsche (*Birth of Tragedy* 22) dat die Apolliniese met die droomsfeer geassosieer word en die Dionisiese, in navolging van die klassieke voorstelling van Dionisos as god van die wyn en feestelikhede, met dronkenskap.

Die wisselwerking tussen hierdie twee beginsels vorm die grondslag van die tragedie, maar in sy toepassing daarvan op die Duitse kultuur kom Nietzsche tot die gevolgtrekking dat die Apolliniese rasionaliteit te oordrewe is. In Camille Paglia se interpretasie van die verhouding tussen Apollo en Dionisos in die letterkunde som sy die verskil tussen die twee op as sou Apollo ons waarsku om te stop—bedoelende om versigtig te wees vir 'n situasie—terwyl Dionisos ons aanmoedig om voort te gaan. Vir Paglia (*Sexual Personae* 96) simboliseer Apollo, "the hard, cold separatism of western personality", teenoor Dionisos met sy voorkeur aan energie, ekstase, histerie en promiskuïteit. Apollo is ook, volgens haar, die een wat die grenslyne trek, en dien as verpersoonliking van "convention, constraint, oppression". In teenstelling hiermee word verklaar: "Dionysus leads barbarian hordes of marauders [...] Dionysus the invader is plague, fire, and flood, the titan of nature unbound" (102). Pappas (43) meen dat dit moeilik is om Nietzsche se konsep van Apollo te konstrueer, aangesien die leser van *The Birth of Tragedy* moet staat maak op slegs enkele verwysings. Hy meen dat Apollo grootliks beskou kan word as 'n "barrier or obstacle" (47)—tussen individue, maar ook tussen individue en die soeke na waarheid—omdat hy as die sogenaamde "soothsaying god"(*Birth of Tragedy* 1) beskou word. Apollo staan dus in die pad van die waarheid en, wanneer dit by die kunste kom, is Apollo 'n dromer en in sy nabootsing van die werklikheid is daar 'n droomelement. Hy is, volgens Pappas (43), die teenvoeter van Dionisiese energie en chaos.

Een van die interessantste toepassings van Nietzsche se Apollo-versus-Dionisos-digotomie is dié van Haueis (260). Hy koppel dié digotomie aan Foucault se idees rondom seksualiteit en bestempel Apollo as die s*cientia sexualis* en Dionisos as *ars erotica*. In aansluiting hierby assosieer Nietzsche die Apolliniese wêreld met beelde en drome en Apollo self word die groot droomontleder genoem (*Birth of Tragedy* 10): "So the artistically sensitive [*erregbar*] man responds to the reality of the dream in the same way as the philosopher responds to the reality of existence; he plays close attention and derives pleasures from it: for out of these pictures he interprets life for himself; in these events he trains himself for life." Soos Haueis (262) aandui, bevind ons ons tans in 'n wêreld wat groot belangstelling toon in droominterpretasie, die onderbewuste en in psigoanalise—laasgenoemde veral vanweë Sigmund Freud, die Oostenrykse neuroloog, se invloedryke *Traumdeutung* (*The Interpretation of Dreams*, 1899). Nietzsche se groot dromer, Apollo, is ook die heerser oor die geestesdimensie wat die innerlike fantasiewêreld genoem word (*Birth of Tragedy* 1), en hierdie fantasiewêreld word oorheers deur droombeelde: "Dreaming is thus a particularly appropriate analogy for the Apollinian in that it involves both the production of and absorption in images" (Freeman 7).

Plesier is 'n verset teen die Apolliniese *principium individuationis* (*Birth of Tragedy* 26) en word volgens Foucault (aangehaal deur Haueis 265) gekenmerk deur die volgende: "I think the kind of pleasure I would consider as the real pleasure would be so deep, so intense, so overwhelming that I couldn't survive it. I would die." Eerder as om te assosieer met die wetenskaplike Apolliniese word die erotiese Dionisiese verkies deur onder meer rocksterre. Dit verklaar hoekom Nietzsche ontevrede was met Wagner se ontkenning van sy eie "dekadensie".

Harmonie versus hipnotiese ekstase

Asbo (3) verduidelik die verskil tussen die twee tipes musiek wat aan die onderskeie Nietzschiaanse beginsels gekoppel word soos volg:

> The music for Apollo was formally ordered, harmonically predictable, rhythmically regular, of moderate tempo and dynamic range, and elevated the values of simplicity and uniformity. It was elegant and graceful, in a "sunny" major mode played on stringed instruments: lyre and kithara. Dionysus, in contrast, had music that was rhythmically irregular and unpredictable, in a minor key mode, in tempos that were very fast or very slow, evoking either a Bacchanalian frenzy or a hypnotic and mystical trance. Dionysus' music was played on percussion (drums, tambourines) and woodwinds (aulos) and celebrated complexity in melody and harmony.

Vir Nietzsche (*Birth of Tragedy* 32) word die Dionisiese aanhanger aangehits tot "the highest exaltation of all his symbolic faculties; something never before experienced". In aansluiting hierby meen Stern (44) dat vir Nietzsche intuïsie en ekstase die enigste outentieke modusse van artistieke skepping is. Die onderdrukking van kreatiewe ekstase is byvoorbeeld aangevoer as een van die hoofredes vir die kwynende gehalte van die klassieke tragedie.

In aantekeninge wat Nietzsche (*Birth of Tragedy* 195) gemaak het ná die verskyning van *The Birth of Tragedy*, spreek hy die versugting uit dat hy nooit hoop gaan verloor dat daar 'n Dionisiese toekoms vir musiek bestaan nie. Die vervulling van hierdie hoop sou ook noodwendig lei tot 'n herlewing in die tragedie en tot 'n sensasionele verheerliking van dissonansie (*Birth of Tragedy* 24). Die onderdompeling in die gees van die Dionisiese impliseer vir Nietzsche 'n oorname van die mite as simboliese taal en 'n uiting in onder meer geheime rituele en dramafeeste ter ere van die god Dionisos.

Aangesien die katarsis 'n kernaspek van die Griekse tragedie is, sou gevra kon word in watter mate Nietzsche die wisselwerking tussen hierdie twee beginsels in verband bring met die element van katarsis. Katarsis, so ver dit die oorgee aan die gevoel van die aflegging van onderdrukte emosies behels, kom wel ter sprake waar Nietzsche (26) verwys na die komponent van sang (veral die Griekse koor) wat Dionisiese emosies wek. Porter (202) wys egter daarop dat die woord *katarsis* slegs een keer in *The Birth of Tragedy* genoem word en dat hierdie teks beslis nie na katarsis in die Aristoteliaanse sin van die woord verwys nie. Nietzsche was skepties oor die morele insig wat sou volg op die katarsiese belewing; hy sluit eerder by die Duitse filoloog Jacob Bernays aan in die oortuiging dat die tragedie 'n ekstatiese belewenis is, een wat gepaard gaan met vrees en plesier (Porter 226). Vir Nietzsche is die grootste vorm van plesier, volgens Haueis (265), wanneer die gehoor genot put uit die wyse waarop die tragiese held ly.

Die Dionisiese element is sterk aanwesig in die musiek van Nietzsche se vriend, Richard Wagner, en deur na Wagner te luister, kan hy hom indink in die waansin van die feeste ter ere van Dionisos. Wagner se operas wat op die Germaanse mitologie gebaseer is, laat die mitiese herleef wat, volgens Nietzsche, deur Sokrates vernietig is. Nietzsche se antwoord op Sokrates is die Dionisiese wysheid wat nie soseer in die tragedie voorkom nie, maar in die tragiese ("the tragic") (*Birth of Tragedy* 75).

Rossman (59) is van mening dat, alhoewel die Apolliniese nie so pertinent voorkom in die latere gedeelte van Nietzsche se werk nie, die dialektiek tussen die twee beginsels as belangrik geag word: "While Nietzsche came to privilege the dynamic, ecstatic and destabilising effects of the Dionysian, he acknowledges that these transformative powers require Apollonian form for their realisation."

Die wesensaard van die onderskeid tussen die Apolliniese en Dionisiese word só deur Burger (4) opgesom:

> In hierdie werk redeneer Nietzsche dat die ou Grieke 'n Apolliniese beskawing gehad het wat hulle onderskei het van die "barbare" rondom hulle. Die barbare rondom hulle het "dionisies" geleef. Vir die Grieke het die Apolliniese die Dionisiese getemper. Die barbare bly barbare omdat die Dionisiese onbeperk voortgaan. In die Griekse beskawing word die Dionisiese deur die Apolliniese aangewend—die impulse van Dionisos word gebruik, getransformeer om 'n bestanddeel van kultuur te word eerder as 'n uitdrukking van impulse van die natuur.

Aspekte van die Dionisiese in "Fan mail Freddy Mercury"

Een van die gedigte oor rocksterre in *Kaar* is die gedig "Fan mail Freddy Mercury" (*Kaar* 96):

> Uit 'n erker van Parse in Zanzibar stulp 'n man-anemoon
> op die podiums van Londen—Mister Bad Guy
> met 'n sprank Zoroaster in die skof. Hy splyt sy bloes
> tot onder die nawel, poseer sy hoef soos 'n hings en kwisp
> fisanterig sy flankevere óm die skietlood van die mikrofoon,
> sy tros geboetseer murgerig en moerig in noupassende satyn,
> duisende snertbye in sy gloed, lighoofdig van selfvernieling,
> soos in 'n bloekom van vervroegde roubeklag.
> Wié sien hom lostuig uit die borstrok van selfbehoeding
> met rillende selfoortreding sy meel verskiet
> in 'n presiese loess van vier oktawe? Wie noteer sy falset
> uit die borsgleuf van divas, 'n snor toegevoeg in self-erbarming?
>
> Radio ga-ga verlak hy en ministerie bla-bla, hul mediokere
> immuniserende verbode soos flenterbiljette in die voetlig geprik,
> met wirrende kopspieëls verlei hy die moraal-gespuis,
> besnuif die gekneusde koljander van hul ontmaking.
>
> A, die pronk in die nek, die traksie van sleutelbene waarmee hy hom smyt
> in klankspuitende paddakuit, onverbeterlik bereid tot sterf
> en spattend uitpasseer op die voorverhoog,
> sy bekkensoom druipend, sy kake oopgetrek vir 'n hap
> uit die appel van Ahura Mazda.

Freddy Mercury (1946–1991) was die sanger van die Britse popgroep *Queen* en word vereer as een van die grootste rocksterre van alle tye. Hy is veral bekend vir sy flambojante styl op die verhoog en sy stemomvang van vier oktawe. Hierdie gegewens kom ook in die gedig voor wanneer verwys word na sy bewegings op die verhoog en die "presiese loess van vier oktawe". Herbst *et al.* (36), wat 'n akoestiese analise van Mercury se stem gemaak het, kon egter nie die bewering oor die vier oktawe-omvang bevestig nie:

> Online sources like Wikipedia (26) report singing voice ranges of four octaves from F2 (about 87.3 Hz) to F6 (about 1,396.9 Hz) for Freddie Mercury. However, in the examples listed by these sources the vocalist is not clearly identifiable (mostly because the putative examples for extreme notes stem from background vocals, which could have been sung by other members of Queen), or the respective data supposedly came from vocal improvisations that were not available as data material in this study.

Van Niekerk spel die sanger se naam as *Freddy*, maar die meeste bronne—insluitend die webblad wat deur 'n bewonderaar opgestel is—spel sy naam as *Freddie*. Die naam word op albei maniere gespel, maar die sanger self het laasgenoemde spelling verkies. Dit is egter 'n verhoognaam, want hy is as Farrokh Bulsara op die eiland Zanzibar gebore en sy ouers was Parsi's uit Indië, en was aanhangers van die Zoroaster-godsdiens. Hierdie biografiese gegewens word in die gedig opgeneem, in die verwysing na die "erker van Parse in Zanzibar". Voorts word daar verwys na "'n sprank Zoroaster in die skof". Tydens sy skooljare in Indië het hy in die Britse skool wat hy bygewoon het, sy naam na Freddie verander. Die van "Mercury" het hy begin gebruik nadat sy ouers in 1964 na Brittanje geëmigreer het. Brian May meen dat Mercury op hierdie naamsverandering besluit het om sy nuwe identiteit te vier, maar ook omdat die musiekbedryf rassisties was. Leo Kalyan, 'n queer Brits-Pakistani en Indiese sanger beskryf Mercury se naamsverandering as 'n poging om hom as 'n wit man voor te doen om sodoende binne die bedryf suksesvol te kan wees (Levine).

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Mercury, of te wel Mercurius, is die Romeinse ekwivalent van die Griekse Hermes, die boodskapper van die gode. Mercurius word geassosieer met handelaar-figure, maar ook met diewe en trieksters. Die sanger het op die van "Mercury" besluit terwyl hy besig was met die lirieke van "My fairy king" in 1973. Vergelyk die slotreëls:

> Mother Mercury Mercury
> Look what they've done to me
> I cannot run, I cannot hide
> La la la la la la la la la la la

Hierdie lirieke herinner ook aan die herhalende verwysing na "Mamma" in *Queen* se bekende "Bohemian Rhapsody". 'n Mens kan die sanger se naamkeuse dus na die vlugvoetige en moedswillige Mercurius/Hermes terugvoer; dit is eienskappe waarmee Freddy Mercury ook geassosieer word. Ewe veelseggend is die verwysing na die feit dat hy nie kan weghardloop of wegkruip nie—weer 'n verwysing na sy openbare persona.

Hierdie naamsverandering aktiveer ook die opposisie tussen die meer behoudende omgewing van Zanzibar en die "podiums van Londen", asook die hibriede mens-diermotief wat deurgaans voorkom wanneer die spreker vir Mercury beskryf. Vergelyk in dié verband die volgende: Hy stulp soos 'n man-anemoon (reël 1); hy poseer sy hoef soos 'n hings (reël 4); hy kwisp fisanterig sy flankevere (reëls 4 en 5); hy het duisende snertbye in sy gloed (reël 7); hy het 'n pronk in die nek (reël 17); hy smyt homself uit in klankspuitende paddakuit (reël 18); hy trek sy kake oop om die appel van Ahura Mazda te byt (reël 20).

Ahura Mazda is die naam van 'n god uit die ou Iranese godsdiens wat later deur Zoroaster tot God uitgeroep is. Ahura Mazda dien as verpersoonliking van die goeie, terwyl sy broer, Angra Mainyu, die bose vergestalt. Ahura Mazda is ook die skepper van lewende wesens, die heelal en alles wat goed is (Mingren).

In die gedig is Freddy Mercury verpersoonliking van die Dionisiese beginsels—soos reeds blyk uit die beskrywing van sy lyf en sy skouspelagtige optrede (sy bloes is byvoorbeeld "tot onder die nawel" oop). Hy dra ook "noupassende satyn" en die spreker beklemtoon die sanger se spel met seksualiteit en uitspattigheid, wanneer sy hom onderskeidelik met 'n pronkerige hings en 'n fisant vergelyk. Mercury se seksuele spel met die gehoor blyk uit die beskrywing van sy "murgerige en moerige tros"—soos dit in sy stywe broek waarneembaar is. Soos die vertoning aangaan, groei die fallus van 'n week orgaan tot een wat uitdagend en "moerig"is. Saam hiermee word ook verwys na "die duisende snertbye in sy gloed" "—wat suggereer dat hy, in aansluiting by die naam van die groep en by die biseksuele persona wat hy voorgehou het, soos 'n koninginby is waarvan die gloed die ander hommelbye of kammabye nader lok. Later in die gedig word verwys na die verleidende spel wat die sanger met die "moraal-gespuis" speel.

Tydens sy optredes het Mercury sy mikrofoon onder meer gedra soos 'n septer, dit tussen sy bene gehou en daaróm gekrul soos 'n ontkleedanser, en in die gedig word die mikrofoon "sy skietlood" genoem. Die woord kan hier as dubbelsinnig geïnterpreteer word: dit kan verwys na die boukundige instrument wat gebruik word, maar dit kan ook na die fallus verwys; die lood waaruit geskiet word. Direk hierná in die gedig word na "sy tros" verwys, wat die falliese inslag van sy vertoning beklemtoon. Genderfluïditeit was 'n belangrike faset van Mercury se flambojante optredes en hy het die grense van fatsoenlikheid uitgedaag. Hy verpersoonlik 'n beliggaming van Dionisiese ekstase wat Nietzsche (*Birth of Tragedy* 47) só verwoord: "And now let us imagine to ourselves how the ecstatic tone of the Dionysian festival sounded in ever more luring and bewitching strains into this artificially confined world built on appearance and moderation, how in these strains all the undueness of nature, in joy, sorrow, and knowledge, even to the transpiercing shriek, became audible."

Op subtiele wyse sluip daar, tydens die beskrywing van Mercury se uitdagende seksuele spel met die gehoor, die frase "vervroegde roubeklag" in; profetiese woorde, om na sy uitdagende spel met die dood en sy heengaan op die ouderdom van 45 te verwys. Mercury se doodsdrif sluit aan by Nietzsche (*Birth of Tragedy* 3) se aanname dat een van die wyses waarop die Apolliniese getransendeer kan word, is "to meet an early death". In sy vroeë dood sluit Mercury aan by die talle sangers wat ná hul onverwags vroeë dood steeds vereer word vir hulle bydraes in die musiekwêreld: Kurt Cobain, Amy Winehouse, Janis Joplin, Jim Morrison—om maar enkeles te noem. Hulle verpersoonlik die kunstenaar wat alles in diens van die kuns stel, en in die proses vernietig word. Selfvernietiging en 'n doodswens word beskou as eie aan die kunstenaar met 'n verwonde ego.

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Die eensame Mister Bad Guy

Die verwysing na "Mister Bad Guy" is gekies om nie net 'n beskrywing te gee van Mercury self nie, maar verwys ook na die titel van een van sy solo-albums uit 1985. Een van die liedjies op die album is "There must be more to life than this" en in 'n onderhoud het Mercury opgemerk dat hy daarmee 'n boodskap wou bring:

> "It is a song about people who are lonely," explained Mercury. "It's basically another love song, but it's hard to call it that because it encompasses other things, too. It's all to do with why people get themselves into so many problems. It's mostly that, but I don't want to dwell on that too much. It's just one of those songs that I had for a while." (Chilton)

Dit is ironies dat 'n beroemde en bekende sanger soos Mercury juis eensaamheid uitsonder en dit as die oorsaak van die meeste probleme bestempel. Indirek lewer hy ook kommentaar op wat in die gedig as "selfvernieling" beskryf word: in die najaag van die ekstatiese gevoel wat gepaard gaan met die verering deur die gehoor, is hy besig om homself te vernietig. Hierdie deurlopende gegewe in die gedig word voltrek in die slotstrofe wanneer die spreker opmerk dat Mercury "onverbeterlik bereid [is] tot sterf". Dit stem ooreen met Paglia (*Sex, Art and American Culture* 20) se beskrywing van rocksterre: "All the Romantic archetypes of energy, passion, rebellion and demonism, are still evident in the brawling, boozing bad boys of rock, storming from city to city on their lusty, groupie-dogged trail."

Die bybring van Zoroaster en Ahura Mazda, wat geassosieer word met streng religieuse voorskrifte, staan in skrille kontras met die dekadente uitspattigheid van Mercury se vertonings. Die besluit om aan die einde van sy lewe wel terug te keer na die kulturele gebruike van sy kinderjare suggereer 'n terugkeer na die sfeer van die Apolliniese. Nietzsche (*Birth of Tragedy* 84) se opmerking dat dogmatiese godsdiens in elk geval gaan uitsterf in die tydgees van die Dionisiese, word dusdoende ondermyn deur Freddy Mercury. Hierna word teruggekeer in die bespreking van Ahura Mazda in die slotstrofe van Marlene van Niekerk se gedig.

Die stem, die snor en die sopraan

Soos reeds genoem, is Freddy Mercury bekend vir sy beweerde "impressive four-octave vocal range" en in die gedig word verwys na " 'n presiese loess van vier oktawe". Die woord *loess* word hier vervreemdend ingespan deur die digter. *Loess* verwys na die sediment wat gevorm word deur windgedrae slik (Pieterse 380) en wissel in dikte van 'n paar sentimeters tot byna 91 meter. Nie net word die omvangrykheid van Mercury se stem daardeur gesuggereer nie, maar ook dat sy stem en melodieë op verskillende wyses ontvang is en onthou word.

Dionisos die transgressiewe plesiernajaer bied aan Freddy Mercury die geleentheid om homself te bevry en waaghalsig ekstaties te leef (vergelyk "rillende selfoortreding"). Een van die personas wat Mercury vertolk is dié van 'n diva wat falsetto sing, maar daar is ook 'n spel met die nabootsing van heteroseksualiteit deur byvoorbeeld die kweek van 'n snor. Die woord "divas" roep die geslaagde duet wat Mercury in 1992 saam met die Spaanse sopraan Montserrat Caballé, gesing het, in herinnering. Caballé se kennismaking met Mercury het in 1987 plaasgevind: "Without warning, he sat down at the piano at the former Hotel Ritz in Barcelona and began to improvise *Exercises in Free Love*, singing in falsetto what would be her part if she accepted. It was the beginning of 1987 and the first time Queen front man Freddie Mercury met Spanish soprano Montserrat Caballé." (Geli)

Die snor het Mercury begin kweek nadat hy San Francisco in die 1980's besoek het. Die snor, wat eens geassosieer is met militêre gesagsfigure, het nou simbool geword van afwykende gedrag: "From a queer perspective, the mustache's association with sexual deviancy also points to the 'Castro clones' of the '80s: masculine gay men who dressed alike, slept together, and were eventually undone and vilified by society during the AIDS crisis." (Colyar)

Vir die spreker is Mercury se snor nie soseer tekenend van sy seksualiteit nie, maar dien dit eerder as 'n poging tot "self-erbarming". Die implikasie hiervan is dat hy die snor dra as 'n poging om medelye met die self te betoon, wat weer aansluit by die verwysing na die "vervroegde roubeklag". Dit is bekend dat Mercury die snor later afgeskeer het, maar toe die letsels van Karposi se sindroom op sy gesig en nek uitgekom het, het hy sy baard en snor weer laat groei om die vigstekens te verberg. Sodoende word die snor 'n ambivalente teken by Mercury: enersyds word dit geassosieer met die viering en aanvaarding van sy gaywees, maar andersyds word dit gebruik om die tekens van wat in die tagtigerjare as die gay kanker beskou is, weg te steek.

Die snor as masker sluit natuurlik aan by die Griekse tragedie, waar maskers gedra word om bepaalde personasies voor te stel. Nietzsche (*Birth of Tragedy* 81) meen dat maskers, in die konteks van die Griekse tragedie,

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niks ander is nie as "masks of this original hero, Dionysus". Die Dionisiese held wat nie skroom om sy ware kleure te wys nie, kruip nie weg agter 'n masker nie.

Ca Ca, Goo Goo, Ga Ga

In "Fan mail Freddy Mercury" word daar verwys na "Radio ga-ga" en "ministeriële bla-bla", wat intertekstueel skakel met die bekende liedjie "Radio Ga Ga" wat *Queen* in 1984 uitgereik het. In die lirieke van dié lied, deur Roger Taylor, word daar sterk kritiek uitgespreek teen radiostasies wat, om kommersiële redes, dieselfde musiek oor en oor gespeel het. Aanvanklik sou dit "Radio Ca Ca" wees, wat geïnspireer is deur Taylor se jong seun se reaksie op musiek oor die radio. In die video van "Radio Ga Ga" word ook intertekstueel ingespeel op Fritz Lang se klassieke film *Metropolis* (1926), terwyl daar in frases soos "Radio Ca Ca Radio Goo Goo" en "Radio Ga Ga"— in die refrein van "Radio Ga Ga" —elemente uit verspotte kindergebrabbel opklink.

Die verwysing na die radio en die ministerie in die gedig illustreer in watter mate Mercury uitgelewer was aan "mediokere immuniserende verbode" op sy musiek; veral aangesien nie alle radiostasies hierdie musiek wou speel nie en *Queen* op die VN se boikotlys was, omdat hulle in 1983 by Sun City opgetree het. Die video van "I want to break free" het ook heelwat kontroversie veroorsaak, want die groep spot met 'n bekende Britse sepie en Mercury is in vroueklere, besig om die huis te stofsuig. Die groep se gewildheid het afgeneem, veral in die VSA, ná die uitreik van hierdie video.

Tog slaag Mercury daarin om die "moraal-gespuis" met hulle skynheiligheid te sjarmeer (vergelyk "verlei" in reël 15). Ten tye van die Sun City-debakel, het Brian May opgemerk: "We've thought a lot about the morals of it a lot [...] and it is something we've decided to do. The band is not political—we play to anybody who wants to come and listen. Throughout our career we've been a very non-political group" (Harris). Die dubbele standaarde in die musiekbedryf word pertinent geïllustreer deur John Harris se opmerking:

> I have always found Queen's alliance with rock's liberal bleeding hearts a little too much to take. Towards the end of Live Aid, for example, Mercury and May played a recently written song called "Is This the World We Created?", which took issue with disease, suffering and human evil in general. I waited in vain for a specific reference to the heart-stopping wrongs they had witnessed in Bophutswana [sic], but none came. And what about the utopian sentiments of One Vision, released a year after their South African trip? "No wrong, no right," sang Freddie. "I want to tell you, there's no black and no white." Well, phooey, frankly.

Selfs boikotlyste kon nie Mercury se gewildheid laat taan nie en vanuit 'n ekonomiese oogpunt was samewerking met *Queen* besonder lonend. Gevolglik is vroeëre morele uitsprake gerieflikheidshalwe vergeet. Later sou *Queen* ook by die Nelson Mandela-konsert optree om hulle assosiasie met die eertydse apartheidsbewind reg te stel.

Die spreker impliseer dat die dubbele standaarde teenoor byvoorbeeld Freddy Mercury gelei het tot hulle eie vernietiging as musiekgroep ("ontmaking") en dat hy die een is wat op die ou einde seëvier. Die morele, voorskriftelike Apolliniese gehoor moet plek maak vir die aanslag van die verleidelike Dionisos—soos in die slotstrofe beskryf word. Die spel met die kindertaal is 'n verdere poging om die strikte Apolliniese inslag van die taal te ondermyn.

Hap uit die appel

Die slotstrofe van die gedig is inderdaad 'n viering van die Dionisiese met die beskrywing van Mercury se verhoogpersona wat 'n vermenging is van beide die erotiese en die doodsdrifte. Die niemensbeelde wat in die eerste strofe gebruik is om na hom te verwys, word nou saamgevat in die beskrywing van sy houding as dié van 'n fier en trotse hings ("pronk in die nek"). Verder word sy sang as "klankspuiende paddakuit" beskryf, wat suggereer dat, net soos die "loess" van vroeër, hy sy klank soos vrugbare stringe paddaeiers op die verhoog strooi.

Die gedig eindig met 'n vertolking van die ikoniese houding wat Mercury tydens konserte inneem: hy staan gewoonlik wydsbeen met sy een dy na die gehoor, arm in die lug en soms met sy kop agteroor en sy mond wyd oop ("kake oopgesper"). Hierdie uitdrukking, soos om 'n hap uit 'n appel te vat, skakel intertekstueel met die Bybelverhaal van Eva wat 'n eerste hap uit 'n appel in die Paradys geneem het, maar ook met die sprokie van Sneeuwitjie. In elkeen van hierdie verhale het die genoemde karakter 'n hap van 'n verbode vrug geneem en dit het verreikende en ellendige gevolge vir hulle gehad.

In Van Niekerk se gedig word die indruk geskep dat Freddy Mercury aan die einde van sy lewe hom gewend het tot Ahura Mazda—god uit die ou Iranese godsdiens wat later deur Zoroaster uitgeroep is as god oor alles wat

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leef (Mingren)—en sodoende vrede gemaak het met sy eie sterflikheid. Hy was inderdaad "onverbeterlik bereid tot sterf". Wanneer ons egter ook in gedagte hou dat Ahura Mazda die produk van Zoroaster se visioene is (Nel 1426), aktiveer hierdie beeld verdere assosiasies met die filosofie van Nietzsche. In 1883 verskyn Nietzsche se *Also Sprach Zarathustra (Thus spoke Zarathustra)*, wat die tog van die profeetfiguur Zarathustra beskryf en wat in 1978 die grondslag gevorm het van Marlene van Niekerk se M.A.-verhandeling getiteld: "Die aard en belang van die literêre vormgewing in 'Also sprach Zarathustra'". Die volgende uitspraak oor wie Nietzsche se Zarathustra kan wees, kom van Heidegger (428), en sluit aan by hierdie bespreking van Van Niekerk se gedig: "Who is Nietzsche's Zarathustra? He is the advocate of Dionysos. That is to say: Zarathustra is the teacher who teaches the eternal recurrence of the same in, and for the sake of, his doctrine of the superman."

Nietzsche se Zarathustra baan die weg vir Dionisos, maar is nie noodwendig gebaseer op die historiese Zarathustra nie. *Zarathustra* is die oud-Persiese vorm van die naam Zoroaster en is deur Nietzsche gekies om die volgende redes: "[B]y choosing the name of Zarathustra as the prophet of his philosophy in a poetical idiom, he wanted to pay homage to the original Aryan prophet as a prominent founding figure of the spiritual-moral phase in human history, and reverse his teachings at the same time, according to his fundamental critical views on morality" (Ashouri). Die wêreld is deur die historiese Zarathustra beskryf as die arena van 'n voortdurende geveg tussen die Goeie en die Bose. Nietzsche se profeetfiguur staan egter krities teenoor die moralistiese ingesteldheid van die oer-Zarathustra:

> He refutes all theological teachings in all disguises as enemies of Life, and replaces them with a thoroughly new and absolutely positive, this-worldly, life-affirming philosophy. This philosophy of the "laughing lions" looks sarcastically at all otherworldly metaphysical notions which, by looking for eternal life instigated by a sense of fear from mortality, necessarily interprets being and human life in moralistic, and, therefore, eschatological terms. (Ashouri)

Deleuze (192) meen dat Zarathustra 'n komplekse verhouding met Dionisos het, en beskou Zarathustra as die vader van die *Űbermensch* en oorsaak van die ewige *Wiederkehr des Gleiches* ("recurrence of the same"). Laasgenoemde verwys na die idee dat alles wat bestaan 'n oneindige aantal kere oor tyd en ruimte heen herhaal word, en sal aanhou om herhaal te word. In deel 3 van *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* tree Zarathustra in gesprek met die diere en merk op: "Everything goeth, everything returneth; eternally rolleth the wheel of existence. Everything dieth, everything blossometh forth again; eternally runneth on the year of existence. Everything breaketh, everything is integrated anew; eternally buildeth itself the same house of existence. All things separate, all things again greet one another; eternally true to itself remaineth the ring of existence" (*Zarathustra* 234).

Wanneer Nietzsche opmerk dat die hoër mens geassosieer word met 'n kenmerkende Dionisiese houding jeens die lewe (234), is die implikasie dat diegene met so 'n houding makliker die beginsel van die ewige terugkeer aanvaar. Die Dionisiese word volgens Deleuze (194) gekoppel aan die lag, die dans en die spel: "In relation to Zarathustra laughter, play and dance are affirmative powers of transmutation: dance transmutes heavy into light, laughter transmutes suffering into joy and the play of throwing (the dice) transmutes low into high. But in relation to Dionysus dance, laughter and play are affirmative powers of reflection and development." Nietzsche merk trouens op dat hy slegs kan glo in 'n God wat weet hoe om te dans (*Zarathustra* 68). Met dans, spel en gelag is ons terug in die sfeer van die rockmusikant Freddy Mercury. Hy het nie net aan die einde van sy lewe ter wille van sy familie na die Apolliniese kultuur en godsdiens van sy jeug terug gekeer en daar gesoek vir "sympathetic looks of love" (*Birth of Tragedy* 34) nie. Hy het ook die historiese Zarathustra, die oervader van die monoteïsme van sy ouers se godsdiens, verruil vir die fiktiewe Zarathustra-konstruksie, "the teacher who teaches the eternal recurrence of the same in, and for the sake of, his doctrine of the superman" (Heidegger 428.) Hy hang Zarathustra aan met sy skepsis teenoor wat veronderstel is om die waarheid te wees—hy is aanhanger van die ewige wederkeer-beginsel en verwerper van morele waarhede. (Vergelyk ook Heidegger se opmerking oor Zarathustra as die pleitregter vir Dionisos en die Dionisiese lewenshouding.)

Nietzsche se keuse van die historiese profeetfiguur Zoroaster (628–551 v. C.) as 'n metaforiese konstruksie vir bepaalde filosofiese idees, is nie so duidelik soos in die geval van ander klassieke figure in sy werk nie (Aiken 335). Die vraag ontstaan dus hoekom hierdie onbekende profeet uit die Ooste gekies is as die sentrale figuur in

Nietzsche se teks. Nietzsche het self erken dat sy Zoroaster nie dieselfde standpunte huldig as die historiese profeetfiguur, Zarathustra, nie:

> Historically, Zoroaster was indeed a reformer; but there is little evidence in Nietzsche's Zarathustra that in his adaptation he was trying to reform the dualistic premises of either Greek or of Christian thought. He simply breaks cleanly with both worlds of thought. Nietzsche's concern was not primarily with metaphysics; empirical evidence for an evolutionary-grounded metaphysic was simply overwhelming. Nor was his concern with ethics; moral hypocrisy in the dualist West is painfully obvious. (351)

Op 27 November 1991 is Freddy Mercury se begrafnis deur 'n Zoroasterpriester by die Wes-Londense Krematorium waargeneem, terwyl sy as aan sy eertydse meisie, Mary Austin, gegee is om op 'n geheime plek te strooi. Die naam op die plaat by die krematorium is ook sy geboortenaam, volgens Wikipedia, en die implikasie hiervan is dat Freddy Mercury/Farrokh Bulsara nadoods weer sy ou identiteit aanneem.

Slotopmerkings

Volgens Paglia (*Sex, Art* 19) word rockmusiek gekenmerk deur "surging Dionysian rhythms" en in Van Niekerk se gedig is Freddy Mercury die verpersoonliking hiervan. Sy ekstatiese liggaamshoudings, sy spel met die gehoor, sy uittarting van sy eie sterflikheid illustreer Carlevale (78) se opmerking dat die Dionisiese grotendeels geassosieer word met "anti-repressive practices". In aansluiting hierby verpersoonlik Freddy Mercury se "lostuig uit die borstrok" die Dionisiese met sy beweging, sy gedans en—soos wat Schnabel dit noem—"individual and collective trance and ecstasy" wat sy vertonings kenmerk.

Die intellektuele digter Marlene van Niekerk, verpersoonliking van die Apolliniese met haar rasionele ingesteldheid, word meegevoer deur Mister Bad Guy, dissipel van Dionisos, soos blyk uit die taalgebruik en ritme van hierdie aanhangersbrief. Eweneens is sommige lirieke deur Freddy Mercury grotendeels Apollinies, bevind Van Niekerk, want ten spyte van sy Dioniese uitspattigheid, getuig dit van besinnende emosies en nabetragting oor lewenskrisisse. Net soos by Mercury is daar by Van Niekerk ook 'n vermenging van die Apolliniese en die Dionisiese—'n vermenging van "die kuns van die skone skyn" en "die kuns van die wanklankige waarheid" ("Aard en belang" 280).

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Towards reconstructing Africa: Recuperation and responsibility in Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Healers*

Augustine H. Asaah & Tao Zou

Towards reconstructing Africa: Recuperation and responsibility in Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Healers*

A product of Africa's pre-colonial and colonial history, Ayi Kwei Armah's fifth novel, *The Healers* (1978), is steeped in an African communalistic worldview and the functional conception of art. In this article we examine the multiple dimensions to recuperation within the context of the reconstruction of Africa, the continental search for utopia, and the responsibility that this places on Africans. Using Armah's communitarian perspectives on health as a guide, we identify six interlocking subsets of recuperation as healing, re-creation, renascence, repossession, recall, and *Sankofa* (return). Informed by Molefi Kete Asante's construct of agency and Armah's communalistic injunctions to readers, we establish that permeating each of these building blocks is the responsibility of Africans to operationalize the reconstruction of Africa, the leitmotif of the novel. As helpers, visionaries, and custodians of vital traditional knowledge and skills, the healers facilitate the sharing of information on Africa's past and future against the background of British colonial domination. We also show that Armah deliberately gives the novel this polysemic title to transcend the spatial, cultural, and epistemic limitations imposed on the continent by the colonial order. We conclude that the social orientation and creative configuration of health in the work are consistent with the diverse and intermingling meanings of recuperation. **Keywords:** Ayi Kwei Armah, *The Healers*, African recuperation, African responsibility, African reconstruction.

Introduction

Completed by Ayi Kwei Armah in 1975, *The Healers* was first published in 1978, almost a century after the 1873–1874 war between the British and Asante/Ashanti that culminated in the defeat of the latter and prepared the ground for their future incorporation into the Gold Coast colony, now Ghana. The success of the colonial campaign was not just a function of European technological superiority and cultural onslaught but of the divisiveness among African peoples. Equally worth noting is the novel's year of publication occurring some hundred years after the 1884 Berlin Conference which formalized the colonial dismemberment of Africa.

Given this historical and sociogenic context, Armah conceptualizes healing as an all-embracing therapeutic activity, guided by the imperative of wholeness—that is, the unification of fragmented entities: individuals, ethnic groups, and nations in Africa and the African diaspora. Grounded in communalism, Armah's dilated conceptualization of healing is thus premised on his project of dismantling the spatial, cultural, and epistemic limitations that colonialism imposed on Africans. Whereas the paratextual paramountcy accorded to healing foregrounds the primacy of therapy and wellness—reflecting the convergence of form and substance, and art and ideology in the narrative—the context invests the term with polyvalence. Six dynamic and interlocking variables of the hypernym "recuperation"—healing/recovery, reinvigoration/renascence, re-creation, repossession, recall, and *Sankofa* (return)—are deployed by Armah to reinforce the imperative of Africa's reconstruction and resistance to hegemony.

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The Healers has received its fair share of critical appraisal, some disparaging (Lindfors), some balanced (Boafo; Ogede), and some eulogistic (Nwahunanya; Petrie; Ashcroft). If scholars are unanimous on the centrality of physical, psychological, and social healing to the novel, very few have interrogated the nature and scope of its underlying concept of responsibility-laden multi-faceted recuperation. Appositely, Bill Ashcroft says of Armah's fifth novel: "The healing that comes from the recuperation of traditional knowledge is a key feature of Armah's vision of the future, and the memory of history a key to the transformation of the present" (710). For all their incisiveness, Ashcroft's article, "Remembering the Future: Utopianism in African Literature", and Y. S. Boafo's "The Nature of Healing in Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Healers*", for example, do not consistently explore the diverse facets of recuperation and Armah's call for commitment to give effect to each of its constituent variables.

To the extent that the name Damfo, the master healer, in the Mfantse dialect of Akan means "friend" or "helper", it foregrounds the facilitative role of the guild of visionary traditional health practitioners, thus indexing, by the same token, the responsibility of subjects (patients, polity, public) in their own multiple recuperation.[1] In other words, recuperation, for Armah, involves the responsiveness, agency, and self-empowerment of the individual and the community in their multidimensional wellbeing. The double focus, in the current study, on multivalent recuperation and the imperative of responsibility that attends on each of the constituent subsets of recuperation will help to fill the gap in knowledge with respect to the literature on therapy in *The Healers*.

Operationally defined in this paper as commitment, duty, action, praxis, application of knowledge, and self-empowerment, the notion of responsibility is grounded in this configuration by Molefe Kete Asante, the renowned Afrocentricity scholar: "An agent, in our terms, must mean a human being who is capable of acting independently in his or her own best interest. Agency itself is the ability to provide the psychological and cultural resources necessary for the advancement of human freedom" (153). The construct is also anchored in Armah's insistence on African renascence (cultural, social, and political) as a function of the courage to deploy available knowledge and competencies for the creation of a better world (*Remembering the Dismembered Continent* 11). Further, it resonates with Jing Yin's thesis on responsibility as a key component of ethics and the backbone of community building (79). Accordingly, this study will show how each of the six identified interrelated manifestations of recuperation—recovery, reinvigoration, re-creation, repossession, recall, and *Sankofa*—is invested with a call to duty and to action in the reconstruction of Africa.

These six constituent subtypes function as the pillars which prop up recuperation in *The Healers*. By extension, they also serve as the building blocks of the reconstruction of Africa. An analysis of their place in the narrative will proceed from the simple/obvious (that is recuperation as the restoration of personal and societal wellbeing) to the most complex/controversial (recuperation tied to the mythical *Sankofa* symbol).

Recuperation as restoration of individual health and collective strength

In effect, the healers demonstrate the first meaning of recuperation as cure and recovery at the bodily, mental, and societal levels. The healers' recourse to traditional pharmacology, psychiatry, naturopathy, and other ecologically friendly therapeutic resources of their locality to heal and cure patients in the fictive village of Esuano in a British-dominated colony testifies to the entrenchment and popularity of African Traditional Medicine (ATM) as opposed to Western biomedicine in the then Gold Coast. Strategically located all over the British-dominated territory, the healers restore corporal and psychological integrity to Densu (of Esuano), Araba Jesiwa (of Esuano), King Sakity (of Ada), and other patients across the colony. Their healing also attracts to their Twifo Praso healing center Asamoa Nkwanta, the devastated Asante war general, brought down from Kumasi, the capital of the yet-to-be-conquered Asante Kingdom.

Arguably, the ubiquitous visibility of ATM vis-à-vis the quasi-absence of Western therapeutic systems translates the novelist's counter-hegemonic intention. Not only does the efficacy of ATM serve to debunk the colonial depiction of Africa as "a hothouse of fever and affliction" (Comaroff 305–6), it deconstructs the prejudice of imperial agents (administrators, missionaries, merchants, ethnologists, historiographers, "discoverers", etc.), exemplified by David Livingston's disciple, James Stewart, for whom ATM was one of the deadliest and "most malignant of influences in Africa" (Lund 91)—see also Jackson; and Konadu ("Medicine"; *Indigenous Medicine and Knowledge in African Society*).

Despite the general accessibility of the traditional healing service to the community, it must be stressed that, as in most health professions, it is a calling for a few, without the healers being necessarily elitist. As Samuel Adu-Gyamfi and Eugenia Ama Anderson observe, "Herbal knowledge was usually the preserve of a kin group […].

Expert traditional healing knowledge is always the preserve of a kin group and only a few people are exposed to such knowledge" (76–7). By reason of the healers' self-discipline (misread by some commentators as asceticism) coupled with their idealism, certain critics have portrayed them as priggish to the extent of sardonically tagging them as "saintly characters" (Gikandi 323), "saintly illuminati" (Boafo 324), and "saintly breed" (Lindfors 373). Certainly, the healers are rigorous in their approach to health and the application of scientific knowledge. However, there is arguably no elitism in the healers' demonstrated dedication to their call and in the general comportment of Damfo (of Esuano), Ama Nkroma (of Cape Coast) Nyaneba, Tweneboa, and Mensa (of Twifo Praso), Duodo (of Atike), and Ezua (from the West). Nor can sanctimoniousness and smugness be read into their recruitment of Densu, their confusion before the daunting nature of their task, and the consensual nature of their decision-making. The very fact of their spread in the British colony rather suggests openness, a horizontal relationship, and effective reciprocity-driven communal network, remarkable in 19th century Africa. Worthy of emulation then is their individual and collective dedication to the promotion of collective health, skillful application of science, and the African reunification/renascence project, so dear to Armah. The commitment and perseverance of the healers are reminiscent of the legendary steadfastness of Kemetic scientists who could spend years waiting for the findings and fruits of their investigation of phenomena.

Facilitated by the close observation of nature, the healers' skillful use of African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (AIKS) provides them with answers to the physiological and psychological ailments of subjects within their agrarian communities. Sodi *et al*. attribute the efficacy of ATM to time-honored therapeutic ethics and praxis on the African continent:

> The traditional healers are guided by three principles. Firstly, the healer ensures that the patients are satisfied that they and their symptoms are taken seriously. The patient is given adequate time to talk about their fears. Secondly, the healer studies the patient in a holistic manner. Finally, the healer considers the patient [to be] an integral component of a family and a community rather than an isolated individual. (103)

Thus configured, Damfo's art and science of healing fit into a long practice of ATM and socially conceptualized health. Armah notes, "Everything going on in the world today tells us that there is life in unity, death in division and disunity" (*The Eloquence of the Scribes: A Memoir on the Sources and Resources of African Literature* 234). Given Armah's preoccupation in his non-fiction works with the health, survival, and prosperity of Africa amid endless internecine conflicts and exogenous threats, it comes as no surprise that personal and societal wellbeing, in his narratives, should transcend the biological. In his 2007 book *Indigenous Medicine and Knowledge in African Society*, richly interspersed with epigraphic excerpts from *The Healers*, Kwasi Konadu argues that, in the African context, disease or illness is a factor linked to the overriding concerns of health and healing since both occur at multiple levels and in diverse domains of life that may have nothing to do with physiologically determined notions of disease (17).

Commenting on the specific healing of the physically, mentally, and socially fractured Araba Jesiwa consequent upon the horrendous slaughter of her only son before her very eyes at Esuano, Boafo (329) contends, "Damfo's treatment of Araba Jesiwa's almost irreparable broken bones is a masterpiece of traditional healing. It is a medical molding of fragments into a single whole". Boafo's laudatory remarks about this first layer of recuperation by the healers are echoed by critics such as Ode Ogede, Chinyere Nwahunanya, Peter Petrie, and Khondlo Mtshali who stress the communitarian dimension to individual healing. For, embedded in the restoration of health to the individual is the notion of societal healing. In the view of Damfo and other like-minded practitioners of ATM, since unity/wholeness is health, strength, and vitality, and disunity/fragmentation is ill-health, weakness, and a source of vulnerability, healing is simply not a personal affair but a community issue. Individual physical recovery is projected as a conduit for communitarian equilibrium. The wellness or sickness of the individual has implications for the cohesion and survival of the entire social group. Significantly, Armah often resorts to the Kemetic myth of Osiris-Isis as archetype for characterization in his narratives. For example, the resuscitation of Jesiwa by Damfo can be re-presented as a creative and scientific version of the healing and resurrection of dismembered Osiris by Isis. While Isis uses her romantic love and magic power as therapy, Damfo deploys his communal love and ATM.

> Given the exigency of wholeness, the healers challenge their public to the opening of the mind to a future that goes beyond single lifetimes, or even the lifetimes of single ethnic groups and nations (*Healers* 185). Such a conception of health places enormous responsibility on both individuals and the collectivity to ensure reciprocity, belongingness, and egalitarianism, since what affects a constituent part inevitably affects the whole. For Yin, while the Western conception of the part/whole relationship is based on subordination, with the whole being sustained by subordinating all constituent parts, in non-Western cultures the unity of the whole is achieved through the coordination and alignment of all integral parts with its own internal equilibrium (81).

Recuperation as rebirth, self-rejuvenation, and collective renascence

As the foundational building block and the pivot of recuperation, the restoration of individual and collective integrity renders possible the second layer of recuperation discernible in reinvigoration, renascence, and reconditioning. The healers do not only cure Densu, Araba Jesiwa, King Sakity, and Asamoa Nkwanta, the hitherto broken Asante war general, they also infuse the healed patients with new energy and new mental alertness. Their resuscitation/recovery results in a new lease of life, in rebirth.

With a new spring in his step, Densu confidently infiltrates enemy lines and devises anti-colonial military strategies with Asamoa Nkwanta. In a like manner, Araba Jesiwa, after her rejuvenation, participates vigorously in the outreach programs of the healers. By the same token, the recuperation gives the healed patients a new sense of direction, and a new community-centered awareness of lofty ideals, which approximate the egalitarian ethos of the healers and Kemet. Asamoa Nkwanta now shuns human sacrifice, Densu publicly declines the offer of royal title, and Araba Jesiwa rejects the spilling of the blood of a sacrificial lamb. Seen in this context, their recuperation becomes re-orientation towards societal responsibility. Their responsiveness gives further expression to Yin's observation: "to define our selfhood in terms of our relations with others does not emasculate our individuality or sense of agency. It is precisely through social relations that persons become cultural subjects and gain a sense of agency" (83). Leveraging holistic communalistic intellectual/social perspectives such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and Afrocentricism, Yin further argues:

> The duty consciousness in these [thoughts] emphasises the reciprocity between the self and the community. On the one hand, a person's self-realisation, to fulfil one's obligations to the community, is encouraged and nurtured by the community. On the other hand, self-realisation is to make the self available to contribute to the social order that enables the fulfilment of each individual's responsibilities. Thus, a person's moral development is both a duty of the self to the community and a duty of the community to the self. (83)

Remarkably, the healed characters in *The Healers* demonstrate this moral development and consciousness of the duty of the subject to the society and the duty of the society to the subject. The examples of Araba Jesiwa, Densu, and Asamoah Nkwanta serve as a challenge and a call to communitarian duty. In this sense, recuperation becomes renascence, reinvigoration, and reconditioning, all robustly guided by palpable commitment to the common good. As earlier noted, Yin correctly stresses that responsibility is the motive power of ethics and the cornerstone of community building (79).

Rejecting Afro-pessimism, such responsibility-driven redirection is akin to Kä Mana's prescription of creative "psychic reform", "de-alienation", and reconditioning for Africans:

> A call for liberation and for the transformation of the structures of our allegiance to the West is not enough. We must undertake a process of reconditioning of our inner life: conscience, heart, imagination and spirit. Such a process is not possible just by the power of denunciation and uprising, but by undergoing complex metabolisms whereby our sensibility, which is above all a work of reflexive lucidity, gives us the world as a sensible and significant world, not a world that is barren, morbid and frozen in its creative possibilities. (qtd in Ashcroft 705)

Thus, recuperation involves re-orientation towards society and active participation in one's wellbeing as it implicates subjects in their own rejuvenation and that of the community.

Araba Jesiwa and the other patients have all participated actively in their healing. Their resuscitation/recovery results in rejuvenation and reconditioning. The challenge that Armah leaves readers, the subaltern, and the black community is how far they can employ agency and cooperate with healers in their own healing and subsequent rebirth. In the recuperation of the broken Asante general, Damfo affirms that the therapy offered by the healer is only an enabler, an adjuvant, and that the real healing lies with the patient: "He (Damfo) would be impotent to help unless he, Asamoah Nkwanta, was himself ready to search for the way to recovery [...] [M]edicine could do

nothing if a human being was making war on his own natural self" (*Healers* 200). Accordingly, Boafo notes, "The success of healing depends on the response of the patient. It is a function of one's readiness to help oneself, that is, to react generously to the help that the healer offers. In short, it is a choice that one is prepared to be healed" (331).

The capacity of the patient to trigger his/her self-recovery mechanism and to positively respond to the healer's intervention is coextensive with the Bântu-Bakôngo notion of "self-healing power" which is "the biogenetic package of power that is received at the moment of conception in the mother's womb" (Fu-Kiau qtd in Konadu, "Medicine and Anthropology in Twentieth Century Africa: Akan Medicine and Encounters with (Medical) Anthropology" 56). Still leaning on K. Kia Bunseki Fu-Kiau, Konadu explains:

> This package is not only the key to one's health, but it is the excellent healer since it is both creative and generative. For the Bântu-Bakôngo, sickness is the abnormal functioning capacity of one's self-healing power caused not by bacteria or virus, but by the loss of the body's balance or energy. The cure is perceived in terms of wholeness and the therapist [*n'niâkisi* or *m'fièdi*] "believes that therapy is essentially grounded in both flesh and spirit," a process of restoring self-healing power. ("Medicine" 56)

The idea of the body losing its balance or energy and thus becoming vulnerable to disease/external aggression evokes Damfo's warning on the body waging war upon its own natural self and, as a result, getting predisposed to malaise/exogenous onslaught. At the macro level, it can be deduced from both conceits that it behooves the community to constantly reactivate its intrinsic self-healing potential to ensure qualitative collective renascence. As the Twi/Akan say, "*Aduroyɛfoɔnnom aduro mma ɔyarefoɔ*" (The one who makes the medicine does not drink it for the sick person) (Konadu, *Indigenous Medicine*, 196).[2] The patient, the community, and Africa all have a responsibility to cure themselves; the healer is just a helper.

Recuperation as re-creation of Africa and the future

Inevitably, personal and communal re-orientation entails the re-presentation of Africa to counter Eurocentric/colonial profiling of Africa. The recuperation of and by traditional knowledge facilitates the re-creation of Africa's history in a radical gesture to positively influence the course of Africa's destiny. Literary creation, medical creation, and epistemic creation constellate to produce another version of African history that inspires and animates agency as well as liberates the subaltern from long-held historiographical misrepresentation. As Edward Said asserts, "Resistance, far from being merely a reaction to imperialism, is an alternative way of conceiving human history" (260). Similarly, Ashcroft avers:

> The healing that comes from the recuperation of traditional knowledge is a key feature of Armah's vision of the future, and the memory of history a key to the transformation of the present. Hegel's exclusion of Africa from History implied that Africans had no future. Therefore the retrieval of history was intimately connected with the 'retrieval' of a future—hence the utopian dimension of memory in *Two Thousand Seasons* and *The Healers*. (710)

For Armah, Hegel's thesis that Africans could only enter history and the future through the so-called benevolence and civilizing mission of European conquerors exemplifies Western attempts at the racial obliteration, epistemic erasure, and "cultural dehumanization" of Africans (*Remembering* 40–1). Convinced that "without a coherent sense of utopianism, liberation is impossible", Ashcroft posits the utopianism-inspired novels of Armah as works that transform the "rhetoric of resistance into a positive anticipation of future freedom" (703).

In their capacity as visionaries as well as custodians and transmitters of life-saving ancestral knowledge on African unity, the healers renew interest in *Ebibirman*, the lost unified Black community of ancient times. Like Kemet, *Ebibirman* in Mfantse/Akan means "the community of all black people" (99). The revival of interest in the legendary nation built on knowledge, unity, and symmetrical social relations is coaxial with raising the consciousness of readers towards the realization of the African utopia of unification. To a large extent, the triumph of the colonial army in the 1873–1874 Third Anglo-Asante War and the subsequent consolidation of British rule in the Gold Coast/Ghana were facilitated by intra-African rivalry. The Fante, Akim, Assin, Twifo, Denkyira (all allies of the British) and the Asante belong to the Akan cultural/linguistic community. West Indians and Africans (Ga-Adamgbe, Hausa, Opobo, Effutu, Kru, Mande, Temne, etc.) who are not Akan also aided the British to crush the Asante. This was a common pattern of imperial conquest and subsequent colonial divide-and-rule strategy in Africa and elsewhere. In this regard, Damfo's insistence on African unity and social healing acquires additional

relevance, transforming the call into a need: the reconstruction of a unified Africa as a duty that Africans owe to themselves and to posterity.

Recuperation as restoration and repossession

Subsumed in the re-invention of Africa and the re-creation of the future are the restoration of lost dignity, revalorization of traditional heritage, and the repossession of Kemetic unity. Having instilled confidence in the vanquished by orienting the public towards *Ebibirman*, Armah now leaves it to them to work towards repossessing Kemet, making the ancient Egyptian success story of unity their own. Inevitably, the desire for this repossession is inseparable from individual and collective commitment. Should Africans fail this test, this identification with fame, they will remain in their current toxic space, infamously known for its systemic debilitation and prolific breeding of conflicts, famine, wars, and all sorts of instability (*Remembering* 13). According to Asante, "African people must be seen as agents in economic, cultural, political, and social terms [...]. When agency does not exist, we have the condition of marginality and the worst form of marginality is to be marginal within your own story" (153). This is comparable in to the infamous (self-) alienation of Africans from the glorious unity story of *Ebibirman*/Kemet in *The Healers*. Responsible identification with this unity story means Africans owning their past once again and securing/repossessing their future.

Damfo laments, "The disease—the breaking up of that community [*Ebibirman*/Kemet]—has taken centuries and centuries, thousands of years. Most of our people do not even wish to imagine any such possibility of wholeness" (99). Armah affirms that the revitalization of Per Ankh, the house of life, and the repossession of lost glory demand of Africans to breathe new vitality into their best values (*Eloquence* 306).

Appositely, a Sudanese proverb says, "We desire to bequeath two things to our children, the first being roots and the second being wings". Paraphrasing this proverb, one can contend that the healers bequeath to Africans two legacies: roots in the shape of knowledge and history and wings in the form of opportunities and prospects, with the two legacies symbiotically facilitating autonomy, growth, and prosperity. Accordingly, for their healthy development, it is up to the audience of the healers to apply their new vital insights, acquired from the healers, to repossess *Ebibirman*/Kemet. This approximates Asante's conceptualization of Afrocentricity as "conscientization related to the agency of African people" (153) in the actualization of the African reconstruction project.

Recuperation as recall and re-awakening

Intimately linked to the re-creation of the African past and future is the fifth building block of recuperation identifiable in recall. The healers' re-awakening of Black people who have slept for so long involves recall and rememoration. Damfo's strategic recourse to memory and his challenge to patients to recall the past serve as invaluable tools for therapy. In healing the physical and psychological scars of Araba Jesiwa, Densu, and Asamoa Nkwanta, Damfo challenges them to dig into the deepest recesses of their soul/self and leverage their self-knowledge. Fundamental to this process is the therapeutic recourse to subterranean memory, and therefore to the arcane past. The re-ignition of the desire to live and thrive for the individual finds its parallel, at the societal level, in the re-awakening of the collective survival and prosperity instinct. In other words, for both the subject and the community, re-awakened memory is crucial to health, to survival, and to triumph. The healing of the fractured and traumatized Araba Jesiwa symbolically demonstrates that the healers have the capacity to heal dismembered and distraught Africa for future generations. In each case, responsiveness to stimuli becomes the major catalyst of recuperation.

The recall of the past leads to the call of the future. As Damfo asserts, "If the pains bringing disease to the mind come from the past, healing means the mind must go beyond the past, traveling into the future as lightly as it can" (199). An integral component of AIKS, cultural memory merges with cultural history into a path towards future memory and future history, a fusion of both individual and collective trajectories. The supreme importance of the symbiotic relationship between the past and the future is also captured in the excerpt from "The Papyrus of Ani" which serves as the epigraph of Armah's essay in *Remembering the Dismembered Continent*, dedicated to African reunification: "I am yesterday; I know tomorrow" (9).

In the words of Ashcroft, "the kind of recuperative return we find in the novels of Armah", such as *The Healers*, is congruent with "a vision of the future grounded in a resurgent memory of the past" (704). Instructively, Ashcroft adds, "While it runs the risk of nostalgia, memory is often the only recuperative strategy available to

the oppressed, the marginalized, the downtrodden. It is also strategically placed to contest the ultimate imperial utopia—history itself" (708).

In consequence, AIKS, via memory, constitute and offer a path-clearing and path-finding ethos towards utopia. Armah contends that the work required to awaken African society from the slumber of divisions to the vitality of united thinking and action is fundamentally a task of memory (*Remembering* 36). In this respect, the healers represent the small group of well-informed pathfinders and path clearers committed to the search for real data, however long suppressed or deeply buried, for the benefit of an awakening audience (*Remembering* 12).

Damfo, the head therapist, conceives of the healers not just as helpers but also as awakeners of their people: "Sleep is natural [...] even it comes after unnatural disasters. But waking is even more natural. Healers are just awakeners of a people who have slept too long" (*Healers* 99). The responsibility of such awakened subjects is captured in Armah's affirmation that memory is at once performance, re-enactment, reconnection, and a path:

> A society whose members, after prolonged oblivion, become aware of their history all the way back to its beginnings is on the way to a great intellectual awakening. Awareness, however, is useless unless it turns active. The actual interaction of a society's present with its past, oriented to its future, is the key to the embrace of history as resource, and understanding of memory as the venue of inspiration. (*Eloquence* 264)

Constitutive of the recuperative gesture of recall in *The Healers* are vital implications for bonding, empowerment, and agency, as it redirects healed and awakened subjects, individually and collectively, towards Africa's reconstruction. Further, such reconnection, after the crucible of awakening, should translate into identification with Kemet's acclaimed medical ethos and praxis, life-sustaining knowledge, life-enhancing biotic culture, and egalitarianism.

Recuperation as *Sankofa* (return/retrieval) with caution

In Akan, *Sankofa* literally means "return" or "go back for it". In traditional African art and intellectual thought, such recuperation is symbolized by the *Sankofa* bird in motion towards the unknown, with its head inclined backwards, holding a precious object in its beak, a resource retrieved from the past for the benefit of the future. In the manner of Osiris and Ra, it can lay claim to being yesterday and tomorrow. As the allegorical dynamic confluence of the dead, the living, and the unborn, the sacred *Sankofa* bird makes it possible to configure recuperation—in the form of return to the past and reclamation of lost possession—as beneficial to the living and the unborn but, at the same time, as problematic, being fraught with danger and risks. Contrariety, tension, and conflict are inherent in its locomotion. Put differently, the recuperative back-and-forth journey of the *Sankofa* bird between the netherworld/the past and the unknown is at once salutary, necessary, and perilous. These preliminary perspectives on the *Sankofa* symbol and movement provide a nuanced context for the appreciation of recuperation in *The Healers* as return and re-appropriation, the culmination of the earlier layers of recuperation in the narrative.

Armah consistently decries the collective amnesia of Black people which has occasioned the loss of communitarian practices of wholeness, oneness, and belonging in *The Healers* and his other works. In the peritext of *Remembering the Dismembered Continent*, he says this of the cover illustration: "Cover motif: *Sankofa* bird in flight. The *Sankofa* bird, the ibis of Kemetic hieroglyphs and Akan *adinkra* graphics, is an ancient Osirian African symbol of memory. Its fragmentation, in this rendering, reflects the current dismemberment of African space and memory, key condition of our continuing subjugation". Armah attributes the very mutilation of the legendary *Sankofa* bird, avatar of the revered Osirian Kemetic ibis, to the disintegration of the African continent by waves of invaders. Nonetheless, the fragmented bird, as the incarnation of memory, can be deployed to recuperate invaluable resources from the past for the reconstruction of Africa. In a similar vein, Camilia Kong asserts: "The Adinkra symbol of *sankofa* is [...] visually depicted as a mythical bird flying forward while looking back [and it] communicates the philosophy of retrieving lost or forgotten gems from the past as one moves forward; it involves reclaiming parts of African practice, history, and standpoints that have been hidden or distorted" (89). Similarly, for both Alfred Quarcoo and Philip Owusu, the mythical *Sankofa* bird represents the need to always retrieve the gems, wisdom, and positive values from the past in order to create a collective auspicious future. Undoubtedly, Armah sets much store by this nativist injunction which was particularly popularized after Ghana's independence. Since the 1960s, the *Sankofa* myth has flourished in intellectual, artistic, and socio-political circles, among both Black and non-Black people the world over, particularly in Africa, the United States, Great Britain, and the Caribbean. It has also culminated in the creation of a movement called *Sankofaism*.

Towards the construction of the new Africa, the treasures and qualities which Armah wants Black people to recuperate from the past, especially pre-pharaonic Kemet, include its scientific traditions, value of unity, ATM, egalitarianism, and self-empowerment ("Masks and Marx: The Marxist Ethos vis-à-vis African Revolutionary Theory and Praxis"; *Eloquence*; *Remembering*). Others are the rational use of natural resources and the unwavering respect of the intergenerational duty towards the unborn (*Eloquence*; *Remembering*; *The Resolutionaries*). In like manner, it would be no exaggeration to state that the *Sankofa* trope and the imperative of African reunification overarch *The Healers*. *Sankofa*, then, is a major building block in African reconstruction.

Following Frantz Fanon and Amilcar Cabral, Armah conceives of re-Africanization as a return to the source. His idealism and "strategic nativism" notwithstanding, he views *Sankofaism* and re-Africanization as a process which of necessity entails revitalization, winnowing, and cleansing ("Masks" 63–5). He reiterates that, in the search for solutions to their current disarray, Africans stand to gain by dispassionately assessing their continental traditions, filtering out the dross, and only keeping the valuable parts of their heritage (*Eloquence* 306), for present and future regeneration. After conceptualizing "naïve sankofaism" as the presumption that "African values and ways of life are normatively valuable in a wholesale sense and are capable of being revived in a pristine, authentic, and pre-colonial form" (89–90), Kong makes a case for "*critical sankofa*". She defines this as "the process of reclaiming cultural values through the critical evaluation which leads to the reflective endorsement or rejection of past practices or traditions" (90). Such an approach is congruent with Armah's thesis.

As seer, Damfo is, in many respects, Armah's spokesperson in *The Healers*. Through this *Iso Lomso* (isiXhosa expression for The Eye of the Future), the novelist cautions Black people against the indiscriminate return to the past since that will translate into the wholesale endorsement of mutilative African cultural practices integral to slavery and castration, sullied royalty, human sacrifice, manipulation, and self-incapacitation. In brief, although Armah in *The Healers* repeatedly stresses the cardinal importance of the recuperation of the African past, he does not endorse the complete return to this past. There is no denying that Armah's works, narratives and non-fiction alike, share many tropes with Negritude, such as nativism, obsession with culture, essentialism, pastoralism, communalism, tellurism (celebration of Mother Earth), and Pan-Africanism. This notwithstanding, his truculent and relentless condemnation of African aristocracy (associated as it is with slavery, class/caste systems, human sacrifice, castration, endless warfare, etc.) in favor of horizontal socio-political organizations (communalism, heterarchy, non-hierarchical structures, egalitarian order, symmetrical formations, non-vertical establishments) set him apart from the dual romanticization of the African past and royalty by the intellectual guides of Negritude, such as Léopold Sédar Senghor (see especially Armah, *Two Thousand*; "Masks"; *Eloquence*; *Remembering*). Soon after the 1968 publication of Yambo Ouologuem's iconoclastic narrative, *Le devoir de violence* (*Bound to Violence*), in which the novelist satirically castigates the complicity of African kings in the slave trade and barbarity, as later Armah would also do with *Two Thousand Seasons*, Senghor condemns the young Malian writer for desecrating Africa's hallowed history and culture (108).[3] In effect, Armah, like Ouologuem, recognizes that Africans are also responsible for some reprehensible crimes, especially those of pre-colonial times, like the production and reification of slaves/eunuchs, visible in *The Healers*, before and after the advent of colonialism.

As already observed, the physical, psychological, and communitarian integrity of all subjects in the collectivity subtends the very idea of health and in *The Healers*, and therefore, is antithetical, in Armah's worldview, to all forms of subjugation, anathematization, and social exclusion. In many respects then, *The Healers* reflects Armah's well-articulated preference in earlier and later writings (*Two Thousand Seasons*; "Masks"; *Osiris Rising: A Novel of Africa Past, Present and Future*; *KMT: In the House of Life*; *Eloquence*; *Remembering*; *The Resolutionaries*) for horizontal socio-political arrangements, sustained by reciprocity, harmony, empathy, and oneness. Pertinent to the discussion of the conjoined subject of Armah's social configuration of health, predilection for horizontal socio-political organizations, and ferocious denunciation of African pre-colonial and post-colonial aristocracy is his remark:

> Those who believe traditional African society was classless will find no comfort here. The society thus structured, with unproductive overconsumers (aristocrats) at its top, and productive underconsumers (slaves) at its bottom, had gaping faults. When the Europeans arrived, their overriding desire was for slaves. These they obtained by establishing a partnership with selected aristocrats willing to export Africa's productive population and other resources in exchange for personal advantages and consumer goods, soon to be considered essential commodities. Thus Africa's resources were hooked to the service of the Western economy. (*Remembering* 207–8)

With reference to the Waalo community (of Senegal), which serves as a microcosm of pre-colonial and post-independence Africa, Armah further notes:

> The sober evidence of a permanent feature of African ruling class [is manifest in] an inability to think of prosperity in supra-personal terms. Here too is wry proof that the debtor lifestyle, now given such a high profile as a national way of life [in contemporary Africa], is centuries old. Waalo princes had a habit of borrowing from European traders, promising to pay in slaves. They then raided neighbors for captives, provoking reprisals and thus aggravating a climate of permanent insecurity in which development was impossible, and even basic survival was a lottery. (*Remembering* 208)

In the face of these sobering tableaux, the qualified desire of a return to the past means that *Sankofaism* and nativism must always be guided by caution and rational examination, even more so as awakening—an important feature of *The Healers*—connotes consciousness and vigilance, sanity and lucidity. As Damfo, in the true spirit of enlightened *Sankofaism*, argues, "Minds don't stay in the past [...] They can find the truths of the past, come back to the present, and look toward the future" (204). Seen in this light, circumspection is vitally required of healed subjects/communities to jealously guard their newfound health, wellbeing, and bodily/psychological/social integrity. Individuals and communities owe it to themselves to subject the recuperation of the past to good judgment. In short, recuperation in the form of *Sankofa* is an obligation, an imperative, and an expectation, which must be met with caution. Still with regard to the tension between the past and the future, notwithstanding the novel's general tenor of Manicheism (inspirers vs. manipulators, wholeness vs. fragmentation, pacifism vs. belligerence, good vs. bad guys, nationalists vs. colonial acolytes, etc.) and anti-colonialism, the anonymous narrator of *The Healers*, perhaps in spite of him/herself, projects the triumph of the dispensers of ATM in the arrest of King Ababio for the murder of Prince Appia as a function of the colonial rule of law. Together with the positive portrayal of certain British colonialists (the trader Collins and Governor McCarthy), this reality check appears to buttress the need for nativism to henceforth reckon with the new colonial dawn/order.

Conclusion

In *The Healers*, Armah thematizes the concept of multi-faceted wellbeing in the context of African reunification. The titular conspicuousness of the healers, practitioners of African ATM and, by extension, AIKS, places their practice, knowledge, and skills not just at the heart of physiological and psychological wellness but, even more importantly, at the center of African epistemic reclamation and the communitarian wholeness project that involves multilayered recuperation and (self)empowerment. The appraisal of responsibility and African reconstruction in the narrative is organically linked with the six operationally identified hyponymic pillars of recuperation—healing, renascence, re-creation, repossession, recall, return/retrieval with caution—all of which coalesce to give Armah's fifth novel its artistic and ideological charge. While none can contest the crucial multifarious roles of the healers in the realization of the African dream of unity, Armah suggests that the ultimate responsibility of translating the knowledge of the healers into reality rests with the bigger public of Africans. Applying the Sudanese proverb cited earlier to the landscape of *The Healers*, one can argue that the two vital assets bequeathed to Africans by the healers are roots and wings, incarnated respectively by knowledge/history/grounding/education and opportunities/responsibilities/flight/prospects/future.

Additionally, since unity is health and life, the multiple building blocks of recuperation demand of Africans individual and collective commitment to the renascence of Africa. Through Damfo, his mouthpiece, Armah also proposes to Africans that their legitimate reclamation of *Ebibirman*/Kemet should be predicated on lucidity and vigilance, but not on unhealthy choices. Clearly, the social orientation and artistic configuration of health in the work is consistent with the diverse and intermingling meanings and subtypes of recuperation. This said, future research into a detailed comparison between *The Healers* and a Negritude work will undoubtedly shed more light on Armah's preoccupation with African unity. So too will an eco-poetic unpacking of the narrative.

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Notes

1. Mfantse is one of the principal dialectal variants of Akan, a West African language spoken mainly in Ghana and the Ivory Coast. Mfantse is often spoken by the Fantse/Fante/Fanti. Much of the action in *The Healers* occurs on land that is traditionally occupied by the Fantse/Fante/Fanti.
2. Konadu stresses that the proverb is presented in Asante Twi, a major dialect of the Akan.

3. As if by coincidence, in 1968, much against the prevailing Negritude temper but in keeping with the nascent spirit of disenchantment, African chiefs, neocolonial oligarchy, and the African past were irreverently depicted in three West African novels: *The Beautyful Ones are not yet Born* by Armah, *Le Devoir de violence* by Ouologuem, and *Les soleils des indépendances* (*The Suns of Independence*) by Ahmadou Kourouma.

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Orisa Sanponna: Indigenous health systems, disability, and morality in Osofisan's dramaturgy

Olusegun Olu-Osayomi & Babatunde Adebua

***Orisa Sanponna*: Indigenous health systems, disability, and morality in Osofisan's dramaturgy**

The relevance of indigenous literature (by this is meant African literature) as an important resource for the interrogation and understanding of the social construction of the body, illness, or well-being in the African context seems not to be of primary interest to most African researchers in the field of sociology of health. In this article we explore how the notion of *Sanponna* (the smallpox deity) depicted in Femi Osofisan's play *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels* can be integrated into disability and indigenous health systems in a way that acknowledges both the biological and social facts as well as how this experience can be interrogated within the domain of epistemological, ontological, and moral foundations and concerns. We rely on mythological and analytical approaches as the theoretical underpinning. We begin with a brief explanation of the concept and potential of *Sanponna* in Yoruba metaphysics. We also look for relationships between moral values and other socio-psychological dimensions and traditional understandings of disability. Thereafter, we briefly examine *Orisa Sanponna* and its possible impacts on characters and disability in *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels* and conclude with an explanation of the relevance of the themes explored by Osofisan in the play to the Nigerian contemporary experience and situation. **Keywords**: *Orisa Sanponna*, Yoruba, morality, indigenous health systems, disability, Femi Osofisan, traditional African religion, medicine, disability, leprosy.

Introduction

In this article we explore the integration of *Sanponna* (smallpox) and leprosy depicted in Femi Osofisan's *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels* (*EVM*) into disability and African indigenous thought phenomena in a way that acknowledges both the biological and social facts.[1] There is also consideration of how this experience can be interrogated within the domain of epistemological, ontological, and moral foundations and concerns. The notions of *Sanponna* and leprosy are complex and multi-phenomenal experiences that demands a multi-layered system of analysis. From the perspective of the smallpox and leprosy patients and the characters in the play who, by proxy, share in that experience, the *Sanponna* notion will be felt and expressed in a variety of ways. This experience is critical to our analysis of well-being and the concept of compassion in the selected text. The selected literary work extensively features the twin issues of African *Orisa Sanponna* and the traditional understanding of specific disability.[2] The handling of these concepts is presented as a literary device and as character depiction.

Incidentally, Alex Asakitikpi (66) states that the relevance of indigenous literature (by this is meant African literature that reflects on and captures Afro-centric concepts of the body or illness) as an important resource for the interrogation and understanding of the social construction of the body, lies in the fact that illness, or well-being in the African context seems not to be of primary interest to most African researchers in the field of the sociology of health. This is in sharp contrast to Western literature which has been explored for over three decades (Goffman; Douglas; Turner, *The Body and Society*). Various studies have been carried out in Western scholarship

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on the social and biological processes of the sick body. Freidson attempts to explain the social construction and definition of illness experiences; David Locker, the social structure that inhibits human behavior as they confront discomforts and disruptions; and Peter Freund, Freund and Meredith McGuire, and Jocalyn Lawler investigate how sick individuals are handicapped as they experience difficulties in their challenged state. But, despite this general progress, Turner (*Regulating Bodies: Essays in Medical Sociology*) has posited that the dominant status of the body as a domain of medical sociology has been greatly undermined. Michael Kelly and David Field posit that one of the reasons for this neglect is the rejection of methodological individualism in favor of social agencies and structures.

The corporeal metaphor of the body as posited by Kelly and Field is seen as representing the dynamics of society, with the body itself capable of absorbing and containing it within its boundaries, and manifesting illness as a physiological response. But Asakitikpi (67) observes that there is much more to this metaphoric presentation of the human body, a limitation that is often associated with how the West deals with physical matter which is often devoid of the supernatural. Hence, rather than just an expression of social turmoil in the society, the selected work also goes beyond the physical to explore the concept of the body not only as gross matter but, more importantly, as a dual entity that bestrides both the physical and spiritual worlds. As espoused by Cynthia M. Mathieson and Henderikus J. Stam (286), self-narratives are part of an open-ended process, with continuous transformations that provide a meaning to daily interactions. Consequently, Osofisan's play is a social construction that emerges from "social interchange and for this reason no single narrative is ever final but part of the negotiation of ongoing, intersecting and multiple influences". It is within this framework that we explore the notion of *Sanponna* and leprosy as depicted in *EVM*, which focuses on the ontology of the body.

The mythological concept of *Orisa Sanponna*

Sanponna/Obaluaye (the smallpox deity) is one of the major principal deities universally worshipped everywhere in Yorubaland, on an annual basis. Others are *Esu*, *Obatala*, *Ogun*, *Orisa-Oko*, *Osun*, *Sango*, and *Yemoja*. In Yorubaland, it is a commonly accepted tradition that there are 401 deities. Oral traditions, according to Akintunde Akinyemi (84–5), often give a confusing impression of the exact number of divinities; for example, sometimes they speak of *erunlojo irunmole* (700 divinities), *igba irunmole ojukotun*, *igba irunmole ojukosi* (200 divinities of the right side, 200 divinities of the left side, for a total of 400 divinities), or *okanlenu irunmole* (401 divinities). There are still *ojilelegbeje irunmole ti won n lu edan fun* (1,440 divinities for whom metal rods are sounded). *Sanponna* is an earth god who has come to be regarded as a dreadful reality to the Yoruba. He is a short-tempered, cruel, and irascible *Orisa* (deity) who attacks people with smallpox as well as mental illness. His other names, which appear exclusive, include *Oluw'aiye* (*Oluwa Aiye*) or *Oluwa* (Lord of the Earth or Lord), *Oba-'lu' aiye* (King who is lord of the Earth), and *Olode* (The Lord of the Open). The Earth, which comprises the ground on which man treads, builds, and which he cultivates, the open spaces, is his jurisdiction where it is believed he holds absolute sway (Idowu 95).

In the Yoruba belief, *Sanponna* is "the destruction that wasteth at noonday" whose main scourge is smallpox, according to E. Bolaji Idowu (95). But smallpox, as dreadful as it is, appears to be no more than the most objective symptom of the fact that the "wrath" of the divinity is upon the victim, or upon the community, more often (96). Any high temperature in a patient, especially when accompanied by restlessness or delirium, is putdown at once to the divinity; a carbuncle, a particularly troublesome boil, a malignant rash are all regarded as marks of the wrath of *Sanponna*. Because *Sanponna* is called *Ile gbona* (hot earth), the Yoruba traditionally do not say *Ile gbona* (the ground is hot) when the ground is indeed hot. They employ a euphemism and say exactly the opposite of what they mean—"*Ile tutu*" (the ground is cold)—when a person has smallpox or suffers any of the afflictions believed to be caused by *Sanponna*. Idowu (97) further states that the Yoruba describe the situation in terms of deep respect for the divinity. They say "*O nsin oba*" (he is under the bondage to the king); *Ile-gbona mu u* or *Ile gbona mba a ja* (hot-earth has laid hand on him or hot-earth is afflicting him); or *O gb'ofa ba a* (he falls a victim to the arrowshot, or he is struck by the arrow).

However, according to Yoruba mythology, *Sanponna* is the "king" whose will, whatever the issue may be, must be accepted, not only with resignation but with manifest pleasure and gratitude. The relatives of a deceased smallpox victim, for example, must not mourn or show in any way that they regret the death. Rather, they must put on a festive and cheerful appearance and show that they are happily thankful for what the 'King' has done for them! If not, they are asking for more of the "king's" scourge! He is often depicted as prowling about when the sun is hot, robed in scarlet. Idowu (97–8) stresses the significance of this dreadful god:

> Care must be taken, especially during the dry season, not to say anything that would offend him. And thus is understandable because smallpox spreads more easily and is usually prevalent during the hot, dry season. Because he is believed to be particularly active during the dry season, he is called *A-soro-' pe'-l'eru*— "One whose name it is not so propitious to call during the dry season". He is considered fierce and almost implacable; so the whole office of his worship tends mainly to the propitiation of him so that he may leave people alone. The remedy used to heal smallpox or any aliments which are calculated to be due to his agency is called *Ero*—"That which softens (Sanponna) or eases (the furious nature of Sanponna)"; it is also called *Ebe* "That which propitiates or appeases".

As Idowu (98) reiterates, anyone who dies of smallpox is considered taken away by the "king". Their body is not buried in the house in the customary way; it is buried in the bush. And the funeral offices are the responsibility of the priests of *Sanponna* or any special undertaker whose qualification is his possession of the requisite preventive and propitiatory medicine. Part of what is done by those undertakers, therefore, is to take hygienic measures to prevent the spread of the disease. The fundamentality of Idowu's submission consists of the fact that the germs of smallpox belong to the class of germs which do not, as a rule, die with the death of the victim, as the Yoruba have learnt by experience. This knowledge of the die-hard nature of the disease's germs, Idowu (98) says, has often been exploited with disastrous consequences by unscrupulous people. On the whole, the Yoruba people would prefer the shrine of *Sanponna* and his emblem outside the house, village, or town—somewhere in the bush—because they fear provoking him; because, according to Idowu (101) "who can approach consuming flame"?

Medical models

According to Asakitikpi (73–4), the conceptualization of diseases from a Western perspective from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which is based on the anatomic and pathological views of the human body, is what is regarded as the medical model. This model captures the Western medical definition of diseases as organ and tissue specific, while the etiology of diseases is mostly linked with specific micro-organisms. Consequently, in digging further, Jonathan Gabe, Mike Bury, and Mary Ann Elston (125–6) say the medical model has three basic dimensions: that a specific etiology can be found underlying specific diseases, that diseases cause lesions in the body and further alter its anatomy and physiology, and that the two processes above in turn give rise to symptoms. However, the medical models may not be limited to only Western concepts of diseases; it may also be applied to non-Western nations and peoples whose concepts of diseases and illness are radically different from Western paradigms. For example, in the Nigerian context, and to a large extent the whole of the African continent south of the Sahara, the concept of diseases and ill health, as discussed by Nwankwo Ezeabasili and, to some extent by John Boston, is both pragmatic and metaphysical and so devoid of the monolithic explanation of the etiology of diseases. The African medical model conceptualizes diseases as caused by natural, preternatural, and mystical events and finds expression in both overt and covert ways that are experienced by the patient. This indigenous health model is more holistic in its approach to illness and diseases as it is based on the beliefs in natural, preternatural, and mystical causes to explain the etiology of diseases. Before the administration of therapeutic cure for patients, this fundamental categorization of the causes of diseases is often considered.

Traditional understanding of diagnoses, causes, and treatment of smallpox and leprosy

Natural causes of smallpox are attributed to bad spirits, walking or working in sun, dry season, and germs, while leprosy is caused by unhygienic living conditions, among other factors, which may lead to physiological dysfunction but which can only be remedied naturally by taking appropriate herbs. On the other hand, "preternatural diseases are explained as the result of the machination of the malevolent agents such as witches and sorcerers, who are believed to have supernatural powers which they use in manipulating spiritual elements to achieve their evil desires" (Asakitikpi 74). Bareness and lameness are some of the health challenges that are easily classified under this category. However, 'common' ailments such as stomach trouble, malaria, and germs may also be attributed to preternatural causes if several attempts to cure them become futile. Mystical causes of ill-health that cannot be given ordinary explanations are attributed to abnormal diseases or illness. This may be in the form of smallpox (which is attributed to meeting *Sanponna*), leprosy, dumbness, swelling of the groin, and some other forms of disability.

Asakitikpi (75) opines that "this category of illness is often attributed to the breeching of taboos and taking of dangerous oaths. Those with this form of diseases or illness are usually not handled by ordinary medicine-

men; there are priests that are attached to the local deities who perform the necessary sacrifices to appease the offended god or spirit". However, open worship of *Sanponna* is banned by law in Yorubaland because it was widely believed that worshippers disseminated smallpox germs during the annual rites. According to Asakitikpi (75), in all these traditional concepts of diseases and rehabilitation processes is the complex mixture of scientific and mystical explanations to common diseases and challenging ailments, and this interaction takes place within the socio-cultural environment of the patient. It should be pointed out, Asakitikpi further states, that "in practice there is no clear distinction among these three major causes of ill health and, more often than not, they grade into one another depending on the severity of the illness and the response of the patient to the prescribed treatment. Therefore, it is often left for the medicine-man to diagnose and prescribe the necessary therapy for cure".

However, for the first category—natural causes—traditional Yoruba healers and priests have common knowledge of the type of herbs to use for smallpox and leprosy. The most common methods of treating patients consist of medical preparations made of mixtures of roots, leaves, barks, fruits, parts of animals, and so forth; rituals involving offerings to the *Orisa* or the witches; or both (Simpson 97). The medical preparations are administered orally, in ointments, by bathing, or through scarification. Typically, scarification for medication is made around the ankles, the wrist, on the sternum, and along the line of sagittal suture of the head. Among many other diseases, according to George Simpson (102), leprosy is blamed on "worms". A rather complicated remedy involves cooking the roots of the *arojokun*, *osunsun*, *aringo*, *abo*, and *orupa* plant in a new clay pot with wood ashes and water.[3] Several *asa* fowls are fed in a cage and their faeces are collected and added, with *alupayida* leaves, to native soap.[4] The patient is then bathed in a pit (to prevent the water from flowing away and thus spreading the disease) with the liquid mentioned above and native soap. Smallpox is widely attributed to meeting evil or bad spirits, that is, to meeting *Sanponna*. Smallpox victims have fever, chills, pain, swelling, dream, and do not eat well. In one type of treatment, according to Simpson (103), a mixture of oil of lavender, *Kanfo* (camphor), and *sebe* water is applied to smallpox sores. Another palliative is made of juice from *ijoyun* leaves and shea-butter, a mixture which is rubbed on the patient. To appease *Sanponna*, a *babalawo* (diviner) may advise a client or their family to give a ceremony with animals and other offerings. However, Asakitikpi (75) asserts that the recognition of the tripartite nature of humans as biological, social, and spiritual makes this form of medicine not only desirable but also in congruence with local cosmologies.

The gods, disability appropriation, and the morality dialectic in *EVM*

Osofisan is one of the most notable contemporary African playwrights and directors. In his dramaturgic engagements and theatrical practice, he has consistently interrogated and addressed the postcolonial African condition. Osofisan has also consistently explored the African tradition and cultural matrices to make artistic statements. A visible imprint of African culture in Osofisan's drama is the recurrent portrayal of the traditional gods as reasoning and healing entities, like humans, thereby making the gods to participate in the play of human beings. In this article we contend that the gods as an idea or an aspect of African (Yoruba) metaphysics occupies a significant place in the construction of Osofisan's plays, serving aesthetic, cultural, and ideological purposes. The need for a firm understanding of the gods and the reasons for the playwright's fascination with them informs our analysis of *EVM*.

In *EVM*, the setting is the crossroad. Osofisan uses this traditional setting as a base from which he treats national concerns from a moral perspective. Within the context of an African worldview, this setting is spiritual. The play, according to Victoria Adeniyi (160–2), tells the story of five minstrels—three men and two women—who are looking for ways to better their lot. They have not eaten for the past three days and are desperate to eat anything edible that comes their way. As they wait at a crossroad to eat the sacrifice brought to *Esu* by his worshippers, they meet an old man. Redio, one of the minstrels, says: "We've come to the end of the road. And it looks like you can help us, as a priest of the gods (17–8)". And the old man tells them:

> Esu loves to help men, but only when they show that they can live happily among other human beings. For human beings are greedy [...] Esu does not see into the hearts of men, only their actions. Are you ready to help those among you, who are in distress? To bring redress to the wronged? And justice to the exploited? (32)

Orunmila is the molder and symbol of knowledge of humanity while *Esu* is the examination officer. Muyiwa, P. Awodiya, quoted in Adebola Adebambo Ademeso (73), says:

> Most Christians in Africa believe strongly that *Esu* is the same person referred to in the Bible as Devil or Satan, whereas the appropriate parallel or the equivalent of the Christian's Devil does not exist in the Yoruba pantheon. *Esu* is one of the deities in the Yoruba pantheon known as the 'errand boy' of *Orunmila*. He is a "trickster god of revolt and unpredictable forces", an embodiment of "the principle of justice whose operation often eludes man's predictive abilities".

The crossroad, where *Esu* resides, is the meeting point for the good and the bad attributes of humanity. According to Yoruba mythology, the dilemma of the crossroads is the dilemma of the society that is going through a socio-political or economic transition. People come to the crossroads to meet *Esu* with the hope of dining with him. However, he does not go to them. *Esu* sees his power in the affairs of men as divine. The old man tells the minstrels: "The owner of the world has created a balance between the forces of Good and those of Evil and therefore leaves people to make their choices. He appointed *Esu* to watch over them […]" (17). It is in this light that Osofisan finds the motif of *Esu* as the most relevant in determining the fate of the minstrels who are in need. These minstrels unfortunately begin to use their power to exploit others and to enrich themselves at the expense of their clients. Epo Oyinbo, one of the minstrels, for example, tells his client: "Yes, I can. But what are you ready to offer?" (39). When the man, who is desperate to be cured of his impotence, says nothing, Epo Oyinbo presents a dubious and innovative dimension to the aberrant expression of his greed and replies: "Talk man! Anything is not definite enough!" (39). In reply, the man promises him all his property. Accompanied by his other minstrels, Epo Oyinbo sings and dances with the man. And as they sing and dance, the stage directions and dialogue read: "*(The Old man's retinue, apparently unseen by the Minstrels and the Impotent Man, return to dance along. They gradually involve the Impotent Man in a kind of ritual and then dance away. As soon as they disappear, the man, as if awakening from a trance, shouts in surprise)*: Sanponna O! My God, it's working! I'm coming alive!" (41).

The impotent man runs after Sinsin and Jigi, two female minstrels, who flee. This is how all the minstrels, except Omole, treat their clients before curing them: always making their client promise them something before they provide the solution to their problems (Adeniyi 160). Epo Oyinbo, Redio, Sinsin, and Jigi select their clients by first ascertaining their level of wealth. Any client who is not rich or who seems too poor to offer anything to them in return is left untreated. Sinsin, for instance, chooses a wealthy man who uses human beings to make money, and all the other minstrels choose material things, the only thing they could invest their healing charm on, thereby denying the suffering healing power.

Thereafter, a male and female leper enter, looking for someone to cure them of their leprosy. To effect a cure, the male leper tells them that whoever wants to help them will have to embrace them. Only Omele accepts. Redio even exclaims, "Not on your life, sir! Not for all the riches in the world" (71). Omele knows that he is taking a risk just for the happiness of the leper-couple against all the pressures from his friends and the condition for using the charm. If true commitment is the bedrock of an action, no matter the implication, one would be ready to bear it. Omele's words affirm this:

> It's no use now. If I let you go, I'll never grow old. For I'll never know happiness again! I'll be thinking only of this single moment of cowardice, when I turned away some human beings in need […] (*He embraces the Male leper*). And you, dear lady, like this! I'll hold both of you together now, while I sing and dance with you. See if you can sing with me! (73)

The changes begin as they sing and dance. The limbs of the lepers begin to stretch out again, while Omele collapses in great pain, his limbs retracting, and spots all over him. The other minstrels mock Omele for proving stubborn and foolish. Then, they drive him away but Omele tells them:

> Because it doesn't matter to me. I have only one life, and it's not worth much. I've always lived in want, as a vagabond. Oh yes, my life itself has been like leprosy. So I am used to it, I can live like this for the rest of my wretched life. But look at them, aren't they handsome as they are? They have a name, a career, they have kid. They have money in the bank, an insurance policy no doubt, their life is a hymn to the future. Society needs them, not the dregs like me. I'll keep the disease! (60)

Omele's disposition, according to Ademeso (57), is a clear indication of the possibility to submit willingly, for the progress of humanity. He deprives himself of all the immediate needs and the will power of man. Later, the old man appears and asks how they have helped to reduce suffering in the world. For using the power given them to enrich themselves, all the minstrels except Omele praise themselves. Then the old man says, "All is set then! The hour has come for your reward, all of you". Then he says to his followers, "reveal yourselves, my children" (81). One by one, hoods fall off to reveal the same characters who had been helped by the minstrels, all except the pregnant

woman and the lepers. The minstrels jump with shock because they realize that the old man was only testing them to know if they would use whatever talents and opportunities they have to help mankind or to enrich themselves. This raises a question left unanswered: how can collective force work when there are people with selfish motives outnumbering the few committed ones? The old man gives his verdict: "Let the disease go to those who have won it, those who seek to be rich without labor. Who have put their selfish greed first before anything, including humanity, I mean you, my dear fellows! Take your reward! (*The Minstrels cringe in terror*). Obaluaye, it's your turn now. They're yours!" (90).

As Omele is cured by *Sanponna/Obaluaye*, his comrades writhe in agony as they are caught by the dreadful god and are gradually covered in spots. Thus, using the myth of *Esu* and *Sanponna* as the illustrative medium, *EVM* is an example of a morality play that is meant to "tune the various human perceptions to the reality of class structure with a guided hold on the social, political, and economic views of man" (Ademeso 54).

Disability, medicine, and the gods in *EVM*

The shift in the structure of the society from pristine traditionalism to modernism, according to Azeez Akinwumi Sesan (80), has exerted much influence on the moral ethos and cultural episteme of individuals in the country. Among the components of modernity in contemporary Nigerian society are architectural designs, innovation in science and technology, and modern religion (Christianity and Islam) that are not native to Africa. With the modern architectural designs and religion, Sesan (80) further states, African gods and goddesses have been losing their prime places among worshippers and adherents. The gods and goddesses are no longer worshipped. Individuals also live in isolation, caring for themselves and their families alone and severing the ties of extended family and the compound. The outcome of this is the loss of the human face and humanity in Nigerians' dealings and interactions with others.

Still in the illusion of the past, the minstrels think *Sepeteri*, the residence of *Esu*, will still receive sacrifices that will satisfy their wants and needs. As a result of modernity, the minstrels want pleasure without stress. This is because of their inherent laziness. Their laziness makes them victims of the antics of *Esu*, disguised as the old man. The crossroad is the abode of *Esu* and plays host to ritual offerings given to the deity. As the umpire of the crossroad, *Esu* gives to each person according to his/her needs and desires. Apart from the crossroad, worshippers are sometimes advised to offer sacrifices to *Esu* and place them in the center of the market. Therefore, the crossroad as an idea or as a concrete institution occupies a significant place in the construction of Osofisan's play, serving aesthetic, cultural, and ideological purposes. *Sepeteri* is, therefore, the confluence of humanity where the giver and the needy meet for favors from the gods or the ancestors. "It is the cultural understanding of the significance of *Sepeteri* that propels the Vagabond Minstrels to the place to find solution to their wants. This confluence of humanity is the centre of fellowship of man, ancestors and deified beings" (Sesan 79). The minstrels are unable to satisfy their needs because the *Sepeteri* crossroad is deserted. In the process, humanity suffers. However, the truth of the matter, according to Omele's declaration, is that time (and by extension, modernity) has changed his people. The implication is that they are no longer humane and responsive to the needs of the less privileged and helpless. The excerpt below shows this:

> Omele: Charity! That is the creed we were all raised on, and the whole village practiced it! Not even a stranger passed by without finding a roof or a warm bed. They taught us to always give, freely like Mother Nature. They said God owned everything, and that every man was a creator of God. Created in his image! So, how was I to know that in just five years, five years since I left, all that would have changed? How could I have foreseen it that a day would come when these same people, my own people would see men in torment and drive them back into the wind? (17)

Osofisan's immediate society (Nigeria) provides a variety of great influences on his visionary posture. He sees his society as a microcosm of Africa and a universal symbol. Osofisan is, first and foremost, a Yoruba man. Among the Yoruba, as in many African cultures, healing is always approached holistically and cosmology is part of Yoruba human existence. Within this cosmological framework, when the physical body is sick or someone suffers from a physiological dysfunction, the spiritual body must be reached either through the physical body or by some other means for the desired wholeness to be achieved. Therefore, traditional healthcare remains an integral part of the people's cultural belief. In addition, central to Yoruba theology is the interaction between the physical and the metaphysical. This, according to Adépéjú Johnson-Bashua (146), is based on the concept that sickness or illness implies a combined physiological and spiritual condition that results from an imbalance between the

metaphysical and the human world. In the Yoruba response to illness and healing in this context, ritual dynamics of divination, spirit possession, offering, and sacrifice play central roles. There is also the recognition of divinities called *Irumole* which they acknowledge as messengers or angels of *Olodumare* (supreme being). Other methods of curing ailments in Yorubaland are healing using herbs and plants, spirit possession, healing during the *Egungun* (masquerade) festival, *Oro* worship, using palm-nuts, cowries shells, numbered checkers, ventriloquism, casting of kolanut, water in a sacred pot, *Osanyin*, and the employment of the *Ifa* oracle to determine the cause and cure of illness. Of all these, the adoration of *Olodumare* is the foremost. Most often, as compared to orthodox medicine, traditional healing is the preferred option for patients in Yorubaland. For instance, in the text Redio says to the old man: "We've come to the end of the road and it looks like you can help us, as a priest of the gods" (17–8).

Some of the characters mentioned in *EVM* are spiritual entities or deities in the Yoruba pantheon. Examples include the old man who played the role of *Esu* (the Yoruba trickster god of revolt and unpredictable forces), *Orunmila* (the herbal healer), *Obaluaye* or *Sanponna*, and *Yeye Osun* (a water goddess). Osofisan makes these gods participate in the play of man to portray them as reasoning entities. The Yoruba believe there are some illnesses that modern medicine will never be able to cure and that some diseases are thought to respond only to traditional empirical technique and magical techniques. The illnesses in this category mentioned in the text are leprosy (traditionally caused by worms), smallpox (caused by meeting *Sanponna*), epilepsy (caused by sorcery), overdue pregnancy (caused by a witch), and impotency (caused by dirt in reproductive organs and sorcery). The setting of the play at the crossroad has its own spiritual essence beyond the physical. The commercialization of compassion by the minstrels (Epo Oyinbo, Jigi, Sinsin, and Redio) is played out in the locale of the crossroad.

The minstrels are given magical charms as spiritual gifts by the old man that will make them rich, provided they are willing to cure/help any human being that comes their way and is in need. These magical charms can cure preternatural diseases which only demand mystical explanations. The disabled people in the text are those who suffer from leprosy, smallpox, impotency, and overdue pregnancy. They are the helpless and the less privileged. As compared to orthodox medicine, magical charms are given by the old man to attend to these people. Irrespective of their age and size, the old man gives them the power to cure man's problems:

> Take these seeds, one for each you. Eat it. Swallow it. Done? Now, let each one find a suffering man, someone unhappy, and sing to him. Sing to him your favourite song, and make him dance with you. That's all [...] As you dance, whatever his suffering, it will end! If he is thirsty, he will be satisfied. If crippled, he will walk. Whatever his agony, you will relive it. Your dance will bear it away [...] (33)

The bottom line of Osofisan's canon in this play is that compassion for the disabled, the needy, the helpless, and the poor can create a new society—the society of Omele where charity brings people of different races, minds, and origins together. Within the context of the African (Yoruba) worldview, the patients in the text believe the healers (minstrels) can deal with their misfortunes spiritually. For instance, when a heavily pregnant woman, who looks wretched, enters, and begins to pray to be delivered of her baby, all the minstrels, except Omele, decline to help, claiming that there is no reward they can get from her. The woman is surprised that Omele offers to help her. He says, "We can't let her go like this! Look at her! She's in torment [...] money is not the only road to happiness. I cannot let her go like this" (43). The woman quickly adds that she would be a slave forever to Omele if she is delivered of her baby. And for the salvation of humans and the continuous existence of the willpower of man, Omele deprives himself of all his immediate needs and his material quest and totally submits to leprosy for the sake of the leprous couple. This is not in anticipation of material rewards, nor of gratification or self-glorification, unlike his vagabond friends. Consider Epo Oyinbo's words: "We have reduced suffering for ourselves! No more hunger and no more wandering for us! Finished, the Vagabond life. We've planted our feet down firmly in fortune!" (59).

Using the motif of disability, Osofisan "lampoons religious leaders who use their spiritual gifts to oppress their clients and followers and to enrich themselves at the expense of their clients and followers" (Adeniyi 159). They are "religious bad eggs" who Awodiya (qtd in Ademeso 130) thought-provokingly describes in the following way: "they smuggle commodity items like gold, trinkets, drugs, shoes, bags, clothing materials, and wrist-watches. Thus, 'Pastor', 'Alhaji', 'Alhaja', 'Aafa' etc, are fast becoming social rather than religious titles as the wearers of such titles are religious fakes [...]"

Osofisan, according to Ayobami Onanuga and Paul Onanuga (1), "asserts his social advocacy through a recommendation of the eschewal of individualistic tendencies and appeals for communal considerations in Africa

social actions". The minstrels, as stated earlier, are to exchange compassion for posterity through the magical charms offered them by the old man provided they are willing to cure/help the disabled leprous couple, smallpox patient, overdue pregnant woman, the impotent man, etc. In all these, compassion and charity must also be supported with the fear of God, and it is upon this premise that society could be seen as truly egalitarian. This, according to Ademeso, is the point made in *EVM* by Osofisan:

> The socio-political and economic progress of a nation lies in its ability to disassociate itself from all forms of superstition about the existence of a god or goddess as the determining factor for the fate of man. It is only when the reality of the world of illusion is x-rayed that man can see himself as his own god or goddess. Man is, therefore, not a property of the goddess. Man is also not a property of another man, he is the property of himself. (63)

It is this situation that enables Osofisan to censure materialism. This is further supported by Gbemisola Adeoti (392–3) who posits that "the desperation by people for quick wealth lies at the root of social problems like corruption, nepotism, fraud, election rigging, armed robbery, prostitution, kidnapping, hostage taking, and extortion". Therefore, as is evident from the concluding song led by *Orunmila* in the text, Osofisan tries to discourage the centering of money as the ultimate life goal:

> All we have tried to say
> Through this gay story telling
> Is that compassion pays
> Kindness has its own reward;
> Life's not all buying, selling;
> Cheating, amassing wealth;
> And greed is the way to death (95)

Conclusion

In this article we explored the *Orisa Sanponna* myth and its challenges in the specific contexts of traditional African religion, medicine, disability, and morality. We have also focused our attention on the concept of *Sanponna* and leprosy in traditional African philosophy and religion. From an Afrocentric perspective, African traditions maintain an expansive powerhouse of muses that have, in turn, maintained relevance across time and space. The Yoruba *Sanponna* is just one of the numerous instances of this assertion. We have paid special attention to the notion of *Sanponna* and leprosy depicted in *EVM* and how it can be integrated into disability and African indigenous thought in a way that acknowledges both the biological and social facts as well as how this experience can be integrated within the domain of epistemological, ontological, and moral foundations and concerns.

It is revealed that this wide field provides a rich source for the interrogation of the social construction and reconstruction of the human body, especially as it relates to diseases and ill health in the African context. Hence, we posit that, in all endeavors, the understanding of the synergy between traditional and modern medicine, as well as the physical and spiritual, is what gives value to the harmony that most African societies seek to achieve. What is clear in this article is that the *Orisa Sanponna* in Africa and its importance in traditional African philosophy, religion, and morality which some self-deceptively consider a myth is already a reality which lives with them. It is, therefore, recommended that one must begin to take African indigenous thought and traditional understanding of specific disability seriously by conceptualizing it as a dynamic project, locating it historically, and acknowledging its social significance in modern health formation. Thus, all the foregoing constitutes immanent elements in the creative consciousness of traditional African deities, religion, medicine, disability, and morality.

Notes:

1. All translations into English are by the authors.
2. *Orisa* is a Yoruba word for deity. As it has already been indicated in this article, the deities are called various names among the Yoruba—found in the Southwestern part of Nigeria and a section of the Republic of Benin—such as *Orisas*, *Imoles*, *Irunmoles*.
3. *Arojokun* is an extract of leaves for constipation of which one species is used in Gold Coast (now Ghana). *Aringo* consists of barks and leaves in preparing enemas. It is also used with spices as a dressing for bruises. *Orupa*, in Ashanti, is a decoction of roots used as a febrifuge, a remedy to mitigate or remove fever.
4. The *alupayida* plant is used by the Hausa in Northern Nigeria as a medicinal charm to rub or wash on the body as a preventive of injury by cutting weapons.

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Womanisme dans *Crépuscule du tourment: Mélancolie* de Léonora Miano

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Womanism in *Crépuscule du tourment: Mélancolie* by Léonora Miano

In this article we examine the notion of womanism as portrayed in the 2016 novel *Crépuscule du tourment: Mélancolie (Twilight of Torment: Melancholy)* by the Franco-Cameroonian author Léonora Miano. We explore how four female characters are subjected to discrimination on various levels: racial, sexist, and even linked to social divisions. We furthermore trace the religious, historical, cultural and sexual aspects of the identity crisis that each character undergoes. The tales by these four voices depicting their suffering and different defence strategies finally point to the womanism of the author herself which this article aims to discuss drawing on a range of definitions provided by scholars such as bell hooks, Molara Ogundipe-Leslie and Alice Walker. Our reading of the novel focusses on the mechanisms of resistance (exploration of homosexual relations, recourse to afrocentricity) deployed by these female characters in an environment where neither Western feminism nor activism seem to respond to the complexity of their alienation. Miano's heroines attempt to reconstruct their identities in terms of culture, territory, the other and the "self". Their revolt and courage to speak out constitute acts of self-determination. This emancipatory quest leads to a form of hybridity that embraces both modernity and traditional values, with its myths and customs, and which results in a reconstructed and plural identity. It also constitutes an approach by an African author that embraces both a return to the self and an openness to the outside world. **Keywords:** womanism, identity crisis, alienation, Léonora Miano, afrocentricity.

Introduction

Crépuscule du tourment: Mélancolie (2016) par Léonara Miano brosse le portrait des hommes et des femmes Noirs et de descendance noire en Occident et en Afrique. Ce roman situé pour la plupart en Afrique subsaharienne, "au Cameroun peut-être" selon son éditeur, présente un monde hétérogène, hybride avec ses traditions les plus anciennes et surtout, un monde où la violence masculine et le racisme institutionnalisé restent les causes principales de l'aliénation de la femme. Au cours de quatre chapitres, quatre femmes prennent la parole à la première personne pour évoquer leur souffrance. Elles s'adressent à un seul homme, Dio, qui ne répond jamais. Dans ces faux dialogues, ces dernières questionnent le monde contemporain, tout en posant le problème de l'appartenance à une culture "afrocentrique" qui réunirait tous les Africains d'Afrique et d'Amérique. Ainsi, la première partie de cet article est-elle consacrée à l'écho des vies tourmentées des femmes. Il est question ici d'analyser le poids

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de la société dans la question du genre. La deuxième partie est consacrée à la crise que vivent ces personnages notamment sur le plan sexuel, religieux et culturel afin de démontrer comment le confinement de ces héroïnes est non seulement idéologique, c'est-à-dire déterminé culturellement et sociologiquement, mais est aussi le résultat des incompréhensions qui existent entre le monde afro-descendant et africain. Nous verrons également comment l'Afrique et ses différentes cultures doivent faire partie de toute solution pour ces personnages africains. La dernière partie sera consacrée au womanisme de Léonora Miano qui se dévoile au fur et à mesure que les récits des personnages principaux se déploient.

Des cœurs qui étouffent

Les quatre héroïnes de Miano (Madame Mususedi, Ixora, Amandla et Tiki) sont toutes en proie à une crise identitaire dans un environnement qui nie leur altérité. Madame Mususedi est une femme qui a évolué dans une société où les chagrins véritables de la femme ne s'exposent et ne s'énoncent pas. C'est une femme aux prises avec plusieurs troubles dont les violences conjugales, les infidélités de son époux et la solitude. Sa conception de l'amour est ambiguë car dit-elle: "il n'y a pas de place pour la romance, être femme, c'est mettre à mort son cœur" (*Mélancolie* 10). Cet idiome qu'elle a adapté, depuis ses fiançailles, a fait d'elle un stratège froid et austère. Ses origines d'esclaves et les relations inexistantes entre elle et ses belles-sœurs ont contribué à sa marginalité; une marginalité qui a abouti à la solitude. Sa quête n'a pas été celle du bonheur conjugal mais celle de la survie car descendante d'esclaves, son union à un sang royal n'avait pour but que d'anoblir le sien. Son statut social la rend donc psychologiquement inférieure. Madame Mususedi est une "malade", elle souffre du complexe d'infériorité dont parle Frantz Fanon. Bien que Fanon théorise sur le complexe d'infériorité et de supériorité d'un point de vue racial dans son ouvrage *Peau noire, masques blancs*, ses arguments peuvent faciliter la compréhension de l'attitude du personnage de Madame Mususedi, qui provient plutôt de sa conscience de classe sociale. Selon Fanon, le malade n'est pas seulement un ensemble de symptômes donnés, mais une personne qui vit une condition spécifique, une situation d'infériorité qui provoque une rétraction de son moi. Cette condition entraîne: "une exacerbation affective, une rage de se sentir petit, une incapacité à toute communion humaine qui le confine dans une insularité intolérable" (65). Dans ce cas, Madame Mususedi n'est pas seulement une descendante d'esclaves ou une dominée mais elle est aussi le produit d'une relation de conflit entre ses différents "moi", une domination qui s'est intériorisée.

Ixora quant à elle est un personnage hybride tant sur le plan géographique que culturel car issue de parents africains et antillais et influencée par les cultures africaines et occidentales. Elle demeure une marginale dans chacune des sociétés où elle vit. Enfant illégitime, elle se trouve marginalisée. Elle n'est ni reconnue, ni acceptée par son géniteur:

> *On ne refuse pas un enfant*, disait-il, sans jamais me reconnaitre vraiment comme sa fille, il ne m'a jamais appelée *Ma fille*, ni prononcé mon prénom, même par inadvertance, je n'étais qu'une parmi ceux que son grand cœur avait acceptés, il avait cessé de voir ma mère sitôt la grossesse annoncée, mais pas de faire le nécessaire (*Mélancolie* 149–50).

Les relations avec son père sont presque inexistantes, leurs rencontres sont toujours courtes et froides. Elle ne bénéficie d'aucune chaleur paternelle. Le rapport entre père et fille est totalement nié. Le manque d'affection paternelle est au centre du malaise d'Ixora si bien que, lorsqu'elle fait la rencontre du futur géniteur de son fils, c'est d'abord la figure paternelle qui l'attire et non le côté charnel de la relation. Elle est à la recherche d'une figure capable de lui enseigner la survie, de déchiffrer les énigmes de l'existence et de la guider comme un père aurait dû le faire.

À ce manque de chaleur paternelle dont elle souffre s'ajoute le racisme auquel elle fait face en Occident. Dans cette société, elle est une personne méprisée et mise au ban de la collectivité. Elle subit constamment des comportements méprisants de l'hégémonie blanche. Les situations impliquant Blancs et autres groupes ethniques provoquent quelquefois des frictions qui génèrent volontairement ou pas, des complexes de supériorité ou d'infériorité, de culpabilité et d'indignation. Il s'agit à la fois d'une ségrégation et d'une discrimination envers les Noirs qui se retrouvent le plus souvent parmi les pauvres dans la société occidentale. La solitude et le dénigrement sont leur lot quotidien. Considérés comme des citoyens de dernier rang, ils sont renvoyés par cette société au statut de "bande ethnique" et le racisme dont ils subissent les conséquences fait d'eux des "âmes insurgées" (*Mélancolie* 35).

Ixora reste toutefois persuadée qu'elle peut retrouver son identité et réconcilier ses univers sur le continent africain, ce qui lui est une fois de plus nié. Pour la simple raison que ses aïeux avaient été des esclaves, elle est exclue et considérée comme une étrangère par sa future belle-mère. Madame Mususedi n'accepte pas Ixora et n'hésite pas à partager ses pensées avec son fils: "Pourquoi agis-tu toujours comme si tu ne connaissais pas ce pays cette femme que tu nous as ramenée du Nord n'est pas faite pour vivre ici on dirait qu'elle va s'envoler si on lui souffle dessus Amandla encore était différente mais aussi problématique" (178). C'est sur ce ton agressif que Madame Mususedi s'adresse à son fils en présence de sa future belle-fille. L'absence de toute ponctuation et la graphie qui est en italique expriment le recours par l'auteure à l'oralité pour mieux signaler la mise en emphase du discours de Madame Mususedi. Observe-t-on alors une nouvelle forme de xénophobie à l'endroit de la personne d'Ixora ? Où qu'elle aille, elle est considérée comme une étrangère ou comme une "sans généalogie". Ainsi Miano crée-t-elle des personnages de l'ombre et solitaires qu'elle installe dans une société où les membres ne savent pas s'aimer et encore moins ne tolèrent pas ceux qui sont différents. Ixora et Madame Mususedi étouffent non pas parce qu'elles sont physiquement empêchées ou incapables de profiter des espaces extérieurs de leur environnement, mais parce qu'elles souffrent d'une instabilité en raison de cet héritage auquel s'ajoutent les mœurs socioculturelles. Elles sont en fait victimes d'une aliénation.

Pendant que l'Occident est présenté dans cet ouvrage comme un milieu où racisme et xénophobie prévalent, l'Afrique y apparaît comme un continent où le mariage n'est pas seulement une affaire de sentiments mais de statut social, où des individus sont aliénés et vivent une déportation intérieure et où les inégalités socio-économiques se conjuguent pour reléguer davantage la femme à la marge. Nous retrouvons à cet effet un champ lexical péjoratif: "des captifs non déportés", "monde régi par une puissance masculine mal ordonnée", "le patriarcat ne sème [...] que des mâles" (11). Le titre du roman constitue également un élément indicateur quant aux tourments et au statut de la femme dans ces différentes structures. Le crépuscule est la lueur qui précède ou succède au coucher du soleil. Contrairement aux précédents romans de Miano tels que *L'intérieur de la nuit*, *Contours du jour qui vient* ou *Tels des astres éteints* dans lesquels c'est le soleil qui s'arroge les pleins pouvoirs dans son aspect destructeur, dans *Crépuscule du tourment: Mélancolie*, c'est le noir qui réside autant à l'intérieur des personnages qu'à l'extérieur. Le champ sémantique du noir: "noirceur", "nuit", "ombre", "dissimulation" l'indique par ailleurs. Le lecteur a parfois l'impression que cette vision pessimiste du noir esquisse la satire du sexe masculin et de tout ce qui est domination. Cette assimilation du noir à la domination du masculin se justifie par un autre énoncé portant sur l'orage et la pluie torrentielle qui vient par la suite. Cette même atmosphère est présente dans les monologues des quatre personnages, annonçant une mauvaise ambiance et le malaise dans lesquels vivent les héroïnes de Miano. Le temps joue donc un rôle important dans ce roman car il est l'écho des vies tourmentées des femmes dans ces sociétés où, comme le dit Madame Mususedi, "être femme, en ces parages, c'est évaluer, sonder, calculer, anticiper" (12).

Les protagonistes de ce roman souffrent d'une insécurité ontologique. Elles manquent le sens de l'auto-validation, du moi intégral et de l'identité personnelle que les gens "normaux" tiennent pour acquis. Une personne ontologiquement sécurisée, nous explique R. D. Laing, prend vie à partir d'un sens central et ferme de sa propre réalité et de celle des autres; lorsque ces éléments sont diminués, ou manquent dans son propre champ de référence, des questions surgissent et l'insécurité s'ensuit (44). Ixora, par exemple, est aliénée de son passé et de son présent et se sent déconnectée des autres; elle n'a donc aucune certitude de validation dans sa vie et se sent coupée de tout ancrage social dans son environnement: "Je me suis regardée dans la glace, me suis vue, svelte et bien mise, toujours parfaite à l'extérieur mais verrouillée quelque part, au point que cela devait se voir, tenir le désir, l'amitié à distance" (*Mélancolie* 149). Sous le toit de Madame Mususedi, elle adopte un "faux moi", une coquille qui lui permet de se sentir "normale" même si ce n'est que temporairement (Laing 40). C'est aussi une manière de copier et d'assurer son autoconservation, tout en se confrontant à ce que l'on attend typiquement de son milieu.

Le lesbianisme et la (re)construction de l'identité sexuelle

Les héroïnes de Miano apparaissent comme des incarnations universelles de la femme noire qui se débattent sous la plume de leur créatrice dans un monde clos. Les récits de Madame Mususedi et d'Ixora évoquent la quête de leur féminité et la découverte de leur corps. Toutes les deux ont connu l'amour homosexuel à un stade de leur vie. Pour le personnage de Madame Mususedi, cet amour homosexuel était la possibilité de s'offrir une nouvelle identité et de tenir son passé douloureux à distance. Mais elle est mal à l'aise et s'assombrit à la pensée de l'opinion publique sur une relation homosexuelle et extraconjugale de surcroît. Ce faisant, elle autorise le regard de "l'autre"

de la juger. Et pourtant, ce regard qui est porté sur elle n'est qu'une limitation à sa liberté de choisir sa route vers le bonheur. En agissant en fonction du regard d'autrui, ce personnage se dépouille de ses pouvoirs et les confère à autrui. Sa conscience et son pouvoir dans le choix de ses décisions deviennent prisonniers de ceux de l'autre. Cette détermination par le regard de l'autre est examinée de façon théorique par Jean-Paul Sartre, Frantz Fanon et Stuart Hall. Sartre estime que la conscience est le fondement de l'être et "autrui" celui qui peut le limiter. Dès lors, la conscience du sujet ne peut être limitée que par la conscience d'un autre sujet. Il déclare: "rien en effet ne peut me limiter sinon autrui" (Sartre 326). Bien que la théorie de Fanon porte sur le colonialisme, elle peut également être appliquée dans ce cadre car il n'hésite pas à qualifier de "drame narcissiste" l'effet du regard de celui qui se trouve en position dominante (Fanon 36), c'est-à-dire le regard du dominant sur le dominé. Hall quant à lui associe ce genre de situation à un conflit des identités; c'est-à-dire un conflit entre le "moi social" et le "moi profond" qui entraine "la dislocation ou le décentrement du sujet" (276). Ceci dit, Madame Mususedi est une femme qui vit un trouble identitaire ou même psychologique. Devant la pression sociale, elle sacrifie son amour et fait passer ces rôles sociaux au-dessus de tout.

Pendant que Madame Mususedi sacrifie son amour homosexuel, Ixora décide d'explorer sa sensualité jusqu'au bout. Elle assume son choix et rompt ses fiançailles avec Dio qu'elle n'aimait pas mais avait accepté d'épouser dans l'optique d'assurer le bonheur de son fils. Dans le processus de se libérer, elle choisit de se défaire de sa condition, transgresse les codes sociaux patriarcaux et souhaite désormais prendre des décisions qui contribueraient à son bonheur. Elle estime qu'"il n'y a pas de bons moments pour annoncer qu'on a rencontré quelqu'un, que tout a changé, que l'urgence est maintenant de renoncer à la blague" (*Mélancolie* 161). Il s'agit ici d'une prise de décision explicite de la part d'Ixora. Une décision qui s'insurge contre tous les stéréotypes et de ce fait, sa relation homosexuelle ne se présente pas comme une déchéance mais comme un accomplissement. Ixora vit finalement son amour avec une femme comme une libération plus assurée, évoquant explicitement le cunnilingus. Elle fait une revendication du plaisir féminin, mais surtout de la liberté obtenue dans un amour entre femmes. Elle parle du corps, de la chair, de la chaleur et non du fait d'être dans une relation avec une femme. C'est donc une marche vers la libération avec laquelle son corps ne sera plus seulement pour la reproduction mais aussi pour la jouissance. La reconnaissance de sa nouvelle identité se manifeste aussi dans ses projets de faire ménage commun avec son amante.

Bien que l'auteure n'évoque pas ici les difficultés que rencontrent les lesbiennes, elle nous présente un monde subsaharien où les pratiques homosexuelles sont considérées comme une perversion importée n'ayant aucune place dans la société africaine. Les femmes homosexuelles vivent isolées et retirées de la société qui les méprise à cause de leurs orientations sexuelles. L'Occident où évoluait l'héroïne auparavant aurait hypothétiquement été un lieu plus accommodant pour ses préférences homosexuelles, étant certainement plus complaisant aux préférences sexuelles diversifiées. Ixora est consciente de ces hostiles préjugés et est prête à les affronter: "on dira ce que l'on voudra sur mon passage, je traverserai la ville entière et j'irai la trouver" (162). Tout en se libérant du joug de ces préjugés Ixora s'assume et de ce fait, cultive le sens de la responsabilité sans toutefois condamner la relation hétérosexuelle.

Toutefois, l'origine de sa nouvelle identité reste un peu ambiguë car d'un côté, on pourrait analyser son identité d'homosexuelle comme une déviance due aux déceptions du sexe opposé. D'un autre côté, on pourrait aussi estimer que le choix d'épouser son orientation sexuelle était bien prévisible. Elle affirme n'avoir jamais recherché la chaleur d'un corps de sexe opposé et n'avoir connu de tressaillements qu'à travers ses lectures: "je souhaitais ta compagnie, même si mon corps ne fut jamais en proie à cette espèce de tressaillements, cela non plus n'était pas grave" (154). Simone de Beauvoir souligne que "ce n'est pas toujours le refus de se faire objet qui conduit la femme à l'homosexualité, la majorité des lesbiennes cherchent au contraire à s'approprier les trésors de leur féminité" (205). De ce fait Miano laisse ses personnages vivre leurs choix et dépasser certaines limites imposées par leurs appartenances culturelles, parmi lesquelles l'homosexualité et leur conception du masculin et du féminin, qui ne sont plus des catégories établies et fixes—sujet qu'elle développe plus amplement dans *Crépuscule du tourment: Héritage*. Pendant qu'Ixora se bat pour une découverte narcissique de soi, Tiki, le troisième personnage féminin qui s'offre à l'analyse, s'engage dans la (re)construction de sa sexualité.

L'éclatement de la famille dans ce roman provoque l'aliénation des enfants et un traumatisme qui déterminera plus tard chez Tiki une pratique sexuelle inhabituelle. Tiki n'avait que neuf ans lorsqu'elle entra dans un conflit de longue durée avec sa sexualité. De l'expérience de ses parents aux films pornographiques qu'elle regardait, l'acte sexuel lui apparut comme un rapport entre un bourreau et une victime: "C'est parcouru de frissons que je regardais,

voyant dans ces corps à corps une lutte d'où les femmes ne sortaient pas victorieuses. Leur plaisir dépendait de celui d'hommes qui n'étaient pas des partenaires mais des donneurs d'ordres, des rouleaux compresseurs. Je ne voyais là rien qui ressemblât à de l'amour" (*Mélancolie* 220).

Le passage ci-dessus avec ces métaphores de "donneurs d'ordres" et "rouleaux compresseurs" laisse comprendre que la jeune fille voit la sexualité comme dégradante et déshumanisante. En analysant les relations de ses parents, Tiki évalue le malheur de sa mère et ne souhaite pas vivre une telle relation. Consciente de son malaise tant sur le plan identitaire que sexuel, elle se met à la recherche des réponses qui élucideraient les mystères et les lourds secrets familiaux qui l'ont façonnée. Elle s'organise dès lors avec précaution, évitant de mélanger les relations sexuelles et les relations amoureuses et met sur pied une pratique sexuelle de substitution pour dominer sans être dominée. Son dépucelage est mécanique, effectué par un jeune prostitué payé pour cela. À sa première défaillance et se retrouvant enceinte, elle choisit d'assumer: elle se refuse à la maternité et avorte. Elle perçoit la maternité comme un fardeau limitant sa liberté: "endurer neuf mois de grossesse"; "surtout, être enceinte pendant neuf mois"; "montgolfière"; "oui, mais encore une fois, cela serait passé par mon corps, par ma personne entière, au-delà de la chair"; "si même j'avais voulu être mère, ce n'est pas volontiers que j'aurais fait venir en ce monde un être qu'on aurait qualifié de métis. Ce mot a une mémoire, je la lui laisse, il y a assez d'Histoire dans ma vie sans en rajouter" (287). Ce choix pour l'avortement, quoiqu'extrême, est un pas vers sa liberté car comme l'affirme bell hooks (*Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics* 29): "*the right of women to choose whether or not to have an abortion is only one aspect of reproductive freedom*" (le droit des femmes de choisir de se faire avorter ou non n'est qu'un aspect partiel de la liberté reproductive; ma traduction). La question de l'avortement va au-delà d'une simple discussion sur la reconnaissance des droits de la femme, elle adresse les tensions sur le statut social de cette dernière, sur son autonomie et la possibilité de déplacer le centre de reproduction tel appréhendé par le système patriarcal. Pour hooks, une focalisation sur les droits reproductifs dans tous ses aspects du terme est nécessaire pour protéger et maintenir la liberté de la femme (29).

Tiki est un personnage avec de sérieux problèmes identitaires. Ses amants s'enchaînent, aussi divers que variés, mariés ou non, pères de famille ou sans enfant. Son identité sexuelle est encore incertaine. Une sexualité débridée s'offre alors à elle et se met en place comme une alternative compensatoire: "[s]e méfier de [s]es désirs" (*Mélancolie* 283) devient la solution idéale qu'elle trouve pour ne pas rentrer dans ses schémas classiques de l'amour où les femmes doivent donner du plaisir et ne pas en prendre. À travers cette nouvelle forme de sexualité, ce personnage affirme ses vrais besoins et rompt avec la tradition. Elle est prête à poursuivre son bonheur en ses propres termes et sans devoir se cacher ou se justifier. Elle retourne vivre en Europe pour y continuer sa vie, avec un homme qu'elle a rencontré, avec qui elle peut partager désormais une sexualité "hors norme". Elle est désormais libre d'être elle-même et d'exprimer pleinement son "moi profond":

> Je suis revenue vivre ici [en Occident] non pour appartenir à ce lieu qui ne sait rien de moi, mais pour ne gêner personne, n'être pas dérangée. M'envoyer en l'air sans alimenter les bavardages de Radio-trottoir, ne pas devenir la freak de service. Adolescente, je me suis assez cachée. Je veux maintenant hurler tout mon soûl les nuits de pleine lune, je l'ai bien mérité. (280)

De l'extrait ci-dessus, l'emploi des pronoms personnels de la première personne du singulier révèle le regard subjectif que Tiki porte sur elle-même. Elle est prête à poursuivre son bonheur de son propre chef et sans devoir se cacher ou se justifier. Tiki est donc libre de son corps et de sa vie: elle refuse le mariage, la maternité et rejette catégoriquement le métissage; mais accepte sa noirceur, son déracinement culturel et dans un cas général, le paradoxe qu'elle incarne. Ses aliénations culturelle, familiale et sexuelle la repoussent loin de ses repères et parachèvent son féminisme, dont les prises de position semblent à priori radicales. À travers ce jeune personnage, l'auteure s'attaque donc au système de sexe et de genre qui transforment la femme en un personnage de seconde catégorie, privé de volonté et de parole.

La crise de l'identité culturelle

La déportation et l'esclavage, à travers l'écriture de Miano s'énoncent comme une douleur émotionnelle difficilement surmontable, comme des causes non négligeables de la crise identitaire que vivent ses héroïnes. Les conflits d'interaction qui existent entre l'Afrique et ses enfants afro-descendants tout comme avec le monde occidental en général sont d'une importance capitale. La jeune Tiki est le prototype d'une déracinée culturelle, dont les racines côtières ne sont pas suffisamment profondes pour qu'elle se définisse comme une Africaine,

et dont les mœurs occidentales ne sont pas raisonnablement ancrées pour qu'elle s'identifie aux Occidentaux. Alors qu'elle semble assumer cette acculturation involontaire, son point de vue sur le métissage reste pessimiste, froidement réaliste, et quelque peu extrémiste. Avec ironie, elle s'interroge sur ce concept:

> On parle de métissage, il nous faut bien un nom. Là encore, devra-t-on aller le chercher à la déchetterie? Jadis, ce mot désignait le croisement de races ovines, dans le but d'en améliorer une, pas les deux. Se décrire en ces termes—même sur le plan de la culture, puisqu'on prétend appliquer aux civilisations des critères biologiques—c'est affirmer le perfectionnement d'un des sujets par l'introduction en lui des gènes de l'autre. (267)

Dans le passage ci-dessus, l'implication et la charge connotative sont claires: sur le plan racial et culturel, c'est la "race" blanche qui améliore la race noire, et non vice-versa. Le métissage n'y est pas perçu comme une rencontre entre deux où chacun bénéficie du meilleur de l'autre. Il n'est pas non plus, sur le plan culturel, cette complémentarité des civilisations, cette symbiose culturelle de l'humanité, bien unique appartenant à chacun et que l'autre ne peut imposer sans dommage comme l'a ardument souhaitée Léopold Sédar Senghor. Tiki perçoit les métissages d'ordre racial et culturel comme un handicap au lieu d'un avantage social. Toutefois, cette position radicale de Tiki semble un peu contradictoire. Signalons que ce personnage peut tolérer un métissage sur un plan primaire dans la mesure où elle entretient des relations amoureuses avec des hommes de race différente de la sienne, mais préférerait avorter que de mettre au monde un métis comme noté plus haut. Dans *La pensée métisse*, Serge Gruzinski affirme que: "les métissages ne sont jamais une panacée, ils expriment des combats jamais gagnés et toujours recommencés. Mais ils fournissent le privilège d'appartenir à plusieurs mondes en une seule vie" (75). Or pour les héroïnes de Miano, ne se revendiquent métis que ceux qui ressentent le besoin de prouver leur appartenance à un monde—notamment celui du "nord", le monde occidental. Autrement dit, ceux qui se vantent du métissage souffrent d'un complexe d'infériorité par rapport aux Blancs et d'un complexe de supériorité par rapport aux Noirs. Pour cette raison, le mélange culturel entre le monde occidental et africain ne peut être valorisé qu'en ce qui concerne l'héritage occidental. Fanon illustre ceci comme suit:

> Si ce nègre se trouve à ce point submergé par le désir d'être blanc, c'est qu'il vit dans une société qui rend possible son complexe d'infériorité, dans une société qui tire sa consistance du maintien de ce complexe, dans une société qui affirme la supériorité d'une race; c'est dans l'exacte mesure où cette société lui fait des difficultés, qu'il se trouve placé dans une situation névrotique. (17)

Amandla, notre dernier personnage, expose dans son récit une thèse rigide, radicale, et sans aucune nuance. À son avis, ce sont les autres qui sont métissés culturellement, pas les Occidentaux. Sans jamais le mentionner clairement et tout en justifiant ses positions, elle sous-entend dans son discours qu'elle est contre tout métissage et contre ceux qui le valorisent. La préservation de la culture Kémite est d'une importance capitale pour elle et c'est pour cette raison qu'elle et Ixora entendent revaloriser la beauté canonique africaine.[1] Le monologue d'Amandla se distingue par la présence enrichissante des repères de la civilisation égypto-nubienne qui est énoncé à travers le relevé onomastique qui transparaît d'abord au niveau des noms originels des divinités. Ce relevé onomastique met en lumière un glossaire captivant. Qu'il s'agisse des noms qu'elle donne à ses élèves, aux dieux et héros antiques auxquels elle se réfère, chacun permet de matérialiser son identité africaine ou/et son afrocentricité. Ils indiquent systématiquement le rejet des civilisations non africaines, la (ré)appropriation d'une identité culturelle et par conséquent la valorisation des Noirs et des civilisations noires.

Comme les autres trois femmes, Amandla raconte son histoire à la première personne. Elle est une descendante d'esclaves et reste entièrement résolue de retrouver ses vraies origines culturelles dans le pays natal de ses ancêtres. Sa mère l'a éduquée selon les préceptes, les pensées et la spiritualité de l'afrocentricité dès son bas âge et lui a fait connaitre les livres racontant l'histoire des Kémites: "Je sus très tôt que la terre où l'espèce humaine vit le jour s'appelait Kemet. Que nous étions des Kémites. Pas des Noirs. La race noire n'avait été inventée que pour nous bouter hors du genre humain" (*Mélancolie* 84–5). Amandla refuse de se dénommer Noire car cela est une appellation offensante, destinée à lui rappeler la déportation, la traite, l'esclavage. Édouard Glissant rejette également le concept de "race" lorsqu'il fait appel à celui de "Tout-Monde" (87). Achille Mbembe lui aussi analyse la rencontre et l'évolution des sens du mot "nègre" à travers le temps: injurieux dans la bouche des Blancs, il devient laudatif au vingtième siècle dans les écrits des Noirs (48). Si Amandla est revenue sur la terre mère, c'est pour fusionner avec ses racines et enseigner à la jeune génération, non plus l'éducation coloniale, mais l'histoire de leur peuple. Le mythe du retour aux racines qui a parcouru l'histoire des Afro-américains depuis la naissance de la

diaspora africaine en Amérique a permis à cette dernière de fantasmer sur une Afrique idéale, terre de la fraternité noire et de la liberté. En plus, parce qu'elle est fière d'être une Kémite, elle transforme l'Afrique en une allégorie de l'identité noire au point de nier toute autre identité à laquelle elle puisse appartenir. La quête identitaire de cette narratrice nous renvoie au mouvement de la négritude, qui relevait d'une prise de conscience des valeurs de la civilisation noire, bafouée pendant des siècles par la colonisation. En révélant le drapeau afro-américain rouge, noir, vert à ses élèves, Amandla certifie que les peuples d'Afrique et de la diaspora partagent une histoire commune et que leur progrès est lié à leur unité.

C'est dans la connaissance de l'histoire égypto-nubienne et dans la recherche du salut des Kémites qu'Amandla s'engage dans la réhabilitation de son identité noire. De par ses discours, elle suggère que le continent-matrice doit être replacé au centre de la conscience noire. Cette immense responsabilité est d'autant plus importante pour elle parce que, née en Europe, elle ne connaît l'Afrique que par l'image transmise par d'autres. De ce fait, la valorisation de la culture Kémite se lit tout au long de son discours et de son monologue constitué de phrases simples mais d'un vocabulaire recherché. Il est riche sur le plan stylistique et syntaxique mais aussi culturel invoquant des noms, des modes de vie, et des expressions propres aux habitants de la plaine côtière. La triple identité culturelle d'Amandla lui confère des compétences et la capacité de comprendre ces réalités et lui montre que la quête historico-religieuse de son peuple est une étape importante dans la lutte contre les "Leucodermes" qu'elle considère comme les ennemis des Kémites.[2] Dans sa vie, le racisme a été et reste une réalité. Le plus virulent c'est le racisme manifesté durant le commerce triangulaire. Elle en veut au système raciste qui a condamné les Kémites à symboliser indéfiniment "l'obscurité du monde":

> Le racisme ne nous concerne que parce qu'il nous faut l'affronter. Ce n'est pas nous qui avons fracturé l'unité du genre humain. Ce n'est pas nous qui avons hiérarchisé les peuples pour nous dédire quand cela ne nous a plus servi. Nous ne sommes pas les seuls auxquels l'obligation soit faite désormais d'avoir soin de leur âme. De se nettoyer de l'intérieur. Astiquer dedans pour que cela se réfère au dehors. Que chacun connaisse et accomplisse son devoir. (*Mélancolie* 94)

L'anaphore doublée de négation "ce n'est pas nous" et l'abondance du pronom personnel "nous" dans l'extrait ci-dessus démontrent qu'Amandla insiste sur la responsabilité des autres dans l'institutionnalisation du racisme. L'emphase est mise sur la non-participation des Kémites à ce procédé. Ce sont eux les victimes et les "Leucodermes" sont les bourreaux. Selon cette héroïne, si les Kémites ont été séparés des leurs, c'est la faute des "Leucodermes" qui en plus les ont réduits au rang de sous-hommes. En même temps, chacun doit assumer ses responsabilités et prendre "soin" de son âme; eux et nous. À travers le champ lexical de colère qui se dénote tout le long de son discours: "chasse à l'humain", "grand déchirement", "hiérarchisé les peuples", "suprématie blanche" (102), nous constatons que son cœur est plein d'amertume et de ressentiment contre les auteurs de la traite négrière transatlantique. Son texte est essentiellement polémique et accuse le "Leucoderme" sans possibilités de rédemption pour ce dernier. Pour Amandla, la possibilité de réconciliation est quasi inexistante car la suprématie blanche est prépondérante et loin de disparaître. C'est de leur faute si la traite négrière a contribué à renforcer et à alimenter l'image difforme et remplie de mépris et de préjugés envers les Kémites; menant à la naissance d'une tendance d'identifier tous les Kémites avec l'esclavage et de nier tout apport quelconque du Noir à l'humanité. Amandla porte une haine contre le monde occidental et fustige l'attitude du colonisateur qui taxait d'obscurantisme tout ce qui avait trait au savoir traditionnel africain. Ce personnage semble extrémiste et un lecteur modéré lirait dans son récit séparatiste une coloration quelque peu raciste ou pourrait même imaginer que Miano construit un monde dans lequel les systèmes de domination doivent être renversés.

Dans ce roman, la reconstruction identitaire est également abordée dans un cadre métaphysique. Les cultes animistes et les traditions africaines comme celles de l'égypto-nubienne et celles de la plaine côtière dans le Littoral du Cameroun occupent une place importante dans la vie des personnages. Vieux Pays, qui est un espace hétéronormatif, se présente comme un lieu où les connaissances et le savoir spirituels trouvent leur place. La croyance aux forces mystiques et occultes capables d'aider efficacement les personnages conditionne toute leur attitude. Le chaos ambiant qu'était la vie de Madame Mususedi la pousse à rechercher les solutions de son malheur auprès de n'importe quel individu à vocation spirituelle. Dans la nouvelle mission d'Amandla, ses guides spirituels Twa Baka et Tehuti la transforment en prêtresse Kémite. L'initiation d'Amandla comprend neuf étapes comme tout culte d'initiation chez Miano et consiste à pénétrer dans les flammes et à entrer en transcendance avec le monde immatériel. Selon les astrologues et les numérologues, dans le domaine ésotérique, le chiffre neuf symbolise l'esprit divin et la spiritualité; il est la marque de l'accomplissement final, de l'universel et permet

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d'ouvrir les horizons et d'élever les consciences. À l'aide d'un bûcher enflammé, d'un tambour et d'une chanson, Twa Baka et Tehuti enferment Amandla dans une nébuleuse parlante où tout esprit cartésien est interdit d'accès. On plonge ainsi dans la spiritualité d'origine africaine et multidimensionnelle où les relations entre le monde mystique, intangible et le monde physique sont dévoilées. Amandla n'aura pourtant accès qu'à trois des neuf étapes à cause de la haine et de la colère qu'elle porte. Au cours de son initiation, une voix merveilleuse s'insinue et lui apprend qu'elle ne pourra pas atteindre ses nobles objectifs en usant des méthodes néfastes. La question de savoir si l'Africain peut se détourner totalement du monde occidental et s'approprier uniquement le savoir selon le mode de vie traditionnel trouve sa réponse au cours de son initiation: "Tu cherches la guérison. Il faut d'abord une intimité avec la douleur. Cohabiter avec elle. Converser avec elle. Savoir ce qu'elle enseigne [...]. Vous [Kémites et Occidentaux] êtes tous la même humanité" (121).

Les êtres humains émanent d'un même créateur et ne sont que les multiples modalités de sa réalisation. Miano semble suggérer que l'amertume et le radicalisme que porte Amandla à l'encontre des Occidentaux ne sont définitivement pas les meilleures voies pour la guérison de "l'âme" Kémite. Au lieu de s'associer uniquement à une culture tout en reniant systématiquement l'autre, les héroïnes de Miano gagneraient probablement gros à s'approprier quelques aspects de ces différentes cultures afin de se recréer une nouvelle identité. C'est dans cette mesure qu'Amandla choisit d'apprendre désormais à dépasser sa colère et son discours raciologique; ses points de vue sur le métissage deviennent moins radicaux. Ainsi apprend-elle à avoir de la compassion et à pardonner. Tout en travaillant pour soigner son âme brisée, elle aspire à la formation d'une nouvelle génération dont la haine sera éradiquée et où la tolérance prévaudra. Il s'agit de la reconnaissance en l'autre d'une part de soi-même, de la légitimation de son expérience comme source d'enseignements.

Miano, par la bouche de sa narratrice, confirme le sentiment qu'elle exprime dans son essai, *L'impératif transgressif*, à savoir qu'"être un subsaharien de notre temps, c'est précisément avoir été nourri d'apports extérieurs à l'Afrique, et n'être pas en mesure de les congédier sans se condamner à mort. C'est donc répudier avec lucidité les fantasmes de pureté" (*L'impératif transgressif* 43). Miano développe ainsi une approche du créateur littéraire africain centrée sur le retour à soi mais aussi sur une ouverture à l'extérieur. Il s'agit de la construction d'une identité nouvelle et plurielle, métissée qu'elle explique comme suit: "Aujourd'hui, les Européens noirs refusent d'avoir à choisir entre leur part subsaharienne ou Caribéenne, et leur part européenne. Ils souhaitent abriter en eux les deux, les chérir, voguer de l'une à l'autre, les mélanger sans les hiérarchiser" (*Habiter la frontière: Conférences* 84). En outre, ce genre de mélange s'énonce particulièrement dans le langage de Miano qui use d'une symbolique et d'une sémiotique propre à exprimer cette construction identitaire. Son écriture est hybride; sans identité unique et précise; elle se tient aux frontières de plusieurs langues. Le franglais, le pidgin, l'anglicisme et le camfranglais sont les différentes langues utilisées qui, travaillées, se veulent toutefois simples et accessibles à tous. Le roman contient également des mots, voire des phrases en Sawa qui est une langue côtière du Cameroun.

Il nous importe de relever que le "long cauchemar" et les abus dont les personnages de Miano ont été victimes ne pourront disparaitre que s'ils acceptent cet état des faits et apprennent à pardonner. Les cultes magico-religieux évoqués dans ce roman se présentent à eux comme des instruments qui exigent un amour engagé pour la vie et pour les êtres vivants. Ils permettent par ailleurs de vivre et de penser nouvellement la relation entre les réalités physiques et métaphysiques. Le rôle que joue la religion dans cet ouvrage nous permet de penser que l'auteure considère les religions comme une ressource pour la mobilisation des libertés et de l'épanouissement. Cette démarche nous rappelle une écrivaine comme bell hooks qui valorise les pratiques religieuses comme mouvement de résistance. Elle affirme qu'avant de connaitre la théorie et la pratique féministe qui l'ont pleinement inspirée dans la conscience de la nécessité de l'amour et de l'acceptation de soi comme nécessaires à la réalisation de soi, elle a parcouru un chemin spirituel qui affirmait ces mêmes messages (105).

Le womanisme de Miano

Introduit par Alice Walker pour lier la question du racisme à celle du sexisme, le womanisme est défini comme un degré différent de féminisme qui se préoccupe des besoins des Noirs. Avec bell hooks, le womanisme va au-delà de la définition donnée par Walker et y intègre les non-Noirs, à condition que la psyché de ces derniers soit décolonisée et qu'ils soient prêts à aider les Noirs à améliorer leurs conditions de vie (Gallant 222–3). Ce qui est important pour le womanisme de hooks c'est la coexistence pacifique entre les peuples, sans distinction de couleur ou de sexe. En 1985, Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi suit les pas de ces deux dernières féministes. Par contre, au lieu d'évoquer dans sa théorie l'inégalité des sexes comme étant la source de l'oppression des Noirs,

Ogunyemi adopte une position séparatiste et rejette toute possibilité de réconciliation entre féministes blanches et féministes noires fondées sur le caractère insoutenable du racisme (Adebayo 17).

Dans *Crépuscule du tourment: Mélancolie*, Miano, pour sa part, s'interroge sur l'identité de la femme noire des trois continents à savoir l'Afrique, l'Amérique et l'Europe. Elle fouille et raconte l'existence des femmes noires battues, trompées, violées par les hommes, mais qui restent debout malgré tout. Elle s'intéresse et s'identifie à la femme noire en général et c'est sans doute pour cette raison qu'elle choisit des personnages féminins d'ascendance noire qui sont toujours des étrangères aux autres Noires du continent africain. Comme elles sont des héroïnes "différentes" car venues d'ailleurs, elles sont toujours marginales. L'objectif de Miano semble ne pas être de parler de la femme africaine, mais d'aborder la condition générale de la femme noire. Celle-ci est le fruit d'une Histoire qui l'a démunie dès le départ du pouvoir d'énonciation. Elle a subi une double marginalisation sur le plan racial et patriarcal. Toutefois, elle doit apprendre à panser ses blessures et à assumer son héritage pour avancer. Ainsi, la romancière propose-t-elle une vision de l'identité noire dans laquelle les diasporas africaines seraient aussi centrales que le continent lui-même.

Bien que les quatre femmes soient individualistes lorsqu'elles souffrent d'une insécurité ontologique, elles font front commun pour résoudre certains problèmes auxquels elles sont confrontées afin de sécuriser leur liberté ontologique. Madame Mususedi interviendra plus tard et aidera Ixora et Masasi dans leur amour homosexuel contre tout préjugé. Cette solidarité est une donnée essentielle pour défendre leurs droits et s'impliquer dans la démarche militante pour leur indépendance et leur progrès social tel que le sous-entend bell hooks (13) dans son slogan "Sisterhood is powerful" (la solidarité féminine est puissante). Ce sont des femmes africaines et afro-descendantes qui tentent de s'adapter tant bien que mal, dans cette société de grandes angoisses et de petites espérances. Ixora prend la parole et d'une manière ferme. Lorsqu'elle fait la rencontre de Masasi, qui deviendra son amante, son fils et son mariage passent au second plan. Ixora devient un personnage non pas contradictoire, mais révolutionnaire. Dans un monologue intérieur, elle s'enrage contre son géniteur qui prend toujours soin de tenir sa progéniture illégitime à distance:

> Comment se fait-il que tu ne portes pas de gants faire le nécessaire me semble une corvée tellement salissante et il ne faudrait pas laisser sur cette enveloppe l'empreinte de tes doigts il ne faudrait pas laisser de traces il ne faudrait pas que ta femme le sache un jour qu'elle ait des soupçons ou peut-être est-elle à l'origine de tout cela peut-être a-t-elle exigé que tu t'emploies seul à nettoyer ta crasse ces excréments que tu as semés çà et là tes enfants noirs non refusés mais pas conviés à partager ta vie. (*Mélancolie* 151).

Bien loin de traduire l'expression d'une perturbation psychologique d'un personnage qui ne croit plus à la consistance de son être mais plutôt en son anéantissement, le brouillage dans la ponctuation et la multiplication des phrases interrogatives qui ont une valeur affirmative dans ce passage ci-dessus énoncent la colère et l'indignation d'Ixora. Dans ce monologue rapide et continu, elle rompt brutalement avec la régularité de sa vie et extériorise des hurlements intérieurs, des mots qu'elle aurait souhaité adresser ouvertement à son père. C'est un monologue intérieur qui traduit une souffrance originelle engendrée par le rejet du géniteur, un rejet qui a à son tour généré des conséquences sur toutes les relations de ce personnage avec le sexe masculin. En lieu et place d'une Ixora marginalisée et jouant le rôle de victime, nous trouvons une femme indignée qui non seulement se sert de la parole pour se révolter contre l'oppression sociale, mais pose des actes concrets pour affirmer son identité. D'abord, elle transgresse les lois sociales de la plaine côtière pour accréditer son homosexualité, ensuite, elle met à l'avant plan ses désirs et son bonheur plutôt que ceux de son fils. Autrement dit, Ixora opère une révolte existentialiste, puisqu'elle prend conscience de sa situation et fait un *coming out* dans un univers hétérosexiste. Dans un sens sartrien, ce personnage met en avant les notions de choix, de libre arbitre, de révolte et d'acte car elle sait désormais que son destin n'est pas prédéfini. En présentant la solitude intérieure qu'éprouvent ses héroïnes comme une conséquence des conditions socio-culturelles et en la rapprochant aux autres éléments et structures qui assujettissent la femme, Miano valide les principes fondamentaux du womanisme d'Ogunyemi. C'est-à-dire un womanisme qui vise à identifier les problèmes liés à la domination des hommes dans la société tout en cherchant des solutions à la marginalisation des femmes dans la culture, au colonialisme et aux nombreuses autres formes de domination et de subjugation qui ont un impact sur la vie des femmes africaines (Ogunyemi 71–2).

Avancer ou migrer devient donc un instrument de libération pour les héroïnes de Miano. À ce sujet, la féministe Rosi Braidotti remarque que les femmes doivent être des nomades migrantes pour tracer leurs identités en puisant dans leurs propres prérogatives féminines. "La migrante", note-t-elle, "n'est pas une exilée car elle a une

intention claire" (44). Une héroïne nomade sait où elle se dirige et d'où elle vient, elle a un objectif clair. Cependant, l'aliénation voire la mort viennent des vies sédentaires et des activités réduites. Le pouvoir du mouvement est comme le chemin vers la liberté. En arrachant donc la parole et en faisant chemin vers sa bien-aimée, Ixora rétablit sa sécurité ontologique, un état qui lui permet d'explorer tous les facteurs négatifs et positifs qui composent son être et de se retirer de la marge. Ainsi faisant, Miano se sert de ce personnage comme un tremplin vers l'universel pour censurer les mœurs et les codes sociaux qui définissent l'existence des femmes et pour encourager la gente féminine vers son objectif. Elle confirme ces faits:

> Pour moi, la fiction est un mode de compréhension du réel et ne pas le montrer pourrait vouloir dire soit qu'on protège le bourreau, ou alors qu'on considère que ces actes-là font partie, quelque part, de notre manière de procéder lorsque nous sommes entre nous. Or il se trouve que je ne crois pas cela. À mon avis, ce sont des déviances. Je les montre pour nous permettre de réfléchir à ce qui les engendre. Ce sont des manifestations de certains désordres que nous avons à corriger mais cela n'est pas notre identité. Les populations qui subissent ces violences-là ont été élevées dans des cultures où il n'est pas permis à un individu d'exprimer sa souffrance en disant 'je' […]" (Miano et Yoassi 104)

Miano propose une autre vérité de l'Africaine, une autre façon de vivre à l'Africaine qui dépasse le cadre du silence et des interdits. Elle revoit et met en question certaines des conceptions et images traditionnelles qui figeaient la femme dans des rôles familiaux et sociaux fixes. La solidarité féminine, la prise de la parole et surtout la découverte du lesbianisme (pour certaines), comme sources d'épanouissement deviennent les différentes méthodes qu'adoptent les héroïnes de Miano dans leur univers. L'objectif de Miano ne serait pas de s'adresser uniquement à la condition féminine mais à celle de toute la communauté noire. Son womanisme s'efforce de briser les barrières de genre entre l'homme et la femme. Ses héroïnes sont prêtes à faire front commun avec les hommes qui sont eux aussi victimes de la discrimination dans les communautés occidentales. Ceci nous rappelle le womanisme d'Alice Walker qui encourage tout autant l'émancipation des Noirs dans leur ensemble que celle des femmes dont elle refuse le séparatisme. Dans *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*, elle met au centre du récit la femme noire, qui malgré les difficultés rencontrées (racisme, oppression, sexisme, homophobie et plus), prend sa place dans l'histoire en cherchant à s'émanciper du masque que les Blancs et les hommes noirs lui font porter. Il devient alors clair que tandis que la menace la plus dévastatrice pour la communauté de *Crépuscule du tourment: Mélancolie* reste le racisme, une attention sérieuse est donnée aux relations homme-femme. Cette inclusion des hommes offrira ainsi aux femmes noires la possibilité de lutter contre l'oppression de genre sans attaquer directement les hommes. Tiki témoigne sa solidarité envers son frère aîné: "Tu vas téléphoner, Big Bro, je serai là" (*Mélancolie* 289). Ce personnage est attaché à la survie des hommes et souhaite un monde où les hommes noirs et les femmes peuvent coexister, tel que prêché par Alice Walker (xi) lorsqu'elle affirme que: "*A womanist is committed to the survival of both males and females and desires a world where men and women can coexist, while maintaining their cultural distinctiveness*" (Une womaniste est engagée pour la survie des hommes et des femmes et souhaite un monde où les hommes et les femmes peuvent coexister, tout en conservant leur spécificité culturelle; ma traduction). C'est toute la communauté noire que Léonora Miano veut émanciper. Son womanisme lie le problème de discrimination sexuelle aux questions raciales et sociopolitiques comme l'explique Ogunyemi (64). De ce fait, la vision de Miano sur les relations femme-homme va au-delà du Motherism, proposé par Obianuju Acholonu, qui encourage simplement le partenariat et la complémentarité entre les deux sexes ou encore du Stiwanisme d'Omolara Ogundipe-Leslie qui estime qu'il ne s'agit pas de se disputer avec des hommes, de renverser des rôles ou de faire subir aux hommes ce que les femmes endurent des hommes depuis des siècles, mais qu'il s'agit de construire une société harmonieuse. Faisant un commentaire sur son roman *Rouge impératrice* récemment publié, Miano estime que "le masculin et le féminin sont deux forces souveraines, indépendantes, aussi incomparables que la terre et le feu" et que si ces deux forces "entrent en relation, il se produit des effets divers, mais chacune existe d'abord par elle-même et à ses multiples domaines de rayonnements" (cité par Houtart). Cet énoncé se retrouve justement dans *Crépuscule du tourment: Mélancolie* où la présence de la force masculine et féminine est requise pour un enseignement spirituel initiatique: "une femme doit m'assister pour préparer le feu. Les rituels d'importance requièrent la présence d'un représentant des deux sexes. Et s'il me faut une femme c'est la mienne que je convoque" (*Mélancolie* 116). Notons le fait que, bien que certaines féministes non-noires ont invoqué cette solidarité entre les hommes et les femmes, les unes de façon provisionnelle et d'autres par besoin de complémentarité, la particularité avec Miano réside dans le fait que cette complémentarité entre les deux sexes doit être accompagnée par le refus de la notion stéréotypée de genre. L'homme et la femme participent de manière égale à la société et, malgré leurs différences, ils devraient être

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des égaux. Le parcours des héroïnes de Miano permet de proposer une image plus libre de la femme noire et de l'homme noir contemporains.

Conclusion

Dans cet article nous avons examiné le roman *Crépuscule du tourment: Mélancolie.* Nous avons trouvé que le roman propose plusieurs axes de lecture et stratégies de déchiffrement du malaise identitaire de ses héroïnes. Ces dernières souffrent d'une solitude intérieure involontaire et/ou une aliénation qui provient de leur état d'insécurité ontologique. L'exil interne ou le confinement dont elles souffrent est idéologique, imposé entre autres par le système patriarcal. C'est ainsi que Miano souligne les aliénations subies par toutes les femmes noires, explore la (re)construction de soi et les encourage particulièrement à dépasser certaines limites imposées par leurs appartenances culturelles. L'auteure utilise la condition sociale de ses héroïnes comme un instrument moralisateur, une mise en emphase d'une société africaine déséquilibrée et contradictoire. Elle ne traite pas uniquement du déséquilibre masculin/féminin, parce que cela laisserait de côté d'autres facteurs qui affectent la vie des femmes africaines, dont l'un est la hiérarchie raciale et la politique qui l'accompagne. En fait, Miano s'intéresse à la politique raciale qui a sapé les identités des Noirs et les traditions africaines dans certaines parties de l'Afrique. Tout en gardant en tête que la colonisation a plutôt alourdi une condition d'inégalité en Afrique, l'écriture de Miano vise à "défaire" les rôles et les conditions qui ont fait dépendre les Africains de leurs colonisateurs. C'est-à-dire qu'elle a pour objectif d'"alléger" le fardeau de l'histoire de la traite négrière qui a duré des siècles, et de donner un nouveau langage avec lequel les femmes et les hommes africains pourront progresser au-delà du traumatisme, de la traite négrière, de la colonisation et du racisme qui les affligent jusqu'à nos jours; quoique de différentes manières.

Déclaration

Cet article est basé sur la thèse de doctorat de Madeleine Tonleu, "Le féminisme africain redéfini à travers la folie et l'identité culturelle dans *Le baobab fou*, *Riwan ou le chemin de sable* et *La folie et la mort* de Ken Bugul, *C'est le soleil qui m'a brûlée* de Calixthe Beyala et *Crépuscule du tourment* de Léonora Miano", réalisé sous la direction du docteur Anna-Marie de Beer et du professeur Elisabeth Snyman (NWU) à l'Université de Pretoria, Pretoria, Afrique du Sud. Le diplôme a été décerné le 16 mai 2022.

Notes

1. La kémitisme est une doctrine qui valorise le retour aux valeurs et religions de l'Egypte ancienne.
2. Leucoderme: se dit de quelqu'un dont la peau est de couleur claire.

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Tribute

James Stephen Mzilikazi Khumalo (1932—2021)

Innocentia Mhlambi

The year 2022 marks the first anniversary of a double tragedy; the passing of Professor James Stephen Mzilikazi Khumalo (1932–2021), Emeritus Professor in the African Languages from the University of the Witwatersrand, and his wife, Rose Litlhare Khumalo (1933–2021). While his wife left a blazing trail as an educationist in African schools, Professor Khumalo went on to leave behind a rich legacy in African Languages academy, and in the choral music of *amakwaya*, and classical music. Mzilikazi Khumalo's expansive work intersected his intellectual and cultural life with the nation's post-1994's search for a specific South African musical idiom and national identity. His academic work in isiZulu tonology became increasingly a frame on which he built a powerful African musical language as witnessed in his choral repertoire, his oratorio, *UShaka KaSenzangakhona*, and his opera, *Princess Magogo KaDinuzulu*.

Born from a humble family of Salvation Army ministers in KwaNgelu, in Hlabisa, Khumalo went on to study for his teacher certificate at the Bantu Normal College, a Teachers' Training College in Mamelodi. Through correspondence study at the University of South Africa, he qualified for a Bachelor's degree with majors in isiZulu and English. His second degree, Bachelor of Arts Honours was also obtained from this university. His employment at the University of the Witwatersrand as a tutor afforded him space to further his studies in African languages and linguistics. His Master's and PhD degrees contributed to ground-breaking understanding of African linguistics, particularly isiZulu tonology and phonology, respectively. For his PhD studies, he also worked with Professor Charles Kisseberth, a phonologist from the University of Illinois in the United States.

Khumalo grew up in a family and community context which was infused with music. His participation in the Salvation Army church brass band choir sharpened his ear for musical consciousness—an aspect which he pursued with vigour at the Teacher Training College with his *amakwaya* choral composition. Until his time of passing Khumalo was respected for his seminal work on African tonology and phonology and his extra-ordinary contribution to African choral music of *amakwaya* and classical music. His contributions to tonology and phonology were transposed to his music composition consciousness to experiment with complex processes between speaking and progression to prosody, elements characteristic in African music. In terms of Tonic Solfa, a musical language in which he composed all his work, including his classical ones (the oratorio and the opera), Khumalo linked the pronunciation of certain rising and falling isiZulu words to the musical concept of glissando. In his compositions, he employed these rising and falling tones to open up Tonic Solfa notation to accommodate natural language cadences found in the isiZulu language.

Khumalo also conceptualised his musical consciousness broadly to link up with the sensibilities of the 'New Africanists' like B. W. Vilakazi. His transposition of Vilakazi's poem, "Ma Ngificwa Ngukufa" in 1958, clearly signalled his role in the intellectual, cultural and political life of Africans and the South Africa's renaissance generally. His dialogue with Vilakazi in this poem registers just some of his views about racialism in South Africa:

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Ngimbeleni phansi kotshani
Duze nezihlahla zomyezane
Ngozwa nami lapho ngilele
Utshani ngaphezulu buhleba
Lala sithandwa
Lal' uphumule …

Akukho mlungu akukho pasi
Kulele izizukulwane zakithi
Ziyagiya, zayigiya ziqethuke

Bury me underneath the grass
Next to willow trees
I will listen while sleeping
The grass above whispering
Sleep beloved
Sleep and rest …

There is no white man and there is no pass book
Only sleeping are generations of our forbearers
They dance and dance to their hearts' delight

The last three lines are Khumalo's anti-racist stance, parodying racial supremacy during the height of apartheid repression.

Some of his sensibilities about South African cultural history were registered in his many choral compositions which not only foregrounded African idioms, but also his preoccupation with classical European musical heritage. Just his choral repertoire for *amakwaya* exceeds fifty recorded compositions, which were sung nationally by school, church and community choirs. This feat alone established him as a pioneer among the first black composers to highlight genealogies of musics and music making practices in South Africa. There are many accolades with which he was respected for his role in this sphere of music as a composer, a choir conductor and as a linguist. Recognition of his work in this regard include among other awards, The Order of the Star in 1999 by Nelson Mandela; Lifetime Achievement Award in 2007 from MNET Literary Awards; and Via Afrika Prize for Linguistic Studies for his academic work, "Leftward Ho! in Zulu Tonology" in 1990 by the *South African Journal of African Languages.*

Towards the years marking the dying throes of the apartheid regime, Khumalo and Richard Cock responded to Aggrey Klaaste's call for the Nation Building project after years of social strife and fracture. Khumalo, Cock and other South African musicians and composers of note founded the Sowetan National Massed Choir Festival which brought together not only different sixty-voice African national choirs onto one stage, but also white instrumental musicians. It is in this space too that his generosity in sharing his musical knowledge became most noted among his peers and younger generations of composers and musicians. The joining together of African voices and orchestral instruments allowed him to experiment with classical music; his work *Five African Songs* is the result of this experimentation. It was out of such endeavours, mixing of different musical traditions in South African, that Khumalo together with Cock pioneered the dual notation system (a representation of music in Tonic Solfa and Staff Notation). The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) also became instrumental in disseminating his music, establishing a link between these experimentations and the choral communities, and the public at large.

UShaka KaSenzangakhona, premiered in 1996, is a composition he started in 1981, which is also a fruition of his musical endeavours in experimenting with western classical music. This oratorio is the first of its kind to be composed by an African in South Africa. Further, he together with composer Professor Peter Klatzow, rearranged the traditional *ugubhu* songs of uMntwana uPrincess Constance Magogo kaDinizulu, titled *Sing Princess—Song Cycle / Haya Mntwana Omkhulu*, sung by the late Sibongile Khumalo (1957–2021). Some of Princess Magogo's songs from this song cycle were included in their original form for his first African opera, *Princess Magogo kaDinizulu*, premiered in 2002 to international critical acclaim. This was the first isiZulu-language opera and it was invited to

major opera centres in the US (Ravinia Festival and the J. F. Kennedy Centre), and in Europe. In Oslo, the opera house recorded the performance, and is the only known existing recording of the performance.

His contributions to South Africa's music were also noted by the Minister of Arts and Culture, Dr. Ben Ngubane, who appointed him as a Chair for the national anthem committee in 1995. In this role, Khumalo was instrumental in reversioning Enoch Sontonga's "Nkosi Sikelel'i-Afrika" (1897) for South Africa's young democracy and national identity. His version joined the new and old anthems, and became a basis for reconciliatory rainbow nationalism discourses post-1994. Younger generations of choral and classical composers acknowledge his contributions to South African art music. Bongani Ndodana-Breen composed and dedicated his first piano concerto, *Mzilikazi Emhlabeni* (2013) as homage to Khumalo. The weight of his work in music, language, cultural and national rebirth has also been recognised by South Africa universities such as the University of South Africa, University of Zululand, University of fort Hare and the University of Stellenbosch.

His chairmanship of the Southern African Music Rights Organisation is also the most distinctive contribution to the politics of music composition and intellectual property rights. Not only did he participate in the formulation of SAMRO's roles in the entirety of the music landscape but he also was also key in the post-1994 commissioning of new work. His role as the trustee of SAMRO's Foundation made it possible for him to also see to the publication of three volumes of *South Africa Sings*, profiling the choral literature of many black composers to have ever reached the African popular spheres.

Khumalo's work and engagement with South Africa's intellectual and cultural life is indeed a feat to be etched for prosperity. A Zulu proverbs, which captures the heroic deed of a national treasure like Mzilikazi Khumalo, says "*Kohamba izinsizwa kosala izibongo*" (Warriors will leave this world and their names will remain).

Ndlelanhle nina bakwaKhumalo!

Acknowledgement
This tribute is based on a version in isiZulu that was published in the 24–26 June 2021 edition of the newspaper *Ilanga.*

Tracing the (Post)Apartheid Novel beyond 2000.
Danyela Dimakatso Demir & Olivier Moreillon (eds.).
Pietermaritzburg: University of Kwazulu-Natal Press, 2021. 256 pp.
ISBN 978-1-86914-460-9.

Tracing the (Post)Apartheid Novel beyond 2000 (2021) is a reflection on and conversation about the trajectory and shifts within the South African literary landscape since 2000. The formatting of '(Post)Apartheid' in the title is eye-catching and thought-provoking. It is also problematic since there are contending views on the delineation of the term. The editors, Demir and Moreillon, admit that the term '(post)Apartheid' is a "compromise" (9). According to them, the strength of the term "lies in its 'contextual neutrality', that is the fact that it is not linked to a particular historical event in potential need of later re-evaluation" (9). This explanation indicates that the book is not merely focused on the 'after' Apartheid period, but also on how we (re)imagine the legacies of Apartheid in the 'now' and the future. The second question that comes to mind is how the focus on the novel only is justified. It is a truism that the South African literary landscape is rich with diverse literary forms. In response to this, the editors note that their analysis derives from the world literature theoretical framework which "sees the novel as a paradigmatic literary form [and] an entry point into a discussion of various literary centers and their (semi-)peripheries [...]" (27). My reading of Demir and Moreillon here is that the novel is a unique genre that allows for multiple methods of analysis owing to its adaptability and complexity.

The book sets itself apart from stale academic research by using the methodology of interviews with the selected authors. Instead of textual analysis or a quantitative survey of the literary production since 2000, the book goes "beyond" the period by using the methodology of interviews. The volume contains interviews with fourteen contemporary South African authors: Mariam Akabor, Sifiso Mzobe, Fred Khumalo, Futhi Ntshingila, Niq Mhlongo, Zukiswa Wanner, Nthikeng Mohlele, Mohale Mashigo, Lauren Beukes, Charlie Human, Yewande Omotoso, Andrew Salomon, Imraan Coovadia and Fred Strydom. Among the questions asked of the writers are "Which genres do you see becoming more prominent in South African fiction [...]" and "What future project(s) are you working on"? In my reading of the responses, these questions allowed for the imagination to dwell on the present and future of literary production in South Africa. Interestingly, several the responses point towards the genre of speculative fiction. This genre is not 'new' in the landscape: Mohale Mashigo, Lauren Beukes and Andrew Salomon have, for example, already published quite a few texts. Another future trend predicted by the interviewees is a look into the South African past through historical fiction, which some authors argue has been neglected. Futhi Ntshingila comments on how history, black identity and memory should be central in our literature, "[w]e are like a memory fighting to remember, or fighting to keep away from forgetting" (71). Yewande Omotoso makes an important observation on the development of the country's fiction, saying, "as we repair and right the wrongs of our past, we'll be hearing from people that were previously told to keep quiet, who were told their point doesn't matter" (176). What these contentions reveal is that the future of South African fiction remains speculative about the past, present and the future and importantly, what these mean for the writer.

A second contribution made by the book is the focus on space in the novels. In tackling this issue, the editors focused on works that are set in one of South Africa's three major cities: Durban, Johannesburg and Cape Town. In line with this, one of the interview questions is "What aspects of home, belonging and community do you engage with in your fiction?" This enquiry revealed layered ideas of what/where home is and in turn how these homes(s) are imagined in South African literature. For example, Mohale Mashigo notes how "*black* spaces, *black* people and the legacies affect what we call home, and how, when there is a change, we have to change our idea of home and our community and how we relate to each other" (123, italics in original), and that this influences the themes and forms of her writing. It is not surprising that this spatial enquiry also reveals a local/global tension in South African novels. Writers such as Lauren Beukes, Nthikeng Mohlele and Imraan Coovadia shift geographical locations beyond South Africa. In contrast, Niq Mhlongo suggests a move from the predominantly depicted city to the rural

arguing that we need more stories about "those places that were silenced or ignored [...] writers should not be limited to only a few spaces" (91). This demonstrates on the one hand a shift to the global, and on the other a desire for a shift towards the specifically local.

Lastly, the collection's significance to the current academic and literary scene lies in the question of tackling taboos in South African literature. Although this question might seem simple and straightforward, it captures contemporary and future trends in South African literature. Contemporary writers such as Thando Mgqolozana and Siphiwo Mahala are good examples of writers tackling cultural taboos since both wrote on male circumcision. Moreover, several writers discuss nuanced considerations of themes such as homophobia, xenophobia, race and racism. With regard to the latter two themes, Niq Mhlongo makes a bold statement: "I think in South Africa we are very apologetic in tackling issues that we feel will offend another race or people" (93). However, some writers such as Fred Khumalo point to another shift in the political landscape, in that "post-1994, many of us took this great sigh of relief that we were no longer obligated to use our art as a weapon of struggle [...] now I can pursue my art without feeling guilty" (59). Hence, Khumalo makes the observation that the future of South African fiction needs to "go back to Njabulo Ndebele's exhortation to rediscover the ordinary; just telling ordinary stories of how people live because we've been consumed by the spectacular, as he calls it" (65). Similarly, Charlie Human makes the point that "[w]hat builds strong literature [...] is that people are telling the stories they want to tell, rather than people feeling that they have a duty to tell stories [...]" (165). Yewande Omotoso shares a similar sentiment of re-discovery, saying, "this is a time of discovery and permission, writers giving themselves permission to explore whatever it is that obsess them" (177). These comments and outlooks create an impression of what readers, archivists and literary scholars can expect from the creatives. Thus, the book makes a timely contribution to the ongoing discussion of (post) apartheid literature and beyond and whet the reader's appetite for what is to come in South African literature.

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Return to the Scene of the Crime: The Returnee Detective and Postcolonial Detective Fiction.
Kamil Naicker.
Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2021. 186 pp.
ISBN 9781869144807.

In *Comparative Literature*, Ben Hutchinson writes: "In an age that is paradoxically defined by migration and border crossing on the one hand, and by a retreat into monolingualism and monoculturalism on the other, the cross-cultural agenda of comparative literature has become increasingly central to the future of the Humanities" (5). Kamil Naicker's *Return to the Scene of the Crime: The Returnee Detective and Postcolonial Detective Fiction* (2021) is such a piece of scholarship: cross-cultural comparative literature for a hopelessly entangled postcolonial world.

Impressively, this is Naicker's first book, stemming from a PhD completed under the supervision of Meg Samuelson and Sandra Young at the University of Cape Town. I will let the author speak for herself as she deftly summarises the gist of the book:

> In this book, I explore five different portrayals of postcolonial violence. In each, I argue, the "world-making" project of the novel eclipses the original mystery that the narrative presents. The five novels I explore are *When We Were Orphans* by Kazuo Ishiguro, *Anil's Ghost* by Michael Ondaatje (both first published in 2000), *The Long Night of White Chickens* by Francisco Goldman (first published in 1992), *Red Dust* by Gillian Slovo (originally published in 2000) and *Crossbones* by Nuruddin Farah (originally published in 2011). The novels are set in China, Sri Lanka, Guatemala, South Africa and Somalia, respectively. Each is an English-language novel set in a postcolonial nation during a period of civil war or violent transition, and each features a protagonist who has returned from abroad in order to assume the role of detective. A "detective" is broadly defined here as a moral observer who is intent upon clearing up a mystery, although some of the returnees operate in their professional capacity as lawyers, journalists or forensic pathologists. Each text has a different geographical and temporal setting, but engages with a similar historical moment—the eruption of civil violence in the years following decolonisation. (5)

The sheer ingenuity of Naicker's topic is perhaps the book's greatest virtue. To have identified the trope of the 'returnee' detective as a golden thread, and to have picked five suitable crime novels, each set in a different but comparable context of civil strife, is enviable. You

know a research idea is good when your first thought is: "I wish I had thought of that!"

Of course, such a nuanced topic requires a distinct critical approach, and Naicker necessarily has to draw on a wide range of theoretical and conceptual apparatuses, ranging from genre theory (for example Tzvetan Todorov's conception of genre as a conventional set of 'norms and expectations' which may be confirmed or subverted), Michael Holquist's concept of the 'metaphysical detective story' (later elaborated by Patricia Merivale and Susan Elizabeth Sweeney), Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee and Stephen Knight's work on ideology in crime fiction, postcolonial theory (especially Edward Said's *Reflections on Exile* and his ideas on 'wordliness' and 'contrapuntal thinking'), Judith Butler's *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?*, and many others.

Suffice to say that the way in which Naicker manages to pull together all these disparate strands of theory is an achievement. Incidentally, Naicker also does not shy away from disagreement, for example when she critiques James Dawes's take on Goldman's novel (81, 91), or when she dismantles the British journalist James Fergusson's problematic book about Somalia (137).

Structurally, each novel gets its own chapter whilst leaving the strictly comparative bits for the end. I think this structure works, as it affords the author ample space to discuss each novel in some detail—and Naicker is arguably at her best when she performs close reading. It also avoids the comparatist trap of overgeneralisation and a "flattening out" (9) of the specificities of each respective postcolonial context.

Mostly I was impressed by Naicker's lucid writing. It is easy to follow her well-crafted arguments and she manages to keep the novels "alive"; in other words, she does not stifle the novels with sterile analysis but captures something of the novels' affective appeal—something I am learning to appreciate more and more in the best literary scholarship.

Who or what is *Return to the Scene of the Crime* good for? Anyone interested in comparative literature, postcolonialism, crime fiction; or better yet: all the above. To researchers working on postcolonial crime fiction, this book will henceforth be regarded as compulsory reading. It may also present a useful pedagogical tool for any lecturer or professor thinking of prescribing one of the discussed novels (or any postcolonial crime novel, for that matter).

If there is a blind spot in the book, it is perhaps the fact that all five chosen novels are English-language novels, bringing to mind the old debate in Comp Lit circles of whether comparatists ought to be studying texts in different languages, and whether English (that poster child of colonialism) functions as bridge builder or homogeniser. For if the figure of the returnee detective plays the role of "hybrid mediator" (6), as Naicker contends, then surely the linguistic cum cultural medium itself comes into play? But these matters are largely of an academic nature and do not diminish the contribution of this book at all. Here is Hutchinson (12) again:

> [C]omparative literature is ultimately not so much about policing borders as crossing them. Comparatists choose to distance themselves from their own native cultures, to forgo their "home" literatures in favour of a willed homelessness, the better to gain purchase on texts and tropes that transcend any single idiom. They choose not to belong to any one particular tradition—indeed, this "unbelonging" is arguably their defining characteristic. As intellectual emigrés, comparatists make links between cultures, but in doing so they also, paradoxically, reinforce the distinctions between them. As such, the contrasts are as important as the comparisons, the disconnections as instructive as the connections.

I would like to suggest that comparatists of Kamil Naicker's calibre are the returnee scholars of the world republic of letters, taking as they do a liminal and remarkably productive vantage point of 'transcendental homelessness' (to borrow a phrase from Lukács). The most valuable asset a critic has is their own culture. It is only by moving away, and eventually returning to one's literary heimat, that one acquires true insight into it.

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Autobiographik in Afrika: Literaturgeschichte und Genrevielfalt.
Susanne Gehrmann.
Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2021. 244 pp.
ISBN 978-3-86821-925-8.

The academic series *Literatures and Arts of Africa* seeks to demonstrate "the relevance of Africa's cultural production for contemporary theories and debates" and Susanne Gehrmann's recent contribution undoubtedly contributes to this endeavour. The German Africanist investigates the broad variety of autobiographical discourses in sub-Saharan Africa from literary historical and genre theoretical perspectives. Proving her extensive expertise in anglo- and francophone African literatures and cultures, the author traces the African autobiographical continuum from the pre-colonial past to the post-postcolonial present. More than an overview, Gehrmann's highly informative monograph deconstructs Eurocentric perspectives on the genre category: redefining autobiographies as autobiographics, she emphasises the capacity of self-referential life narratives (which include slave narratives as well as prison literature) to oscillate between oral and written forms, factual and fictional elements, individual and community interests. The continuum unfolds in five chapters and, although evoking a Eurocentric conception of time, their chronological arrangement not only renders the study a comprehensive work of reference; moreover, it serves to illustrate that pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial autobiographics, their distinct forms and functions, emerge from ever-shifting structures of power. Additionally, the research design functions to elucidate structural continuities and intertextual references across the centuries; accordingly, Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* (1789) appears as a precursor of contemporary testimonies by child soldiers or LGBTQ+ activists, while the mention of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's critical essay *Decolonising the Mind* (1968) in Binyavanga Wainaina's *One Day I Will Write About This Place* (2011) suggests that, in the post-postcolonial era, intellectual activism gives way to middle-class comfort.

Indeed, focusing on pre-colonial oral forms, the first chapter establishes a system of references which clarifies that self-referential literary discourses in sub-Saharan Africa cannot be reduced to European influences. Encompassing the subject's genealogical investigations or the use of fairy tales, myths and proverbs, oral autobiographical features show a remarkable resilience, pervading Amadou Hampâté Bâ's *Amkoullel, l'enfant peul* (1991) and *Oui mon commandant!* (1992) just as much as Frances Baard's *My Spirit is Not Banned* (1986) which relates the imprisonment of the ANC Women's League representative in the 1960s. Similarly, pre-colonial written forms did not exclusively develop out of the transatlantic economy. Preceding the discussion of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century slave narratives in the third sub-chapter, Gehrmann points to various religious and historiographic texts which, written in Arabic and Ajami (an umbrella term for African languages written in the Arabic alphabet) by male Islam scholars in West, Central and Northeast Africa, frequently include accounts of the writers' conversions and other spiritual experiences, such as the seventeenth-century historiography *Ta'rikh al-Sudan* by the Timbuktu scholar Abd al-Sa'di.

Moving to the twentieth century, the second chapter scrutinises how the colonial powers consolidated their superiority via the import of languages and forms of literary expression. Heavily influenced by colonial memoirs and travelogues, the first African life narratives in European languages served to devise the disciplines of anthropology and ethnology and thereby strengthened colonial power. The extent to which colonialists regulated African autobiographical production is exemplified by Daniel Mtusu's *The Autobiography of an African* which, originally written in the Malawian pastor's mother tongue Chingoni, was translated, expanded and edited by the missionary Donald Fraser in 1925 so as to fit the colonial taste of the British reading public 'at home'—a practice that, as chapter three indicates, continues in the circulation patterns of recent child soldier narratives and other testimonies in human rights contexts like Waris Dirie's *Desert Flower* (1998) that, registering the traumas of female circumcision, was co-authored by the American writer Cathleen Miller and distributed by the US publisher William Morrow. Challenging one-dimensional conceptions of power, however, Gehrmann convincingly contends that this and other early twentieth century auto-ethnographic texts equally imitate the kind of colonial ideology that distinguishes 1930s popular anthologies like Margery Perham's *Ten Africans: A Collection of Life Stories* (1936). On the other hand, and as the third sub-chapter highlights, the prose autobiographics of Francisco José Mopila (*Memorias de un Congolés*, 1949) or Camara Laye (*L'enfant noir*, 1953) who, in the mid-century, travelled to Europe as a means of training to become part of a male colonial elite, herald an increasing hybridisation of African and European autobiographical forms. Appropriating the l'enfant noir short biographies of colonial teachers, Laye's text, in particular, stresses the

potentially subversive and self-affirmative functions of self-referential African writing which turn into a central characteristic of the postcolonial era.

The scope of postcolonial autobiographical forms is underlined by the longest third chapter of Gehrmann's study. Resistant writing practices, which undermine Western canon formations or criticise colonial legacies, inform the autobiographical novels of the Nigerian Wole Soyinka (*Aké: The Years of Childhood*, 1981) or the Senegalese Cheikh Kane (*L'Aventure ambiguë*, 1961) and the autobiographical essays by the Malian Manthia Diawara (*In Search of Africa*, 1998) or the Congolese V. Y. Mudimbe (*Les corps glorieux des mots et des êtres*, 1994) alike. In contrast with political memoirs, which construct linear narratives of heroic masculinity, these essays blend self-referential and theoretical elements and, as a result of their formal hybridity, envision identity formation as an ongoing process. A similar observation applies to the serial autobiographical narratives by the Nigerian Buchi Emecheta or the Senegalese Ken Bugul (Mariétou Mbaye Biléoma) which, contrary to the colonial childhood memoirs of Soyinka or Kane, do not seek to reconcile the culturally fragmented subject but rather mix autobiographical and fictional modes to negotiate hybrid femininities in colonial and local patriarchal settings. Against this backdrop, and as the fourth chapter (which testifies to the series' combination of literary, art and media studies approaches) shows, it is hardly a coincidence that Mudimbe's essay and Bugul's autobiographical trilogy (*Le Baobab fou*, 1982; *Cendres et braises*, 1994; *Riwan, ou, Le chemin de sable*, 1999) expanded into photography and a road movie (*Ken Bugul: Personne n'en veut*, dir. Silvia Voser, 2013), using different media to further hybridise their autobiographics.

Closing with a discussion of Wainaina's text in the fifth chapter, Gehrmann's study merely touches upon twenty-first-century African diasporic writers and the self-promotional practices with which they expand the autobiographical continuum. A closer consideration of the current global and increasingly digitised book market would have been beneficial to interrogate the merits and demerits of a term like 'post-postcolonial' and examine the material conditions of contemporary African autobiographics. Irrespective of these minor criticisms, this rich study can only be recommended. Without doubt, readers with an interest in the continuity of and changes in anglo- and francophone African autobiographical production will appreciate Gehrmann's solid textual analyses in their respective historical contexts.

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Gender and the Spatiality of Blackness in Contemporary AfroFrench Narratives.
Polo B. Moji.
London: Routledge, 2022. 182 pp.
ISBN 9780367637514.

Polo B. Moji's *Gender and the Spatiality of Blackness in Contemporary AfroFrench Narratives* analyzes the tension between Black French people's notion of belonging and their presence in French public space. Moji offers a "strolling method" (8) using diverse visual and written materials to show how Black people in certain French public spaces are "out of place" and the ways in which their representations of Blackness are perceived as disruptive. Moji utilizes the gaze of the black flâneuse (strolling woman) to investigate how "race and gender intersect in the (re)mapping and/or repurposing of urban spaces." As a Black French activist, I only encountered frequent use of the term 'AfroFrench' after entering academia and engaging with English-language scholarship. Indeed, Black political organizations, collectives, and cultural projects more commonly use the categories of Afro, Afro-descendant, Noir (Black), or dual citizenship (i.e. Senegalese-French, Guadeloupean). In her book, Moji chooses to adopt the non-hyphenated style "AfroFrench" to emphasize the way in which AfroFrench identities are "inherently relational, multiple and mobile" (8). It is interesting to note that Afrofeminist activists in France also use a non-hyphenated term to emphasize that they are not an offshoot of feminism, but rather a movement of their own (Nsafou).

Moji argues that the narrative of colour-blindness produces the invisibility of Black French women's identities. It is from those margins of invisibility that they mobilize to negotiate place, space, and movement—constantly negotiating with the persistent idea of Blackness as foreign/strange. To address the notions of belonging, space, and Blackness in France, Moji makes use of documentaries, biographies, and novels by Black French politicians, authors, artists, and academics, some of whom are analysed individually,

while others are understood in conversation with Léonora Miano and Rama Yade-Zimmet's writings.

Moji's book is divided into two sections across three chapters, which she organizes around material that she draws from to construct her argument. The first part of the book revolves around the tension between being Black and French and the notion of belonging. Moji highlights the persistence of the "geographic collusion" (43) that the presence of Black bodies creates and how it disrupts the "fixation of French homogeneity" (45). The second part focuses on urban space (and more specifically Paris) as the prime example of Blackness being deemed out of place, in comparison to the banlieue.

Another facet of French national ideology is the political distinction between Black and French. For her third chapter, Moji uses the title "Black or French," highlighting the "language of nativeness in France" (62). Moji provides evidence that, despite the ideology of colour-blindness, there exists a political distinction between white French and the 'others' who do not belong to the national French identity.

The tension between the Republican ideology of colour-blindness and the material and ideological realities of the production of racialized 'others' is a central question in race scholarship in France, but Moji succeeds in offering a new perspective on the diversity of Black French narratives with her strolling method. *Gender and the Spatiality of Blackness in Contemporary AfroFrench Narratives* is a compelling addition to emerging contemporary Black French studies and geographies due to Moji's thoughtful dialogue with Africana scholarship, from Paul Gilroy to Édouard Glissant and Saidiya Hartman.

Despite its numerous achievements, Moji's book could have provided readers with a more nuanced understanding of the importance of class in the production of Black French identities, in connection with the space of the banlieue. Indeed, it would be useful to understand the core differences between Rama Yade, Léonora Miano, Alain Mabanckou and Fatou Diome on one hand, and Maboula Soumahoro (her book is not cited but her quotes from interventions are) or Mame-Fatou Niang on the other. The first group represents an updated version of French exceptionalism since these figures have roots in the petite bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie of former French colonies and gained French citizenship as adults. Their success and recognition are used in national narratives as proof that France is a place that rewards talent. However, Maboula Soumahoro or Mame-Fatou Niang, for example, come from proletarian family backgrounds in the banlieue, and their social mobility is tied to the history of the transformation of racial justice mobilizing in France in the past 20 years (Larcher; Niang; Kouvibidila). This dimension is crucial as it produces tension between the two groups. Miano, Mabanckou, Diome's "literary activism" must be contextualized and offset by the many critiques that Black French people from the banlieue make vis-à-vis their bodies of work. This form of literary engagement should also be understood in relation to the persistent issue of classism from the African and Caribbean intelligentsia/elite toward Black French people from predominantly working-class immigrant backgrounds.

Incorporating the work of Elijah Anderson, a key scholar in the sociology of racialized specialization and spatializing of race, could have helped to strengthen the analysis of how the 'iconic ghetto' (Anderson)—the stereotypical imagination around Blackness—provides analytical tools to understand the narratives voiced by individuals appearing in the documentary materials: the eagerness to prove that they are "not Fatou" (26) and the choice to label people "who do not fit the trope of unemployed or unemployable black youth" as "ordinary people." This frame is based on a problematic trope regarding the non-ordinary condition of those who are unemployed or unemployable while failing to question the persistence of systemic racism that creates this condition. The intersection of class with gender and race is unfortunately and additionally left out of the analysis when in response to certain representations of Black girls (loud), the counterargument involves showcasing middle-class and petit-bourgeois Black women, furthering the erasure of the most marginalized people. Black women and Afrofeminist activists and thinkers from France (Gay, Mwasi, Noël, Soumahoro) emphasize how the response to racist representations of Black girls and women in mainstream media should not revolve around respectability politics but rather reveal how those loud Black girls in public spaces carry disruptive and rebellious intentions, and in this way deploy Black girlhood fugitivity.

The book is proof of the necessary ongoing transatlantic and afro-diasporic conversations around blackness in the hexagonal French context.

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At Penpoint: African Literatures, Postcolonial Studies and the Cold War.
Monica Popescu.
Durham: Duke University Press, 2020. 258 pp.
ISBN 9781478009405.

In 2010 publiceerde Monica Popescu al een monografie met 'Afrika', 'literatuur' en 'Koude Oorlog' in de titel: *South African Literature Beyond the Cold War*. In haar nieuwe boek heeft ze haar focus op drie fronten verbreed. Ten eerste richt ze haar aandacht in *At Penpoint* tot de literaturen van (potentieel) *heel* Afrika. Alleen al vanwege de talenrijkdom op het continent is zoiets natuurlijk ondoenbaar, en dat beseft ze ook zelf: haar geraadpleegde teksten en/of archiefbronnen zijn grotendeels Engelstalig, al steunt haar boek ook op enkele romans, artikels en papers in het Frans, Portugees en Afrikaans (24). Uiteraard heeft ze ook niet elk Afrikaans land in haar betoog kunnen betrekken, maar met casussen uit oostelijk (Kenia, Oeganda), westelijk (Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal) en zuidelijk Afrika (Angola, Zuid-Afrika) kan toch besloten worden dat ze—indien niet qua talen, dan toch—geografisch in haar ambitieuze opzet is geslaagd.

Ten tweede heeft Popescu nu niet alleen gekeken (zoals ze deed in 2010) naar de belangstelling van bepaalde (Zuid-)Afrikaanse schrijvers en intellectuelen, tijdens de Koude Oorlog, voor de communistische ideeën uit Oost-Europa. Dit boek behelst de *beide* kanten van het spectrum, het spanningsveld tussen de twee supermachten van toen: de Sovjet-Unie versus de Verenigde Staten. Popescu toont aan hoe je je als Afrikaanse schrijver of criticus in die decennia nauwelijks aan dat spanningsveld kon onttrekken, maar tegelijk slaagt ze erin te laten zien dat er te midden van dat mijnenveld ook mogelijke tussenwegen waren: die van de zogenaamde 'nonaligned' instellingen en initiatieven (55). Die hadden tot doel Afrikaanse en andere landen uit de wurggreep van de ideologische polarisering te houden. Het is enigszins jammer dat Popescu de belangrijke rol hierin van Joegoslavië niet belicht. Vormde de zogeheten 'Derde Weg' van Tito, de eerste voorzitter van de Beweging van Niet-Gebonden Landen, een (lichtend) voorbeeld? Het feit dat een romanpersonage uit *Way Back Home* (2013), van de in Soweto geboren Niq Mhlongo, Tito's naam draagt (176), doet vermoeden van wel. Erg inzichtelijk is dan weer de betekenisverschuiving die de term 'nonaligned' in sommige delen van Afrika kon ondergaan, zoals in het Kenia van Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (63). Aan die schrijver en denker ontleende Popescu trouwens de woordspeling (op 'at gunpoint') uit haar rake hoofdtitel (2).

Een derde front waarop Popescu ten opzichte van haar vorige monografie verbredend—én flink verdiepend—te werk is gegaan, is dat van de postcolonial studies. Terwijl haar boek uit 2010 ook al met dit studiedomein in dialoog trad, heeft het nu zelfs een plaats verworven in de ondertitel. Van meet af aan wordt op een blinde vlek gewezen: de postcolonial studies hebben (veel) te weinig rekening gehouden met de Koude Oorlog. Met name Edward Said kan hierbij wel een en ander worden aangewreven (5–6), al is Popescu van mening dat er in feite al zo'n twintig jaar vóór zijn *Orientalism* (1978) 'postkoloniaal' werd gedacht en geschreven in Afrikaanse intellectuele milieus (13). *Dat* aan te tonen is, naast het verenigen van de "two separate narratives—of decolonization and of Cold War-period tribulations" (2), het hoofddoel van *At Penpoint*.

Na een lange, verhelderende inleiding, "Genres of Cold War Theory: Postcolonial Studies and Literary Criticism" (1–28), volgen twee grote delen met daarin telkens twee hoofdstukken. Deel I ("African Literary History and the Cold War", 29–103) is eerder historiografisch van aard, in die zin dat het een beeld schetst van de belangrijkste literatuurdebatten op en over het continent en daarbij erg welkome contextualisering biedt over de tijdschriften en andere

(fysieke) plaatsen waar die gevoerd werden en hoe nauw de Koude Oorlog daarmee verstrengeld bleek. Zo vergrootten de supermachten hun ideologische greep op Afrika (en Azië) door het sponsoren van internationaal verspreide tijdschriften en magazines en door strategisch uitgereikte literaire prijzen. Popescu gaat terecht ook uitgebreid in op de "artificial dichotomy" tussen modernisme en realisme (67). Ze stelt ook de vanzelfsprekend lijkende argwaan van het Westen in vraag, wanneer Afrikaanse schrijvers zich lieten leiden door het socialistisch realisme uit de Sovjet-Unie.

In het iets langere deel II, "Reading Through a Cold War Lens" (105–92), gooit Popescu het over een andere (maar wel complementaire) boeg. Zoals de titel aangeeft, (her)leest ze een reeks Afrikaanse literaire werken, zoals de canoniek geworden roman *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) van de Ghanees Ayi Kwei Armah (135–44). Voor de lezers van dit tijdschrift vermeld ik er graag bij dat Alex La Guma prominent aanwezig is in deel I en dat het ook in deel II vaak specifiek over Zuid-Afrika(nen) gaat: zo behandelt Popescu Nadine Gordimer en ook de grensliteratuur, met summiere vermelding van enkele literaire pennenvruchten (en films) in het Afrikaans (153). Behalve naar de al dan niet verholen impact van de Koude Oorlog op die literaire teksten speurt de auteur ook naar pogingen, in Afrika, om aan de 'tweedeling' van de wereld te ontsnappen.

Eerder dan een samenvatting van wat voorafgaat, bevat de conclusie van *At Penpoint* (185–92) een soort oproep aan de beoefenaars van de world literature studies en hoe deze academici hun blik zouden kunnen (moeten) verruimen via de hier uiteengezette, verregaand door de VS en de Sovjet-Unie gestuurde ontwikkelingen in het Afrikaanse literaire veld. Het boek sluit af met 36 pagina's kleiner gedrukte eindnoten, twintig bladzijden bibliografie en een handige, uitvoerige index. Tot slot verdienen nog twee zaken vermelding (en lof). Ten eerste het tiental afbeeldingen, met daarbij covers van tijdschriften, sfeerbeelden van internationale schrijversbijeenkomsten, maar ook een foto van het op een (Sovjet)raket lijkende mausoleum, in Luanda, van Agostinho Neto, de in Moskou gestorven eerste president (1975–1979) van de Volksrepubliek Angola, die ook gedichten schreef. Die foto brengt de fictieve ontploffing van dat mausoleum, in Angolees Ondjaki's, door Popescu meeslepend bestudeerde (178–84), roman *AvóDezanove e o segredo do soviético* (2008), meteen tot leven. Een tweede 'toevoeging' die ik erg kon appreciëren, is de persoonlijke, autobiografische aanloop waarmee Popescu sommige van haar hoofdstukken inleidt. De ervaringen en inzichtelijke anekdotes van deze onder Ceaușescu geboren Roemeense, die nu lesgeeft aan een universiteit in Québec, geven het betoog een extra dimensie.

In een notendop: Popescu combineert in haar boek inderdaad "literary history with a thematic approach", zoals ze in de inleiding aangeeft (2), maar verwacht daarbij dus geen literatuurgeschiedenis in de vorm van een handig consulteerbaar overzicht met de belangrijkste namen en literaire 'gebeurtenissen', wel een schat aan—weliswaar voornamelijk Engelstalig—materiaal waarmee lang niet alleen de world literature studies meteen aan de slag kunnen gaan.

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Convivial Worlds: Writing Relation from Africa.
Tina Steiner.
London: Routledge, 2021. 156 pp.
ISBN 9780367535735.

In *Convivial Worlds: Writing Relation from Africa* (2021), Tina Steiner approaches the study of literary cultures from the global South through the lens of convivial relations while shedding light on social injustices that have ravaged the African continent. Steiner meticulously presents a collection of various African authors' narratives of conviviality which she uses to explore the conditions of the possibility of conviviality in everyday interactions and ways to sustain them. Honouring African perspectives, this book foregrounds some prominent African authors like D. D. T. Jabavu, Sophia Mustafa, Jamal Mahjoub and Abdulrazak Gurnah. It locates them within global literary cultures, thus giving African perspectives more currency in North-South scholarship overflowing with intellectual superiority complexes. The book is well researched with carefully organised ideas that lead the reader to a more profound understanding of literary cultures of the global South while prioritising human experiences and relations.

The first chapter sets the tone through a thorough discussion of mundane tasks that reveal conviviality.

This captures the book's essence as it highlights that these everyday tasks birthed a rich African literary culture and indicates how conviviality can function as a form of agency. Each chapter of the book takes the reader through the various dimensions of conviviality and how these should not be viewed as utopian tropes or examples of naïve optimism. The different chapters do not shy away from facing the conditions that come with conviviality and the possibility of conviviality breeding hostility. Although some of the chapters are about literary fiction, the inclusion of the genealogies of convivial scholarship was crucial to this book because it provides the reader with a deep historical narrative that stems from archival work, thus reconnecting real life to archives and cementing the idea that the past informs the present and the future. The other important factor in the unfolding events of this book is the flexible representation of the various ways that African literary outputs open unusual encounters in time and space. Excavating the archives assisted in underlining the interconnectedness of science, language, history, and travel.

More pertinently, Steiner highlights the importance of non-universalising black and brown lived experiences by situating the literary outputs of each individual in each chapter within the socio-political contexts in which they occurred, which dilutes the over-representation of hard politics. While reconciling the possibility of agency and spontaneous relation across differences, the author brings an added layer of African scholarship that does not focus only on unequal power relations but rather on intrinsic human experiences that represent far more than just face-value interactions. Steiner explores the various contours of African literature, laying bare debates around apartheid, colonialism, racism, patriarchy and xenophobia using both fiction and non-fictional experiences and interpretations of ordinary moments in everyday life.

The second chapter transitions to D. D. T. Jabavu's travelogue, highlighting Africans' ability to form relations beyond social hierarchies. This chapter highlights the sharing of politically motivated journeys infused with intimate aspects of humanity, blurring the private versus public dichotomy. Steiner contributes to the understanding of the multiplicity of African literature by citing diverse African scholars and writers whose narratives show how African literary cultures transcend race, culture, languages, gender and borders. Steiner highlights how simple acts of recognising people as humans shape their social experiences and literary traditions. Furthermore, by using Jabavu's travelogue, Steiner highlights how everyone has a different perspective informing their interpretation of events, which can be attributed to the uniqueness and diversity of African cultures. Moreover, the chapter on Jabavu highlights how conviviality born out of ordinary gestures may have an influence on political approaches and how those at the margins are always the ones who are more inclined to intervene, perhaps motivated by shared vulnerability, thus connecting the overlap of politics and conviviality. This is ironic, because politics is not a friendly game.

Using Sophia Mustafa's endeavour toward national liberation, the third chapter advances the deliberate breakdown of barriers based on gender, language, and citizenship and forceful participation in 'big man' politics by a South Asian-born Tanzanian woman. This brings the reader to the stark realisation that convivial inclusivity is not always possible, especially when fighting against odds that have been institutionalised. Steiner indirectly speaks to the intersectionality of Mustafa's identity, which opens another layer to understanding her experiences of conviviality. The following chapter, on Jamal Mahjoub, details the continuous circular movement of African literary cultures while advocating for the interdependence of scholarship that has been silenced, erased, and marginalised.

Despite dealing with serious and sensitive narratives, the chapter on Abdulrazak Gurnah uses wit and humour to underpin the fact that humour can break social hierarchies. Still, the author also cautions that these literary tools represent merely a superficial break. Steiner unpacks the dark side of convivial wit with academic precision, bringing a compelling new perspective to narratives of exclusion. This chapter locates conviviality beyond politics and victimhood and provides a front-row witness to authentic experiences. To a certain extent, Steiner mimics the various authors' writing styles, which nicely merges the chapters. Reading the chapters makes the reader feel that they have read the work first-hand. Each chapter is crafted to connect the reader to the subjects' work. Each page is filled with fascinating insights.

In *Convivial Worlds*, the ocean is written about as a whirlwind of breeding interconnectedness. Perhaps drawing on the historical significance of the sea to African history (and scholarship on this topic) may have helped the reader to understand why emphasis was placed on the role of the oceanic space. The maritime space holds continuous importance throughout the book and affirms that the personal is international, representing a medium of fluidity. After reading this

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book, the importance of prioritising the growth of South-South scholarly relations rather than assimilating to the North-South intellectual superiority complex becomes clearer. Through this book, Steiner advances South-South scholarship by detailing its roots and the rational and intrinsic value of seeing each person as a human. Steiner makes clear that forcing North-South collaborations may, at times, be futile because the circulation of ideas transgresses boundaries. This book highlights the richness, meticulousness and refreshing nature of African scholarship. It is a vital narrative of African literary cultures that centres on diverse individuals to oppose the universalisation of literary cultures of the global South.

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Dockside Reading: Hydrocolonialism and the Custom House.
Isabel Hofmeyr.
Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2022. 136 pp.
ISBN 9781776147625.

Dockside Reading is a fascinating and important book that makes a valuable contribution to literary scholarship whilst speaking much more broadly. In this review I will provide an overview of the book, before exploring what I believe is its most interesting and provocative deliberate absence: that of the digital.

Dockside Reading begins with a curious list of "Prohibited and Restricted Imports and Exports" from South Africa in the 1950s, when apartheid was becoming entrenched as a political system. Hofmeyr reveals that in South Africa at that time, copyright, trademark, books, printed matter and censors were all subject to particular forms of governance, reading and power. Her book tracks "printed matter as it made its way from ship to shore and through the regulatory regimes of the Custom House" (2) and explores how the rules that shaped the material transmission of knowledge and imagination were subject to the personal, political and practical whims of emerging nation-states and geopolitical orders in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, with a focus, in particular, on copyright and censorship.

Hofmeyr uses two key terms throughout the book—'dockside reading' and 'hydrocolonialism'—with which she creates a frame for reading and interpretation. "Port cities", she observes, "aim to pave the ocean and assert sovereignty over the conjuncture of land and sea. Yet they are unstable spaces [...]" (4). By considering the management and regulation of commodities *and of people* in these unstable dockside sites, Hofmeyr explores what she categorises as objects, bodies, books and reading.

"Categories have their uses," writes Lochlann Jain (6), continuing, "[t]hey enable concepts and organize perception, and in so doing, they constitute those who devise them, those who are ensnared by them, and the worlds in which they move together." In this construction of categories that lays over centuries of similar processes, Hofmeyr tells a remarkable story of the intersections of people, property, and politics. Through this she is able to interpret narrative from the edge of a fluvial shore. The book "investigates shore-shaped methods of reading that crystallized around the Custom House and raises larger questions of literary formations across land and sea" (15).

'Hydrocolonialism' is a term invented by Hofmeyr in which one finds the ripples of colonisation, postcolonialism, the paradoxical territorialisation of water and geopolitics (see Starosielski's *The Undersea Network* and Hillman's *The Digital Silk Road*). "Water sculpts political authority", Hofmeyr (16) writes, and water is implicit in shaping the 'hydrosocial' cycle of human interaction with capital, the environment and power. 'Hydrocolonialism' is invoked as a tool with which to make sense of the impact of aquatic environments that shape the circulations of knowledge and objects.

The introduction is dense and rich, and filled with literary references, neologisms and insights which can be read at a multitude of depths. It also includes a comprehensive summary of the arguments that follow.

The first chapter begins with a striking image from Port Elizabeth in 1878. Ten black men in loincloths stand between the ocean and the shore, their backs bent under heavy sacks. A white man in a pith helmet and jacket observes their labour. Here Hofmeyr considers both the processes of the legal admission to the territory of the content of the sacks, and also the labour of both transportation and codification of documents. Hofmeyr describes the procedures of landing and marking, the handbooks, legislation and practices of reading that guided this process, and the

contradictory claims that could be made that spoke to origin, ownership, language and script itself. Here we discover the origins of the 'Made in X-country' that will be so familiar to consumers today as to be almost invisible. Hofmeyr asks the reader to think seriously about how objects become not just things, but things that exist in semiotic, legal and material categories that allow for their regulation.

Chapter Two, "Copyright on the Hydrocolonial Frontier", explores how copyright was developed, policed and enforced—with the same varying degrees of success as we experience in today's digital sphere. Sailors were apparently enthusiastic consumers of printed matter, from the serious to the solicitous, and port authorities spent huge amounts of energy trying to catch up. The chapter shows how this process was almost as impossible as it is today for those who try to keep a few steps ahead of the 'torrents' of contemporary digital exchange—much of which happens in entirely unregulated domains.

Custom Houses around various empires cooperated and at times colluded with publishers, politicians, merchants and authors to regulate what was read, in what format, and by whom. The picture Hofmeyr paints is one of an exhausting array of conflicting information, trickery, profit and plans that left customs officials "hewed to their own practices" (55). That she herself is able to identify the proverbial fish in what she calls the "galaxy of inscriptions circulating on the dockside" (56) is remarkable. It is a fascinating entry point to understanding how colonial knowledge was validated through copyright, which in turn became what Hofmeyr called a "racialised process" (61) not dissimilar to the ways in which algorithms—another form of knowledge organisation—are invoked and applied today (see Benjamin's *Race after Technology*).

In "Censorship on a Hydrocolonial Frontier" (Chapter Four) Hofmeyr shifts her focus from South Africa to Australia, where, as she writes, the "White Australia policy went hand in hand with zealous maritime boundary making, immigration restriction, and censorship" (63). She tells the stories of young men working in cramped offices "reading books as bars of soap" in their efforts to classify and control them, following logics and ways of reading that "rendered" acceptable moralities of the mid-20th century. This, Hofmeyr (65) argues convincingly, is a process that has much to teach contemporary readers. Using carefully curated stories, Hofmeyr illustrates the almost random power of censorship decisions, which at times were radically out of sync with unfolding history but shaped local and transnational imaginations in startlingly similar ways to today's 'information bubbles' enabled by social media (see Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*). An intriguing comment is the practice by which 'inappropriate'—or censured—content was "donated to lighthouse keepers" (71)—a provocative phrase with the potential for interpretation at many levels of metaphor. The 'lighthouse keepers' perhaps played a particular role in South Africa, where in addition to managing information from beyond the borders, the apartheid state took it upon themselves to censor from within. The chapter interrogates the ways in which the combined external and internal regimes "placed the dissident author in its crosshairs, while drawing on a Customs-style hermeneutic of the book as an object of contamination" (74). "Dockside reading" concludes Hofmeyr here, "had longer lives than one might initially anticipate" (75), and indeed this chapter opens understanding of the genealogies of reading.

The conclusion, "Dockside Genres and Postcolonial Literature", is satisfying. Several models of the book, Hofmeyr shows, emerged as possible in the 20th century, and it was the power of regulation, copyright and 'winning' bureaucracies that consolidated it as an entity by the 20th century (though Ashleigh Harris's work shows us that such processes are far less stable than we might imagine). In this section, Hofmeyr imagines the "epidemiological models of the book" (82) which enabled the utilisation of text as a tool of disruption, counter narrative, and interruption—the latter how books were perceived by the customs officials who had to deal with their complexity in the flow of objects for processing.

Short reflections on landings, on the farm from the perspective of the port, and on quarantine, wrap up the reflection on "dockside hermeneutics" which flows as a thread throughout the text. The 'dockside hermeneutics' were "shaped hydrocolonially, by the elemental politics of the port, by the epidemiological and ideological prerogatives of the colonial maritime frontier, and by the books themselves" (84). The conclusion ends with a call for other literary scholars to "venture down to the dockside" and take a look.

I am not a literary scholar, though I believe that literature infuses imagination and has a way of seeping into other disciplines. Nonetheless, the questions that this text provoked resonated with my own scholarship and to some extent with my life as a citizen in the 21st century. These questions all had to do with the chaotic, murky parallels between the attempted regulation of printed matter on boats and the attempted contemporary regulations of digital media in pirated forms. Is Netflix's recent attempt to stop 'users' sharing

passwords the same as the behaviour of 20th century port officials?

If there were one thing the text leaves out, it is perhaps the pirate figure, who may not have berthed in Port Elizabeth, but who no doubt had something to do with 'content management' on the open sea. Henceforth, when I read a "pirated" text downloaded from the online oceans of the digital world, or watch a movie accessed via a torrent, I will reflect on the vain attempts at regulation of some digital equivalent of a sweaty colonial official trying to work between land and sea. Now, as before, occasionally carrying viruses that are hard to entirely protect against, but that each one of us, in our capacity as Personal Customs Official, chooses to let in or out through a series of mundane, but consequential, actions of regulation.

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African Performance Arts and Political Acts.
Naomi André, Yolanda Covington-Ward & Jendele Hungbo (eds.).
Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2021. 280 pp.
ISBN 9780472074822.

The intricate interconnections between performance and politics in Africa are informed by a productive and chequered history, one of the famous events of which was the call in 1964 by the celebrated Nigerian author Chinua Achebe for African literary artists to infuse their creative work with political consciousness. In *African Performance Arts and Political Acts*, Naomi André, Yolanda Covington-Ward and Jendele Hungbo take a similar charge by another luminary, Léopold Sédar Senghor, as basis to explore this connection. The Senegalese poet-politician made his call two years after Achebe, and focussing on him appears to be a highly intentional choice; his background embodies the purpose of the 12 constituent chapters that combine to highlight the intimate relationship between performance and politics in diverse contexts.

While it is easy to stop at the claim that performance has always connected with politics in Africa, the contributors go further in this collection to explore the implications of this relationship. That is where the collection gets exciting, and it solidifies the significance of the book. Nompumelelo Zondi's "The Intrinsic Power of Songs Sung During Protests at South African Institutions of Higher Learning" moves through time and identifies a trajectory between songs and protest in South Africa across historical and ideological lines. Tracing the role of songs from the Apartheid era to incidents that culminated in the #FeesMustFall movement allows for an understanding of how context influences one single mode of communication in volatile spaces. The chapter "Discussing the Play *Angalia Ni Mimi!* and a Performance by the Playwright Marthe Djilo Kamga" by Frieda Ekotto operates in a transnational and diasporic context to highlight women-centred African epistemologies that are created in a one-woman play. In "Surviving Gender Violence Activating Community Stories for Social Change", Anita Gonzalez analyses the use of solo performances to, in this case, speak to the difficult topic of rape in South Africa. Another difficult topic—the brutal colonial history of the Belgian Congo—is the focus of Yolanda Covington-Ward's "Seditious Songs: Spirituality as Performance and Political Action in Colonial-Era Belgian Congo." Here, she examines the performative encounters that occurred as Congolese subjects sung hymns to reclaim agency in the face of Belgian oppression.

Judith Irvine (36) speaks for the rest of the contributors when she notes, in "Performing Political Identities: Senegalese Speakers and Their Audiences", that performance is layered and thus encompasses a wide range of possibilities. Not only does it appear in the more obvious forms of dance (as in a chapter on how dance and space relate in South Africa) and plays (including one-person plays in Cameroon and South Africa), performance also manifests in personal and mediated social exchanges, such as in-person "institutionalized" teasing in Senegal and gratitude over the radio in Nigeria, respectively. Politics, on the other hand, manifests in hyper-masculine themes in Tanzanian underground rapping; it is also present in Black Nationalism in Haiti and South Africa; and can be found in hymns in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The diverse definitions of these two broad umbrella topics provide room for the various authors to take their chapters in unique directions, as is also seen in their methodologies.

Differences in method can remind emerging scholars and advanced graduate students of the importance of tailoring scholarship to fit specific areas of study. For example, Nikolas Sweet's field research into institutionalized teasing is done through a focus on and subsequent comparative analysis of three examples and Irvine uses her field data to explain the linguistic role that different Senegalese case studies played in both conventional and unconventional notions of performance in the 20th and 21st centuries. Using interviews and analysis, David Kerr employs a theoretical framework by Michel de Certeau to move an understanding of rap beyond the restrictive resistance/consumption binary. The various types of data—including plays, speeches, and music—suggest overlapping qualitative modes of engagement that can still be specific to these unique data sets.

The editors clearly delineate their area of focus in their introduction and present a strong case for how African countries south of the Sahara connect performance and politics. As in most collections, selection creates exclusion in terms of representation. Accordingly, North Africa and Lusophone Africa are absent. While all the representative regions bar West Africa are each represented by one country, South Africa dominates the collection with almost half of the chapters. This is understandable considering the process through which the collection came to fruition—from a workshop organized in South Africa—although the promise of the book makes one wonder what could have been if more countries had been sampled.

Another lacuna is the lack of attention paid to social media, despite the presence and influence of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and lately Tik Tok on both politics and performance. Even Zondi's chapter, which refers to an incident that also played out online, is more interested in songs sung offline. Social media has become an intrinsic part of cultural practices across the continent, and research consistently underscores its performative nature. But again, the editors and authors are highly aware of their focus. Accordingly, identifying this gap serves to reveal the potential of this work to influence subsequent research in order to better understand the connection between performance and politics in relation to events such as #EndSARS or #BringBackOurGirls in Nigeria, #AmharaGenocide in Ethiopia, #ZimbabweanLivesMatter in Zimbabwe and lesser-known events.

While Achebe and Senghor both made their calls in a specific time of political upheaval, each chapter proves that their claims are still relevant in the 21st century. To a large extent, the authors collectively manage to adequately "explore how identity, interpersonal relationships, and larger societies are shaped through performance dialogues across Africa" (3). These investigations crucially speak to each other and are enhanced by four thematic subtopics that help to structure the work. The collection thus presents a strong case for new directions in performance and politics on the continent and is highly recommended for scholars in humanities and social science fields.

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Queer African Cinemas.
Lindsey B. Green-Simms.
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Lindsey Green-Simms has been a leading interlocutor in queer African studies with a specialisation in queer African cinemas. *Queer African Cinemas* (2022) buttresses the comprehensive work that she has done in examining the representation of queer lived experiences in and through African films. Her previous work has focused on representations of queerness in West African cinemas, with a particular focus on Nollywood films (films produced in Nigeria) (see "Hustlers, Home-wreckers and Homoeroticism: Nollywood's Beautiful Faces" [2012] and "Queer African Cinema, Queer World Cinema" [2018]). *Queer African Cinemas* marks an important and considerable expansion of this work by focusing on other regions of the African continent such as East Africa and South Africa. Green-Simms does not attempt to include North Africa in this book, because of the particular "linguistic, cultural, historical, and political differences that North Africa" presents, which makes this region fall beyond her "field of expertise" (214). Incidentally, my own work has focused on the "marginalisation, muting, and omission of the Maghreb from discourses that attempt to articulate non-conforming gender and sexual identities in Africa" (Ncube, "Renegotiating the Marginality of the Maghreb in Queer African Studies" 624) by focusing on queer representations in films from the Maghreb (see also Ncube, "Skin and Silence in Selected Maghrebian Queer Films").

In *Queer African Cinemas*, Green-Simms is interested in how contemporary films reflect and draw on resistance to understand queer lived experiences on the continent. As she argues, to understand "all the complexities of resistance in queer African cinema, one needs to look both at and beyond the text and to the politics of production, consumption, and distribution" (7). Part of the complexity that she deals with in this book involves bringing into conversation films which have diametrically opposed visions of queer lived realities. It is a messy and daunting enterprise to read films that are largely homophobic together with "life-affirming" films. Green-Simms finds such a relational opposition to be generative in making queer lived realities possible and liveable. For example, reading a generally queer-affirming film such as *Rafiki* against some palpably homophobic Nollywood films is important in showing how these films practice, and confront each other's, forms of resistance. Through such confrontation, it becomes possible to discern that "resistance does not follow any neat or discernible path, that it is never as simple as simply showcasing forms of agential resistance or celebrating transgression against power" (8).

Green-Simms's central argument hinges on three broad questions. The first question asks, "What happens when intimacy, pleasure, small gestures of unruliness, practices of survival and fleeing, or even of negotiation, are imagined as conditions or resources for resistance?" (21). The second question focuses on "What happens when we see resistance not as the opposite of subordination and complacency but as something that is entangled with it?" (21). The last of the three questions is interested in understanding "What happens when we take the [...] framing of resistance as something that might be routine or vague, as something that hovers in the spaces of the meanwhile" (21). In thinking through these questions, Green-Simms proposes different "registers of resistance" (21). She considers the act of "registering" in its diverse nuances. For example, to register can refer to the process of taking stock and recording different kinds of resistance that are exemplified in African films. Registering is also taken to mean different sonic ranges. Engaging with the work of Tina Campt, Green-Simms engages with the ways in which there is an adjusting of senses to affective frequencies that are often captured in silent forms of art. For Green-Simms, "the lower frequencies, or registers, and inaudible expressions of interiority are also part of resistant practices and present in many queer African films" (21). In the different iterations of registering, there is an evocation of the idea that "just as resistance can operate at different frequencies, so too can it register different meanings" (23). Ultimately, for Green-Simms, registering also serves "to indicate the way that the resistance might mentally register, or make sense, to a particular audience member" (24). The resistance captured in films is understood in different ways by different viewers. This points to the importance of being attuned to the politics of not just the production of queer films but also how they are consumed.

Queer African Cinemas is composed of four core chapters which each focus on a particular region of Africa. The first chapter is "Making Waves: Queer Eccentricity and West African Wayward Women". The second is entitled "Touching Nollywood: From Negation to Negotiation in Queer Nigerian Cinema". "Cutting Masculinities: Post-apartheid South African Cinema" is the penultimate chapter whilst the last is entitled "Holding Space, Saving Joy: Queer Love and Critical Resilience in East Africa". In each of the chapters, Green-Simms is attentive to the historic and cultural specificities of each of the geographic regions. In such attention to the regional specificities, the book "reaches out to different sites to understand the multiple complexities and registers of resistance" (31) and heeds the call by Chiang and Wong (5) that queer (African) scholarship "must attend to the uneven temporal and spatial calculus of queerness congealing within the grids and gradations of geographical regions."

Of the four chapters, I found the chapter on South African cinema offered fresh and insightful readings of three films which have previously attracted significant critical and academic attention: *Skoonheid* (2011) directed by Oliver Hermanus, *Inxeba* (2017) directed by John Trengove and Christiaan Olwagen's *Kanarie* (2018). These films examine the violence of queer masculinities in different contexts in South Africa, during the apartheid and post-apartheid periods. In examining these films, Green-Simms concentrates on the multifaceted and enduring enmeshment of class, homophobia, race, and masculinity in South Africa. She uses the concept of "cutting" to consider the "moments of breaking away or cutting away in the cinematic sense, but also to think about that which is left out or cut out, that which is cut short, that which cuts through, and that which is literally cut or wounded" (32). For example, the film *Inxeba* centres on ulwaluko, the traditional rite of passage of Xhosa people, which includes the circumcision of young men. Through an analysis of one of the queer protagonists in the film, Kwanda, Green-Simms shows that the

definition of masculinity is not based solely on the cutting of the foreskin. Rather, for Kwanda being a man involves "being the type of man he wants to be and psychologically liberating himself from versions of manhood he finds to be violent and problematic" (144). The analysis of *Inxeba* shows how it is possible to resist, or queer, traditional conceptions of masculinity. In Green-Simms's argument, the space of ulwaluko has the potential of engendering affective relationships in which men can "care for and nurture one another" (144). The film explores how the characters of Vija and Xolani transgress the space of ulwaluko by forging a queer relationship, transient as it may be. Green-Simms argues that the three films discussed in this chapter offer manifold examples of how "cutting" makes it possible to "perform ways in which globally circulating queer male South African feature films simultaneously break away from and are contained by hegemonic racial and gendered structures" (32). *Queer African Cinemas* complicates our understanding of resistance as not simply transgressive but also as generative in the way it requires us to consider how "the precarities and vulnerabilities of queer African life exist alongside modes of survival, practices of care, and aspirational imaginaries" (9).

Read in conjunction with other recent books on queer representation in literature and film such as Keguro Macharia's *Frottage: Frictions of Intimacy across the Black Diaspora* (2019), S. N. Nyeck's *African(a) Queer Presence: Ethics and Politics of Negotiation* (2021) and Serena Dankwa's *Knowing Women: Same-Sex Intimacy, Gender, and Identity in Postcolonial Ghana* (2021), Green-Simms's book makes an invaluable intervention in the field of queer studies broadly and queer African studies in particular. *Queer African Cinemas* has a rich and robust theoretical underpinning, which, coupled with its innovative readings of the selected contemporary films, means that it explores in an engaging and accessible way how African queer worldmaking is inextricably linked to diverse iterations of resistance.

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met die oog op more: 'n versdrama.
Antjie Krog.
Pretoria: Protea Boekhuis, 2020. 95 pp.
ISBN 978-1-4853-1125-6.

Antjie Krog se versdrama *met die oog op more* (2020) is ruimhartig ontvang deur talle Afrikaanssprekende kritici. Die positiewe kritiek prys die vorm en inhoud van die teks. Onder meer herken Alwyn Roux vir Krog as 'n meester van die versdrama, waar die vers 'n funksionele tegniese vorm is en nie bloot 'n dekoratiewe element nie. Joan Hambidge beklemtoon die teks se aard as beide mito-poëties en feitelik. Beide hierdie stellings is geldig. Vir my lê die toneelteks se grootste sukses, in 'n dramakonteks waar daar effens wegbeweeg word van Krog se woordkuns, in die karakterskepping van Moshoeshoe, koning van die destydse Basoetoland.

In 'n onderhoud met Melt Myburgh vertel Krog self: "Moshoeshoe was in feitlik alle opsigte Nelson Mandela se voorloper". Krog se bewondering van Moshoeshoe vergestalt in haar toneelteks in 'n intelligente, posisievaste leier wat in die toekoms probeer kyk hoe om in die hede sy mense voor te berei op onvermydelike verandering. Vroeg reeds sê Moshoeshoe: "my oog is op môre en hiervoor vleg ek reeds 'n mat dig van mens en bees en veld, 'n mat van genoeg … van saamwerk" (11). Die groot staatsman sorg vir sy mense, voer hulle, beskerm hulle. Hy is nie naïef oor die teenwoordigheid van Boer en Brit in en om sy landsgrense nie. Moshoeshoe se vriend Moorosi herhaal juis sy koning se woorde oor hoe belangrik samewerking oor godsdiens- en rasselyne is in konfliksituasies: "Ek wil skadelike gedrag stop, maar hoe stop ek dit sonder om self ook skadelik te raak? […] Die manier waarop 'n mens die skadelike onskadelik maak, is belangrik vir die pad waarin ons wil hê ons toekoms vorentoe moet loop" (17–8).

Die vriendskap tussen koning Moshoeshoe en die Franse sendeling Eugène Casalis vorm die spil van die intrige. 'n Ryk historiese werklikheid word opgeroep in karakters se verwysings na en beskrywings van figure wat dadelik herkenbaar is: Sobhuza, Mzilikazi,

Shaka, Mohlomi, die sogenaamde "Sokrates van Afrika" (Du Preez), Cathcart en ander. Krog gebruik verder 'n spreekkoor, wat 'n imbongi insluit, om historiese situasies en gebeure verder toe te lig. In inhoud en vorm vervleg die toneelteks verskillende—en soms kontrastrende—kulturele posisies en (teater)tradisies. (Hierdie tipe vermenging is lankal omtrent so bekend soos die tradisies en praktyke wat dit voorafgegaan het). Hoewel hy en Casalis verskil oor die aard van sonde en die rol van Christus in individuele redding, weet Moshoeshoe dat hy en die kerkman met mekaar moet praat. Wit militêre magte bedreig die Basoeto toenemend en Moshoeshoe het 'n bondgenoot nodig.

Krog beeld Casalis uit as 'n denker wat vasstaan in sy geloof hoewel hy deur sy interaksie met Moshoehoe die teenstrydighede van die Skrif raaksien. Casalis het groot agting vir die Basoetokoning, 'n gespierde man en 'n man van grasie (23). Moshoeshoe dwing Casalis om nugter oor sy geloofsoortuigings te dink: "[...] die koning peper my met vrae. Hoe kan ons bewys dat alles in die Bybel waar is?" (25). Moshoeshoe vra verder hoe gewone sterflike mense in 'n ewige God kan glo; hoewel die ewigheid van God vir Moshoeshoe 'n kwelvraag is, is die idee van die ewigheid deel van sy verwysingsraamwerk en verwys hy telkens na hoe hy en karakters soos Casalis saam in die ewigheid met mekaar verbind is.

Moshoeshoe is bekommerd oor sy mense en sy krimpende koninkryk. Tot die einde (ná verskeie tydspronge oor dekades) in sy korrespondensie met sy dogter Adéle, is Casalis op sy beurt bekommerd oor Moshoeshoe se geestelike saligheid. Dis ook in hierdie skrywes tussen pa en dogter wat die toneelteks sake wat vroeër uitgelig is, soms onnodig met 'n hamer herhaal: "Het die wit man se genadeloosheid dan geen perke nie?", wonder Adéle (85).

Beide Moshoehoe en Casalis is gereeld in die teenwoordigheid van, en word uitgedaag deur, vroulike vertrouelinge. Wanneer Moshoeshoe se vrou 'Mamohatho vir hom uitwys hoe vreemd en absurd die gebruik van geld is, reageer die koning uit frustrasie: "Jy praat asof ons kan kies! Asof ons kan nee sê!" (40). Op haar beurt spreek 'Mamohatho haar kommer uit oor die invloed van die sendelinge: "Intussen loop jou kinders se koppe leeg van Basoetokennis en dool ons almal verdierd hier rond soos die sendelinge ons van mekaar afsny" (41). Hierdie woorde dui treffend op die die wyses waarop inheemse kennissisteme stelselmatig verdring is deur koloniale raamwerke en woordeskatte. Wanneer Moshoeshoe wegstap van die gesprek, sê 'n bewerige 'Mamohatho "selfs sy beeldspraak is wit ..." nadat die koning na vensters en deure verwys het (43). Beide Moshoeshoe en 'Mamohatho is karakters waarin akteurs hul tande sal kan inslaan.

Die tonele tussen Moshoeshoe en 'Mamohatho is van die sterktste in die hele toneelteks, waar Casalis en sy verstaanbaar-meer-gedienstige-vrou 'n veel minder dinamiese verhouding het. Tog moet ek Mevrou Casalis nie te lig skat nie; dis immers sy wat die kannibalismemotief (reeds in die openingstonele aangekondig) eksplisiet in verhouding bring met die Christelike nagmaalsritueel (48). Die karakters Maeder en Arbousset (twee ander sendelinge wat Casalis ken) wat beide die styl en figure van Samuel Beckett en Tom Stoppard oproep, is by tye irriterend, asof hul dialoog ontuis klink in die toneelteks. Dit is nie vir my duidelik waarom hierdie kort interaksies en dialoog op hierdie wyse gestruktureer is nie (sien byvoorbeeld 53, 56, 58).

Die verhoog vra vir 'n "witkleurige raamwerk of omlyning wat te alle tye sigbaar vir die gehoor moet wees" (6). Hierdie raamwerk word op kreatiewe wyse deel van die verhooghandelinge, soos gedurende 'Mamohato se monoloog as voormoeder (62–4) wanneer die raam uitmekaargehaal word en Casalis dit herstel. Soms is Krog se toneelaanwysings visueel treffend: "Pragtige uitsig op manjifieke berge van Lesotho" (32). Hierdie uitsig, of die suggestie daarvan, moet oortuigend weergegee word, aangesien Moshoeshoe en Casalis op een van die kranse sit en gesels. 'n Regisseur sal die dramatiese gewig van sekere toneelaanwysings goed moet (her)oorweeg. In toneel 41, byvoorbeeld, is daar 'n "luide weeklaag" vanaf die berge, waarop Moorosi (op besoek aan Casalis) 'n bord laat val; "Casalis stort op sy knieë" (49). 'n Regisseur mag dalk verkies om hierdie dramatiese klanke en handelinge ligter te benader as wat die teks voorstel. Indien hierdie toneelteks opgevoer sou word, sal dit interessant wees om te sien watter visie en interpretasie 'n dinamiese jong swart regisseur tot die produksie sal bring.

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Ons het ver […] versit: Gedigte, toesprake, onderhoude, met 'n essay deur Hein Willemse.
Patrick J. Petersen.
Wildernis: abrile doman-Uitgewers, 2021. 315 pp.
ISBN 9781991219374.

Die naam Patrick Petersen is een van dié wat uitstaan wanneer 'n mens dink aan die 1980's en 1990's toe die Afrikaanse letterkunde as instelling ter take geneem is vir die wyse waarop dit skrywers wat nie wit is nie uitgesluit het. Petersen was een van 'n groep skrywers en akademici wat die begrip 'swart Afrikaanse skryfwerk' 'n bepaalde invulling gegee het en met groot dringendheid op die literêre agenda van die tyd geplaas het.

Petersen is gebore in Wolseley in 1951 en is aan die Universiteit van Wes-Kaapland opgelei in die teologie voordat hy in 1976 sy eerste beroep as dominee aanvaar het. Hy begin in die middel tagtigerjare om self sy bundels te publiseer nadat 'n eerste manuskrip deur uitgewers afgewys is. Hy help ook ander swart Afrikaanse digters om hulle werk te publiseer deur die uitgewerye Prog en later Domestica op te rig en publiseer ook saam met hulle in versamelbundels. Sy ontydige dood in 'n motorongeluk op ouderdom 46 in 1997 is 'n gevoelige verlies vir die Afrikaanse letterkunde, veral omdat hy as skrywer bereid was om op kompromislose wyse die rol van die Afrikaanse letterkunde in die politieke landskap ná 1994 te bedink.

Die publikasie *Ons het […] ver versit*, onder redaksie van Hein Willemse, is 'n belangrike erkenning en huldiging van hierdie digter-aktivis wat in 2021 sy sewentigste verjaardag sou vier. Sy digbundels, toesprake en onderhoude word hier saamgebring met 'n besonder insiggewende essay waarin Willemse sy bydrae takseer teen die agtergrond van die swart Afrikaanse skrywersbeweging, die sosio-politiese konteks en belangrike teorieë oor die verhouding tussen die estetiese en die politiese, 'n saak waarmee Petersen homself deurlopend besig gehou het. Hiernaas is daar ook Willemse se voorwoord waarin hy sy redigeringsbeleid uiteensit en Petersen se werk plaas binne die konteks van die swart Suid-Afrikaanse letterkunde in Engels en ook die postkoloniale letterkunde, iets wat interessante navorsingsmoontlikhede in verband met dié skrywer se werk open. Die netjiese versorging van die geheel sowel as die nuttige lys woordverklarings en indeks maak hiervan 'n keurpublikasie.

Dit is veral Petersen se drie digbundels en een lang gedig wat inhoud gee aan sy reputasie as polities betrokke digter deur die wyse waarop dit politieke kwessies vervleg met onderwerpe soos familie, liefde, geloof, maatskaplike kwessies en sport. Die inleiding van sy eerste bundel *amandla ngawethu* (1985) maak dit duidelik waarom dit die geval is: "niks in suid-Afrika is neutraal nie, niemand in suid-afrika kan neutraal skryf nie," (16) skryf hy. Daarom moet die poësie ook die rol van wapen in die politieke stryd vervul. Die eerste gedigte in hierdie debuutbundel fokus op herkoms, soos wat blyk uit die gedig "komvandaan" ('n begrip wat later ook deur Diana Ferrus opgeneem sou word in haar digbundel *Ons komvandaan* van 2006). Deel van die "komvandaan" is die roerende portrette van sy ma en pa, ook van sy gemeenskap wat ly onder apartheid. Die gedig "dienaar van die nagereg" (oor sy polisieman-pa) bly 'n hoogtepunt in Petersen se oeuvre vanweë die verwikkelde emosies wat oorgedra word deur middel van die woordspel, dubbelsinnigheid, ironie en treffende metafore.

Die bundel *Advent* wat drie jaar later in 1988 verskyn, is besonder sterk gesetel in die versetspolitiek van die laat tagtigerjare. Die uiters gespanne atmosfeer van daardie tyd is deurlopend aanwesig in die bundel, wat in elke afdeling en in haas elke gedig die politieke probleme van die tyd aanspreek. Besonder treffend is byvoorbeeld die reeks gedigte in die tweede van die bundel se sewe afdelings, getitel "Soldate van die tweede revolusie", waarin beide stem en erkenning gegee word aan die vroue wat deel was van die vryheidsbeweging. Hiernaas is daar ook die vyfde afdeling, getitel "Die kerk 'n hand windvolles", waarin die digter sy ingewikkelde posisie as predikant van 'n kerk in die apartheidskonteks verreken. Die drang na vryheid van onderdrukking bou al hoe sterker op met verloop van die bundel totdat dit eindig met die gedig "Daar kom 'n bloedkreet uit die aarde op". Daar is min verse in Afrikaans, voor én ná die val van apartheid, wat die brandende verset en uitdagende retoriek van hierdie verse ewenaar.

Petersen se derde bundel *Vergenoeg* verskyn in 1993, ná die draai van die politieke gety maar vóór die eerste demokratiese verkiesing van 1994. Volgens die opdrag voor in die bundel is dit geskryf "vir Afrikaans" en sinspeel die tekste wat op die titelblad 'ingeplak'

is ('n nuwe verstegniek wat Petersen gebruik om ook ander stemme in sy werk in te bring) daarop dat Afrikaans beide die taal van onderdrukking en van die struggle is. Waar die aksent in *Advent* gelê het op die onmiddellikheid van die stryd teen apartheid, verskuif dit in *Vergenoeg* na die stryd teen armoede en die uitbuiting van die werkersklas. In die tweede afdeling van die bundel word die werkers van die land aan die woord gestel in hulle eie taal, terwyl die sesde afdeling se gedigte die lot van veral plaaswerkers belig uit die perspektief van 'n simpatieke buitestander.

Myns insiens is die lang gedig "Ons kom van ver af"—hier opgeneem uit die bundel met dieselfde titel gepubliseer saam met P. William Abrahams, Eugène Beukes, André Boezak en Isak Theunissen in 1995—'n hoogtepunt in Petersen se oeuvre. Dit is 'n gedig waarin die persoonlike en die publieke verenig om die lang tog van onderdruktes na vryheid te beskryf. Dit verwys tegelykertyd na die verlede (vergelyk die herhaalde verwysings na die "lang pad" wat afgelê is vanaf slawerny en swerwerskap) én na die toekoms (vergelyk die pleidooie om samewerking aan sy "Xhosa-broers en susters" om die hande van die ander onderdruktes in die land te vat en hulle nie alleen te los op die pad vorentoe nie).

Naas Petersen se poësie bevat dié versamelbundel ook drie van sy toesprake waarin hy sy artistieke oortuigings en agenda as swart Afrikaanse skrywer uiteengesit het, telkens steeds meer selfversekerd, vasberade en duidelik geartikuleer. Die eerste toespraak, "Swart Afrikaanse digters en hulle ambag" (gelewer by die Swart Afrikaanse Skrywersimposium van 1985), is die geleentheid waarby hy die taal Afrikaans vir homself as swart skrywer toeëien, met die vaste oortuiging dat die poësie binne die apartheidskonteks moet funksioneer as wapen in die stryd en "boodskapdraer van die mense" (212). In "Goeie skryfwerk en slegte skryfwerk", 'n toespraak gelewer by geleentheid van die ontmoeting tussen Suid-Afrikaanse skrywers en die ANC by die Victoria-waterval in Julie 1989, voer hy die idee van die letterkunde as wapen verder wanneer hy die metafoor van poësie as briefbom gebruik en die stelling maak dat die struggle "'n poëtiese guerilla-aksie" van skrywers vra (219). Die rede "Publication and power: Views of the marginalised", gelewer tydens 'n kongres oor Suid-Afrikaanse letterkunde in Duitsland in 1992, verduidelik in watter mate sy oprigting van die uitgewers Prog en Domestica 'n poging was om hom te verset teen die magsverhoudinge in die Afrikaanse uitgewerswêreld. In sy rede by die Tweede Swart Afrikaanse Skrywersimposium in 1995, "Die ongelyke magsverhouding in die Afrikaanse letterkunde", dring hy weer eens aan op die regstelling van ongelykhede in die Afrikaanse literêre sisteem en blyk dit dat sy optimisme oor die politieke omwenteling in die land getemper word deur die besef dat daar deeglike introspeksie oor die verlede nodig is.

Die onderhoude wat in die boek opgeneem word, vul die prentjie verder aan. Petersen se bedaarde antwoorde op die Nederlandse letterkundige, Hans Ester, se skeptisisme oor die letterkunde as wapen in die politieke stryd in 'n 1989-onderhoud, is die keerkant van die vurige strydgedigte in *Advent* van 1988. Besonder verhelderend is ook die 1991-onderhoud met Hein Willemse waarin Petersen verwys na die invloed wat sy skoling in die swart- en bevrydingsteologie op sy denke en werk gehad het. Sy beskrywing van die belangrike invloed van Black Consciousness op sy begrip van homself is eweneens veelseggend: "Deur Black Consciousness het ek van 'n skaam mens—teruggetrokke oor hare en velkleur—eenvoudig 'n ander mens geword". Die onderhoud met Daniel Hugo vir die Afrikaanse radio bring weer 'n blik op hoe hy homself as predikant gesien het, as iemand wat "begif is om 'n prediker te wees en woorduitleg te doen", eerder as om pastorale of administratiewe werk te doen.

Hierdie saambring van Petersen se versamelde werke erken die belangrikheid van sy nalatenskap en gee vir die leser sig op 'n belangrike periode in die geskiedenis van die land en die Afrikaanse letterkunde. Terugskouend is dit duidelik dat die dink-, skryf- en aktivistiese werk wat Petersen en sy tydgenote gedoen het die grondslag gelê het vir die werk van 'n volgende geslag skrywers soos Ronelda Kamfer, Nathan Trantraal, Jolyn Phillips, Lynthia Julies, Ryan Pedro, Ashwin Arendse, Churchil Naudé en Veronique Jephtas. *Ons het [...] ver versit* is dus 'n belangrike en tydige huldiging van sy werk wat vir studente en ander belangstellendes van groot nut sal wees.

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Unam Wena.
Mthunzikazi A. Mbungwana.
Durban: uHlanga, 2021. 88 pp.
ISBN 9780620928144.

Unam Wena is a single-author collection of 37 isiXhosa poems, divided into four sections. The themes in this collection are life in general, home, dreams, love and sexuality. This poetry collection is very different from most traditional collections. It requires the reader to allow their mind to think differently, it challenges the reader to change their mind about their knowledge of poetic creativity, difference, language use, spatial organisation and orthographic conventions. These are all packaged and incorporated creatively to provide the reader with a sense of painful celebration of freedom and difference.

The title of the book, *Unam Wena*, is a phrase which invites the reader to become part of the contents, to be with the author. This title can mean 'you are with me', 'you have me', 'you are within', 'you are following what I am saying' or even 'we get along', 'we understand each other'. This array of associated meanings provides the reader with a sense of interpretative freedom. However, when a reader is provided with so many alternatives, they are forced to become uncomfortable and even confused, and perhaps even lost—the opposite of what the title presumably hopes to achieve, to be with the author, to be intimate with the author. This sense of freedom, and perhaps confusion for a rigid mind, is also expressed through various ways of writing the title and the book: 'UNAM WENA' or 'unam w*E*na' (emphasis added). The phrase is written as 'Unam Wena' in the table of contents and as 'UNAM WENA' (26) in the title of the titular poem. "UNAM WENA" is an explicit poem about same-sex lovemaking. This poem is written with no capital letters and no punctuation apart from a full-stop at the end of the poem. As one reads through this poem, you are drawn to the repeated use of possessive pronouns such as 'yours', 'ours', 'mine'. The use of language in this manner is aligned with the intimacy as expressed in other poems such as "Imilebe Yethu" (our lips) and "Bhospeliti wam" (which is the isiXhosa word for the English 'brooch' or Afrikaans 'borsspeld').

Another theme is ikhaya (home). The home is a very special place for many people. When life turns sour many people think about the warmth of the home and family. This theme is expressed in a form of a yearning for a place to belong. Ordinarily, home is the place of comfort and safety. However, in this book, home is expressed in terms of remembering smells, the village, memories of grandmother, grandfather, uncles and aunts, love and pain. The poem, "Ikhaya" (59) reflects the ordinary life associated with home, however, reference to 'ikhaya' is also made in many other poems.

The third theme, pain, is expressed in many ways throughout the book. The first three poems are about the pain associated with being queer, the rejection by society and family and the violence that queer people face. The poem, "Ndicholwe ndifile" (I was found dead) is a painful expression of rape and abuse, and how society views the queer—in terms of obscenity, decay, faeces that needs to be flushed (16). This level of violence is expressed in many other ways including in the titles of some of the poems, "Ihlwili" (blood clot), "Amanxeba" (wounds), "Isilonda" (a sore) and "Ameva" (thorns).

Coupled with the theme of pain is the expression of difference. The poem "Unongayindoda" (one who is like a man), the title of which is a slur used to refer to butch women, is an example of how society views the queer woman:

UNongayindoda akamntu
Yinto! Akayontombi, engengofamzi, engeyondoda
NguNongayindoda.

(*UNongayindoda is not human*
It's a thing! She is not a girl, nor a woman, or a man
She is like a man.)

In this poem, the author painfully expresses how society justifies the abuse of queer people, because "oonongayindoda" are not seen as human, they are seen as things. This level of abuse is also expressed in the poem "UMamise/UToki". The title of the poem suggest uncertainty. Using figurative language by referring to village dogs, the author shows how a male dog (uToki) is held in high esteem, as a provider, a protector and a keeper of the house. The female dog (uMamise) is Toki's puppy. Mamise is ridiculed for having big breasts from feeding Toki's puppies while Toki is praised as a hero. The use of UMamise/uToki in this manner, depicts the vicious cycle of misogyny and abuse of women.

Finally, the spatial organisation as well as the employment and subversion of orthographic conventions in the collection must be noted. The book is divided into four sections. Each of the sections open with a poem that expresses pain and difference. Looking at the table of contents, the first two sections lure the reader into thinking that there is uniformity. The last two sections, however, create an imbalance in many ways. Whereas punctuation is used sparingly throughout the book, the last two

sections are typical of a 'freestyle' approach that is associated with performance poetry. The author uses the alignment of sentences in a way that many would consider unconventional. Some poems have embedded poems and some poems are spread over several pages, with lots of empty spaces—perhaps an expression of silence. These half empty pages force the reader to slow down and wonder why the pages are empty, when the poem is continued on the next page ("Ihambo", which starts on page 72, is spread over 16 pages, for example). This is unconventional and unfamiliar. However, this is exactly the point: to make the unfamiliar familiar and disturb the order of the day, and to painfully celebrate in many ways the freedom to be different.

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Ilifa.
Athambile Masola.
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Athambile Masola's *Ilifa* is a refreshing compilation of poems written in everyday isiXhosa. The choice to use an urban, everyday dialect with the occasional splash of English phrases is typical of the language use of the modern black South African, especially in urban areas. Thus, the choice of language and the particular dialect is inviting and lends a sense of familiarity and earnestness to the the poetry. The compilation is divided into three parts: "Umyalelo Wentombi" (Instructions for a girl), "Uthando" (Love) and "Apha" (Here).

"Umyalelo Wentombi" can be read through the lens of an Afro-feminist critique of the circumstances of black South African women's life worlds; however, the poetry throughout the book also presents us with a postcolonial reflection upon the identity and the circumstances of the lives of ordinary black people who continue to live within the advent of coloniality in South Africa. The poems have a personal tone that reminds one of storytelling. Rather than using abstract or academic language, there is something about the style of writing that is therefore reminiscent of listening to *iintsomi* (folktales). This section is characterised by emotions of pain, loss, grief and disappointment, as well as a sense of raging against the oppressive expectations laid upon this group of women. Throughout the first section, the issue of the silencing of black women's voices, the cost of that silence and the price of speaking up comes through in several poems. In "Igazi" (16) the speaker interrogates the social expectation for a young lady to not speak out of turn. She asks what happens when we continue to bite our tongues and our mouths are then filled with blood. The concept of the mouth filled with blood invokes another idea, that of the culpability of those who fail to speak up in the face of injustice. The speaker points to the fact that ultimately the blood causes a feeling of sickness from within, and what then do we do? How shall we continue in the face of the sickness caused by the sanctioned silence of women?

The section is not just about pain and silencing, however—there is also present in it a celebration of coming of age, coming to know oneself, one's culture and the legacy from which one comes. "Umyalelo Wentombi" is also a celebration of the legacy of black women who were courageous and stood against injustice; women who wrote and spoke truth to power in their day, but now stand almost buried in the margins of our history and our academics—women like Nontsizi Mgqwetho, Noni Jabavu, J. Nozipo Maraire, Sindiwe Magona and others. It is a call to remember them; to keep their names and teachings alive. These poems point to the fact that these women provide an inheritance and legacy upon which today's young black women may come to know themselves and find the courage to stand and make their voices heard.

The second section, "Uthando", explores the theme of love in its different forms. Love expressed in sensuality and longing. Love explored in its ordinariness and everydayness. Love's losses as well as its capacity as healer demonstrated through the bonds of kinship.

In both the first and the second sections there is a recurring reference to Christian spirituality and a use of biblical phrases. In the first section the Christian symbolism such as in the poem "Warkazulwa" (23) often points to the pain of the defilement of that which is sacred. In "Uthando" the biblical phrases continue, but the tone is more hopeful, as in the poem "Izwi elidala" (38). Along with the Christian spirituality there is also a continued reference to one's ancestors and the importance of such connections.

Masola writes odes to the traditions of Xhosa women in poems such as "Iinyawo Zinodaka" (14). The title of this poem is taken from a song sung by women during particular traditional ceremonies; the

phrase "iinyawo zinodaka" speaks of the experiences the women have walked through, particularly as it concerns the roles they play in being wives and mothers. Masola does not attempt to translate for us the wisdom embedded in certain isiXhosa idioms she employs in the poetry, or the meanings of the different textures of Christian religiosity in her poems. However, this form of hybridity echoes and mirrors the identities imbued upon many of us, as black people of this place and this time.

In the last section, "Apha", the poetry speaks to the socio-political circumstances that characterise the life worlds of the black people of South Africa. Some of the poems in this section pay homage to the fact that while people live in a disenfranchised state, they still live—they still dream dreams of a better future. Most of the poems in this last section, however, represent an unflinching indictment of the quality of freedom that contemporary black people in post-1994 South Africa experience. The opening poem, "Ikaka" (64), which translates as "Shit", voices bold commentary on the indignity that black people are subjected to in South Africa. The basic point being made is that the freedom that black people have today is shit! The writer also critiques South African politicians. In the poem "Rayi-Rayi" (66), the writer uses a children's game called "rayi-rayi" to frame her critique. The game is commonly played in townships and villages by old people with the young to teach them idioms. It is a guessing game where one aims to solve riddles by putting together obfuscated clues to uncover the true identity of the thing in question. The use of the structure of this children's game emphasises the games that are played in our society with people's lives. It also points to the obfuscating nature of the of politics and the failure of our political leaders.

Masola's *Ilifa* is a delight to read. In many ways, the way it is written can be judged as unsophisticated, but therein lies its winning card. It is completely unpretentious, simple in its unrefined isiXhosa and yet, at times as the reader, all one can do is exclaim "iyoh!" and then put down the little book and just selah! *Ilifa* showcases the need to write in our languages, not because one is an isiXhosa scholar, but because of the fact that to write in one's own language is to exercise and increase the collective power and voice of one's own people.

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As die katjiepiering blom.
Audrey Jantjies.
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ISBN 9780795710285.

Audrey Jantjies se debuut *As die katjiepiering blom* is 'n bildungsroman waarvan reeds die titel gelaai is met spanning. Dit herinner aan die titel van Ronelda S. Kamfer se debuut *Noudat slapende honde* (2008) en skep dieselfde afwagting oor wat gebeur wanneer die aksie van blom of ontwaking plaasvind. Dit trek die leser in en lok onmiddellike nuuskierigheid uit.

Met betrekking tot die titel en omslag van die roman staan die katjiepiering sentraal en dien dit as metafoor vir Lea, die protagonis, se lewensverhaal. Die roman vertel nie net die verhaal van Lea se komvandaan nie, maar ook van haar oorgang van kindwees tot jong volwasse vrou. Hierdie oorgang sluit groei en verandering in, net soos wat die katjiepiering ontwikkel en verander deur die verloop van verskeie seisoene. Die wit van die katjiepiering op die omslag suggereer myns insiens reinheid oftewel onskuld—Lea verlaat Galberg as 'n jong onskuldige adolessent met baie min kennis van die buitewêreld en selfs 'n verwronge kennis van die stad:

> Maar Lea en Niesie is excited, want vanjaar maak hulle klaar met skool en hulle twee gaan fokkof uit Galberg. For good. En hulle twee gaan iets word. En as hulle vakansies kom kuier, gaan hulle Engels praat soos die mense van die Kaap. En hulle gaan vir hulle Kaapse mans met gladde hare kry wat goed na hulle kyk, al is hulle self ook 'n ietsie. (57)

Verder skep die lewendige natuurgroen op die omslag en die rooi in die titel die gevoel van hoop en verkondig dit die oopbloei van 'n nuwe blomseisoen. Reeds deur middel van die omslagontwerp en titel word die konvensies van 'n bildungsroman geaktiveer—'n roman wat 'n jong protagonis se reis van kinderjare tot volwassenheid uitbeeld met 'n fokus op die uitdagings wat die karakter se groei beïnvloed.

Struktureel bestaan die roman uit 32 hoofstukke met 'n epiloog aan die einde. Oor hierdie 32 hoofstukke

word die lewe en opgroei van Lea kronologies uitgebeeld. Hoofstuk 1 open met die geboorte van Lea, daarna maak die leser kennis met Galberg wat as vaste ruimte dien vir die eerste paar jaar van Lea se bestaan tot in adolessensie. Die tweede helfte van die roman speel af in die stad waar Lea haar universiteitsjare begin en waar sy deur die moeilikste toets(e) van haar lewe gaan wat haar groei as karakter en die uiteindelike keerpunt in haar lewe bewerkstellig. Die epiloog aan die einde gee 'n kort opsomming van Lea se lewe ná al die uitdagings. Ten opsigte van die taalgebruik varieer dit van Overbergse uitdrukkings tot Nama met 'n woordelys aan die einde van die roman: dit is die tipe geselstaal wat dit vir die leser maklik maak om te lees en die verhaal te volg.

Voorts sentreer die roman ook grotendeels rondom Lea se soeke na haar persoonlike sowel as kulturele identiteit. Lea ondergaan 'n verplasing van kultuur en identiteit wanneer sy in Hoofstuk 16 Galberg verlaat vir die stad. Sy maak kennis met 'n heel nuwe bestaan en is opgewonde oor die verandering en moontlikheid om haarself te verbeter. Hierdie opgewondenheid is egter van korte duur wanneer sy tot die wrede ontnugtering kom dat dit nie so maklik is om aan te pas nie. Lea ondergaan verskeie uitdagings vanaf Hoofstuk 20 tot Hoofstuk 26 wat'n identiteitskrisis by haar oproep. Jantjies neem die leser saam met Lea op hierdie emosionele en spanningsvolle ontdekkingsreis in haar soeke na 'n nuwe identiteit.

In terme van die tematiese aspekte wat die roman ondersoek, staan geweld teen vroue en kinders op die voorgrond. Lea se verhouding met mans staan veral sentraal. Byna elke man in haar lewe behandel haar sleg en wil haar gebruik vir hul eie voordeel. Haar pa, Jakob, is 'n alkoholis, wie se enigste manier van kommunikeer lelike woorde en vuiste is: "Wanneer Jakob Vrydae sy pay gaan haal by die oubaas, gaan hy eers by ou Fly by die smokkelhuis om. As hy dan by die huis aangeval kom, is dit donnertyd vir mammie Dientjie" (18). Lea word in Hoofstuk 3 seksueel gemolesteer deur haar ouer neef, Tommie.

In Hoofstuk 20 ontmoet Lea vir Sam wat haar ook gebruik vir sy eie voordeel en bykans haar ondergang beteken. Van al die mans in Lea se lewe is Boet Tang en Emmanuel die enigstes wat haar beskerm. Hulle kan myns insiens beskou word as aardse verteenwoordigers van die engele Amakhoeb en Mâbasen (wat ook in die roman uitgebeeld word). Tesame met die tema van geweld teen vroue en kinders speel die onderwerp van godsdiens ook 'n belangrike rol in die verhaal en word Christenskap en Nama-godsdiens dikwels vermeng. Die Nama-godsdiens glo soos Christenskap ook in aartsengele (Amakhoeb en Mâbasen) wat op aarde geplaas is om mense te beskerm en te lei. Al het die mense van Galberg min en al is hulle uitdagings baie, glo hulle steeds dat hulle geloof hulle sal deurdra.

Ander tematiese aspekte soos rassisme, seksuele mishandeling en die kontras tussen die plaaslewe en die stadslewe word ook ondersoek in die roman. Dat die roman sterk feministies is, is reeds vanaf die eerste hoofstuk duidelik. Die vrou se onderdrukte posisie in 'n samelewing wat deur mans gedomineer word, word ondersoek en uitgedaag. Lea se sterk matriargale voorgangers (ant Kôtjie en ma Dientjie) is ten spyte van hul onmagtige posisie op ekonomiese, politieke en kulturele terreine steeds sterk karakters wat die weg baan vir Lea.

In my mening is *As die katjiepiering blom* nie net die verhaal van Lea Floris nie, maar van baie bruin plaasgemeenskappe. Van ant Kôtjie wat permanent by die deur inval met 'n sappige storie tot by Jakob met sy vier gevrete wat sy hele gesin byna elke tweede dag papskop. Lea is elke kleindorpse of plaasmeisie wat stad toe gekom het met die hoop om 'n beter lewe te maak vir haarself, om 'n iets te wees en dan verskeie uitdagings in die gesig moes staar. Dis 'n verhaal wat jou as leser breek tot op die been en jou dan weer bou. Die hoop beskaam as't ware nooit in hierdie roman nie. Audrey Jantjies skryf uit die perspektief van die gewone mens en kry dit reg om met die leser op die eenvoudigste manier te gesels en 'n boodskap van hoop, standvastige geloof en die hoop op 'n nuwe begin oor te dra.

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bottelnek breek bek.
Dianne Du Toit Albertze.
Kaapstad: Human en Rousseau, 2022. 255 pp.
ISBN 9780798182669.

Snikkend, stukkend en uitgelewer aan die alleenheid van nie-behoort, roep 'n stem: "Ek wil ook net hoort, soosie swart aarde om my" (239). Dit is die noodkreet van Dianne Du Toit Albertze se debuutroman, *bottelnek breek bek*: 'n noodkreet wat sê transgender mense is

hier, in Afrikaans, en dat ons ook 'n plekkie in die son verdien. *bottelnek breek bek* bied vir lesers 'n intieme blik op die lewens van 'n tapisserie van karakters, geweef rondom Dora, 'n transgender vrou van Carolusberg, buite Springbok in die Noord-Kaap.

Vanaf bladsy een word die leser aan die kraag geruk wanneer die verhaal begin met Jamie, Dora se vriendin, wat verkrag en vermoor word op die Belville-treinstasie terwyl Dora en haar ander vriendin, Whashiela, toekyk. Op soek na iets om die verlies mee te verdoof, word Dora vasgevang in 'n warrelwind van nagklubligte, dwelms en seks. Woonagtig in Woodstock in Ma Helen se huis, sukkel Whashiela en Dora om woorde te vind vir die smart wat hulle opvreet. Wanneer Ma Helen uitvind dat Dora dwelms gebruik, skop sy haar uit en Dora moet terugkeer na die plek van haar Grootma se bene, Carolusberg. Hier word sy nie as Dora aanvaar nie en moet sy baklei teen die stemme van haar familie wat haar nog as Daantjie sien. Myle weg van Kaapstad en die eens veilige hawe van queer sisterhood, moet Dora alleen met die spoke van haar verlede worstel.

Die leser word saamgeneem op 'n waaghalsige reis deur die donker onderbuik van die Bellville-treinstasie, holderstebolder deur die strate van Woodstock en Kayamandi, tussen die vier mure van die Mystic Boer op Stellenbosch en oor die rooi sand van Namakwaland. Op 'n soortgelyke wyse as in K. Sello Duiker se *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* (2001), Chase Rhys se *Kinnes* (2018) en Olivia M. Coetzee se *Innie Shadows* (2019) word die verhaal in *bottelnek breek bek* vanuit die perspektief van agt karakters, asook die hoofkarakter se kleintydpersona, Daantjie, vertel. Elke karakter se narratief strek oor slegs agt of minder bladsye op 'n slag. Dit speel af in vyf milieus, naamlik "kleintyd", "nou", "varsity", "teenage nightmares" en "daai tyd", en flits achronologies tussen die onderskeie tydperke. As sulks, lees *bottelnek breek bek* meer soos 'n samestelling van blitsfiksies in plaas van 'n lineêre verhaal en tóg is dit glad nie onsamehangend nie. Die fragmentering van die verhaal is veral effektief omdat dit daarin slaag om 'n realistiese en eerlike beeld van die mens se oneindige soeke na identiteit weer te gee. Op dié manier kry Albertze dit ook reg om die leser ten alle tye geboei te hou terwyl sy ons uitdaag om onsself ook af te vra: Wie is ek? Waar behoort ek?

bottelnek breek bek is ook nie op die bek geval nie. Die leser word ingelaat in die gewelddadige realiteite en vervreemding wat transgender persone elke dag in die gesig staar en word nie toegelaat om weg te skram daarvan nie. Tog is geweld en vervreemding nie al aspek van transpersone se lewens wat in die roman uitgebeeld word nie. Daarmee tesame verhaal *bottelnek breek bek* ook die sagte oomblikke wat in die gekose familie van die queergemeenskap bestaan, soos Whashiela wat vir Dora onder haar vlerk neem op varsity en Dora wat vir Whashiela bad en haar seer probeer weg was nadat hulle saam aangeval is (23–7, 34–40, 75–7). Die leser sien so die kwesbaarheid van elke karakter.

As 'n transleser was dit by tye vir my moeilik om aan te hou lees juis as gevolg van hoe hartverskeurend, intiem en sag die verhaal is. In woorde wat so sag soos systof saamgeweef is, leer Daantjie oor sy vroulikheid wanneer hy en Grootma saam dress up speel.[1] Lesers kry hierdeur insig in transpersone se genderontdekkingsreis (13–7). Alhoewel die sigbaarheid van transpersone in die media toeneem, is voorbeelde van trans en gender-nonconforming karakters in die Afrikaanse literatuur skaars. Daarom is *bottelnek breek bek* 'n uiters belangrike roman wat Afrikaanse lesers op 'n genuanseerde wyse aan die bestaanstryd van transpersone blootstel.

Terselfdertyd worstel ek met Albertze—'n wit skrywer—se besluit om die verhaal in 'n mengsel van standaardafrikaans, Namakwalandse Afrikaans, Gayle, Kaaps en Sabela te skryf. Die laaste drie taalvorme en/of -kodes word hoofsaaklik in bruin gemeenskappe gebesig en dus is dit sinvol vir die bruin karakters in die roman om een of meer van die vermelde taalvorme en/of -kodes te gebruik. Na my mening oorskry die roman egter die grens tussen waardering en kulturele toe-eiening omdat ook die wit karakters, wat in werklikheid eerder standaardafrikaans of ander variëteite van Afrikaans sou praat, ook dieselfde mengsel van Gayle, Kaaps en Sabela praat.

In 'n onderhoud met Johan van Zyl in *Rapport Weekliks* sê Albertze: "Soos my hoofkarakter, Dora, glo ek as dit by taal kom, is optelgoed hougoed" (12). Na my mening kan dié benadering tot taal kolonialisties voorkom in ag genome hoedat die historiese taalpolitiek van Afrikaans, volgens Frank Hendricks (97), vandag steeds bruin Afrikaanssprekendes benadeel en hul gebruik van variëteite benewens standaardafrikaans stigmatiseer. Is dit nie juis kolonialiste se "optelgoed is hougoed"-houding wat bruin en swart mense se land en lewens gekaap het nie? Dit is teenstrydig dat die roman die kwessies van gekaapte land aanspreek, maar dat wit karakters in die roman taalvorms ook kaap.

Alhoewel dit duidelik is dat Dora bewus is van haar witheid en skuldgevoelens daaroor het, is daar slegs enkele oomblikke wanneer sy dit aanspreek. Verder spreek sy slegs een keer haar gebruik van taal aan wanneer sy bieg: "Dalk is ek maar net jessica, oor hy wil wit praat en ekke my tong wil afsny" (161). Myns

insiens moes Albertze meer krities omgegaan het met haar gebruik van Afrikaanse variëteite.

Nietemin is *bottelnek breek bek* 'n broodnodige bydrae tot die Afrikaanse letterkunde oor transgendermense. Dit maak Afrikaanse lesers bewus daarvan dat Afrikaanse mense ook trans kan wees en dat transmense ook behoort. As 'n jong transpersoon, gee dit my hoop dat ek en ander soos ek ons stories in Afrikaans kan vertel. Ek sien uit na nog sulke vars nuwe transgenderstemme.

Aantekening

1. Albertze gebruik 'hy'/'hom'-voornaamwoorde vir Daantjie.

Geraadpleegde bronne

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