Power, Discourse and South African Resistance Literature: A Provisional Exploration

by Johan H. Geertsema

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Supervisor: A.M. de Lange, M.A.
Assistant supervisor: Prof. H.M. Viljoen, D.Litt.

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Preface

The purpose of this preface is to clarify some pertinent issues regarding the argument of this dissertation. These issues need clarification before the argument proper is introduced.

A major point of criticism which I foresee with regard to this dissertation concerns my position vis-à-vis the subject matter. Stated bluntly, I am a white European presuming to criticise an African literature of struggle and resistance.

The fact that I regard myself as an African, and *not* as a white liberal, might not be a good enough safeguard against criticism that I am a Eurocentric (elitist) settler, who, from an elevated position in an ivory tower, seeks either to discredit or to colonise the struggle. This is a criticism I am very sensitive towards but which does, unfortunately, inevitably carry some weight.

The dilemma I face is one which is relevant to most if not all Western critics writing on African literature. It can be summarised in the following three points:

1 The Western critic is a white liberal. S/he is therefore both patronizing and, probably, has a hidden agenda. This hidden agenda could arguably amount to either maintaining the status quo (which deprives African people in order to privilege Western colonisers) or to exploiting Africa, albeit in a more sophisticated way than did the soldiers of Christianity and civilization who came to Africa in order to exploit her people, her wealth and her resources. The accusation that the Western critic writes on African literature because s/he can in such a way benefit materially is obviously a valid one. This dissertation, for instance, will - hopefully - grant me an MA degree with its possible attendant benefits (university tenure; an academic reputation, money and so forth).

2 What makes the white liberal even worse is her/his bourgeois position - especially relative to the mass working class struggle for liberation. While the townships are burning and the oppressed masses are suffering under the yoke of white minority domination, the white liberal is sitting at a computer, typing away at a comfortably elitist treatise on "art". S/he criticises, comments and cajoles at the expense of the very people s/he so smugly supports. S/he colonises a black struggle against white bourgeois capitalist exploitation and oppression.

3 Another way in which s/he colonises this struggle is by employing Western standards based on Western thought in her/his critique of African texts. The white liberal critic is Eurocentric in her/his approach to something which is not Western, but African.

These are very serious problems indeed and, as Sipho Sepamla makes clear, they are especially serious ones in terms of Black Consciousness:

> There is nothing that a so-called critic will gain by destroying [a] book. Instead he will prevent the black people from making any progress ... It appears they have not understood the meaning of black consciousness (Seroke, 1981:308)[1].

These problems could perhaps still be glossed over in a slightly uncomfortable way had they not specifically been levelled against so-called white liberal critics by the very authors under discussion in this dissertation. Both Miriam Tlali and Sipho Sepamla have criticised both critics in general and *white* critics in particular[2].

Despite Watts's protestations to the contrary (1989:x), this is still a big problem. Society is divided to such an extent in South Africa that there is very little trust between the "privileged" and the "other", between the "oppressor" and the "oppressed".

This dissertation does argue for a movement beyond oppositions like this in order to transcend the mythical deadlock inherent in the ideological construction of ethical moralisation. However, how such a move is to be *practically* effected is a problematic issue. The interplay of textuality and contextuality is a complicated matter, also with regard to literature and to a literature of struggle.

I therefore do not attempt to *criticise* the literature of struggle in terms of content which would in some way be either ideologically "correct" or "incorrect", aesthetically "good" or "bad". I seek to question the very possibility of a literature of *struggle* in order to determine the viability of culture as a means of struggle. What is at stake are not so much finished textual products as the processes which they initiate or fail to initiate. In other words, if there is to be a quarrel at all it will not be for narrowly ideological reasons, but rather in terms of what influence textual ideology can have in bringing about fundamental and radical change in this society.

The purpose of this dissertation is not to discredit the literature of the struggle or its practitioners, but rather to intervene in a (de)constructive way. By analysing culture in terms of its postulated processes of assimilation and exclusion it will attempt to evaluate the role certain purportedly progressive or radical texts can theoretically

play in bringing about change, in subverting the political status quo of the dominant system and its hegemonic culture.

In South Africa the hegemonic culture is not African but European. This is so despite the contradiction that African culture is the culture of the vast majority of South Africans. The reason for this anomalous and imperialist situation must be sought in the fact that *power* lies in the hands of the minority - whose culture is Western. Culture is, ultimately, bolstered by political power. The question now is whether the disenfranchised majority's cultural expressions will be able to assist in gaining one inch in terms of real power, which is needed to change the material circumstances of which culture forms a part.

The question can be reduced to the terms of the following well-known formula: Is the sword really mightier than the pen? Can books destroy guns?

Because this dissertation seeks to examine the potential of literature to change the status quo in a radically subversive way it will necessarily be heavily theoretical. The theory should not be seen as being elitist, but as being explanatory - as shedding light on the possibilities of power through discourse and knowledge.

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It would also be easy to level the accusation of irrelevance against this dissertation, mainly because of recent political developments in South Africa. On 2 February 1990, more than a year after I had started work on this dissertation, the ANC, PAC, SACP and a host of other anti-apartheid organizations were unbanned. On 11 February Nelson Mandela was released from jail after more than 27 years of detention. The result is that the political climate in South Africa has been transformed to a considerable degree. To be sure, apartheid is still firmly in place legally. But the prospects for negotiations are good.

Not only can the above mentioned organizations now function legally - exiled members of those organizations may also now return. This has occasioned something tantamount to an epistemological break. The dissertation could not, unfortunately, make full use of this epistemological break because of the advanced stage it had reached by the time this break occurred. However, an attempt has been

made in the *Postscript* to clarify some of the issues which have arisen with greater force than before 2 February 1990, and especially the quite convoluted "Sachs controversy".

Notes

1. What Sepamla is saying here, even though he is referring specifically to black critics, has a bearing also, and even more so, on white Western critics who are seen as intruders rather than as misguided "BC adherents".

2. Compare Sepamla's remark in an interview with Stephen Gray (1977:259) that it is unfortunate, but inevitable, that he

> [has] to deal with Whites as my critics. .....
> I think most White writers and critics and editors don't have the sort of feelings that oppress me as I sit in a township room, writing, fearing ...

Tlali, in response to a question by Jaki Seroke (1981) is more blunt:

> JAKI: We are tackling a crucial question when we talk about critics. An argument has been advanced that because of the scarcity of qualified people, blacks who are well versed in the theory of literature, the standard of black criticism does not rise. Inevitably the role of midwife is played by people with foreign concepts.
>
> MIRIAM: This is very interesting. These so-called critics labour under a misconception in that they say that in order to write you have to be a literary scholar .....
> I think these arguments are silly. I don't agree with that at all. Why should we adhere to these self-professed critics of literature? Why are we tied up by the role the critics assign to us? It is the reader who must judge, not those masters of literature .....
> We shouldn't be trapped like the 1950s generation of writers who had their books read by a few at the top of the masses. .....
> I have always remarked that I'd like to present my stories with the black audience in mind and I have never really intended to write for a white audience (Seroke, 1981: 305-307).

Part 1: Theory

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The problematic nature of the category of the "aesthetic" (if such a category can be said to exist at all) pertains especially to its relation with that of the "political". It is a question which has often been discussed in literary theoretical circles all over the world, and which at the moment is yet again being examined by, amongst others, the so-called New Historicists. This is done in the guise of the relation between history and form. What seems to have been examined less often, though, are the theoretical possibilities of the aesthetic as a very real vehicle for social change, despite the recognition both of the "rhetoric of authority [and of] the authority of rhetoric" (Salusinszky, 1987:206). This dissertation will concern itself more with questions pertaining to the authority of rhetoric than with the rhetoric of authority, although such a distinction - which could, of course, be deconstructed - already invites accusations of oversimplification.

At the moment[1] a number of debates on the role of art as a vehicle for political change are taking place in South Africa.

The problem of the relation between art and politics is, of course, not something new. But in South Africa it has been a pertinent issue in the last few decades - for obvious reasons, two of which pertain to the role of the artist in an unjust society, and the role of culture as a "vehicle" for or a "condition" of social change.

The issue has been given special pertinence in 1990 with the unbanning of the African National Congress (and other organizations and movements), as this has resulted in voices long silent - like that of Albie Sachs (1990a) - being heard again.

A number of broad positions with regard to the issue have crystallised so far. One position takes literature - or at least some forms of literature which are seen to be "correct" representations of reality - to possess certain special qualities which would enable it to portray life "as it is" - usually in terms of injustice, oppression and

squalor - and therefore would enable it to change that life by conscientising a readership.

A second position takes literature to be incidental, "symptomatic" or "superstructural". Accordingly it takes literature to be dispensable in political struggle.

These first two positions are, paradoxically perhaps, quite intimately related. The first position tends to lead to the second in that it sees literature as a necessary reflection of social practice, which is equal to that of the second position. This is why the first position tends to condemn art as elitist - art is accused of attempting to escape its role of reflecting social practice, and is said to be irresponsible. Only that cultural practice which is seen adequately to reflect social practice is *not* seen to be elitist and irresponsible. On the other hand, from the broadly orthodox Marxist position of the base/superstructure dichotomy has evolved a position *celebrating* irresponsibility as the only alternative in a world dominated by a huge culture industry. According to this position art should be a trial arena for alternatives. In order to fulfil this task it must prevent itself being pulled into the culture industry - by being elitist.

A third broad position takes literature to be a discursive practice, and to have a processual nature. This would make literature part of social practice. Literature would then no longer be either dispensable or indispensable but *inevitable* as part of the material social process. This last position - within which the work of deconstructionists and the work of Foucault can be identified - is no less fraught with danger than the first two because of its totalising tendency with regard to, on the one hand, textuality and on the other hand, with regard to power relations.

In this dissertation the social value of literature is explored and the possibilities of literature to act as a vehicle for resistance are examined by means of an exploration of power - it will consist of explorations and examinations of various positions on discourse and power, or art and effect; and power and discourse, or art and its causes[2]. The purpose is to abstract from these varying positions a possible position on effective political resistance through literature.

The main problem to be addressed in this dissertation can be framed by the following question - To what extent and with what effect is it possible for South African protest literature to engage in political struggle, actively to *resist* and *subvert* the political status quo?

This includes the following questions - How does one go about destroying apartheid in South Africa now? Or, for that matter, how does one change anything? In short, how is the status quo to be subverted? Is it subvertible at all? If it is, can literary texts contribute to its subversion? What is the *use* of art, and specifically, of literature?

These are the broad questions which will be addressed in the study, and which form the background against which this dissertation should be read. They are such broad questions, however, that detailed answers to them would fall outside the limited scope of a dissertation. The question which this dissertation will mainly concern itself with is therefore limited specifically to the South Africa of the last fifteen or twenty years. The problem to be discussed in some depth pertains to the relation between discourse and power as it manifests itself in South African protest or resistance literature.

This is not to ignore the much vaguer and more generalised but also implicit question, namely to what extent discourse can and does, theoretically at least, contribute to the subversion of any social or political status quo. However, as the problem of this dissertation could be framed by two possible formulations - the first being narrow and specific, the other being broad, more generalised but implicitly linked to the other - one formulation has had to be delineated. This formulation is, therefore, a specific one which is geared to South Africa specifically, but obviously cannot be viewed in isolation.

1.2 Hypothesis

While it is readily accepted that texts have to be read in order to have an effect, it is not accepted here that a text's power depends exclusively on itself and its "content" or "intrinsic" qualities, but rather on the con-texts into which it is inserted. In fact, this dissertation is sceptical of both those positions which assume the power of

subversion which texts are supposed to possess, and of those positions which find texts to be politically ineffectual and therefore dispensable.

A text's power, it is postulated, depends as much on its extra- or intertextual as on its intratextual *relations* and *movements*. The purpose of this dissertation is to *indicate*, theoretically at least, *that a text's power depends on its con-texts at least as much as on itself.*

This might seem like a facile point to make because nowadays it is generally accepted that a text cannot be viewed in isolation. That is, however, not the point to be argued in this dissertation.

According to Williams (1977:24ff.), literature is always *in* society. One cannot simply refer to literature *and* society when discussing the relations between literature "and" society. Con-text is not "context" in the sense of a "background". Neither can one really refer to "con-text" in the singular. Rather, a text's con-texts are made up of various kinds of texts (political, economical, sociological, philosophical, mathematical, literary, and others) which are in a *concurrent relation* to the literary text.

A text can therefore be said to have con-texts in relation to which it is produced and processed. This is not to say that literature must be read "against its background", for this already implies taking the "background" to be

> a general body of facts against which this foreground of activity we call literature is undertaken. The background is regarded - with all the implications of the metaphor - as a fixed unchanging scene, and against this the more significant activities of the making of literature are engaged in. So that, in denying the active relationship and interrelationship between literature and other social experiences and practices, we are cut off from considering what in fact are the real relations, the primary relations, between literary practice and other kinds of individual and social experiences and practices (Williams, 1977:25).

1.3 Methodology

At least three distinct methods could have been used in order to formulate the *possibilities* of resistance through literature. Firstly, an examination of specifically South African polemics regarding the role of culture, and specifically literature,

could have been conducted along the lines of, for instance, Chapman (1988a:24-49). However, this avenue was rejected as the dissertation concerns itself more with the theoretical underpinnings regarding literature and resistance than with specific polemics themselves. Before examining the polemics in any detail, one should first of all examine the broad theories espoused by the various participants. A second reason for not pursuing this avenue is the limited scope of the present study. A discussion of the polemics in South Africa regarding the role of culture has a far wider scope and would have consisted of at least the first part of this study (or at least a very similar theoretical section), plus an exhaustive examination of the polemics themselves[3].

Secondly, an empirical study of specific texts and readers' responses to them could have been conducted. The theoretical part of this dissertation would then have been concerned with reader reception theory, its methodology, and the problems it raises. The second part - dealing with the texts - would then have consisted of a report on patterns of reader behaviour and response towards, or construction of, the texts in question. This would have provided an empirically-based and scientific report on resistance (or the absence thereof) through literature by means of, for instance, conscientisation of the presumed readership. Here the work of especially the so-called Konstanz School is of importance, and specifically that of Jauss[4]. Such theories of reader reception, which could be situated in the nexus between the extremities of text and context, formalism and history have, however, not been touched upon. The reason for this is that the dissertation sets out to establish a theoretical framework for determining the *theoretical* possibilities of resistance through literature, and does not pretend to be a strictly empirical study.

The methodology of this dissertation is focused on a theoretical exploration rather than on literary criticism[5]. This does not mean that literary criticism is unimportant. On the contrary, criticism is essential in determining and disseminating possible means of undermining the totalitizing tendencies of the hegemonic. However, to examine effective resistance one would first have to examine the possibilities of resistance. This is why the third possible methodological avenue has been selected. In accordance with this methodological avenue the implications of certain theories with regard to the possibilities of resistance through texts will be examined. A reading of two texts in the light of these theories - so as to be able theoretically to gauge the possibilities of resistance of those texts - will follow.

It is imperative that the reader accept the most basic tenet of this study, namely, that it is not possible to separate society from culture, even though it is possible to distinguish them. Culture is a product of society, and culture shapes society. However, the relation between culture and society is a complex one. Views of culture, "art" and literature are inextricably linked to society. It is not really possible to identify reasons for the conception of literature as being either powerless or powerful in either society or culture. Both are agents, either of shaping or of determining or causing one's view of literature. Neither, as has been mentioned previously, is it really feasible to speak of works of literature and their backgrounds or "contexts". However, methodologically it is essential to delimit and order research in a way which will facilitate accessibility to the problematic nature of an issue.

This dissertation therefore consists of two parts. The first part is a theoretical introduction to the problem of power and discourse with a view to investigating the relation of literature *in* society. It deals with the ways in which literature is or can be realised in practice, and therefore with the possibilities of resistance through literature. In this part an attempt will be made to sketch the problem from some broad positions[6], and to write a theoretical "story" of resistance leading to a "synthesis" of sorts. This theoretical "story" is told in the course of two chapters. The first chapter is again divided into two main parts, the first part consisting of theories which would seem to imply the ineffectuality of art while the second part consists of theories which would seem to imply on the one hand the irresponsibility of art, and on the other would want art to be irresponsible so as to be effective vehicles of cultural practice - or non-practice.

The first chapter starts with a discussion of the essay "Beantwortung der Frage: Was Ist Aufklärung" (1784) by Kant. This discussion points out the "dispersion of discourse" as a result of the emphasis of the Enlightenment on Reason. This dispersion of discourse is shown to be linked to power and the protection of state order. Because of the fragmented late twentieth century society in which we live there often does not seem to be a clearly defined discourse which can be attacked and undermined, and therefore the effectuality of art as oppositional cultural practice is undermined.

The ultimately conservative implications of rationality are illustrated by means of a discussion of deconstruction as a symptom of the dispersion of discourse. Deconstruction has had the tendency - whether intended or not - to depoliticise textuality. Despite (or perhaps because of) the notion of intertextuality and the resultant confluence of texts and textual boundaries, texts are often supposed to be unable to resist and subvert anything outside or apart from themselves because of their very textuality. Because they are texts, they subvert ("deconstruct") themselves. Their meanings dissolve in textuality, leaving literally nothing to fulfil any social task or political subversion. Instead, they strengthen the status quo by their passivity - a passivity which is caused by internal struggle.

Another view is that art, as well as literature, is "elitist", and, furthermore, that it is "only" literature. According to this view, literature cannot reach its audience because of factors like illiteracy and poverty on the one hand, and naturally esoteric and "highbrow" content on the other. This makes literature an irresponsible luxury, because literature should be for the people. Yet this view espouses the idea of, for instance, a "people's literature" and a "people's culture".

This paradox could perhaps be best explained with reference to the classical orthodox Marxist model of base and superstructure, which broadly holds literature to be a superstructural epiphenomenon: it should (or cannot but) provide a true reflection of the underlying economical base of society. If it does not, then it is not true to, on the one hand, the economic realities and the mode of production of a specific society, and on the other the need for struggle in order to change these realities. This position is fraught with difficulties and paradoxes because of the mechanical or even expressive determinism inherent in orthodox Marxism.

However, another Marxist idea - the Neo-Marxist one of the culture industry - leaves room for resistance in the very elitism of literature. According to this view literature and art *should* be irresponsible. It requires literature to be excluded from the culture industry and from the mainstream of culture itself in order really to be effective as a means of resistance.

After a brief discussion of the notion of a "culture industry" and the need for art to marginalise itself, Adorno's essay "Commitment" (1962) is discussed as an important example of this line of thinking. Adorno's position regarding "autonomy" as a

prerequisite for "commitment" is elaborated. The problem of the institutionalisation of even the most avant-garde works of literature is discussed.

Ndebele's article "Turkish Tales and Some Thoughts on South African Fiction" (1984b) is discussed as an example of the influence of Adorno and the Frankfurt School's thought within a South African context. This article addresses the problematic issues pertaining to South African fiction as merely a response to the dominant oppressive apartheid culture *in its own terms*. Ndebele's insistence on the autonomy of art - also of "political" art - is questioned with regard to the criticism on Adorno and the Frankfurt School. The point is made that art, as well as literature, cannot be expected to fulfil its social practice merely on the grounds of artistic autonomy, although the point that there should be a movement away from simple polar opposites (for instance "oppressor/oppressed", "white/black" and "good/evil") is accepted as essential.

Ndebele's and Adorno's ideas, in the end, imply that texts have power because of their "content" - if their content is in some way ideologically or politically correct they would be powerful. Texts might be constructed in such a way as to negate themselves by engaging with the status quo on its own negative terms, or they might be constructed in such a way as to be effectual underminers of the hegemonic status quo. Their characterisation, plot, language style, and other such "formal qualities" might be "incorrect" or "insufficient" and therefore ineffectual. Even though this last position takes into account the social con-texts (or, more often, the social context) of texts, it very often becomes entangled in a kind of pseudo-formalism.

The point at which this dissertation departs from Ndebele and Adorno is that artistic autonomy will in no way guarantee a movement away from moralistic ethical oppositions. Rather, this movement might be facilitated by means of a conscious denial of such ethical oppositions within texts. Texts should deconstruct themselves with regard to moralising.

The second chapter discusses theories which emphasise the possible effectuality of art as a vehicle of resistance by means of cultural practice, but which limit this effectuality by taking into account power structures and the relative and relational ability to create cultural space by means of cultural practice. In this chapter, the work of Williams (1977, 1979, 1980, 1988, 1989) and that of Jameson (1985) are

examined - especially with regard to hegemony, and to dominant, residual and emergent cultures. Texts are no longer considered to be "merely" superstructural - their positions change accordingly. If history is viewed as a discontinuous process (Benjamin, 1978a:227), shaped through human action (including that of producing texts), then texts would assume a more important role with regard to shaping history through resistance to or subversion of the status quo.

Literature is seen as one means of cultural practice which could open up, define and fill new, oppositional and alternative cultural spaces. Foucault's *The History of Sexuality. Volume 1: An Introduction* (1984) complicates this position with its absolute insistence on the relationality of all power. Some theorists have attacked Foucault's and his "New Historicist" followers' brand of so-called poststructuralism on the grounds that it has had the result of creating an idea of power as being omnipotent and omnipresent. This view entails power being everywhere, leaving no possibility of attacking that power somehow from the "outside".

The Résumé offers a summary of the various ideas and theoretical positions discussed. A provisional synthesis is reached which accords literature - within the framework of cultural practice in general - limited power to "resist" and change hegemonic culture by means of the filling of cultural spaces. This position attempts to avoid making largely a-historical generalisations on discourse and power, but rather seeks to view texts as social processes engaged in social practice.

Instead of assuming either the position of considering power in terms of absolute omnipotence and omnipresence, or of considering texts in terms of absolute impotence and absence, the emphasis will be on the specificity of a historical moment which would seem to render specific texts powerless to subvert a specific political status quo because of a combination of the factors outlined above. At the same time, such a position will seek to establish the theoretical possibility of textual infiltration - as a counter or alternative discourse - into the largely hegemonic dominant discourse(s), and thus of opening the possibility of preparing the way towards active opposition through creating the beginnings of an alternative hegemonic space.

The second part of this dissertation is divided into two chapters. The first chapter of the second part (chapter three) will sketch the con-texts of two South African novels

(*Amandla* by Miriam Tlali and *Third Generation* by Sipho Sepamla) which are, in the second chapter of the second part (chapter five) examined in the light of the findings of the first part of the dissertation. The second part of the dissertation will, therefore, consist of analyses of two South African novels which would seem to form part of a literature of resistance against apartheid. These analyses will be made in terms of the theoretical part of the dissertation, and especially in terms of the synthesis arrived at by critically discussing the above-mentioned positions on discourse and power. The reading strategy which is to be developed will be applied to the texts under discussion, but in a very specific rather than in a universal way, the point being not to score but to gauge. From this research broader questions beyond the scope of this dissertation pertaining to the possibilities of subversion will inevitably flow, and these will be briefly dealt with in the Postscript.

A Postscript has been added because of recent developments in South Africa (for instance the unbanning of the African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress). The in-house paper by Sachs (1990a) forms the focus of the Postscript.

The texts to be engaged with here have therefore in one sense been chosen only as exemplars. This is not to fall into the trap of logocentrically considering texts "either as functions of or as parasitic on some schematic philosophy or system on which they are dependent (as illustrations, exemplifications, expressions) ..." (Said, 1984:214). On the contrary, the power of texts as indispensable enactors and defenders of cultural hegemony is affirmed in this dissertation. What *is* questioned is whether the texts under discussion (and therefore by implication, all and any discourse) can transcend their material and historical circumstances in order to subvert the status quo as embodied and entrenched by a dominant culture. In order to decide this question any texts could have been chosen.

In another sense, however, the texts have been selected in a very specific way. They are specifically South African and deal with contemporary issues in South Africa. They would seem to aspire towards subverting and resisting the very specific political status quo of apartheid. The texts in question here can both be said to attempt to enact resistance and have therefore been chosen specifically because of so-called intrinsic qualities such as angry rhetoric, stereotyping, depictions of violence or struggle, and so on - which seem to characterise them as exemplars of a literature of resistance.

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Because there are no easy answers to the problem of discourse and power, and because so much has been written on literature and power, the method will initially have to be eclectic. Discussing different positions and then attempting a synthesis of aspects of these positions will, however, not necessarily amount to a tepid and relativist critical pluralism. Neither will it amount to an arrogant "own" position[7]. Instead, cognisance will be taken of the various positions in a critical way and an attempt will be made to *utilise* them for the ends of the dissertation by taking sides. It might be worthwhile here to consider what Jameson, in a somewhat different context (that of his book - *The Political Unconscious* - and of Marxism proper) says of appropriating positions:

> One of the essential themes of this book will be the contention that Marxism subsumes other interpretive modes or systems; or, to put it in methodological terms, that the limits of the latter can always be overcome, and their more positive findings retained, by a radical historicizing of their mental operations ... (1985:47).

Jameson's position - that different methods and different positions can be usefully employed in a critical way - is accepted here. It is difficult to believe in any particular critical master narrative which will "subsume" all other positions, but this is all the more reason for one not at once to ignore those different positions and at the same time to synthesise what one finds to be useful ideologically and practically in them. Of course, this inevitably leads to a master narrative of some sort. The question is whether one can ever completely escape the logocentric grasp of mythologisation, however sceptical one finds oneself of such master narratives with their totalising tendencies.

The reason why no single, specific theory or school of thought has been selected to apply to the texts under discussion here, is a pervasive cynicism with regard to the belief in some ultimate truth which can unproblematically explain all problems. At the same time, it is an expensive luxury to be cynical and, in the end, to run the risk of operating in a relativistic way. When interpreting one always uses an ideological master code, a rubric according to which everything is sought to be explained for one's own (class or ideological) benefit. One is always, in a sense, both a fascist and

an imperialist. The classical liberal humanist values of plurality and tolerance are dangerously closed illusions precisely because they seem and pretend to be open and thus serve the status quo by seeming to allow dissent. One must - and indeed always does (even if unconsciously) - take a stand.

This position also affirms that there is no need to develop a reading strategy with which to score points by making brilliant interpretations of texts which would seem to resist and subvert the status quo in esoteric literary debates. The need is rather to develop a reading or an interpretive strategy with the narrow purpose of gauging the efficacy of such texts in fulfilling their (often) stated missions, a strategy which could determine whether such texts are at all subversive, how they can be made to be subversive if they are not (by changing *them* or by changing the status quo) and, ultimately, in how far they can contribute to creating the conditions which will make subversion unnecessary. It is not believed that such a reading strategy has been fully developed here. However, the purpose of this exploratory study is not in the first place to develop such a strategy, but rather to identify some theoretical underpinnings for such a strategy.

All this may sound like so much New Historicist rhetoric. The point needs to be made, however, that this dissertation does not seek to be read as an exercise in the so-called "New Historicism". In the discussion of Foucault and his New Historicist followers, in fact, important problems with regard to the New Historicist project (if it can be said to exist - this is precisely one of its problems) are scrutinized. Furthermore, attractive as some of its insights and methods are, the New Historicism has already to a large degree been subsumed as merely another critical method with which to score points in the academic game of one-upmanship, publication and prestige.

A deep scepticism, therefore, of "truth" and "master narratives", has to be addressed and exorcised. Hopefully this study will address the problem of discourse and power with reference specifically to resistance literature in South Africa. However, more questions will be left unanswered than answered. The point has to be made that the resolutions offered here are at best tentative and provisional. Carusi's observations (1989:135) in this regard (with specific reference to her article on narrative and power concerning J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*) are pertinent here. She states that

it is doubtful that at this point any resolution can be posited - instead the questions are proposed as possible directions for future research. .....
.....
To be sure, questions are not enough, but they are one possible starting point.

Notes

1. See the Postscript (below).

2. The references to "cause" and "effect" should not be seen as a condonation of a simplistic and mechanistic relation of cause with effect or vice versa. "Cause" and "effect" are used here only to be discarded later in the dissertation in favour of "practice" and "process". Art is seen not to be an effect of the cause "society", and "art" is seen not to be the cause of the effect "society". Instead, art is seen to be a process integral to social practice.

3. However, such a study has become more urgent than ever before in the last few months, especially after the so-called "Sachs controversy". Therefore a theoretical study like the present one has also become very important. See the Postscript, below.

4. See Sprinker (1987:94-106) for a discussion of Jauss's polemic against Marxism and its framing of the relation between the aesthetic and the historical.

5. Of course, the distinction between "theory" and "criticism" is problematic. "Criticism" is never innocent of "theory"; vice versa, theory always implies possible critical methodologies.

6. For a concise and succinct discussion of the tendency to view the possibility of resistance in terms of consolidation and resistance, see Dollimore (1989:1ff., especially 11-15).

7. The so-called "synthesis" which this dissertation will seek to arrive at will not amount to a detailed outline or recipe for cultural practice. Instead, it will have an exploratory nature, providing guidelines for future research.

Chapter 2: The Impotence of Art - Ineffectuality and Irresponsibility

A Ineffectuality

2.1 The Dispersion of the Subject and its Discourse

In 1784 a relatively minor essay by Kant called "Beantwortung der Frage: Was Ist Aufklärung?" ("Answering the Question: What is Enlightenment?"[1]) was published. This essay illustrates the idea that power should and can lie in the hands of individual human subjects. What is interesting to note is that this very emphasis on the power of the individual to make decisions and determine life has led to the demise of the subject through the creation of a culture which dehumanises the subject.

In his essay Kant pleads for *Aufklärung* (and the use of free reason) as the only way out of "an immaturity which is one's own fault" (*"selbstverschuldeten Unmündigkeit"*) (1784:163) and which has people in its grip, which prevents people from being free. This maturity which Kant desires could, however, be dangerous. That is why Kant makes the distinction between private and public uses of reason. *Aufklärung*, Kant says, requires freedom, but

> zwar die unschädlichste unter allem, was nur Freiheit heissen mag, nämlich die: von seiner Vernunft in allen Stücken *öffentlichen Gebrauch* zu machen
>
> [only that type of freedom which is most harmless, namely that which would allow one openly to employ one's reason in every respect] (1784:164).

In order to reassure people with power (like the Emperor Frederick of Prussia) that reason and *Aufklärung* would not be detrimental to them, Kant here makes a distinction between public and private uses of reason.

According to Kant the open or public use of reason (which he is propagating) is harmless as far as - specifically - order in society is concerned. If everybody had the freedom to reason and to question *everything*, society would fall apart, Kant believes.

He provides an example. When an army officer gives an order, it must be obeyed. One cannot reason about whether it should be done or not - if one could the officer

would lose his power (1784:164ff.) and the structures of society would be rendered meaningless. But the use of reason which Kant propagates is an open or public use. It is not the private use of reason.

Kant explains what he means by the private use of reason by citing the example of religion (for which one could also substitute his earlier example of the army, or, for that matter, of any other social institution):

> ... der *Privatgebrauch* [der Vernunft] darf öfters sehr enge eingeschränkt sein, ohne doch darum den Fortschritt der Aufklärung sonderlich zu hindern. .....
> Der Gebrauch also den ein angestellter Lehrer von seiner Vernunft vor seiner Gemeinde macht, ist bloss ein *Privatgebrauch*; weil diese immer nur ein häusliche, obzwar noch so grosse Versammlung ist ...
>
> [... the *private use* [of reason] could more often be severely limited without particularly impeding the progress of the Enlightenment. .....
> .....
> The use of reason made by an appointed teacher for the sake of his community is merely a *private use* because this [the community] is always only, despite its size, a domestic collection ...] (1784:165-166).

Kant therefore, as Foucault (1984:36) notes, inverts the usual notion of private and public by emphasising these in a way very different from the usual:

> We might think that there is nothing very different here from what has been meant, since the sixteenth century, by freedom of conscience: the right to think as one pleases so long as one obeys as one must. Yet it is here that Kant brings into play another distinction, and in a rather surprising way. The distinction he introduces is between the private and public uses of reason. But he adds at once that reason must be free in its public use, and must be submissive in its private use. Which is, term for term, the opposite of what is ordinarily called freedom of conscience.

In Kant's words,

> Ich verstehe aber unter dem öffentlichen Gebrauche seiner eigenen Vernunft denjenigen, den Jemand als *Gelehrter* von ihr vor dem ganzem Publikum der *Leserwelt* macht. Den Privatgebrauch nenne ich denjenigen, den er in einem gewissen ihm anvertrauten *bürgerlichen Posten* oder Amte von seiner Vernunft machen darf.
>
> [However, I take the public use of one's own reason to be that which one as a *scholar* makes use of before all of the public of the *world of readers*. The private use I take to be the making use of one's reason in a *civic position* or office specifically entrusted to one] (1784:165).

If one therefore has to fulfil a particular duty in the "Mechanismus ... vermittelst dessen einige Glieder des gemeinen Wesens sich bloss passiv verhalten müssen, um ... zu öffentlichen Zwecken gerichtet, oder wenigstens von der Zerstörung dieser Zwecke abgehalten zu werden" ["structure [i.e., society] which requires some members of the general entity [i.e., society], for the sake of a public end, or at least in order to prevent the destruction of this end, to act passively only"], then it is not allowable "zu räsonieren; sondern man muss gehorchen" ["to reason; one must be obedient"] (1784:165).

However universal reason might be, according to Kant, it is always limited. The common good must always be served; order must, according to Kant, always be preserved. Kant's position is therefore conservative - it favours the status quo, the *current* order of things. This point is important because it has bearing on the explicitly political dimension of the use of reason as portrayed by Kant in this essay.

But Kant's essay is political in another way as well. The public use is, according to Kant, a universal use: "[Der] Gelehrter [spricht] durch Schriften zum eigentlichen Publikum, nämlich der Welt" ["[The] scholar [speaks] through [his] writings to [his] real audience, namely the world"] (1784:167). The question is, however, how universally accessible the work of scholars (Gelehrter) is, how many people are literate, how many people are, moreover, *philosophically* literate. On this Foucault remarks the following:

> We can readily see how the universal use of reason (apart from any private end) is the business of the subject himself as an individual; we can readily see, too, how the freedom of this use may be assured in a purely negative manner through the absence of any challenge to it; but how is a public use of that reason to be assured? Enlightenment [therefore] must not be conceived simply as a general process affecting all humanity; it must not be conceived only as an obligation prescribed to individuals; it now appears as a political problem (1984:37).

Kant therefore emasculates and renders reason impotent by limiting it to the world of the academy (which he pretends is a universal, because rational world), and by consciously assuring the leaders of the state, the church, the army and so forth that reason will be of no danger to them precisely because it should be limited to a falsely universal use.

As Sir Philip Sidney noted in his famous *Apology for Poetry* in 1595, "the philosopher teacheth, but he teacheth obscurely, so as the learned only can understand him; that is to say, he teacheth them that are already taught" (*in*: Enright and De Chickera, 1987:16; lines 529-531). Kant excludes reason from everyday civic - or bourgeois - life through the clever philosophical move of setting up two different universes of discourse (the so-called "private" and the so-called "public"). This enables the human subject (or rather an elitist clique of human subjects, namely the scholars ["Gelehrter"]) complete freedom to reason *without affecting the world*. Human discourse is fragmented so as to preserve the status quo.

The birth of the subject as an independent entity capable of and obliged towards reasoning therefore also entails the death of this individual subject as a meaningful contributor towards the social world through the world of ideas. This is so because of the inevitable dispersion of its discourse which takes place through the division of its universe of discourse into a "private" and a "public" realm. This division and the resultant dispersion constitute the very condition of the subject's freedom (which is paradoxically attained through reason) to reason. Reason, and Rationality as a category, is what makes possible the division - and dispersion - of discourse in the first place.

The result[2] of this type of thinking is an unfreedom which is punctuated by the subject's ambiguous insistence on itself[3]. The subject becomes merely a fragment of a mechanical culture industry in which it loses its power because of the paradoxical dispersion of its means of power - discourse. Discourse is here explicitly no longer a unified practice which operates collectively - exactly because of the claims made upon it by a myriad of private individual subjects. This process has weakened the subject's discourse to the extent that the subject is no longer able to counter the tremendous power of the opposite discourses of state ideology, discourses kept in place not only through police action or other forms of brute force, but through processes of assimilation and exclusion consciously and unconsciously manipulated by those in power. This is done not only through state censorship, but happens through processes like canonisation by institutions in alliance with the state such as publishers, schools, universities, distributors and disseminators of information, and so on.

However, it is not a question of some monolithically powerful state or conglomerate of large multinational corporations repressing all forms of resistance. For the dispersion of the subject's discourse (and the resultant frustration of resistance) is really the result of the dispersion of meaning in the subject's texts which, through the processes described above as well as through processes made possible by the text itself, become fragmented and equivocal rather than univocal.

Habermas (1984:104) makes an interesting and relevant comment regarding Foucault's reading of Kant

> as the first to break seriously with the metaphysical heritage, withdrawing philosophy from the True and Eternal and instead concentrating on what philosophy until then had considered the meaningless and non-existent, the merely accidental and transitory, Foucault discovers in Kant the contemporary who transforms esoteric philosophy into a critique of the present to answer the challenge of the historical moment. Foucault sees in Kant's answer to the question 'What is enlightenment?' the origin of an 'ontology of actuality'...

This targeting of the contemporary scene, "the meaningless and non-existent, the merely accidental and transitory", has made it necessary, according to Foucault, "to make language and if possible discourse once again appear within that field of invisible dispersion that, since the end of the classical age, language has become" (Said, 1984:219). Culture must be saved from what it has become: a collection of traces.

Whether this is in fact possible is an open question, because textuality has been dispersed not only through extra-textual processes (reception, distribution, ideology, canonisation, censorship, the culture industry) but also through "a misreading of texts ... made possible by texts themselves" (Said, 1984:203). This is why the efficient realisation of texts must be examined and questioned both in terms of extra- and intertextual relations, as well as in terms of *intra*textual relations.

2.2 "Deconstruction" and Poststructuralism

The position of deconstruction is symptomatic of what could be called the dispersion of discourse because of the reified and fragmented society in which we live. The purpose here is not to discuss the merits or demerits of deconstruction as a

philosophy, strategy (or anti-strategy), or as a methodology of reading texts. Rather, it is to speculate about the effects deconstruction has had, and about the possible reasons for these effects.

The battle against New Criticism has been fought, but has it been won? What is the difference between New Criticism and "New" New Criticism, as Hawkes (1983:156-160) calls it?

Even though "deconstruction" might have been intended as "a kind of *general strategy* ... to avoid both simply *neutralizing* the binary oppositions of metaphysics and simply *residing* within the closed field of these oppositions, thereby confirming it" (Derrida, 1981a:41), deconstruction has had the tendency to become merely a new system, a new way of interpreting texts, of "simply *residing* within the closed field". Even though Derrida does try to oppose the abstracting (and unmaterialist) tendencies of Western thought, his own "position" has developed into a highly abstract and orthodox one - especially, but not only, because of the "application" of deconstruction by literary theorists and critics. As Said has noted, deconstruction "claims to be antiorthodox criticism, despite the lamentable proliferation of epigones and fellow travelers who have given it the worst aspects of unquestioning orthodoxy" (1984:183).

This has been the case specifically in the United States. According to Ellis (1988:271ff.) one of the problems is the difference in intellectual climate between the United States and France. He regards the French intellectual climate as "arrogant", "frivolous", "elitist" and "obstinate". According to him, "[t]he rapid institutionalizing of this would-be anti-institutional position [deconstruction] is a sign of a fundamental geographical mismatch" (1988:273).

Lentricchia, in a lengthy critique (1983:103-112) of Culler's *Structuralist Poetics* (1975), states that Culler's introduction to structuralism "go[es] far toward softening the impact of the new French thought" (1983:105). The fact that Culler was awarded the MLA's James Russell Lowell Prize for *Structuralist Poetics* is to Lentricchia "an ideological nod of recognition" (1983:104). The same observations could probably also be made with regard to Culler's *On Deconstruction* (1987).

Said goes even further and calls poststructuralism (and deconstruction), like Hawkes - but for different and derogatory reasons - "New New Criticism" (1982:138) because, like the older American New Criticism, structuralist and poststructuralist poetics in effect were acts of "public depossession. Texts were to be unlocked or decoded, then handed on to anyone who was interested ... Thus French and American New Criticism were ... competitors for authority within mass culture" (1982:139). But in the end, despite its "populist intention" (1982:138) New Criticism became an elitist exercise for professors of literature. Because of close reading (and écriture) New Criticism (and New New Criticism) developed highly specialised reading strategies and techniques in order to reach the "true meaning of texts" through such universalising and homogenising techniques (Said, 1982:143). The aim of structuralism, like that of the French New Criticism of the early Roland Barthes, was also to develop a

> science of the text .....
> [which would claim] the last word in explanatory power (Norris, 1986:8-9).

Thus, "as the elaborate techniques multiplied" gradually, the academy became "a quasi-monastic order. Critics read each other and cared about little else" (Said, 1982:140).

How did an oppositional and "anti-institutional position" (Ellis, 1988:273) like deconstruction contribute to undermining itself? Why does Said's description of those "lonely prophetic figures like de Sade and Nietzsche [whose] outrageous and even preposterous pressures on rationality are absorbed and institutionalized almost routinely by the very structure one might have thought they had permanently disabled" (1986:152), fit Derrida so well? The answer is obviously complex, but could perhaps be sought in deconstruction's simultaneous revolt against and affirmation of textuality.

A basic deconstructionist tenet regards everything to be textual (the celebrated "il n'y a pas d'hors-texte" / "there is no outside-text" (Heath, 1989:36). This means that everything is, ultimately, *known* through textual means, that the very opposition between "text" and "reality" (that which is somehow outside the text) is invalid. Everything *is*, therefore, in effect, textual. Deconstruction takes "language [to be] always everywhere already" - reference is "always immanent" (Heath, 1989:36). The

world is - through society - made up of a great web of intertextuality. Texts are known in terms of other texts, through an endless signifying chain. Because of the difference between one signifier and all others, meaning must always escape final conceptual definition.

This great intertextual chain or web must always be in a state of internal struggle. There are no clear boundaries between texts; "individual" texts are engaged in a continuous struggle for self-presence and identity. This is so not only because of the intertextual web in which all texts are situated, but also because of the struggle for centred meaning within "individual" texts themselves.

Although the potential for - as well as the actuality of - textual subversion would therefore seem to be not only possible but inevitable because of the great intertextual web, this subversion is extremely limited, mainly because of two reasons. Firstly, all texts subvert the "meaning" of all other texts because they contribute to the meaning(lessness) of all other texts because of their difference from other texts. This would limit the extent to which "individual" texts could subvert other texts (like the "text" of apartheid ideology). Secondly, the potential and actual subversion of texts by other texts is limited because of the internal struggle in which all texts are engaged. There is such an intense struggle for meaning that takes place in "individual" texts, such a continuous evaporation of meaning, that a significant actual subversion of other texts can be said to evaporate with the meaning of other texts.

Deconstruction's way of viewing textuality has caused texts to be seen (probably unintentionally) as, paradoxically, self-enclosed shells of meaning(lessness). As Heath (1989:41) says, if

> everything is sign, everything construction of meaning, everything fiction, as is quickly said [by postmodernists and deconstructionists], then ideology seems to lose any particular sense, any particular relevance, any *necessity*: we enter the age of fictions, of the end of truth ... the era of postmodern circulation.

Despite the deconstructionist acceptance of the danger inherent in absolutizing and totalising hierarchical oppositions, of arriving at the "final" meanings against which deconstruction militates, and despite its professing the necessity of consciously

rewriting an "existing writing of history [which distorts] history by granting universal and ontological status to contingent and historical hierarchies" (Degenaar, 1989:7), it would seem as if deconstruction, after all, is not as far removed from the liberal humanism it professes to oppose.

Hawkes (1983:153) notes that New Criticism's "ideological commitment to equipoise [embodies the] political and social modes ... of liberal humanism". If, as Degenaar (1989:8) states, deconstruction is anti-fascist and

> points out that no one can bypass the textuality, the contingency, the historicity, the temporal predicament of all understanding [and if it] remains critical of the following claims: one book that contains the truth ...; one experience that contains a privileged position; one authority who speaks the final word; one key to unlock the meaning of history; one interpretation which enables us to terminate controversy; one program that justifies authoritarian rule; and one revolution to end all forms of domination

then the shift from antifascism to liberal humanism is easy to make: Can one still make really relevant moves? Is it still possible to engage in those "re-writing" strategies, laudable as they are, which Degenaar (1989:12-13)[4] proposes? Deconstruction is a result of "the movement from language-consciousness to language-play to the statement and restatement of interminability, the powerlessness of knowledge" (Heath, 1989:40). It has resulted in the unwelcome consequence of a conception of texts *qua texts* rather than as the only possible vehicles of meaning.

This new essentialism (or, in the parlance of contemporary New Historicism, *hypostatisation*) of which so much deconstructionist criticism makes itself guilty, has led to a widespread reaction against poststructuralism in general and deconstruction in particular. Some so-called "Foucauldian New Historicists" have vehemently attacked deconstruction and much of poststructuralism as being a-historical.

Certain brands of deconstruction do seem to have the implication that texts will be rendered ineffectual by presenting them as the mere sites of play of an infinitude of signs and counter-signs.

B Irresponsibility

B i Condemning Irresponsibility

2.3 "Art", Literacy, Orality and a People's Literature

A different angle regarding the ultimate impotence of textuality is provided by that notion which regards art and literature as "merely" "art" or "literature". There is a tradition which considers literature, with other forms of so-called "art", to be elitist by its very nature. Literature is thought to be read mainly by middle-class academics and intellectuals for their own private gratification. Literature, in this view, is not written for "the ordinary person in the street". It is therefore, by implication, powerless to reach that "ordinary person in the street". Literature is therefore not only dispensable for political struggle but is an irresponsible occupation, especially at times of great social upheaval. Being involved with literature is, as it were, like fiddling while Rome (or rather, the township) is burning. This is an important issue, as Adorno (1962:312) notes:

> I have no wish to soften the saying that to write lyric poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric: it expresses in negative form the impulse which inspires committed literature. The question asked by a character in Sartre's play *Morts Sans Sépulture*, 'Is there any meaning in life when men exist who beat people until the bones break in their bodies?', is also the question whether any art now has a right to exist ...

But, as Adorno also notes, such an attitude would disqualify even so-called "committed art" because the question is "whether intellectual regression is not inherent in the concept of committed literature because of the regression of society" (1962:312).

Be that as it may, the point that dealing with literature "while the townships are burning" is like "fiddling while Rome is burning" is to some extent an anti-intellectualist view, something Ndebele (1984a:338) finds "disturbing" in an interview with Miriam Tlali, Sipho Sepamla and Mothobi Mutloatse conducted by Seroke (1981:303ff.). In this interview, Tlali refers to "so-called critics [who] labour under a misconception in that they say that in order to write you have to be a literary scholar" (Seroke, 1981:306). Sepamla adds that "[there] is nothing that a so-called critic will gain in destroying this book. Instead he will prevent the black

people from making any progress" (Seroke, 1981:308). As Ndebele (1984:338) notes, however, "Tlali's artistic practice contradicts her own critical assertions". For she states that "[w]riting is an art like all the other forms and it should not be pipelined or squeezed in a watertight channel" (Seroke, 1981:306). And Sepamla, in an interview with Gray (1977:257ff.), tells of "a lot of material that I receive from the post and also from people that hand me stuff as they meet me in the street - well, a lot of it is not ready to be published" (Gray, 1977:258).

It therefore becomes clear that both Tlali and Sepamla do not condemn *writing* as much as prescriptive critics - and especially white critics[5] - and the elitist and intellectualist type of art they demand. Tlali, Sepamla and Mutloatse actually make this very clear:

> SIPHO [Sepamla]: ... We have to go to the people, like Miriam says. It is the man in the street - how he understands BC - that I feel we must listen to, rather than the people who'll come with the jargon that they've picked up from American magazines to tell us what BC is all about ...
> MOTHOBI [Mutloatsi]: We are not working in a vacuum. We have the people to respond to (Seroke, 1981:308).

What Tlali, Sepamla and Mutloatse therefore want is a genuine "people's culture" and "people's art". They condemn that particular strain in Western artistic and literary theory which views art as something "elevated" and plead for "an imaginative stance that seeks to close the gap between 'art' and 'life'" (Adey *et. al.*, 1986:152).

If the notion of a "people's literature" excludes a particular strain of literature on the grounds that it produces texts which are not "appropriate ... in a situation such as South Africa", then the implication is "that certain modes of writing *are* appropriate to a greater or lesser degree in the context of such blatant and legalised oppression" (Dovey, 1989:119). This seems to be a symptom of the desire "to insist upon ... radical Otherness, and upon the possibility of speaking as Other" (Dovey, 1989:121). The desire for a "people's literature" is the desire to inscribe the self as a radically Other subject - Other, that is, than the colonising Sameness of the oppressor in the opposition oppressor/oppressed, and of the coloniser in the opposition coloniser/colonised. The oppressed subject which has been denied its identity as merely something which is not-Same now wants to become radically different from the Same[6].

Yet, Sepamla can state that "a lot of it [written material] is not ready to be published" (Gray, 1977:258), presumably because it is not "good" enough. And Tlali makes it quite explicit that it is wrong to take her novel *Amandla* to be "not a novel but a statement" (Seroke, 1981:307). Despite their intentions of establishing a true "people's literature" they therefore do stick to certain artistic standards; to, in the end, more or less the same conception of "art" which excludes some writing from itself.

The very notion of "art" seems to be a discriminating and exclusivist concept.

Even if it were possible to create a genuine "people's art" - and it should be a prerogative of concerned artists to attempt creating such a "people's art", if only to demystify "art" as a reified exercise and to open up its process character - then certain other pertinent problems arise. Not the least of these is the widespread illiteracy of the Third World, and specifically, of South Africa. According to recent estimates "[m]ore than half of South Africa's adult population is illiterate" (Moroke, 1990:8). As Ndebele (1989a:30) notes:

> The reading range of the average South African is most likely to be very restricted indeed. The availability of reading matter may vary according to whether one is in the rural areas (where there may be relatively very little to read) or in the urban areas (where there will be much to read). But reading in the latter case will also depend on a number of variables: on whether one is in a position to purchase reading material; whether one can have access to a library; or, whether one has the requisite standard of education coupled with a sufficient reading interest to want to read what may be readily available. The fact that there are such numerous reading variables in such a highly industrialized and technically advanced society as South Africa, and that consequently, for the vast majority of the South African population, it is difficult to predict regularity of reading opportunity, indicates the high level of intellectual deprivation in that society.

One is therefore not surprised when Nkosi (1981:1) states that "much of African literature written in the European languages ... has been, and continues to be, created in a barely concealed state of profound anxiety, even panic". According to Nkosi,

> [this] anxiety stems in large measure from an uncomfortable feeling that this literature, however deeply conscious of its responsibilities, somehow lacks relevance for 80 per cent of the African people who enjoy no literacy. Quite conceivably, the majority of those who can read could easily handle

> vernacular literature but cannot be expected to deal with the complex forms of modern fiction and contemporary verse, written in the European languages (1981:1)".

Under these circumstances, even a "people's literature" would be elitist and self-defeating[8]. The problem of illiteracy is indeed a major material impediment not only to a South African literature of resistance (a people's literature) but also to this MA dissertation. The point is that very few people could participate in the physical act of *reading* it. There is in effect an educated elite which produces and consumes texts (and literary texts), and therefore in effect a situation of neo-colonialism where the African masses are, yet again, excluded and deprived. This amounts to a restatement of the dilemma of (philosophical) literacy discussed with regard to Kant's position. The number of people who can be reached through the written or printed word in Africa today is severely limited.

This is not to oversimplify the dilemma of a people's literature by overlooking orality for the sake of literacy and the written word. The oral tradition, while it can and does reach an audience which does not enjoy the benefits of literacy, is limited itself. With regard to orality, however, particular attention should be paid to the revival of the oral tradition in the work of "worker's poets" like Mzwakhe Mbuli and Mi Hlatshwayo, who compose poetry for, amongst other reasons, recital at mass rallies and protest meetings.

Van Dyk and Brown, in their interview with Sitas (1989:61-68), describe the work of the "worker *izimbongis*" as "essentially kinetic, it sets out to mobilize people, and the whole context of performance is vital to this function" (1989:63,64). Despite this intention the poets, according to Sitas, feel that by having their work published (for instance in the anthology *Black Mamba Rising*) "they were reaching an audience which they couldn't physically reach. Locked in factories, most of them couldn't go on tours and perform their poetry extensively to audiences that weren't based in the Nguni languages" (Van Dyk and Brown, 1989:62)[9]. Allowing for the admittedly complex relation between orality and literacy with regard to a "genuine" people's literature, the point is that such a people's literature would also seem to be limited in its oral form. Literacy[10], in a postmodern information world where power to a great degree depends on the circulation of information, would seem to be an essential condition for the widespread circulation of information, whether in the form of novels, stock market reports or worker's poetry.

And, as far as literacy is concerned, the situation of new-colonial oppression, poverty and deprivation in the end leads someone like Wole Soyinka to suggest "that in the final analysis the solution does not lie with the writers themselves but with political leaders capable of taking radical decisions" (Nkosi, 1981:8).

In the end - for quite practical reasons - this would have the implication that literature is dispensable, and that "art" is an elitist pastime. This could be put in an even stronger way: It is, in the end, irresponsible to practise something like literature.

2.4 Base and superstructure

This view could to a large extent be attributed to the classical orthodox Marxist view that society should be understood as consisting of two main components: the base or infrastructure, and the superstructure. In terms of the base/superstructure model culture (in the sense of art or literature) is merely one of several superstructural epiphenomena because of the way society is organised. The model is static, and "reduces the cultural to the status of an effect: the ideological, illusory reflection of activities in the real economic base" (Higgins, 1986:114). This would make cultural processes - for instance the production, reception and effect of literature - minimal. Fitzgerald (1989:163) cannot agree with such "ultra-left workerist and ... extreme-nationalist" positions which tend "to see cultural discourse as a convenient (or inconvenient) epiphenomenon of particular theories of class struggle".

Both Williams (1980:31-49; 1988:75-82) and Jameson (1985:23-58) discuss in some depth the orthodox Marxist notion of "base" and "superstructure" - Williams states that "base" and "superstructure" were used in a "metaphorical" (1988:77) sense by Marx and Engels and that they were abstracted to concrete entities in the transition from theory to orthodox Marxism:

> In doing so [orthodox analysts] lost sight of the very processes - not abstract relations but constitutive processes - which it should have been the special function of historical materialism to emphasize (1988:81).

This has led to the notion of "determination". According to orthodox Marxist dogma, the superstructure is determined by the economic base of society. Jameson sees this relation between the infrastructure or base and superstructure, the

economy and all other social processes as one of mechanical causality, which would comprise a totally inadequate expression of a complex reality.

According to Jameson the relation base/superstructure cannot be expressed in terms of mechanical causality. This is so not only because it is an inadequate and oversimplifying expression of reality, but because such a relation of mechanical causality would make "literature" and "literary theory" little more than illusions. The result would be that literature could theoretically not produce social change. In fact, literature could only strengthen the status quo. Because literature is the determined result of the economic base of society, it would always be only a reflection of that society. According to such a view change in society can only be brought about by changing the economic base itself through revolution. This revolution could only, in the end, come about through the course of history.

The presentation of this model (and of Williams's and Jameson's views) is admittedly an extreme representation of the orthodox Marxist view. However, the point to be made is that change and the possibilities of resistance are very small indeed if one works with a conceptual system such as that of the base and superstructure dichotomy.

It is because of these excesses that critics as diverse as Williams and Jameson have developed alternative models not only of society but of culture. The paradoxes inherent in this position - art and literature are results of the base; at the same time, art and literature should contribute to the destruction of the base - leave an ambiguity with regard to the whole idea of base and superstructure.

Ideology as false consciousness - as the untrue representation of the real relation between base and superstructure - is a concomitant of the model of base and superstructure. And as numerous critics have pointed out, this does not allow for political struggle. Higgins (1986:112-122) makes the point succinctly. The work of Althusser - who sees ideological interpellation as "the process that places the individual in an imaginary relationship to society" (Higgins, 1986:115) and thus rejects human agency - can be seen as a consequence of this static structural model taken to its extreme. According to Higgins (1986:117), the

critical weight of Althusser's account of ideology falls, then, on the notion of experience, which is, for Althusser, a structure of inevitable misrecognition.

Althusser's theory is untenable as the basis for any idea of ideological struggle.

There is a dual and related movement from the absolute immediacy of experience as the result of the direct relationship between base and superstructure, to the absolute mediacy of experience as a result of the superstructure (and human subjects) as victims of ideological powers in a structural relation to the components of the mode of production on the one hand, and the subject on the other.

On the one hand, art and literature are seen as important vehicles of struggle; on the other, this very notion leads to accusations of irresponsibility because of art and literature - and all of culture - being merely results of the base they are supposed to help destroy.

B ii In Praise of Irresponsibility

2.5 Culture Industry

Quite a different form of irresponsibility is espoused by the Critical Theory of the so-called Frankfurt School of Neo-Marxists. Because of the difficulties regarding the classical orthodox notion of base and superstructure (specifically with regard to problems of determinism), cultural theorists like Marcuse, Adorno, Horkheimer and Benjamin developed a more or less unified Critical Theory. One of the most important points of this Critical Theory pertains to the notion of the so-called "culture industry" - an almost all-embracing cultural monolith which seeks to control most - if not all - cultural practice in order to defend and consolidate the power of multinational capitalism.

A very significant aspect of the concept of the "culture industry" regards what could be termed the notion of "irresponsibility". In order to escape the grasp of the culture industry, cultural practitioners should seek to marginalise if not exclude their practice from the mainstream culture. They should be irresponsible and compose works of art in such a way that they will barely be read; so that these works of art can become trial arenas for alternatives.

In their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* Adorno and Horkheimer state that "social freedom is inseparable from enlightened thought" (1989:xiii). Enlightenment implies demythologisation and demystification in favour of the supposed maturity of "pure reason". What Adorno and Horkheimer set out to do in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is to discover "why mankind, instead of entering into a truly human condition, is sinking into a new kind of barbarism" (1989:xi). They want to examine the "self-destructiveness" (1989:xi) of the Enlightenment. The reason for this self-destructiveness is to be found in the fact that the Enlightenment merely replaced the myth of superstition, faith, and irrationality for another: the myth of pure reason. Enlightenment is supposed to demystify; however, in practice Enlightenment mystifies Reason. This paradoxical process takes place in History.

History can be seen as a perpetual dialectical process of mystification and demystification (Adorno & Horkheimer 1989:xiii-xiv). This process makes the critique of society particularly difficult. One always faces the danger of mystifying while intending to demystify. Tied up with this problem is the question of immanent and transcendent critique[11]. Transcendent critique is, really, both an impossible illusion (it is impossible to escape from history and to launch "an attack from an imaginary point of reference outside culture" (Arato & Gebhardt, 1978:187)) and a dangerous one (the semblance of privileged truth leads to a fascist insistence on one's own project).

Despite Adorno's frequent assertion that one should practise an immanent critique[12], it on the other hand, cannot provide a full picture of truth because of the lack of distance between it and that which it seeks to criticise. Critique can therefore at most be dialectical inquiry, tentatively yet decisively hovering between the totalising tendencies of transcendentalism and the relativising tendencies of working immanently, "maintaining both in uneasy opposition" (Arato & Gebhardt, 1978:202).

The result of such a critique should be the demystification of that which is scrutinised *without the foundation of a new mythology* or master code or narrative (Jameson, 1985:22ff.) according to which the text of culture is to be interpreted and explained by means of its being rewritten in terms of another mythologising text or code which is supposed to contain "truth".

According to Adorno, examining the social totality amounts to examining the *reified* social totality, which is not the real social totality at all, but the only - and false - image of the social totality as mediated by this social reality. Transcendental critique cannot present the whole picture, it loses sight of "a future-oriented dynamic" (Arato & Gebhardt, 1978:199) of society. Transcendental critique is therefore false:

> ... we can have knowledge of total society only in the form of micrology - i.e., through the intensive, critical examination of single, totalized works in art and philosophy. .....
> Mediation, in the form of micrology, in the form of an 'immanent critique' that has not forgotten its interest in a future-oriented transformation of the false whole of society, is therefore the only possible avenue for a conceptual unfolding that involves a dynamic relation of subject-object in Lukács' sense (Arato & Gebhardt, 1978:199).

Adorno's critical project is a supremely negative one. It denies the traditional role of the proletariat which can be reactivated into action through the defetishisation of labour which will be spurred on by means of the conscientisation of the working class. This is, according to Adorno, not possible because of the falsity of the social totality - which was supposed (in orthodox Marxism as practised by Lukács at least) to be the key to the conscientisation of the working class:

> The Lukácsian project of a mediation or de-fetishization in which revolutionary theory is met half-way by the self-mediation *or* self-de-fetishization of reality in the emergence of class consciousness, collapses in Adorno's work ... Therefore, Adorno could not admit an objectively possible identity of theoretical mediation and the practical self-mediation of the addressees of theory, and hoped only for a parallel and incomplete mediation of micrological theory and those of its objects that themselves incorporate the project of critique, i.e., autonomous works of art (Arato & Gebhardt, 1978:200).

This implies that critique can at most be negative - that is, it can *identify* contradictions within a (cultural) text without, however, being able to *resolve* them. Great, autonomous works of art, however, will have a "cognitive function", a "method ... characterized as the unfolding of a 'dynamic totality'" (Arato & Gebhardt, 1978:200) which will presumably uncover contradictions in society and "appear as negative, as critique" (Arato & Gebhardt, 1978:200).

Such a negative critique must be exercised upon the fetishised, reified, de-magicised, rationalised social reality which entrenches itself through the perpetuation of a "culture industry". Art and culture in the form of the "culture industry" are powerless against - and in fact strengthen and embody - the political status quo because of

> the commodification of the [art] forms themselves [revealed by the artificial aura (re-magicisation; denial of reification) of art and culture in, for instance, the form of films] and introject the commodity fetish into their psychic structure, reducing them to mere consumers of cultural commodities (Arato & Gebhardt, 1978:216).

This is where the paradox of art comes into play - art is powerful only when it is excluded from culture. Art which *forms part* of the culture industry must of necessity serve the status quo of a reified but demagicised and at the same time mystified social reality. Because we live in a "one-dimensional" society where change is *rationally* impossible, negative dialectics has as its aim "to secure an arena in which alternatives become conceivable again" (Arato & Gebhardt, 1978:220).

The only such alternative is "irresponsibility", excluding oneself from the system of cultural domination or *heteronomy*: "Today, a quieter, more insidious bondage of consciousness has taken the place of older, more 'immediate' forms of oppression (which had allowed at least for opposition in thought)" (Arato & Gebhardt, 1978:220).

Therefore Adorno pleads for a "minority discourse". It is because art is threatened with cultural assimilation that it must be a minority discourse which is excluded from the dominant culture. Adorno saw the possibility of this happening to the very self-conscious and formal (with the semblance of being "autonomous") avant-garde (Arato & Gebhardt, 1978:223). According to Adorno "the artist [should] devise alternative forms of objects, trial objects, or counterrealities through alternative transcendental ideas which retrieve the previously invisible, ignored or suppressed, but concrete potentialities of given historical situations" (Arato & Gebhardt, 1978:221).

Artists should do what critics do: they should "unmask" texts. As far as *mimesis* is concerned, art may never be mere reproduction but must be *critical*. Its technique

must already indicate the true state of the present reality, it must be conscious of what the true state of affairs is and should attempt to transcend its historical circumstances. But, according to Adorno, individuation is the essence of aesthetics.

Art is seen to take part in a dialectical process in which art and society, art and not-art, not-society and society interact and define each other:

> ... the very principle of art [is] to seek out and 'synthesize the incompatible, unidentical elements in the process of friction with one another .....
> .....
> the processual nature of art is constituted by its needs (as an artifact, as human-made, with its a priori place in the mind) for the nonidentical, the heterogenous, the not-yet-formed. Works of art need the resistance of the other against them - it induces them to formulate their own formal language. This reciprocity constitutes art's dynamism.' Thus, authentic art, independent of the artists intent, continuously confronts a given reality with what it is not, but could very well be. 'There is something contradictory to the idea of a conservative work of art,' Adorno insisted, and Marcuse agreed: 'a subversive potential is in the very nature of art' ... (Arato & Gebhardt, 1978:222).

The fact that art is seen *by society* to be just that - art - causes it to become "exempt from immediate social function or praxis [and this] permits it to be a trial arena for alternatives" (Arato & Gebhardt, 1978:223).

However, the fact that art is supposed to be something relatively harmless and that it is supposed to be autonomous without anything to say about politics, causes it to be excluded from the political sphere:

> To be sure, society protects itself from the 'subversive potential' of art by creating a special sphere for it in which it is declared autonomous but also, therefore, socially irrelevant. While society can thus safely, and even justly, worship art, this fetishization is also the social protection of such a qualitative enclave. .....
> [Art] must [therefore] remain beyond the constraint of immediate application to the very reality it is to transcend (Arato & Gebhardt, 1978:223).

Society therefore protects itself by emasculating art, by viewing it as "art" in the first place. The result is that the possibilities of an art of resistance diminish rapidly. If art is not "autonomous" ("art"), then it is assimilated into the culture industry. If art is "autonomous", then it is marginalised and castrated. Is there a way out of this impasse?

> To Benjamin the only answer to the fascist challenge is that politicization of art which unites artistic production to the struggle of the workers' movement for self-consciousness (Arato & Gebhardt, 1978:210).

Despite the claim that art is an autonomous sphere for the production of alternatives, ultimately art seems to be relatively powerless - especially if it is to be accessible to only a select few who can fruitfully read avant-garde works of art. Irresponsibility of the sort propagated here seems to be a dubious alternative for alternatives.

2.6 Adorno and Commitment

In his essay on commitment (1962:300ff.) Adorno distinguishes between "tendentiality", "commitment", "autonomy" and what could be termed "committed autonomy" in art. Broadly speaking, Adorno opposes both tendentiality (propaganda and so-called committed works of art) and autonomy (works of art as "art for art's sake"):

> Committed art, necessarily detached as art from reality, cancels the distance between the two. 'Art for art's sake' denies by its absolute claims that ineradicable connection with reality which is the polemical *a priori* of the very attempt to make art autonomous from the real (1962:301).

He believes that there is a third alternative to these two positions. It is possible to produce an art that is both politically committed and at the same time artistically good. Adorno's point is that it is not possible to separate the "Sartrean goats [of commitment] and the Valéryan sheep [of artistic autonomy]" (1962:301).

2.6.1 Propaganda and Commitment

"Tendency" literature (1962:303) is, according to Adorno, changeable and temporary (its "pliancy mocks any commitments by the subject" [1962:302]). Unlike committed art, its intention is "to generate ameliorative measures, legislative acts or practical institutions - like earlier ... plays against syphilis, duels, abortion laws or borstals" (1962:303). Commitment, however, is supposed "to work at the level of fundamental attitudes" (1962:303ff.).

Adorno's essay is - among other things - an attempt to provide an answer to Sartre's notion of literature. This notion is based on the premise of human choice. According to Sartre works of art should be committed only in the sense that they embody the

choices made by their authors. But the effect of these committed works of art should not be to cause individual choice. Adorno states that, "[i]n fact, as soon as committed works of art do instigate decisions at their own level, the decisions themselves become interchangeable" (1962:304); the effect should not be "to spotlight alternatives, but to resist by its form alone the course of the world, which permanently puts a pistol to men's heads" (1962:304). Sartre therefore "has with great candor confessed that he expects no real changes in the world from literature" (1962:304).

Adorno finds this notion unacceptable because it ignores the fact that "the author's motivations are irrelevant to the finished work, the literary product" (1962:304-305).

Adorno takes issue not only with "the extreme subjectivism of Sartre's philosophy" (1962:304) but also with Brecht's "didactic poetics" (1962:306). There is a contradiction in Brecht's art: it "both presents itself as didactic, and claims esthetic dispensation from responsibility for the accuracy of what it teaches" (1962:307). This is the case because Brecht "made ... abstraction into the formal principle of his art" (1962:306). Adorno says of Brecht's play *Arturo Ui* (which is a parody of fascism) that

> [i]nstead of a conspiracy of the wealthy and powerful, we are given a trivial gangster organization ... The true horror of fascism is conjured away; it is no longer a slow end-product of the concentration of social power, but mere hazard, like an accident or crime ..... the ridicule to which Ui is consigned renders [fascism] innocuous ..... The group which engineered the seizure of power in Germany [i.e., the Nazi's] was also certainly a gang. But the problem is that such elective affinities are not extra-territorial: they are rooted within society itself. .....
> *The Great Dictator* loses all satirical force, and becomes obscene, when a Jewish girl can bash a line of storm troopers on the head with a pan without being torn to pieces. For the sake of political commitment, political reality is trivialized: which then reduces the political effect (1962:308).

Brecht's art seeks to teach the true essence of society through abstraction via alienation. Brecht's method (which is intended to politicise the audience) is therefore precisely what makes his art "art". "His method, to render immediately apparent events into phenomena newly alien to the spectator, was also a medium of formal construction rather than a contribution to practical efficacy" (1962:309). Didacticism undoes itself because it refuses (for obvious reasons) to be propaganda, but presents itself as an art of abstraction. And as an art of abstraction it trivialises

its subject matter. Brecht's attempt to place the audience at a distance by means of alienation through abstraction cannot be acceptable because this would not allow Brecht's critique to be truly immanent, and "immanent critique, which alone is dialectical [demands an] assessment of the validity of his [Brecht's] forms with that of his politics" (1962:309).

In the end, Adorno decides that "[t]he gravest charge against commitment is that even right intentions go wrong when they are noticed, and still more so when they then try to conceal themselves" (1962:311). Can literature, then, consciously and in a committed way subvert any given political status quo?

2.6.2 Autonomy

Adorno distinguishes between two forms of autonomous art, the first being an autonomous "art for art's sake" and the second an autonomous art of commitment which is "committed" precisely because of its autonomy. He seeks to justify so-called autonomous art by arguing that all works of art are created *in reality*:

> The distance these [autonomous] works maintain from empirical reality is in itself partly mediated by that reality. The imagination of the artist is not a creation *ex nihilo* ..... There is no material content, no formal category of an artistic creation, however mysteriously changed and unknown to itself, which did not originate in the empirical reality from which it breaks free (1962:314).

The accusation of apoliticism and the denial of reality regularly levelled against so-called autonomous works of art therefore does not hold. Because all works of art are involved with reality all works of art are political and therefore "committed" in the sense that they are aligned to a specific political position. Autonomous works of art therefore are at the same time - although this might not be immediately apparent - thoroughly "committed" works of art. Art cannot escape from its reality. Art's efficacy depends not on whether it is "political" or not, but on how it treats its own political being, on how it responds to a specific political reality. But as Williams (1988:199) notes, "if all writing is in this sense aligned, what is the point, at any time, of a demand for commitment?"

However, political efficacy does ultimately depend upon the work itself. Adorno asserts that the dialectical tension between the "aspiration" of political renewal and

the "possibility of foundering and failure" (1962:315) is a necessary aspect of a truly politically effective art:

> The loss of tension evident in works of painting and music which have moved away from objective representation and intelligible or coherent meaning [causes such works to] drift to the brink of indifference, [to] degenerate insensibly into mere hobbies, into idle repetition of formulas now abandoned in other art forms, into trivial patterns. It is this development which often gives substance to crude calls for commitment. Formal structures which challenge the lying positivism of meaning [as practiced by committed works of art] can easily slide into a different sort of vacuity, positivistic arrangements, empty juggling with elements. They fall within the very sphere from [which] they seek to escape (1962:315).

The type of art that Adorno favours is therefore not an "art for art's sake", a newly positivistic art which hides its positivism and is incorporated into the culture industry by being reified expressions of its own "artness". Adorno believes in truly human works of art like those of Kafka or Beckett, which "deal with a highly concrete historical reality: [for instance] the abdication of the subject" (1962:314). These works "enjoy what is today the only humanly respectable fame: everyone shudders at them, and yet no one can persuade himself that these eccentric plays and novels are not about what everyone knows but no one will admit" (1962:314).

The result of this "uncalculating autonomy of works which avoid popularization and adaptation to the market [is that this autonomy] involuntarily becomes an attack on them" (1962:314) as much as on the society they seek to attack. This is the price and the danger of producing Adorno's truly committed autonomous art. But because "no literary work, not even the traditional novel, leaves ... meanings unaltered, as if they were outside it" (1962:302), literature as a socially processual institution always does change the political and social status quo.

However, the very notion of the culture industry makes Adorno's view problematic. In the almost thirty years since he wrote "Commitment" both Kafka and Beckett have become part of this culture industry. Their works have been re-written both in academic articles and books, as well as in numerous novels, short stories, poems and plays. At first the "autonomy" of Kafka and Beckett might have involved a self-undermining of their works - by not being read or performed. Now, they are considered "masters" and "artists".

Despite Adorno's assertion that "[t]he moment of true volition ... is mediated through nothing other than the form of the work itself, whose crystallization becomes an analogy of that other condition which should be" (1962:317), form alone is, like meaning (as emphasised by "committed" works [1962:302]) not enough. Kafka and Beckett's forms now do not point towards "that other condition which should be" but to the process of incorporation into cultural heteronomy and compliance.

The cost of artistic autonomy is not always that it undermines political meaning or form through exclusion from the market of the culture industry. Very often it is the assimilation through political polyvalence (Adorno, 1962:302) which renders works susceptible to reification.

Irresponsibility seems, with the passage of time, to become responsibility. The crisis of Western civilisation today seems as great as - if not greater than - ever before. Kafka, Beckett and, indeed, the Frankfurt School, do not seem to have offered particularly useful solutions to the social and economic problems pervading our century.

2.7 Ndebele and Autonomy[13]

In an excellent article on the state of South African fiction, Ndebele (1984b) offers a provocative view of what is wrong with South African fiction. According to Ndebele fiction has not succeeded in effecting radical social change in South Africa. Like Adorno, Ndebele stresses the autonomy of art *and* its dependence on society:

> The central problem [in dealing with art] appears to lie in the often confusing paradox that art is an autonomous entity which, at the same time, derives its objective validity from and within society. This latter condition would then, by definition, appear to deny artistic autonomy. Something there is, therefore, in art that determines its autonomy; and something there is that appears necessarily to undercut that autonomy. Writers might therefore fall into two camps: according to whether they emphasise what makes for artistic autonomy, on the one hand; or, on the other hand, according to whether they emphasise the undercutting elements (1984b:328).

Ndebele goes on to say that the so-called committed writers in South Africa, those writers who identify with the struggle against apartheid and who wish their texts to

serve this struggle, seem to play down the autonomy of art and emphasise the intimate connection that must of necessity exist between society and art.

The cost of ignoring the artistic side of art for the sake of emphasising its political side, Ndebele points out, is high. The result

> is that the writing's probing into the South African experience has been largely superficial. This superficiality comes from the tendency to produce fiction that is built around the interaction of surface symbols of South African reality. .....
> [Characters] appear as mere ideas to be marshalled this way or that in a moral debate. Their *human* anonymity becomes the dialectic equivalent of the anonymity to which the oppressive system consigns millions of oppressed Africans. Thus, instead of clarifying the tragic human experience of oppression, such fiction becomes grounded in the very negation it seeks to transcend. .....
> Thus the writer of indictment soon gives himself up to dealing with the oppressive negation on its own terms (1984b:328-330).

Ndebele wants art to go *beyond* resistance. Resistance is already a negative process. Because one resists something, resistance is a response to something. What happens therefore, according to Ndebele, is that art reifies and dehumanises its characters *itself*, and therefore strengthens the oppressive status quo which reifies and dehumanises real people. A true art of resistance will therefore be one that resists the status quo by, as it were, not resisting it at all.

The major presupposition held here by Ndebele is that if art is "correct"[14] and does not seek to deny its being art, then it will not strengthen the status quo. The status quo is strengthened by South African fiction because of the immanent nature of the text as such which strengthens the ideological processes of the status quo, rather than because of the ideological processes inherent in the status quo *per se*.

Even though "[t]he phenomenon of information in a capitalist society hinges on such issues as who produces the information, who interprets it, and who disseminates it" (1984b:330), and even though the fact that the processes of information are in the hands of the liberal English multinationals and in the hands of Afrikaners who revert to propagandist slogans because of the rationalisation needed to justify a manifestly unjust political system - apartheid (1984b:331), Ndebele seems to believe that the superficial nature of the type of fiction (which participates in what "can most clearly be seen as a clash of slogans" [1984b:331]) is not necessarily the *result* of the type of

information available as much as a condition which makes it *easier* for this fiction to fall into the trap of sloganeering, "journalism" and "numbing sensationalism" (1984:330).

The result of this, according to Ndebele, is that art places the stress on *information* rather than *transformation*. The reverse would only be possible if art confirmed rather than denied its being art, if it were both stylistically and formally *autonomous art*. This, as we have seen above in the discussion on Adorno, makes art "exempt from immediate social function or praxis which [would in turn permit] it to be a trial arena for alternatives" (Arato & Gebhardt, 1978:223). That is, when art becomes sensationalist, sloganeering journalism, it cannot but strengthen the status quo by criticising the status quo on its own terms. The implication is that art has the magical capacity of, in some way or another, transcending its social context.

Ndebele tells of a writer he once met

> who gleefully told me how honoured he felt that his book of poetry had been banned by the South African censors. What I found disturbing was the ease with which the writer ascribed some kind of heroism to himself, almost glorying in a negation. It did not occur to him, of course, that the censors may have banned his work precisely because they may have seen in it ... their own quality of propaganda, their own vindictiveness, their own debasement. The writer may have concentrated on those aspects of social reality and the methods of treating that reality which interests the censors to the extent that the censors cannot think beyond them. The censor may have seen not experience, but social information that simply conflicted with his own (1984b:332).

Ndebele's point seems to be that the content of an aggressive and committed literature of resistance alienates and *further* dehumanises the very reader it is supposed to address. Another implication is that literature which does not have a "quality of propaganda , ... vindictiveness [and/or] debasement" will somehow be more effective in subverting the political status quo. This is again to say that the efficacy of literature depends on its content, form and style - on itself only rather than on itself *with* the con-texts into which it is inserted. It might be true that an "autonomous" work of art will (at least initially) not be incorporated into the culture industry. However, it is almost certain to be incorporated later. And if it is not incorporated it will in effect be excluded from the culture industry and from culture itself. In other words, as Adorno makes clear in "Commitment", both autonomous and committed art run the very real risk of undermining itself. Autonomy becomes

heteronomy because it is no longer read; commitment becomes heteronomy because it is from the start "politically polyvalent" if it resists becoming propaganda.

The answer to the problem of producing a genuine art of resistance which will not be subject to the culture industry and at the same time will not be subject to political polyvalence through the open-endedness of choice is indeed difficult to determine. It is not so easy to write an effective literature of resistance, a true "people's literature". According to Ndebele, however,

> there is a difference between art that 'sells' ideas to the people, and that whose ideas are *embraced* by the people, because they have been made to understand them through the evocation of lived experience in all its complexities. In the former case, the readers are anonymous buyers; in the latter, they are equals in the quest for truth. All the writer needs to understand is that he can only be genuinely committed to politics through a commitment to the demands of his art (1984b:338).

The point, and the problem, however, is that all art is in some way or another "sold" to "readers [who] are anonymous buyers" in a society which makes money out of culture. Art is a commodity. Furthermore, the purpose of the culture industry is not merely to make money for "the capitalist bosses" but to safeguard the political status quo which ensures the possibility of profits, and therefore to preserve power.

As Williams (1988:200) notes, "'[freedom] to publish' ... can be practically redefined as 'freedom to publish at a profit'". Cultural works which cannot be sold will not be made available; cultural works which seem to threaten the status quo will be suppressed, whether through state apparatuses or through the mechanics of exclusion or marginalisation which operate in society.

Ndebele notes in his contribution to the *Culture in Another South Africa* conference (1987) that

> [in] the nineteenth century .....
> Africans had lost the battle over their land .....
> [There] was the beginning of the effective marginalization of the African peoples of South Africa; of their functional consignment to the periphery of human history. [There seems to be] .....
> at least one unavoidable implication: the written word, perfected in the isolation of the study, which itself perhaps represents a form of strategic marginalization, may be the only viable bearer of witness, the one last act that would provide proof of existence (1989:20-21).

Even the written word might not offer a viable option of resistance any more, as Ndebele affirms. Even the written word might no longer be able to provide proof of existence, because it too "represents a form of strategic marginalization". This point is very important. Literature does seem to have a role to play in actively working towards social change, but the possibility of its effectiveness is small indeed.

Notes

1. Hereafter abbreviated as "Beantwortung". All translations from the German have been made by me.

2. The impression should not be created that only Kant is to be blamed.

3. As an example of this ambiguous insistence of the subject on itself, compare the following statements by the German Romantic Novalis:

"Poetry is the great art of the building of transcendental health ... It intertwines everything for its great purpose of purposes: *the elevation of mankind above itself*."

"Poetry is representation of the spirit - of the inner world in its totality. Its medium already, words, hint at this for they are the outer revelation of that inner realm of power."

"The artist is wholly transcendental ... Only an artist can divine the meaning of life" (quoted in Furst, 1980:58-59, 70).

4. It is worthwhile to quote Degenaar at length here. He says:

> If the act of writing leads to a cul de sac, re-writing becomes imperative, re-writing which reinstates the dynamic quality of writing as a creative way of making distinctions and of situating signs differently. If we are willing to take in part in the process of re-writing, the following kind of issues will have to be taken into account:
>
> 1. The notion that a new history must be written on a higher level since self-reflection is inevitably part of the enterprise.
>
> 2. The way in which vocabularies, assumptions, paradigms, methodologies and interests condition the way in which we talk about art and history.
>
> 3. The extent to which the white mythology of Western man has been projected onto the South African world of art and the manner in which its history has been constructed.
>
> 4. The way in which hierarchies have conditioned our way of thinking, for example, the hierarchies of class, race, and gender, the hierarchy of Western culture and African culture, the hierarchy of universal and particular, and the hierarchy of academy and township.
>
> 5. The role played by culture in the writing and re-writing of history and the importance of questioning the assumptions of one's culture.

6. The influence of the hegemony of certain discourses on the way in which we talk about art and the way in which it represents certain power relationships.

7. The nature of writing and re-writing as symbolic acts entailing the question whether one is involved in the writing of art and art history in terms of domination or of liberation.

5. In the answer to a question by Gray (1977:259), Sepamla states that

> [it] seems I'm in a position which I cannot change at the moment, having to deal with Whites as my critics. I think the fact that there are no experienced Black writers leaves me with very little choice but to work with White critics ...

Tlali's "so-called critics" also seem to be white. Seroke frames in the following way one of his questions (which is then answered by Tlali):

> We are tackling a crucial question when we talk about critics. An argument has been advanced that because of the scarcity of qualified people, blacks who are well versed in the theory of literature, the standard of black criticism does not rise. Inevitably the role of midwife is played by people with foreign concepts (Seroke, 1981:305ff.).

6. This is a complicated matter drawing to a great extent on Lacanian psychoanalysis. The major problem which the analysis in terms of Same/Other implies is that the desire of the Other to be more than either the Same or merely the not-Same is that the tension between the Same and the Other is never resolved but merely reversed. The Other - in its radical Otherness becomes, in its insistence on this radical Otherness, merely a perpetuation of the opposition Self/Other, and therefore of the status quo. See the discussion of Ndebele, as well as the analysis, both to follow.

7. On the efficacy of literary texts with regard to illiteracy, see Gordimer (1990:36-41) and, with regard to the protest novel, Sole (1988:81ff.).

8. A major dissenting voice in this regard is that of Watts (1989:33-37).

9. However, it should be noted that, for instance, the cassette of Mbuli's *Change is Pain* "was banned while some of the printed poems were not" (Van Dyk and Brown, 1989:64). This suggests that the relation between orality and literacy - and their perceived subversive accessibility - regarding a people's literature is quite complex. Steadman's report (1985:26-28) on the banning of plays performed in township venues and the acceptance by censorship authorities of the same plays when performed at established venues like the Market Theatre offers a valuable insight in this regard. Steadman ascribes this tendency to a process of cultural commodification which causes theatre to be viewed "as a middle-class enclave". He compares this process to the way in which "militant poetry is turned by publication into literary commodities" (1985:26).

10. Technology - like audio or video cassettes (Van Dyk and Brown, 1989:63,64) - could also provide a useful avenue of circulation. However, technology brings a whole new set of problems to bear, especially in a third world country. Sitas notes that "[i]t was the lack of suitable sound equipment that has seen to it that the worker poets are not on record or cassette at the moment" (Van Dyk and Brown, 1989:64). African people simply do not have available the range of technological products which would ensure mass circulation of audio and video cassettes. Furthermore, as Van Dyk and Brown note (1989:64), "the cassette [of Mzwakhe Mbuli's *Change is Pain*] was banned while some of the printed poems were not".

11. This, of course, is a convoluted debate in its own right. An exhaustive discussion cannot be attempted here. For discussions the reader is referred to Horkheimer (1941), Marcuse (1960), Arato and Gebhardt (1978), and Jameson (1985).

12. For instance in his essay "Commitment" while discussing Brecht "The task of an immanent critique, which alone is dialectical, is rather to synthesize assessment of the validity of his forms with that of his politics" (1962:309).

13. In this section Ndebele's theory is considered with regard to the Frankfurt School and its idea of "autonomy". The very important notion of the "storyteller" (which Ndebele takes over from Walter Benjamin, also a "member" of the Frankfurt School) is not examined in any explicit detail. For a discussion of Ndebele's response to, for instance, *Amandla*, see below. It must be stressed that the assessment of Ndebele which follows here is not the final one for this dissertation. In fact, the very important notion that much of the resistance literature which has been produced in South Africa takes on that which it seeks to attack (apartheid capitalism) on terms dictated by that system, is employed at length in the analyses of the novels in the second section of this dissertation.

14. This "correctness" must not be confused with orthodox Marxism's insistence that art must be correct in order to be efficacious in furthering the aims of the revolution. Ndebele does not mean that art must be politically correct, but that in order to be politically efficacious art must be true to itself first and true to its ideological commitments secondly only. The results (political or otherwise) are determined not by ideological correctness but by artistic correctness. The similarities with Adorno's position are obvious.

Chapter 3: Limitation and the Power of the Word - Creating Spaces

3.1 Hegemony and Counter-Hegemony

In the discussions of Adorno's and Ndebele's views of what a literature of resistance should be like it is notable that, in the end, the possibilities of real resistance seem minimal. Even though both Adorno and Ndebele believe in the possibility of resistance through art - and in this case literature - certain problems regarding their views have appeared. The major problem seems to be the problematic issue concerning literature's function in society. Thus far it has seemed as if "society" and "culture" through the "culture industry" would severely limit the possibilities of resistance. The culture industry's mechanisms of exclusion and assimilation, of reproduction and co-option, have, in fact, up to now probably appeared more monolithic than may have been allowed for. The chances of strategic intervention and resistance therefore appear particularly slim.

Bullock (1977:379) notes that since the nineteenth century "hegemony" has been used "to describe the predominance of one state over others". The term is elaborated by Gramsci to stress

> not only the political and economic control exercised by a dominant class but its success in projecting its own particular way of seeing the world ... so that this is accepted as 'common sense' and part of the natural order by those who are in fact subordinated to it (Bullock, 1977:379).

Williams (1988:110) regards "hegemony" as a particularly useful term to describe and to go beyond the related processes of "culture" and "ideology":

> Hegemony is ... not only the articulate upper level of 'ideology', nor are its forms of control only those ordinarily seen as 'manipulation' or 'indoctrination'. It is a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of living: our senses and assignments of energy, our shaping perceptions of ourselves and our world. It is a lived system of meanings and values - constitutive and constituting - which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming. It thus constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society, a sense of absolute because experienced reality beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society to move, in most areas of their lives. It is, that is to say, in the strongest sense a 'culture', but a culture which has also to be seen as the lived dominance and subordination of particular classes.

Even though "culture" and "ideology" are subsumed under the rubric of "hegemony", and even though the hegemonic should not be seen as something monolithic and omnipotent, it does constitute a very powerful process. Because it "constitutes a sense of [absolute because experienced] reality" it does not allow for much real difference or resistance. The hegemonic is a totalising process. However, this systematic "sense of reality" is "constitutive and constituting". It can never be seen as embodying an all-embracing process because it is something that is not only continuously shaping reality, but is also continuously being shaped by people:

> Hegemony, then, is not the name of an abstraction, but the name of an active social process, the practice of human sociality. The ideological, for Williams, is always the result of human practice (Higgins, 1986:114).

Despite the immensity of the task, therefore, there is room for developing and producing alternative or counter-hegemonies, for inventing - as the Frankfurt School seeks to do - new realities as constituted by new hegemonies.

Taking the hegemonic process to be "a lived system of meanings and values - constitutive and constituting" (Williams, 1988:110), amounts to the orthodox Marxist idea of a base/superstructure dichotomy being, in effect, deconstructed. Change in society can no longer be seen as being constituted solely, or at least mainly, by the economic and political forces of production. The "superstructure" is no longer epiphenomenal or incidental. Culture is, like the economic, part of "life" and "experience". It is now, as Williams (1988:111) puts it, "much more than superstructural expressions - reflections, mediations, or typifications - of a formed social and economic structure". Cultural practice is therefore both constituted by *and* constitutive of society. A cultural process like literature can contribute towards the establishment of a counter-hegemonic process.

To indicate and stress the fact that hegemony is a process, Williams prefers to refer to it as "the hegemonic" (1988:113). It does not

> just passively exist as a form of dominance. It has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended, and modified. It is [therefore] also continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressures not at all its own ..... [;] while by definition it is always dominant, it is never either total or exclusive (1988:112-113).

In fact, the hegemonic cannot exist without resistance to it[1]. Because the hegemonic has to provide itself with defensive responses to that which threatens its hegemonic hold, processes of resistance to the hegemonic in effect shape the hegemonic. These defensive responses, however, do not affect the dominant status of the hegemonic. In order to remain dominant, the hegemonic seeks to "control or transform or even incorporate" (Williams, 1988:113) alternative strategies. These alternative strategies are mostly tied up with the hegemonic itself, in the sense that "the dominant culture ... at once produces and limits its own forms of counter-culture" (Williams, 1988:114). However, and this Williams regards as especially significant in terms of real subversive resistance, there are

> other kinds of initiative and contribution which are irreducible to the terms of the original or the adaptive hegemony, and are in that sense independent
> .....
> The cultural process must not be assumed to be merely adaptive, extensive, and incorporative (1988:114).

Whether this is so, in fact, is an open question. Foucault sees "power" as primarily a relational process. According to him it is impossible ever to be in a position of exteriority to power. As we shall see below, Foucault does not want to think of power as a repressive force. Foucault refuses to deal with power (and "resistance" to power) in terms of assimilation or exclusion.

However, both Williams and Foucault - despite their differences - oppose the view of a monolithic and all-powerful society against which resistance is impossible.

3.2 Emergent Discourses

In keeping with his insistence that resistance is not only possible but does, in practice, take place in ways which are irreducible to the dominant hegemonic culture, Williams distinguishes between what he terms the dominant, the residual and the emergent (1977:34-37; 1988:121-127)[2]. According to him (1977:34) the dominant (or corporate) culture is only one of different kinds of culture: one has to keep in mind that there are "a corporate culture, a residual culture, and an emergent culture".

The residual meanings and values of residual culture should not really concern us here. However, as it is very difficult - if not downright impossible - to chart accurately the signs of an emergent culture in texts, we shall have to look for signs in history within the texts in order to indicate that even if there were to be elements of an emergent culture, then there are also residual elements of the dominant culture present. These residual meanings and values, or what Jameson calls *sedimentation* (1985:140ff.) are very important for the notion that "meanings, values, and practices ... are themselves living resolutions - in the broadest sense ... political resolutions - of specific economic realities" (Williams, 1988:115). In fact, one of the most significant aspects of Jameson's methodology is the identification of sedimented layers of residual meanings and values in a text in order to indicate that such a text is a symbolic act which becomes "the imaginary resolution of a real contradiction" (Jameson, 1985:77).

However, what should concern us in this dissertation is less the ideological unmasking of texts (in which residual meanings and values play a most important role) than the possibilities of resistance in and through texts. But if we want to determine whether the texts in question do contribute to resistance against apartheid, then one avenue would be to determine whether they do *not* contribute to such resistance. The idea of sedimentation and the residual could, therefore, be fruitfully used in indicating differences between the novels under discussion and other novelistic texts.

As far as the emergent discourses of an emergent culture are concerned, Williams points out that these should be alternative rather than merely oppositional. However, these are extremely problematic notions.

If the emergent discourses contribute to a merely oppositional culture, then

> the process of attempted incorporation significantly begins. ..... Straight incorporation is most directly attempted against the visibly alternative and oppositional class elements ..." (Williams, 1988:124).

One of the many ways in which this incorporation works is by seemingly accepting the oppositional discourses.

However, if the possibility of meaningful resistance through oppositional discourses is to be doubted, then the possibility of meaningful resistance through alternative discourses seems even less likely. Are alternative discourses possible at all? Can one at all distance oneself from the dominant culture? Social relationships are, if not monolithically repressive, at least strictly relational.

Williams recognises these difficulties:

> Cultural emergence in relation to the emergence and growing strength of a class is then always of major importance, and always complex. But we have also to see that it is not the only kind of emergence. ..... *no mode of production and therefore no dominant social order and therefore no dominant culture ever in reality includes or excludes all human practice, human energy and human intention* (1988:125).

This is so because the dominant hegemonic culture is per definition selective and untrue. It has to exclude certain processes and practices. Although that is part of what makes the hegemonic so powerful and dangerous, it is at the same time also what makes it vulnerable. While exclusion is the concomitant of assimilation or incorporation, exclusion can itself be a dangerous process to the hegemonic. What is excluded could *develop* into an alternative culture with its own alternative discourses, and thus pose a threat to the hegemonic culture.

However, this process is laborious and complex. Subtle incorporation and exclusion make the emergence of an alternative culture particularly uncertain. This might, all the same, present an alternative for meaningful resistance.

3.3 Power as a Relational Strategy

To a degree, the work of Foucault - and especially of his so-called New Historicist followers - like that of Adorno and, to a more limited extent that of Ndebele, also imply that "in any given social formation there is a kind of monolith of power that crushes and makes irrelevant all intention" (Lentricchia, interviewed by Salusinszky, 1987:206). However, as is the case with Derrida and deconstruction, Foucault stands in a specific relation to the New Historicists, and this relationship is far from unproblematical.

In one of his last works, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, Foucault sets about tracing the history of (sexual) discourse. Foucault rejects what he calls the "repressive hypothesis" (1980:3ff) of the relationship between sex and power. This hypothesis holds that sex, as well as sexual discourse, was marginalised in the seventeenth century in order to satisfy the Puritan work imperative which developed into capitalism.

Foucault identifies a number of problems (1980:11) with the "repressive hypothesis". Of special importance here are two of these points. Foucault questions the validity of assuming that

> the workings of power, and in particular those mechanisms that are brought into play in societies such as ours, really belong primarily to the category of repression ... Are prohibition, censorship, and denial truly the forms through which power is exercised ...? (Foucault, 1980:11).

Referring to literature in such terms would, furthermore, result in a typically self-reflexive *aporia*. Serious methodological problems would arise if one were to believe that one was criticising something as all-pervasive and repressing as repression itself. If all power is repressive power, and if power pervades everything, then a critique of that all-pervasive power is impossible:

> Did the critical discourse that addresses itself to repression come to act as a roadblock to a power mechanism that had operated unchallenged up to that point, or is it not in fact part of the same historical network as the thing it denounces (and doubtless misrepresents) by calling it 'repression'? Was there really a historical rupture between the age of repression and the critical analysis of repression? (Foucault, 1980:11).

Foucault, however, emphasises that he does not wish to deny that power can work in a repressive way; what he questions is whether *all* power works like this. Power, according to him, does not work in a single constitutive way - it employs "'polymorphous techniques'" (Foucault, 1980:11). This is why Foucault says that he will "[bypass] as it were the repressive hypothesis and the facts of interdiction or exclusion it invokes" (1980:13). According to him "the objective is to analyze a certain form of knowledge regarding sex, not in terms of repression or law, but in terms of power" (Foucault, 1980:92).

What exactly, then, does Foucault understand by the term "power"? He makes it quite clear that power, as far as he is concerned, is not something monolithic which acts in a univocal and repressive way:

> By power, I do not mean "Power" as a group of institutions and mechanisms that ensure the subservience of the citizens of a given state. .....
> It seems to me that power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization; as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them; as the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or system, or on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another; and lastly, as the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies (1980:92-93).

Foucault is quite emphatic on the point that "[power's] condition of possibility ... must not be sought in the primary existence of a central point" (1980:93) and at the same time that power is omnipresent:

> not because it has the privilege of consolidating everything under its invincible unity, but because it is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another. .....
> Major dominations are the hegemonic effects that are sustained by all these confrontations (1980:93-94).

Furthermore, power is at the same time personal and transindividual. Power relations, according to Foucault,

> are both intentional and nonsubjective .....
> [This is] an implicit characteristic of the great anonymous, almost unspoken strategies which coordinate the loquacious tactics whose 'inventors' or decisionmakers are often without hypocrisy (1980:95).

One could compare this with Jameson's conception of narrative as being not so much "a literary form or structure as an epistemological category" (Dowling, 1985:95) which recounts the story of humanity and embodies "the essentially antagonistic collective discourses of social classes" (1985:76). Jameson, like Foucault, tends to emphasise the collective nature of power, and of power through discourse.

Foucault denies that there is a "single locus of great Refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary" (1980:95-96). He denies the possibility of a single revolutionary origin or telos, for instance the Marxist concepts of class or History. He is therefore anti-Marxist in his conception of how power works and how power is strengthened or subverted. This view of power being everywhere, leaving no possibility of attacking that power somehow from the "outside" is, according to Eagleton's discussion of ideology (1985:115), something peculiar to so-called "poststructuralism":

> The problem will be to prevent the concept [whether ideology or power] from stretching to the point where it becomes simply useless or redundant, as has happened with much poststructuralist thinking about power. The Marxist objection to the poststructuralist 'expansionist' notion of power is not that it is false but that it is quite often politically unhelpful ...

It would, however, be unjust to accuse Foucault of maintaining such an indiscriminately "expansionist" concept of power. In fact, Foucault emphasises that the opposition between being either "inside" or "outside" power is false. This is so because this would be "to misunderstand the strictly relational character of power relationships" (1980:95).

Foucault does believe in the possibility - or rather, the inevitability - of resistance. Because of the collective, transindividual way that power operates through discourse, resistance to power is both inevitable and not a matter of individual decision. According to Foucault, in fact, power *depends* on resistance to power: "Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (1980:95).

Foucault therefore attempts to prevent his conception of power from being "politically unhelpful" by pre-empting the possibility of being attacked for propagating a position which would imply being powerless against power.

Power is omnipresent because it emanates from various points of resistance - there is a

> plurality of resistances, each of them a special case ..... one is dealing with mobile and transitory points of resistance ... (1980:96).

Thus resistance can sometimes take the form of savagely violent, or of "peaceful" opposition, sometimes of spontaneous and sometimes of planned opposition. Like power, resistance is omnipresent, polyvalent and plural.

Rather than presenting a practical strategy for practically resisting power and domination, Foucault argues for a strategy, a methodology of examining power so that power can be understood, and so that strategic discourses of infiltration rather than of opposition can be found to counteract power:

> We must not look for who has the power ... and who is deprived of it ... nor for who has the right to know and who is forced to remain ignorant. We must seek rather the pattern of the modifications which the relationships of force imply by the very nature of their process. ..... Relations of power-knowledge are not static forms of distribution, they are 'matrices of transformations' (1980:99).

Foucault implies that knowledge - the link between power and discourse - may provide an alternative to power and domination. Discourse links knowledge and power and "for this very reason, we must conceive discourse as a series of discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable" (1980:100). Discourse, like resistance to power and power itself, must be seen as embodying a "multiplicity of force relations". This is so because discourse - as the vehicle of knowledge, and of power - is not "subservient to power" (1980:100). Discourse, power, knowledge: there is a very intimate relation between the three.

In the end, Foucault states that power cannot but subvert itself. Even silence (the opposite of discourse, but also a (non-)discourse itself) offers the possibility of not only strengthening power, but of subverting it:

> Discourse transmits and produces power: it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. In like manner, silence and secrecy are a shelter for power ... but they also loosen its holds and provide for relatively obscure areas of tolerance ... (1980:101).

* * * * * * * *

Foucault does allow for the possibility of revolution. It can become possible through "the strategic codification of ... points of resistance ... somewhat similar to

the way in which the state relies on the institutional integration of power relationships" (1980:96).

However, the process through which this codification takes place, is still unclear and is never fully worked out in Foucault's work. The answer to the question of how revolutions can be started, or of how peaceful yet radical change can be effected is unknown. In practical terms, how does one go about destroying apartheid? Foucault does not attempt to answer such a problem. Instead he argues for a strategy, a methodology of examining power so that power can be understood and strategic discourses of infiltration rather than opposition can be found to counteract power:

> We must not look for who has the power ... and who is deprived of it ...; nor for who has the right to know and who is forced to remain ignorant. *We must seek rather the pattern of the modifications which the relationships of force imply by the very nature of their process.* ..... *Relations of power-knowledge are not static forms of distribution, they are 'matrices of transformations'* (1980:99, my emphasis).

Even though we can therefore not agree with Said that Foucault ascribes "undifferentiated power ... to modern society" and that his is a "profoundly pessimistic view ... imagining power to be so irresistible and unopposable" (1984:151), we have to agree that "Foucault is unable to deal with, or provide an account of, historical change" (1984:188). This criticism is linked to that of Eagleton (1985c:115) quoted earlier. There are numerous examples of this tendency to absolutise the "power/knowledge configuration" (Carusi, 1989:143). Carusi, in fact, is sceptical of the "much vaunted political effectiveness" of resistance literature - even though (because?) she draws on a genealogical Foucauldian discourse analysis. She states (1989:143) that,

> if it is to be at all, the narrative must exert power in terms of a discourse which will at some point erupt into a Truth. ..... It is possible then that the relation to Truth in resistance literatures is a guarantee of the continuation and extension of an inherently oppressive discourse into the discourses of resistance, which in this way necessarily spring from it (and maintain it?)

All narrative becomes suspect, because all narrative has a Truth claim. This is so, then, especially in the case of a literature of resistance, which consists of narratives which offer themselves as the Truth with regard to specific socio-economic

situations. The uncertainty and suspicion with which one has to approach all narratives and all texts according to this brand of Foucauldianism, give rise to a set of questions: "where do you come from? who do you wish to affect? and finally, who is speaking to whom?" (Carusi, 1989:143). On the grounds of not only Foucault's work but specifically the article by Carusi, Nethersole (1990:116) has warned against the "new South African parochialism" which leads to the end of knowledge.

These questions are not geared towards a historical specificity which bears in mind the specific con-texts into which texts are inserted in order to gauge more or less accurately the power relations which come into play, which affect texts and which, in turn, affect readers. The questions are, rather, geared towards questioning all texts, *regardless of historical specificity*, and "exposing" their Truth claims as precisely "claims". This seems to lead to the double-bind of (Foucauldian) New Historicism which Thomas (1989:187) points out:

> On the one hand, [New Historicists] claim authority for their reconstructions of literary history by appealing to historical evidence. On the other, they have to admit that their evidence is itself an inevitably partial construction of the past from a present perspective.

Graff (1989:172) notes the same problem with regard to the problem of co-option in what he calls "Left" New Historicism:

> The only truly authentic "success" is to fail, or at least remain as marginal as possible. Retaining one's radical credentials means remaining marginal - but then remaining marginal means remaining ineffectual[3].

The result of this is that "['subversive'] has become little more than a plus-mark, a gold star awarded to whatever a critic happens to approve of ..." (Graff, 1989:173-174). This position in turn leads to what Graff calls "Right" New Historicism, which according to him argues,

> in effect, that since every form of culture is destined to be co-opted, the very notion of an oppositional position is nonsense. Since there is no 'outside' to power, the very question of alternatives to an established regime is foolish (1989:175).

He ascribes this to "an intellectual subculture which senses that its society is illegitimate but has lost the vision of an alternative" (1989:173). This point is similar to the one made earlier in this dissertation: scepticism is an expensive luxury.

Therefore, we seem compelled to agree with Lentricchia (Salusinszky, 1987:206; Lentricchia, 1989) that, as seems to be the case with "deconstruction", Foucault's discourse of power has to a very large extent itself become a victim of that which it warns against. This is so, it would seem, because of the limited degree of power over which we have power. Derrida has noted that, in seeking to destroy metaphysics, all

> destructive discourses and all their analogues are trapped in a kind of circle. The circle is unique. It describes the form of the relation between the history of metaphysics and the destruction of the history of metaphysics. There is no sense in doing without the concepts of metaphysics in order to shake metaphysics (1978:280).

3.4 Résumé: Active Resistance?

The basic problem with the notion of a "culture industry" is that it tends to present itself in the end as such a powerful process, such a monolithic structure, that art really becomes "worthless" and "powerless". The only alternative for art is that it must be an alternative. However, this should not mean that art or literature must be banished to oblivion and seen to be "merely" art. Literature is a vehicle for establishing an *alternative* hegemonic discourse; it is one possible cultural avenue to infiltrate the hegemonic discourses of the state and the dominant ideology.

While the option of silently infiltrating the hegemonic discourse (as, amongst other strategies propounded by Foucault) certainly is a way of responding to a situation in such a way as to do justice to the decentred nature of the human subject, there is a very real connection between silence, the lack of knowledge, and powerlessness. The whole point of this dissertation is precisely to explore the ways through which literature might be empowered so as to assist in the dissolution of dominance and injustice in an unjust society. Silence is surely only one - and probably the last - alternative.

It is so, however, that silence is only one example of the ways in which the status quo of hegemonic practice can change. Often, as was the case with homosexuality and sodomy (Foucault, 1980:100-102), silence as a form of exclusion does lead to eventual change of the hegemony. In the case of homosexuality and sodomy, an open space of silence and tolerance allowed for the creation of an alternative or counter-discourse to that of heterosexuality. This happened not by opposing the discourse of heterosexuality but by infiltrating it and slowly wrenching change from it by changing it. By making the dominant discourse different from the way it was, the "counter-discourse" of acceptable homosexuality was created.

The difference between this position and that of Williams is, in the end, that Williams insists on the destruction of hegemonic structures through the creation of counter-hegemonies. This should happen through exclusion - but this exclusion must be total. No incorporation may be allowed since assimilation would mean the rendering impotent of counter-strategies.

Foucault, however, insists that it is impossible to escape the reach of the hegemonic. Rather, the hegemonic should be infiltrated and changed so that it accommodates counter-discourses and is changed in the process. Whether one opts for the creation of alternatives through exclusion or for infiltration through an initial exclusion which leads to accommodation and change, there do seem, in the end, to exist possibilities of active resistance. As Olivier (1989:60) says, "to speak for democracy is already to act against apartheid" because speaking for democracy is opening up and filling an oppositional space which makes resistance against any hegemony (including that of apartheid) not only possible but inevitable. This is so, because, as Williams (1988:125) has said, "*no mode of production and therefore no dominant social order and therefore no dominant culture ever in reality includes or exhausts all human practice, human energy, and human intention*".

Notes

1. See also Foucault and the section on Foucault.

2. However, Thomas (1989:184) states that "the old historicism's narrative that charts an emergent tradition [is] a narrative that poststructuralists have discredited". The idea of continuous

history is problematic in the light of Foucault's work: The notion of a telos has become unacceptable.

3. Note the similarity between this position and that outlined in the section on Adorno earlier.

Part 2: Reading Resistance

Chapter 4: Methodology and Con-texts

4.1 Introduction: Methodology

Ndebele, in a recent article appropriately entitled "Redefining Relevance", states that "what has been called protest literature may have run its course in South Africa" (1989b:40). In his analysis of the situation, Ndebele finds himself in the company of various other critics. Watts states that where earlier black literary expressions of the South African situation "[are] looking back at situations rather than indicating a way forward" (1989:3), Black Consciousness writers have

> turned from white-directed protest to black-directed conscientisation. ..... After 1976 the poets and writers were possessed by the need to record, to seize history as it passed and render it back to those who had made it serve as ammunition in the struggle, and to point the way forward (Watts, 1989:4-5).

According to Watts this trend can be characterised as a movement away from an

> *angst*-ridden search [for identity], the introspective nihilism of the existentialist [to] the purposeful quest of a people who have had to emerge from conscious and subconscious subjugation [and] rescue their psyche from alienation and near obliteration and forge a collective will to carry out the task allotted to them by history (1989:5).

Visser (1987:67-76) traces this movement within a single novel - Serote's *To Every Birth Its Blood* - and notes that Serote started the novel before the Soweto insurrections, and completed it only afterwards. This leads Visser to find two different fictional projects in the novel. He describes the initial project as presented in Part 1 of *To Every Birth Its Blood* as one which would have been "a novel fully immersed in modernist and existentialist narrative practices" (1987:70) and the final project (as presented in Part 2 and pervading the whole novel) as being overtaken by Soweto 1976:

> The irruption of Soweto 1976 into his fictional project confronted Serote with a crisis that was (in addition to being intensely personal) simultaneously compositional and ideological: the need to narrate, and the need to gain an

> understanding of, events which lead him, like his characters, with the knowledge that 'South Africa will never be the same again' ... (1987:75).

According to Visser, "everything in the novel is presented as leading up to and away from that seminal moment of the 'days of Power' ..." (1987:68). The result is that "the initial fictional project is overtaken by a new project" (1987:69), creating the impression that in *To Every Birth Its Blood* there is a "clash of two different fictional projects, and the incomplete integration of one fictional project into another" (1987:72).

This is a movement - described by Watts in terms of the specific history of South African ideology and fiction, and focused by Visser on one novel - within which the tasks of rescuing an identity from the alienation of oppression "located themselves within the primary need to appropriate language - a context in which a culture can be created that will articulate their people's demand to take charge of their own lives and their political destiny" (Watts, 1989:5).

What distinguishes Ndebele (and Visser) from Watts[1] is their concern that the two projects have not become integrated, or rather, that the project of liberal humanism (and the reaction against it) has not yet been rejected fully. This is why Ndebele can still call for

> a radical displacement of the white oppressor as an active, dominant player in the imagination of the oppressed [and] .....
> .....
> for an accompanying change of discourse from the rhetoric of oppression to that of process and exploration" (1989b:50).

Whether the opposition can ever be fully resolved or deconstructed, or even, as Ndebele seems to want, reversed (1989b:50), is a difficult question. However, the aim of this part of the dissertation will nevertheless be to trace the contradictions inherent in establishing a new space for a new culture in Miriam Tlali's *Amandla* and Sipho Sepamla's *Third Generation*. As far as methodology is concerned, the following points have to be made.

Firstly, the con-texts within which *Amandla* and *Third Generation* were produced have to be defined. This will be done by briefly considering the responses of the

South African government and of literary critics and reviewers to *Amandla* and *Third Generation*.

Secondly, as far as is possible, the space in which *Amandla* and *Third Generation* were produced, inserted and circulated is sketched. The widening and filling of that space by the texts will also be examined. Finally, residual elements such as traces of liberal ideology, the tribal and communal past as an idealised entity, and the presence of precisely that - capitalist exploitation via racism and sexism - which the novels seek to attack, will be considered by means of the silences, absences and traces to be seen or made visible within each text. The ways in which the texts smooth over the contradictions of a struggle against the system of apartheid which is also a struggle *in terms of* that system are accorded special attention. This process is illustrated - with specific reference to the trope of exile made inevitable because of the role of actants - in terms of Greimas's well-known actantial model (Jameson, 1985:46-49, 121-129; Du Plooy, 1986: 173-183).

This chapter will not offer detailed analyses of the sociopolitical "backdrop" of either *Amandla* or *Third Generation*. Neither the Soweto 1976 rebellion (the "Days of Power") and its aftermath nor Black Consciousness ideology will be subjected to exhaustive examination. While it is obvious that the "backdrop" - or "con-texts" - will fulfil a necessary complement to the study of any text, the limited scope of the present study prevents exhaustive analyses of the con-texts. Neither will the South African state's volumes of past and present state security and "publications control" legislation be accorded much attention. These fall outside the scope of a study like the present one. Instead, the reader will be referred to pertinent texts on these issues while the central thrust of the argument will centre on the theoretical possibilities of resistance through the vehicle of - specifically literary - texts. The theoretical efficacy of *Amandla* and *Third Generation* as texts which are able to conscientise their readers will be tested by analyses based on the theories of and/or methodologies explicated in the first section of this dissertation.

4.2 Responses and Receptions

This subsection investigates the responses by two significant power structures to the publication of *Amandla* (as well as of some of the other "Soweto novels") and *Third Generation*. First the response of the South African state - specifically with regard

to its censorship - is discussed. Then the responses of reviewers and literary critics are examined. These responses are linked to the implied readership (the African population) and therefore to the very important question of the circulation of the novels in question.

4.2.1 State: Censorship and Readership

As Sole (1988:85) notes, "all [the "Soweto novels"[2]] except *To Every Birth Its Blood* have at one time or another been banned inside the country [South Africa]". The fact that the three novels which were banned "at one time or another" have since been unbanned is significant[3]. This would seem to point to at least one or more of the following three phenomena:

Firstly, the fact that the novels have been unbanned might testify to their success. If these novels have been unbanned, then it might be true that they - and other cultural products like them - have managed to establish a space for themselves within the South African cultural arena. They would, then, have been unbanned precisely because they are no longer considered to be dangerous to the status quo. This position would imply that the status quo has been changed to such an extent through various means (including, but not exclusively so, through cultural products which seek to change or subvert the status quo) that the messages emanating from these novels are no longer at odds with the messages which the South African State wants sent out.

Secondly, the hegemonic system might have co-opted the novels by assimilating them within itself. This might have happened by means of the status quo's having changed itself slightly - and to the extent that the novels can be allowed wider circulation without threat to the status quo.

Alternatively, it might also be that the South African State has decided that - although undesirable - these novels do not really pose a significant threat to the status quo which it wants served. The state might have come to this conclusion through viewing the novels in question as having, for instance, a very limited readership, or as not being able to sway whichever readership they might have to subscribing to their position(s).

As *Amandla*, *A Ride on the Whirlwind* and *The Children of Soweto* were banned in terms of sections 47(2)(*d*) and (*e*) of the Publications Act (number 42 of 1974) (Cornwall *et. al.*, 1983:109-110; 1985:99), the relevant section of the Publications Act has been reproduced here:

> *Section 47*
>
> (2) For the purposes of this Act any publication or object, film, public entertainment or intended public entertainment shall be deemed to be undesirable if it or any part of it -
>
> (a) is indecent or obscene or is offensive or harmful to public morals;
>
> (b) is blasphemous or offensive to the religious convictions or feelings of any section of the inhabitants of the Republic;
>
> (c) brings any section of the inhabitants of the Republic in ridicule or contempt;
>
> (d) is harmful to the relations between any sections of the inhabitants of the Republic;
>
> (e) is prejudicial to the safety of the State, the general welfare or the peace and good order;
>
> (f) discloses with reference to any judicial proceedings (*in*: Cornwall et. al., 1982:81)[4].

Amandla, *A Ride on the Whirlwind* and *The Children of Soweto* were therefore found "undesirable" because they were considered "harmful to the relations between any sections of the inhabitants of the Republic" and "prejudicial to the safety of the State, the general welfare or the peace and good order".

As the unbanning of *Amandla* seems to have passed almost unnoticed[5], this discussion will focus on *A Ride on the Whirlwind*, which was found to be not undesirable in 1982. Reasons for the unbanning of the novel were that, to quote extensively from Cornwall, Gardner and Ries' summary of the "Committee of Literary Experts" report,

> * "[i]t was best regarded as 'a work with literary pretension', a mitigating factor in the determination of likely readership";
>
> * the fact that, "[according] to the [Publications] Appeal Board this readership would 'come close to a popular readership', although 'the likely reader would be the more arduous [*sic*] kind who would be prepared to

> labour through parts of the book'; in any case, 'potential revolutionaries find their inspiration in publications of a more direct and inciting nature';
>
> * "[the] emotive clichés and biases - for instance, the presentation of the police as almost invariably inefficient and brutal - were in fact so one-sided as to be regarded as counter-productive to incitement" (*in*: Cornwall, *et. al.*, 1985:100).

On the basis of these arguments, it would seem as if *A Ride on the Whirlwind* (and, by implication, *Amandla* and *The Children of Soweto*) was unbanned because of the third broadly stated reason above. It would seem as if the authorities found that, although "not to their liking", *A Ride on the Whirlwind* does not really pose a significant threat to the status quo.

It would seem that this conclusion was reached with regard to literary quality, readership and the biased or propagandist nature of the novel. The novel was seen to have "literary pretension" - the readership would therefore be limited and would furthermore not accept the "emotive clichés and biases" which are "one-sided"[6].

In these terms, it would seem that the South African state allowed *Amandla*, *A Ride on the Whirlwind* and *The Children of Soweto* to be unbanned precisely because they were not deemed to be "harmful to the relations between any sections of the inhabitants of the Republic" and "prejudicial to the safety of the State, the general welfare or the peace and good order".

The question now is whether their assessment was correct or not. If their assessment was incorrect, does that mean that *Amandla*, *A Ride on the Whirlwind* and *The Children of Soweto* have managed to create and fill a new cultural space for themselves - a cultural space against which the dominant and hegemonic order was either powerless or which they had no reason to fear because of its already having been co-opted?

If, on the other hand, the correct assessment was that "any poem, play or story (however radical in intention) is of less danger to the ruling power than the information of the press" because poems, plays or stories are "ultimately removed by their very conventions of language, rhythm, plot, style and mode of reproduction from the points of real confrontation, at the rally, at the funeral, at the work place"

(Chapman, 1988a:25), is this then the reason for the unbanning of texts, and does this unbanning then imply the final impotence of, specifically, literary texts?

Answers to these questions would be complicated, but should perhaps be sought in the power relations into which the texts were inserted.

4.2.2 Critics: Absence and Value

A limited number of newspaper reviews[7] of either *Amandla* or *Third Generation* could be located for the purposes of the present study. Reviews of *Amandla* seem to be limited to that by an anonymous reviewer (1981:15), and of *Third Generation* to those by Johnson (1986:14), Kruger (1986:17) Paton (1986:4), and Holloway (1988:48-49), as well as by an anonymous reviewer (1986:6). The first thing to note regarding reviews of these two novels, therefore, is their (relative) absence, which might perhaps be ascribed to the fact that *Amandla* was banned[8], but this still does not really explain the dearth of reviews in the case of *Third Generation* (it has never been banned)[9].

As far as scholarly articles are concerned, no discussions of *Third Generation*, and only four of *Amandla* could be found. Ndebele (1984b:318-340) briefly discusses *Amandla* in the context of his critique of South African fiction; Alvarez-Pereyre (1988:111-124) has published an article on Tlali in which *Amandla* is discussed as well; Sole (1988:65-88) discusses *Amandla* with the other "Soweto novels"; Watts (1989:222-224) devotes almost three pages of her book on Black South African writers to the novel.

Reviews of Serote's *To Every Birth Its Blood* have not been listed here as this dissertation is not concerned with this novel. However, it does seem to be - with Sepamla's *A Ride on the Whirlwind* - to be the most discussed of the four "Soweto novels"[10].

Visser (1987:67) notes that *To Every Birth Its Blood* was, when it was first published in 1981, an immediate success:

> The novel quickly became a prescribed text in university courses; a second print run of 1500 copies was undertaken in late 1985, and by August 1986, according to Ravan Press, fewer than 100 copies remained in stock and a

> third print run was in the offing. No other works of fiction by black writers published by Ravan have had anything like that reception.

According to Visser, "[w]hat has made the reception possible ... is its [*To Every Birth Its Blood*'s] formal complexity, for just such stylistic and structural complexity has been a principal aesthetic criterion of twentieth-century poetics" (1987:67). This might explain not only the relative popularity among academics of *To Every Birth Its Blood*, but also the fact that it is the only "Soweto novel" which has never been banned by the South African authorities (Chapman, 1988a:25).

There does therefore seem to be at least the possibility that the relative absence of reviews is connected with the power structures of the university and of reviewers, which in turn is related to *Amandla*'s having been banned, and to Sepamla's "status" as a much-banned author. The most reviewed novel (*To Every Birth Its Blood*) is also the most prescribed text, and the only one of the four Soweto novels which has never been banned. *Amandla* (which was banned) and *Third Generation* (written by an author many of whose works - both poetry and novels - had been banned at one stage or another), however, have not been either extensively reviewed or prescribed.

4.2.2.1 Reviews: Artistic and Social Value

One very noticeable aspect regarding the reviews of *Amandla* and *Third Generation* is that the question of literary value crops up repeatedly. The nature and role of aesthetics and aesthetic value is a major - if often unspoken - concern of the reviewers.

In fact, two distinct positions in the various reviews regarding these issues can be identified. It is possible to construct a "dialogue" between the reviewers of the two novels on the basis of judgments regarding aesthetic value on the one hand, and the social value on the other.

The anonymous reviewer of *Amandla* (1981:15) states that

> [b]y any customary definition of literary quality, *Amandla* falls a long way off making records. The interweaving of themes, the complicated saga of an extended family, and Tlali's somewhat rambling style, do not make for the crispest reading.

The reviewer goes on, however, to state that even "if it is a mediocre novel, it is a powerful documentary" (1981:15).

Another anonymous reviewer - of *Third Generation* - makes the point that

> [of] course there are some lapses in terms of characterisation and occasional cliches cropping up. But, given the nature of the work and its times, these weaknesses could be ignored (1986:6).

Kruger (1986:17) sees *Third Generation* as a continuation of Sepamla's "tradition of inspiring national pride and offering encouragement to the people's struggle". She finds (1986:17) that Sepamla has here "adopted a less militant approach than can be found in his A Ride on the Whirlwind [sic] and that

> [the] author's low key handling of the interrogation, treatment and subsequent trial of the detainees lends credibility to these events; at no stage can Sepamla be accused of sensationalism.

With regard to criticism of the language usage, Kruger (1986:17) very carefully states that

> Sepamla has a grammatical style of his own ... but this does not detract from the sensitivity and depth; in fact the basic style lends emphasis to the theme.

Finally, Kruger (1986:17) says that *Third Generation*

> is a celebration of the determination and ability of the people to achieve their aspirations, a call for dedication and commitment; it will find its place in contemporary South African literature.

Kruger and the two anonymous reviewers, even though they identify certain problems posed by the novel(s) with respect to aesthetic quality, approve of *Amandla* and *Third Generation*. These are, however, brushed aside because of the perceived social value of the texts in question. The anonymous reviewer of *Third Generation*'s judgment that "given the nature of the work and its times, these weaknesses could be ignored" (1986:6) can here be taken as representing the general view of these reviewers.

Johnson (1986:2) takes a different approach. To him *Third Generation* is, ultimately, an unsuccessful text. He feels that the strength of *Third Generation* is lodged in its being

> a fairly simple story of inchoate activists and their attempts at a relevant role in resistance. But more than that, it breathes life and personality into the meshed web of humanity that forms the backdrop of township resistance in South Africa ..... These people are not the cardboard cut-outs of the morality play, but people ... (1986:2).

Despite "[this] strength of the book", it has "weaknesses and inconsistencies" which are to be found not in the "didacticism of the message [but] in the vagaries of Sepamla's writing style" (1986:2).

According to Johnson (1986:2), "African novels in English have long bewildered Western critics" because it is not always easy to see when "the cavalier - in terms strictly grammatical - use of the language [must] be judged as merely capricious, lazy and wrong". He finds that "[in] Sepamla's case, it is difficult to believe that the majority of the stylistic quirks are intentional".

Johnson's (1986:2) ultimate verdict is that

> *Third Generation* should be read for the sake of its story. It is a glimpse behind the statistics of unrest and a country in crisis. But its weaknesses, sadly, are such that it can at best be judged timely, not timeless.

Paton (1986:4) largely agrees with Johnson. He states that *Third Generation* "cannot be placed in the same category as [Sepamla's] best poetry, but it is nevertheless an important work". He argues that "there are some structural flaws and the writing is uneven", despite the fact that "[the] plot of *Third Generation* is absorbing" and that "Sepamla's central characters are well rounded" (Paton, 1986:4). He concedes, however, that "for some readers these flaws [might be] unimportant. These readers might argue that the message is more important than the medium". To him, however, "it is a pity that some of the climaxes are not sustained".

Holloway's (1988:48-49) review must be situated between the two positions outlined above. He sees "[the] advantages of a long writing career" in *Third Generation*:

> Dialogue, scene and situation are handled with skill, while the political and the personal are successfully integrated without detracting from the novel's polemical purpose. Interestingly, Sepamla, at least in his presentation of black people, resists idealization and stereotype ... (1988:49).

Despite his appreciation of the novel, Holloway is preoccupied with the fact that

> racial issues are accorded greater emphasis than class or economics. .....
> I would like to see black writers delving more deeply into the conditions and motives underlying South African social and political behaviour (1988:49).

All the reviewers comment on the artistic quality of the novels, and all comment on certain perceived artistic flaws. Paton's prediction - that "for some readers these flaws [might] be unimportant" (1986:4) - is echoed in the reviews of at least Kruger (1986:17), as well as in those of the reviewer on *Amandla* (Anon., 1981:15) and the anonymous one of *Third Generation* (1986:6). One could say that for these reviewers the place of *Amandla* or *Third Generation*, and the process which it initiates or bolsters, are of more importance than some or other "inherent" artistic qualities.

Johnson (1986:14) and Paton himself (1986:4) find that despite some or other artistic qualities *Third Generation* is fatally flawed. Johnson laments the fact that *Third Generation* is not universal enough, while Paton finds the novel important but the flaws persistent. To these reviewers artistic standards seem to be of greater importance than either social process or function.

Holloway (1988:48-49) is alone in his appreciation of *Third Generation* as good writing, which is, according to him, unfortunately rather shallow in its analysis of the South African crisis. He traces this to "[t]he centrality, according to Black Consciousness precepts, of cultural liberation in the struggle against white dominance" (1988:49).

He finds no fault with structural flaws, inept language usage or shallow characterisation - in fact, he praises the novel in aesthetic terms. He does not find the novel's politics to interfere with its status as a literary artifact either but rather blames the novel for its moralising stance. He pleads, in fact, for a move, not beyond politics, but beyond moralising via simple ethical oppositions: "The plot is

ultimately reducible to a titanic struggle between good - black activists - and evil - the white security police and black informers" (1988:49).

In this he echoes both Ndebele (1984b, 1989) and Jameson (1985:114-119). This would imply that Sepamla offers a romance narrative, an "imaginary resolution of the objective contradictions to which it thus constitutes an active response" (Jameson, 1985:118), and that he is thus still caught up in the stilted oppositions of black/white, oppressed/oppressor and good/evil.

In all the reviews the notion of efficacy is implied but not really explicitly addressed at all. The question whether *Amandla* or *Third Generation* manages to conscientise its readers, whether a transformation of reader consciousness is to be expected, is not, in the end, addressed. In most of the reviews the emphasis is on either the artistic qualities or the lack of these, or on the irrelevance of artistic qualities, with the implied acknowledgment that these are sadly lacking.

Apart from Holloway's review there is no attempt to explicate the spaces within which these novels have inserted themselves. Neither is there any attempt to present the novels as manifestations, on the one hand, of the spaces which they seek to create, and on the other, which they seek to oppose. Issues like the presence of residual elements of the very apartheid system which the novels oppose within the novels (for instance the disturbing recurrence of sexism and racism via stereotyping) are ignored.

The premise of reviewers seems to be that the status of the novels as seemingly explicit examples of a literature of struggle against an abhorrent system would guarantee their political and social efficacy. Either this political efficacy is taken for granted by the reviewers, or it is ignored because of, for instance, the emphasis on the category of the aesthetic.

This is a peculiarity which recurs again and again, not only in the work of the reviewers but also in that of the literary critics who discuss *Amandla* and other Soweto novels. Nowhere does there seem to be any attempt to question the very basic premise on which the novels are constructed: their political efficacy. The reason for this must be sought in the emphasis on the category of the aesthetic - which seems to blind critics to the implications of historical process.

4.2.2.2 The Critics: Artistic and Social Value

Ndebele (1984b:318-340) is the only critic who addresses the question of reader onsciousness and conscientisation. He contrasts the "moralistic ideology of liberalism [which] has forced our literature into a tradition of almost mechanistic surface representation" with "an ideological stance which stresses ... social and historical process" (1984b:333). According to Ndebele, the realisation of process is a prerequisite for fiction as explanation and thus of transformation: "To work from the perspective of process is to attempt to situate individual events within an explainable totality of social meaning" (1984b:333).

The task of the writer with regard to, say, characterisation, should be "not to avoid interiority, but to render it *as concretely as possible* within the unfolding logic of narrative" (1984b:334).

In this regard, Ndebele refers to "a moment of insightful intimacy ... a moment of transcendence" (1984b:334) which is not "an escape into bourgeois phantasy [but a moment] of universal experience" (1984b:335). The whole process of coming to insight is summarised succinctly by Ndebele:

> The specific subjectivity of character is universalised through the reader's recognition of familiar emotion generated in a given event. Thus, a reader, confronted with a *dramatisation of process* in character development, grows with the story (1984b:335).

Ndebele presents this approach as an alternative to the phenomenon of moralising stereotyping and its concurrent impotent liberal ideology. On these grounds - linked to the whole notion of process regarding "technical issues" and "the ideological nature of fiction" (1984b:333) - Ndebele finds, for instance, "Matshoba's depiction of social reality in his stories simply too overwhelming" (1984b:332). Ndebele says that Mzamane's *The Children of Soweto* is "grounded almost entirely in the events of June 16, 1976" and that he could find "no independent narrative line that permits any reader involvement beyond the act of recognition" (1984b:333). Sepamla's *A Ride on the Whirlwind*, however,

> has an independent plot line [which] .....
> .....
> makes Sepamla's novel more narratively engaging than Mzamane's. Sepamla constantly struggles to subject the objective events to the demands of his art (1984b:333).

However, Ndebele calls *Amandla* "the best of the novels written on the events of June 16, 1976" (1984b:336-337). This is so, amongst other reasons, because "we can identify with [the characters and] their problem" when Pholoso and Felleng have to part at the end of the novel as Pholoso goes into exile to join the liberation movement.

> Any situation that forces lovers apart will invite our condemnation. .....
> What Tlali has done is build into her characters 'the emotions of the reader' (1984b:336).

Alvarez-Pereyre, unlike Ndebele, views *Amandla* more as a type of documentary novel - *and* sees the novel's power in its sociological nature. According to him (1988:115), the theme of power and revolt against power is very important in *Amandla*. He notes that

> [before] even opening the book the reader is confronted with the theme of power. 'Amandla', the title proclaims across the top of the red cover, while beneath it a black fist is shown raised against barbed wire.

He goes on to explain the title of the novel and its significance as a title:

> In Zulu the word 'amandla' means 'power', and it is the first of two terms chanted by demonstrators against white power, 'Amandla Ngawethu!' - 'Power is ours!' or, 'Power belongs to us!' A title therefore which is at once a programme and a challenge. .....
> The theme is a revolt, a would-be revolution ... (1988:115-116).

Alvarez-Pereyre notes that "[the] structure of the novel, in spite of its many twists and turns, is fairly loose" and that *Amandla* "is a militant book: the didactic intention is frequently apparent" (1988:117). He calls *Amandla* a "'white-hot' historical novel" which provides us "with an abundance of useful information about this important phase of South African history" (1988:117) and later, at least as far as part is concerned, "a history book" (1988:121). He says that "[t]he pedagogical purpose takes over from the action of the novel" (1988:121) and describes "Pholoso

and his companions" as "characters in fiction" (1988:123) and thus questions the relevance of traditional generic descriptions for *Amandla*.

What Alvarez-Pereyre does, really, is to elaborate on the *theme* of power in *Amandla*. He is not so much concerned with the power *of Amandla* as with the *depiction* of power in *Amandla*. He notes, for instance, that "the principal participants, the school children, [are] often very young ... It is they who have taken power within the black community" (1988:118). This amounts to "the traditional images of power and authority at the level of the family cell hav[ing] been inverted" (1988:119). He also notes the destruction of "[s]ymbols of power" and of "symbols of a much-hated system" in the novel (1988:120).

Only twice does Alvarez-Pereyre examine the representation of power structures by *Amandla* with respect to the possible power of the novel. With regard to problems of gender he decides (1988:119) that

> [e]ven the implicit status of women is beginning to change. ..... In *Amandla* ... the adolescent women and girls have a place equal to that of the boys, but do not occupy the same positions in the struggle, because they risk more if they fall into the hands of the police. One of their tasks is to politicise their sisters or their mothers who are not yet politically aware.

He also refers to the many political discussions in the novel: dialogue is important (1988:117); "conversations between adults or between them and the young people reveal their long-term preoccupations, viz. the destruction of central power" (1988:120); and Chapter 24 is "a series of political discussions" (1988:121). Alvarez-Pereyre does not know whether to blame this intrusion of didacticism and politics into the novel - which causes the confusion of standard rules of genre already referred to above - on "the author or the situation" (1988:122).

He does, however, see this generic confusion as the "power of the book itself" and as the main reason for *Amandla*'s having been banned: "even if it finds a response only on the fringes of society, it is yet considered sufficiently dangerous by the current régime to be banned" (1988:122).

Of course, with the *unbanning* of the novel, Alvarez-Pereyre now has the problem that his *Amandla* has become powerless, because presumably it is now no longer

"considered sufficiently dangerous by the current régime to be banned". Such a position is unacceptable because it assumes a simple one-to-one relationship between power and repression. It does not, in short, allow for the intricate workings of power with regard to knowledge.

Sole, like Alvarez-Pereyre, focuses on "depictions of politics and community" (1988:65). According to him *Amandla* (with *The Children of Soweto* and *A Ride on the Whirlwind*) "investigate[s] the human experiences, reactions, and political activity in Soweto immediately before and after that fateful day in June" (1988:65). Sole notes that the investigation is informed by Black Consciousness ideology, and that the "Soweto novels" therefore "systematically put forward and elaborate aspects of [Black Consciousness] ideology" (1988:66).

There are, obviously, certain definite similarities between the "Soweto novels". One of the most important of these similarities pointed out by Sole is a "sociohistorical element".

> *Amandla* is constructed as an account of the lives of Soweto dwellers in the year after the uprising. The use of dialogue and the interweaving of several human interest stories allows Tlali to present a number of areas of black discontent. .....
> Into this web of familial experience Tlali places a number of other figures, historical events, and issues of discontent and political debate in Soweto at the time (1988:66-67).

Sole points out that white characters - especially Afrikaners - and other characters, perceived to be in cahoots with the system of apartheid, are stereotyped in their response to the crisis:

> In general, the whites can only respond with brutality and fear to the upsurge of black nationalist fervor the novels embody .....
> white policemen and township officials portrayed are almost uniformly callous in their dealings with blacks (1988:69;74).

Black characters are, on the other hand, drawn in quite a different way:

> Fictional activity takes place in a detailed real world .....
> most of the action of *Amandla* takes place in the meticulously described area around Vundla Drive, Moroka. Many of the characters could, indeed, be the people next door (1988:72)[11].

To be sure, the protagonists of the Soweto novels are used by the authors as one vehicle for what Sole calls "political proselytization":

> the devices most often employed here are authorial interjection, discussions between various characters where political viewpoints are expressed, and the quoting of pamphlets and speeches made at funerals and debates (Sole, 1988:69).

This is linked to the stated intention of authors who seek to conscientise their black readers by means of a "retrieval of black history" (1988:70). However,

> [d]espite the predominantly realistic mode employed, these novels should not be seen as mirroring the social history so much as actively helping its denouement through the conscientization of a black readership (Sole, 1988:69).

The issue of conscientisation brings one to what Sole terms "the thrust by a black intelligentsia to mobilize and unify a black community against the strictures of apartheid and the strength of white culture" (1988:85). The notion of a "black intelligentsia" (Sole, 1988:75-76, 79-82) is problematic in its begging certain questions regarding the addressees of a novel like *Amandla*. Who are the "people"? Are the South African liberation movements mass based grassroots movements, or are they the preoccupations of a radical, educated intelligentsia? Does *Amandla* or *Third Generation* belong to a newly emergent "people's culture" or does it constitute another form of exploitation? In a brief historical introduction to the South African novel (1989:211ff.) before her discussion of *Amandla* (1989:222-224), Watts - like Sole - states that the "Soweto novels"

> have all attempted to give form to the escalation of the liberation movement in the seventies, and to convey to their readers the dynamics of the corporate effort involved (1989:212).

and that the "Soweto novelists"

> are responding to the need experienced by the whole writing community ... to set down the history which they and their community are involved in making (1989:222).

Watts's emphasis, however, is quite different from Sole's. As was noted above, she is quite convinced not only of the attainability of a people's literature, but feels that

it has already appeared, or is at least already appearing to a greater degree than has been acknowledged thus far in the dissertation.

This project of a people's literature is problematic, however, and Watts (1989:222) finds "problems of perspective" in *Amandla* and an inability

> to make the neat artistic detachment of plot or theme customarily demanded by the western bourgeois novel form ..... it [*Amandla*] remains accident rather than design".

She goes on to complain that

> [t]ime passes imperceptibly ..... The action in which they [the characters] are engaged is presented in a very fractured and disjointed fashion" Tlali's problem arises from this attempt to incorporate, erratically, too much historical and political material in her framework. Instead of selecting a small number of events and limiting her historical and political explanation of these to what the situations themselves make necessary, she allows herself to be seduced into making comprehensive surveys and using situations as an excuse for serving them up to the reader. ..... The work's ultimate flimsiness rests on this tendency to clothe ideas and information in situations, instead of the other way around, and in the absolute absence of any sense that the characters are a people in charge of their own destiny (1989:223-224).

Despite her explicit opposition to this "neat artistic detachment of plot or theme customarily demanded by the western bourgeois novel form" (1989:222; cf. 1989:33-37), however, Watts states that *Amandla* is "a very confused literary product". She does acknowledge, though, that

> [i]t may be that the black South African reader, familiar with township relations and interconnections, is less at a disadvantage here than the western reader. And, after all, the novel is aimed at the black South African reader (1989:222; cf. 225).

This statement must be seen against the background of her Preface. She says, namely, that she does not think "it is any longer necessary to embark on the question of the white critic and African literature" (1989:x). This is so, she says,

> since the issue with which South Africa's literature is most crucially concerned, the liberation struggle, has by the efforts of the Africans themselves been made into a world issue - the township youth see themselves as fighting for the world, for the global restoration of political integrity, not just for South Africa.

However, she goes on to say that

> while I am constantly aware of my limitations in dealing with literature that is nourished by the African rather than the European tradition. I have tried to assimilate to the perspective of African writers, ... to learn about African writing from African writers and African people rather than superimpose upon it the literary superstructure or the literary theory of the West (1989:x).

These passages are quoted here for the sake of the argument that Watts is ignoring - or idealising - the possibilities of an African readership, even though she does, in the end, dismiss the novel as a failure. At the same time, however, one can not merely ignore or idealise the problems of reception in the cursory way Watts seems to do. These two statements have to be viewed together as a glossing over of several of those problematic questions raised earlier on the concept of a "people's literature", as well as with regard to the western critic's reading African literature. For Tlali - in an interview with Vivan (1987:60-62) - has herself said the following about the reception of *Amandla*, and it makes sense to quote her at length:

> [*Amandla*] stato un grande successo. Ma bisogna tener presente che il successo d'un libro, da noi, è legato alla possibilità reale che ha la gente di comperare libri. Se uno non può comperarselo, allora tutta la buona volanta di leggerlo non gli serve a nulla: perché finanziariamente per molte persone un libro costituisce un lusso assoluto (questo vale per il 99% della gente del ghetto). Solo una piccola minoranza può avere i soldi per comprare libri. Certo, un libro può diventare famoso lo stesso, perché tutti ne parlano, i giornali lo recensiscono, la radio ti intervista, ecc. Ma *Amandla*, per esempio, ha venduto solo ventiduemila copie e pensare che a Soweto ci saranno almeno tre milioni di abitanti! (1987:61)[12].

> [[*Amandla*] has been a great success. But one must remember that the success of a book, here, is conditional upon the real possibilities people have to buy books. If one cannot afford the book, then all the good intentions he has of reading it are of no use. Because for many people, economically speaking, a book is an absolute luxury (this applies to ninety-nine percent of the people in the ghetto [Soweto]). Only a small minority can afford to buy books. Of course, even so, a book may become famous, because everybody speaks of it, newspapers review it, the radio interviews the author, etc. But *Amandla*, for instance, sold only 22000 copies, and to think that at least three million people live in Soweto!][13]

It seems that even black people, despite the popularity and relative success of *Amandla*, have not really been reading the novel as much as the author would have liked. The point here is that Watts cannot gloss over the issue of structural disjointedness (something to which Sole [1988:69] also refers) by simply stating that

the readership is in any case intended to be black. The whole issue of a black readership is itself a complicated one.

Earlier in her book (1989:33-37) Watts does refer to the question of literary form or structure with specific reference to an African audience. What she says is valid, namely that literature in the black community is a communal effort (1989:36-37), but the question of readership itself is never satisfactorily addressed. Indeed, before discussing the constraints upon African readers and writers in shanty towns - without electricity, with very little privacy, with a high crime rate etc. - Watts herself states that "the reading of a novel is an individualistic and solitary undertaking" (1989:33).

Seen in this light Watts's criticism of *Amandla* on the grounds that

> there seems a low level of organisational awareness even on the part of the central characters ... thus even for the black South African reader there is a failure to transmit an important element of revolutionary consciousness. ..... The funeral ... is the last integrative piece of action. The following underground meeting [*Amandla*:81-93] puts forward no campaign plan but degenerates into a naïve discussion of codes, invisible inks and utopian vagaries about education ... (Watts, (1989:222)

is itself quite naïve. It is difficult to gauge what African readers will make of *Amandla* and of the underground meeting scene, but the point is that Watts's analysis gets bogged down by her focus on structural detail. She does not really examine the difficulty of generic form as a possible manifestation of the rejection of a structure which - in Western eyes at least - would have seemed awkward. How many Sowetans have read *Amandla*? Can *Amandla* be said to form part of the newly emerging people's culture it seeks to establish by means of conscientisation and through the experimentation with other generic forms? These are serious questions which Watts never really addresses in her analysis of either *Amandla* or the other "Soweto novels".

4.3 Space: Con-texts

This subsection has a dual focus. Firstly, it will *briefly*[14] discuss the specific con-texts into which *Amandla* and *Third Generation* have inserted themselves. Secondly, the quite different issue of the space which *Amandla*, *Third Generation* and other

texts have established as an alternative to the power structures of apartheid South Africa will be discussed. This new space, in as far as it has managed to establish itself as a new culture, is an emergent process, and an attempt will be made theoretically to determine in how far *Amandla* and *Third Generation* have managed (and are managing) to further this process.

4.3.1 Defining the Space 1: Insertion

The first point that has to be made regarding the con-texts is that they themselves are situated in a specific space in time. This space can be described as post-Soweto 1976 and pre-FW de Klerk 1990 "glasnost" and "Pretoriastroika"). It roughly coincides with that period of severe State repression which could be called the PW Botha era.

This space is located, therefore, after 1976 and the pre-empted Black Consciousness revolution, and before the time in which the State's policies were altered quite radically. The space itself is characterised by the seeming demise of Black Consciousness as an ideology in the form of its heyday leading up to and going slightly beyond Soweto 1976. This period saw the effective destruction of Black Consciousness in any internally organised form by the mass bannings of organisations and the closure of vehicles of power like newspapers in 1977.

It also, however, saw the emergence of African National Congress (ANC) related charterist activism - accompanied by severe State repression. Perhaps the most significant signs of this emergence towards an inclusive South Africanism were to be seen in the establishment of so-called "alternative" weekly newspapers like *The Weekly Mail* (1985), *The New Nation* (1986), and the Afrikaans weekly *Die Vrye Weekblad* (1988). There was a resurgence of long-suppressed trade union activity, especially with the founding of the mass-based, non-racial Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). Organisations like the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa (IDASA) sought to involve especially whites (the traditionally conservative segment of the South African population because of apartheid's minority power) in dialogues with the ANC and internally based mass movements and resistance organisations.

After Soweto 1976, South Africa slowly but surely became more isolated internationally, mainly because of efforts by the ANC. A mandatory arms boycott has been enforced against South Africa since 1977. South African academics, sportspersons and artists increasingly found it difficult to establish contact internationally. Crippling economic sanctions culminated in the late 1980s in the refusal of several international financial institutions to reschedule South Africa's foreign debt.

All of this forced FW de Klerk, South Africa's present State President, to announce significant changes in State policy on 2 February 1990. These included the unbanning of the ANC, the PAC and other anti-apartheid organisations, the release of Nelson Mandela, as well as proposed talks with the ANC and the abolition of some apartheid legislation.

South Africa is still in the grips of apartheid today. A negotiated settlement between the State and the ANC (with other important organisations) still has to be reached. Apartheid culture with its mentality of prejudice and exploitation must still be destroyed. However, some changes have taken place in the South African sociopolitical arena.

The question pertinent to this dissertation is whether *Amandla* and *Third Generation* - or, by implication any of the other so-called "protest" or "struggle" texts - have contributed significantly to the changes which have taken place, and which will still take place? Were these changes the result not only of their insertion into but also of their circulation within and their modification of this space? Can the changes which have taken place be seen as a victory for *Amandla* and *Third Generation* and a vindication of "people's culture"?

A point that should be added in order to answer these questions satisfactorily concerns the degree to which *Amandla* and *Third Generation* have circulated, or at least could have circulated within the space into which they have been inserted. Here one has to keep in mind constraints such as poverty, racial discrimination with regard to especially education and crime, as well as, as regards Tlali, the position of the African woman in South African society.

4.3.2 Defining the Space 2: Creating and Filling

In the light of the earlier discussion of culture and power, there seem to be two main cultures - one dominant, the other emergent - in South Africa.

The dominant culture could loosely be termed the "apartheid culture", and the emerging one the "liberation culture". The apartheid culture is in decline; the liberation culture is in the ascendant[15].

However, one should note that it is as yet impossible to speculate on what the culture of a post-apartheid South Africa is going to look like. Liberation culture seems to be only an embryonic manifestation of the culture in a future non-racial and unitary South Africa, because the culture of liberation (in contrast to a future culture of liberty) itself is still emergent.

Furthermore, one should note that the relation between apartheid culture and liberation culture is, like that between any dominant and emergent culture, quite complicated. Within the emergent culture will be found traces or residues of the dominant culture. These residues function as a way of rendering the emergent culture impotent by means of co-optation and assimilation for the sake of consolidation. The very act of resisting the dominant culture may itself amount to nothing more than a strengthening of the dominant culture, as such resistance would amount to nothing more than an acknowledgment of the dominant culture. The dominant culture is *resisted* - it is attacked on its own terms.

This is why it has been argued persuasively by Ndebele (1984b) and Watts (1989) - amongst others, though in mutually exclusive ways - that effective resistance will amount in the South African situation to a movement *beyond* resistance and *towards* the exploration of new possibilities, the establishment of an alternative culture.

Before starting an analysis proper of *Amandla* and *Third Generation*, it is necessary to reiterate the point that the insidious ways in which dominant cultures seem to work in order to secure their own perpetuation make both effective exploratory "resistance" and the analysis of such "resistance" particularly difficult and provisional.

For the sake of clarity, regarding the space in which *Amandla* and *Third Generation* were produced, the following should be noted:

> 1 The space is one dominated by apartheid.
>
> 2 Black Consciousness ideology plays an important part in the novels, as they were produced at the pinnacle of Black Consciousness.
>
> 3 Culture is seen by the writers as a weapon in the struggle for liberation.
>
> 4 The audience is expected to be black - there is a difference between conscientising already persuaded (black) readers and persuading (white) readers by changing their attitudes or cognition.
>
> 5 The writer sees herself or himself as fulfilling an oppositional role in an apartheid dominated society.

All of these issues have to a greater or a lesser extent been discussed thus far in the dissertation.

What should perhaps be stressed again, as the issue has become a burning one again in the past few months, is the role of conscientisation and writing as a cultural weapon of opposition and resistance by writers or "cultural workers". Alvarez-Pereyre (1988:114), Sole (1988:69ff.) and Watts (1989:3-5, 25-37) have all discussed the importance of conscientisation to the writers in question. But what is especially important is the emphasis put on this issue, as well as on the need to record what is happening and make it one's own as a people, by Tlali and Sepamla themselves.

Tlali is said to be "known for her pen which always shouts slogans and bleeds with anger" (Anon., 1986:15). In the same article Tlali is quoted as saying

> 'I always feel that our history must be recorded. The future generation has the right to know what happened during our time. ..... The role of the writer is to conscientise the people, so that they can be able to wriggle out of this oppression. ..... Our struggle is in the streets. Our battle is raging there - so, writers have to be there with the people. As writers, we cannot pretend to be comfortable - not as long as the blood of our youth is running in the streets. We cannot turn a deaf ear to their cries. It is impossible ... (1986:15; cf. Rolfes, 1981:62).

This is one of the reasons why she writes in English and not in her native Sotho: "'I'm trying to reach as many people as possible'" (Ludman, 1989:28; cf. Tlali, 1984b:24).

And Sepamla sees his task as "not to be the provider of entertainment, but to spread hope for the future and sympathy for the present" (Douglas, 1981:6). In the interview with Gray already referred to, Sepamla states that the South African writer "has a duty to be a witness ... to record what transpired while he was around" (1977:257).

The African Writers' Association (AWA), a Black Consciousness grouping, condemned the banning of *Amandla* in very strong terms. In a statement issued to the media they stated that

> 'Miriam Tladi [sic] is one of our novelists and will remain [a] faithful and accurate interpreter and recorder of our history ... Individual and mass literary bannings will not daunt or force us into distorting and misrepresenting our cultural heritage and history ... We are committed more than ever to mirror as accurate [sic] as possible the conflicts and crises of the South African socio-political conditions especially affecting us blacks (Maseko, 1981:12; cf. Anon., 1981:2).

It should be clear that Sepamla and Tlali, as well as at least a sizable number of other African writers, are deeply committed to the principles of recording and writing history, to "a process of the fictionalizing of history", as Sole (1988:82) calls it. This writing of history is executed, on the one hand, for the benefit of a future generation - and is therefore geared towards the shaping of a future and emergent culture - and, on the other, for the benefit of the present generation - and is therefore geared towards conscientisation and action for liberation now.

Notes

1. And from Gagiano (1989:84-91), who attacks Visser's reading of *To Every Birth Its Blood* on the grounds that the novel's disjointedness occurs "within a bondedness which is not merely the accidental result of the novel being a set of pages between two covers" (1989:84). With regard to this "bondedness", Visser calls "such an assumption of unity ... misleading" and "a fundamental tenet of orthodox criticism" (1987:68).

2. Critics tend to group Tlali's *Amandla* (1980), Serote's *To Every Birth Its Blood* (1981), Sepamla's *A Ride on the Whirlwind* (1981) and Mzamane's *The Children of Soweto* (1982) together under the epithet "Soweto novels". *Third Generation* would not be included within this group because it is set not during, but after the Soweto revolt. Unlike a novel such as *To Every Birth Its*

Blood, furthermore, it cannot be said to have the Soweto gays as its focus, albeit an absent one - as is the case with *To Every Birth Its Blood*.

3. *Third Generation* has never been banned in South Africa.

4. For a general discussion of censorship in South Africa, and of apartheid itself as a form of censorship, see Watts (1989:10-21).

5. According to Makaringe (1985:6), Tlali "discovered by chance" the unbanning of both *Amandla* and *Muriel at Metropolitan*. Quite a few notices in newspapers regarding the unbanning of *A Ride on the Whirlwind* have been found, but none regarding the unbanning of *Amandla*.

6. Compare the arguments of the lawyer for the defence (Prof J. Dugard) at the hearing:

> Hy (Dugard) het voorts daarop gewys dat dit 'n boek met letterkundige aanspraak is, hoewel 'n komitee van deskundiges dit nie juis as 'groot letterkunde' beskou het nie. Dit sal net in boekwinkels wat ernstige letterkunde aanhou, beskikbaar wees, en beslis nie in Soweto self nie, het hy gesê. Dié is 'n lang novell [sic], en dit is onwaarskynlik dat potensiële revolusionêres dit sal lees (Anon., 1982:5).
>
> [He (Dugard) also pointed out that - even though a committee of experts had not exactly regarded it as 'great literature' - it was a book with literary pretensions. He said it would be available only in book shops which sold serious literature, and definitely not in Soweto itself. This was a long novel, and it was improbable that potential revolutionaries would read it.]

And Malherbe (1982:2) emphasises Dugard's statement that, rather than being read by revolutionaries, the book "would instead be read by students of contemporary South African literature". Of course, if this statement could be taken as representing the truth regarding the readership of this novel and others like it, then this MA dissertation could be viewed (regrettably) as a confirmation of the status quo. In conversation activists involved with Cultural Desks have told me, furthermore, that they do not read "novels", but prefer "struggle poetry" or "scientific articles". The temptation exists to make the deduction that *novels* as a genre are doomed to failure, as opposed to - for instance - "praise poetry". However, compare the section (above) on the oral versus the literary traditions. It seems that oral performances also present problems regarding reception.

7. The INEG filing system was used in the search for newspaper reviews. The INEG filing system's exhaustiveness cannot be vouched for.

8. This relation can, of course, apart from any philosophical speculation about "power structures" or "hegemonic discourses", be explicated already in terms of the fact that a novel like *Amandla* enjoyed very brief circulation as a result of its having been banned.

9. Sipho Sepamla, its author, has of course had to suffer the banning of quite a few of his works prior to *Third Generation*.

10. To offer a few examples only, Watts (1989:237-247) offers a detailed discussion of *To Every Birth Its Blood*, while Visser's article (1987:67-76) has elicited that by Gagiano (1989:84-91). Jacobs (1989:3-17) has discussed the novel in terms of the American "Blues novel".

11. One should not lose sight of the possibility that whites are portrayed in the way they are not only for the sake of a particular political effect, but also because the apartheid system has

managed to divide and separate people belonging to different racial groups from one another - something which makes stereotyping almost inevitable. Despite this result of apartheid,

> [t]here is a sense in all the novels that whites do not form a homogeneous block; nevertheless, their economic and political position is such that blacks are forced, we are told, to view them in a certain way (Sole, 1988:74; cf. Watts, 1989:10-14).

12. On the constraints people experience with regard to reading, see Tlali (1984:22-26), Schipper (1985b:59-68) and Watts (1989:10-14, 33-37).

13. Unpublished translation from the Italian by R. Pach, lecturer in French at Potchefstroom University.

14. For much more detailed analyses and discussions the reader is referred to Lodge (1983:201-231, 321-363). Sole (1988:66), Alvarez-Pereyre (1988:116ff), Watts (1989:7-57) and Schipper (1989:27-47) also offer useful discussion pertaining specifically to the literary responses to the South African crisis.

15. It must be noted here that there are, obviously, more than only two "cultures" in South Africa today. There are, within these two main cultures, also cultures like that of the different so-called "cultural" or "language" groups (Xhosa, Zulu, English, Tswana, Venda, Afrikaans etc.). There are also numerous sub-cultures to be found. Examples include "rugby culture", "yuppie culture", "liberal culture", "Black Consciousness culture", "reactionary culture", "academic culture", "Charter culture", "Muslim culture", "Calvinist culture" and so on. In fact, there are probably as many cultures as there are interest groups. The idea here is that all of these different (sub-)cultures could roughly be grouped into two "main cultures": "apartheid culture" and "liberation culture". This is to simplify the issue considerably; such simplification is undertaken here for practical reasons.

Chapter 5: Residues and Contradictions in Amandla and Third Generation

5.1 Introduction

It is quite difficult to distinguish between, on the one hand, the success of a novel (or any other text) in filling and establishing new cultural spaces, and on the other the degree to which the novel gets bogged down by what it wants to destroy. The difference between protest and resistance on the one hand, and exploration on the other, constitutes a complex relation. Perhaps the best way to examine the success of a text with regard to its attempts to establish cultural space for itself and its ideology is to examine the ways in which it contradicts itself.

The focus of this subsection will therefore be on the silences, the traces, and the contradictions to be found in *Amandla* and *Third Generation*. Plot construction and narrative form will be examined in terms of exile as an imaginary resolution to real contradictions. The novels will be seen as novels of defeat which seek to hide their defeat by means of this imaginary resolution in order - still - to have a conscientising effect on their readers.

Here the importance of the dichotomy reality/unreality will be connected with structural disjointedness: the times are out of joint; generic confusion becomes inevitable, boundaries have to be transgressed. South Africans find themselves in a time of social upheaval. The dichotomy reality/unreality becomes a confusion punctuating not only the implied disjointedness of the times, but the novel form as a means of escape into the exile of the private imagination as against the collectivity of mass struggle. This is *despite* the stated intention of using this private form - the novel - of fantasy and fictionalisation in another, transgressive form as a means of resistance. Rather than offering new cultural possibilities by means of fashioning new supra-novelistic forms, these texts confirm their fictional status through the traces of private flights of fantasy which cannot but lead to the end. This end is the end of writing in exile because of the exile of the imagination. The end of writing in exile is not so much a physical end of writing, but a punctuation of what would seem to be the only way *out*. Exile starts where fictionalisation ends.

This is the way in which *Amandla* and *Third Generation* seem to confirm their ultimate impotence as mere artifacts. They themselves harbour doubts as to their

own efficacy, and try to resolve these doubts in imaginary ways. Hopes become dreams and dreams become fantasies and illusions. Both novels can be characterised by Lifa's statement that "ours was a receding dream" (*Third Generation*:68).

Amandla documents the history of the Soweto 1976 rebellion and its culmination in detention and exile. *Third Generation* documents the disintegration of the Third Generation and, by implication, that of the struggle. Rather than mass action, there are more or less individual pockets of action. Rather than victorious action, action is defeated. This is ironical as both novels present themselves explicitly as novels of struggle against apartheid.

This message is conveyed explicitly through codes not usually taken as part of the novel text itself. The cover of *Amandla* has been commented upon by Alvarez-Pereyre (1988:115-116):

> Before even opening the book the reader is confronted with the theme of power - and with the attempt to instal an alternative power. 'Amandla', the title proclaims across the top of the red cover, while beneath it a black fist is shown raised against barbed wire. In Zulu the word "amandla" means "power", and it is the first of two terms chanted by demonstrators against white power, "Amandla Ngawethu!" - "Power is ours!" or, "Power belongs to us!" A title therefore which is at once a programme and a challenge.

The front cover of *Third Generation* consists of, at the top, the author's name (Sipho Sepamla) in relatively small type. Then, some way down, we find the title (*Third Generation*) in black and white capitals with a black border. The "THIRD" of THIRD GENERATION consists of huge white letters with black borders; GENERATION is black in its entirety. The bottom part of the cover consists of a photo of black men, some with fists raised in the air, holding banners proclaiming revolution. The effect of this lies in the implication of a new (third) generation[1] of black South Africans which will rise up and attain dignity and freedom through struggle from the grassroots. The message of the success of this struggle is carried by the novel, which the dedication:

For Emma Sathekge,
15 years old,
and Thabo Sibeko,
6 years old,
undying victims
of apartheid
(*Third Generation*:no page reference).

The back cover states that "*Third Generation* celebrates the courage and commitment of Black women in the liberation struggle".

Amandla has a subtitle - "A Novel by Miriam Tlali" (*Amandla*:no page reference). It offers itself as a fictionalisation of history when the text is dedicated not only to Tlali's husband and children, but "to the courageous children of Soweto who laid down their lives during June 1976 so that a free Azania may be realised" (*Amandla*:no page reference). *Amandla* records the attempt at *realising* "a free Azania". It does not portray success as much as the tension between desire and defeat, between an ideal and a reality. This tension finds physical manifestation in a significant way within the novel as already in opposition with physical, objective reality.

The back cover of *Third Generation* identifies the text, like that of *Amandla*, as a "novel", stating - in typical adventure and spy thriller vein - that "[i]n this novel, a life-and-death game goes on right under the nose of the forces of repression ...". Although *Third Generation* does present itself as a novel of struggle against apartheid and injustice, it also presents itself as an adventure story. This does not mean to imply that the novel could not be both a novel against apartheid and an adventure story. On the contrary, the novel sets out to document a particular phase of the struggle in such a way that readers will find it engaging. To Johnson (1986:2), as we have seen, the strength of the novel is its "fairly simple story ... *Third Generation* should be read for the sake of its story".

However, the novels undermine themselves and their messages of hope in certain key areas regarding the way in which they represent themselves. Both novels, paradoxically, announce the end of struggle through their culminating in exile - or as *Third Generation* intimates regularly, "flight". Furthermore, both novels make themselves guilty of sexism while attempting to celebrate the courage of people

regardless of sex in the struggle. *Third Generation* specifically seeks to celebrate the courage of women in the struggle for liberation. Furthermore, and, very importantly, they confront the system of apartheid (which they seek to attack) on the system's terms. They do this rather than examine critically both the system of apartheid, and its own relation towards apartheid as a cultural product ensconced in language. They do this, for instance, by stereotyping whites as oppressors and victimisers, thereby making themselves guilty of the prejudice they seek to attack in the system of apartheid.

Despite all this, *Third Generation* would seem to be, theoretically at least, better able to address the issue of struggle and resistance than *Amandla*, because it allows to a larger degree for dissenting views, and questions regarding the nature of the struggle. It is therefore both less totalising and less totalitarian than many of the other novels produced in South Africa over the last few years. The tendency towards allowing dissent seems, however, to be informed less by democratic belief than by scepticism and defeat. This would make *Third Generation* more palatable to "postmodern" readers preoccupied with the lack of Truth and the resultant desire for certainty, but could also open it to charges of not being committed enough. The novel does, indeed, seem to be quite sceptical in its implications. The point, however, is that this scepticism is less direct than oblique.

At one level, both novels seem to doubt the heroics of struggle, yet also seem to affirm this heroics. This paradoxical movement could be thematised through the portrayal of exile as a *leitmotiv*.

At another level altogether, the novels undermine their (presumed) message of heroic democratic struggle by means of repeated instances of sexism, as well as by a tendency towards moralising through the stereotyping of certain characters and groupings of characters. The near refusal to categorise the struggle in terms which would valorise the struggle either in terms of the inevitability of history or in terms of the inevitability of mass action, is unfortunately contradicted by the easy and unproblematical categorisation of good and evil forces, in the form of black versus white, and in the end black versus co-opted black. To this must be added the impact of the contradiction of a novel with the stated aim of celebrating the courage and achievement of women in the struggle for liberation which at the same time portrays these women in dehumanising terms.

The result of these two quite different movements within the novels amounts to a profound uncertainty regarding the role they could and should play in the struggle for liberation - a profound uncertainty regarding their fictional status. Had the tendency towards sexual and racial stereotyping in *Amandla* and *Third Generation* been absent, then the novels might have provided us with quite a sophisticated examination of the dilemma of a struggle which would seem to force both the author and his or her readership to view it as impotent. The way in which the novels deal with the contradictions inherent in a situation of struggle faced with tremendous state power which renders virtually impotent mass uprisings like that of Soweto 1976, and individual incursions by freedom fighters only to be betrayed and shot, is quite illuminating. One could perhaps even have made out a case for novels closely approaching the establishment of a space for meaningful resistance, by portraying the situation in some complexity without succumbing to the expensive luxury of outright scepticism.

5.2 Plot Construction and Exile

The first chapter of *Amandla* (*Amandla*:1-8) functions as a kind of prologue to the novel. The beginning of the novel is situated before the start of Soweto 1976: It is "Monday the 29th of April, 1975" (*Amandla*:1) - more than a year before Soweto 1976. The protagonist of the novel, Pholoso and his girlfriend, Felleng, are in the Starlite Cinema watching a film. In this ambience of unreality and the fictionalisation of history - they are on the point of watching Cecil B. de Mille's *The Ten Commandments* (*Amandla*:4) - they are told that "'Die 'terrorists' is hier!'"[2] (*Amandla*:1). However, Pholoso is sceptical:

> It could be a hoax; a false alarm. Maybe an armed black man had suddenly run amok and started shooting at random. Perhaps he had actually wounded a few whites, and, as usual, it had become a 'white' national disaster. He tried to reason it out, alone in his mind, in the complete darkness of the cinema. How could the poor so-called terrorists pierce the armour of the South African Defence Force - the invincible Goliath armed to the teeth; the mighty 'white' navy; the powerful 'white' air force, *how*? (*Amandla*:3).

The unreality of it all is intimated by a reference to the film: the SADF is "the invincible Goliath"; the "terrorists" could never succeed to "pierce [its] armour". David is helpless against Goliath. Miracles do not happen in South Africa.

Throughout chapter one there are references to the improbability, the hopelessness and the unreality of what is said to have happened. This is indicated by the repeated use of conditionals when referring to the "terrorists". Furthermore, Pholoso thinks of "the absurdity of such an occurrence" (*Amandla*:3), while apartheid is described - in terms of the vainglorious ideas of its propagators that it is the god-given nature of reality - as a "'million commandments'" (*Amandla*:7) and is thus linked to the film as well. It is also no accident that it is the Israeli embassy which is the focus of the attack.

Apartheid, and thus the Afrikaner State, is linked to ancient Israel and their being God's chosen. This, in turn, is linked to the film Pholoso and Felleng are watching in the Starlite Cinema.

And the "terrorist" attack was, as Pholoso feared, "a hoax; a false alarm" (*Amandla*:3). It was insubstantial with regard to the South African liberation struggle - it had, in fact, nothing to do with this struggle. The promising prelude to what is to happen in the novel - the June 1976 insurrection - amounts to nothing. And at the end of the novel Soweto 1976 itself as well seems to have been "a hoax; a false alarm" (*Amandla*:3). The tension between unreality and reality, expectation and action, becomes grounded in the very structure of *Amandla*.

Amandla, as was noted above, has been described by critics as disjointed and confused. The view postulated here is that this disjointedness is an expression of the disjointedness of the times, a symptom of the dialectical clash between reality and unreality. Society is in a state of severe flux; history is being written, and history is itself something discontinuous.

The novel ends with Pholoso's going into exile. This is an important move as it is presented, if not triumphantly, then at least inspirationally. Despite the defeat inherent in retreating into exile

> 'I never wanted to flee, Felleng. I have to go because the student leaders think it is the best thing, better than rotting in jail. The police dragnet is closing in on us. All known leaders are in jail' (*Amandla*:288).

- the movement into exile is presented as a continuation of the fight. Despite everything's being lost, everything is portrayed as not being lost:

> 'You see, Felleng, in order to fight we must be armed, not only physically but also mentally. We are up against a formidable, highly-sophisticated enemy whom we must[?3] face on equal ground. That our task is a momentous one cannot be denied. The roots of this evil have penetrated deeper than we can speculate. But we dare not give up. If we forget those who laid down their lives, then they will have done so in vain. We the oppressed cannot be expected to think we can go on living as if nothing has ever happened' (*Amandla*:289).

The irony is that it *is*, or at least feels to the people, as if Soweto 1976 - as the book has intimated right from the start - has never happened. It was - in the context of Serote's *To Every Birth Its Blood* an abortive birth. A people's defeat and subjection - by a system of dehumanisation, and by their rejection of this system through violent rebellion - is denied. This is inevitable. The reality of it all is too unreal even to contemplate. An imaginary resolution (the flight into exile) to a real contradiction (reality/unreality) is the very condition for continued existence after defeat. Without this no hope, and no conscientisation would, indeed, be possible. With this hope present, at least some degree of conscientisation and the creation and filling of a cultural space seems to be a possibility. Of course, that still leaves one with the problem of filling the cultural space in such a way that it will amount to more than the mere resistance of the hegemonic culture on its own terms.

The same process can be seen in *Third Generation*. The story is presented not only as a straightforward story being told in a straightforward way - there are numerous interruptions by means of flashbacks in the progression of the narrative. These interruptions take the form of, mostly, the representation of the memories of characters. The novel starts with Lifa's recollection of Soweto 1976. In what amounts to an invocation of this turbulent time, Lifa presents Soweto 1976 from the perspective of his mother, Sis Vi. In a later reference or flashback to Soweto 1976 (*Third Generation*:12-13), we read that Sis Vi's

> job exposed her to sights unknown in any other experience: often she had to attend to victims of the knife, men with intestines rolling out of the stomach; casualties of the motor-car, the brains smashed into portions similar to the cauliflower. She could live with these spectacles bearing their pain fortuitously. But the year 1976 was the turning point for her. The sight of mutilated young bodies, innocent victims of ruthless, trigger-happy sharp-shooters crowded on cement floors bleeding and helplessly begging for attention left her own heart bleeding endlessly. It was a sight which turned around her code of conduct so that in the quietness of her heart she swore to do something about it.

Sis Vi is a nurse who decides that real nursing will amount to nothing less than a radical change in the socio-economic situation. In order to stop the flood of maimed bodies which have to be treated at hospitals like Baragwanath, the root cause of injury - apartheid - has to be destroyed. While in detention Sis Vi reflects that

> [s]he had seen all kinds of disease; she had seen how its slow process ravaged the body and how vulnerable the body was. Causes of diseases were just as bad as the disease and were to be tackled with the same vigour for their elimination. When she agreed to join the Third Generation, it was with this conviction in mind. She saw the group as a unit bent on eliminating the causes of disease ... (*Third Generation*:51-52).

The *victims* of the disease of apartheid must be cured by destroying apartheid. Sis Vi's spell in detention, and the psychological torture which she undergoes, are portrayed in vivid terms. The vivid quality of the portrayal is emphasised by means of the frequent interiorisation of Sis Vi's action. By means of the juxtaposing of, for instance, dreams (*Third Generation*:52), almost Gothic visions induced by dreadful memories and fears (*Third Generation*:56,58,91-92) and the writing of imaginary letters (*Third Generation*:89-91) with the naked reality of torture and interrogation, the terrorism perpetrated by the police is emphasised. An opposition between reality and unreality is constructed. This opposition fulfils a number of important functions within the novel, especially because it is linked explicitly with the task not only of the Third Generation group, but also with the task of *Third Generation* itself.

The question of writing in times like those depicted in the novel is posed by means of the structural device of organising an opposition between reality and unreality. The Third Generation group, according to Lifa, "was a receding dream" (*Third Generation*:68). *Third Generation* documents the receding of this dream. The thematics of writing is introduced most forcefully in the compulsion Sis Vi experiences to write.

Sis Vi has to write a confession of her activities as a member of Third Generation. Major Brink forces her to provide a representation of her mission to Port Elizabeth to organise the transportation of recruits to Johannesburg. This confession must meet the expectations of Brink - Sis Vi may not write her truth, but has to write that of Major Brink.

The whole of Chapter nine (*Third Generation*:50-61) is devoted to Sis Vi's writing and rewriting the story of her mission to Port Elizabeth. This chapter becomes an allegorical representation of the black person's plight to redefine him or herself in terms of what the white person demands. Sis Vi's forced writing is a graphic illustration of the forced reduction to writing suffered by black people at the hands of white conquerors. And this graphic illustration (Chapter 9 of *Third Generation*, but also the novel as such) is subject just as much to colonialist coercion as that of Sis Vi. It is writing as a residue of the dominant culture - and *Third Generation* itself as such a residue which seems forever doomed to replicate the very system it opposes by confirming the status of black people as foreigners in their own country - which unsettles the novel. Moreover, the novel seems aware of the contradiction inherent in its own being. Instead of making black people more real by consciously writing their own history, it cannot but confirm its status as a foreign and Western object. Sis Vi's realisation that "pen and paper had become the elements of her survival" (*Third Generation*:61) is reminiscent of Ndebele's statement (1989a:21) that

> the written word ... which itself perhaps represents a form of strategic marginalization, may be the only viable bearer of witness, the one last act that would provide proof of existence.

This "strategic marginalization" itself is already limited, a denial of the very type of existence it seeks to confirm, as Nethersole (1990:8) notes:

> 'the pen, paper and ink' are themselves objects associated with the conquerors. The proof of existence mediated by the pen is thus not a 'last act' but a new form of existence ...

Resistance in such a situation of total coercion (with the implication that such a system is not transcendable) does not seem to be possible, and *Third Generation* presents the system of apartheid and oppression, at least from the perspective of the narrator, as well-nigh monolithic. The system is portrayed as having the power to turn the struggle into an illusion, and to make ordinary, everyday life unreal. After Sis Vi has been arrested Lifa goes to Potlako. It is late at night:

> I walked the streets of Wattville on this Friday night oblivious of the dangers lurking along dark shadows of houses; my head was in a spin; eyes cat-like; I couldn't tell how much of the surroundings registered on my mind. At times I met the lone night-creature too pissed out to let it worry me. There

> were strange sights of young couples glued to each other in the middle of the street or hugging hedges on the sidewalk. Dammit, I thought to myself, who said we slaughter one another in the night? (*Third Generation*:39).

Township life is portrayed in almost apocalyptic terms in this eerily poetic passage. There is a strange inversion of what is expected - Buda B has warned Lifa about the dangers of going out at this time:

> 'Thugs in the streets will not look at it that way; cops pounding on the door any minute now will not look at it that way. I know these things! Believe me, I know what I am talking about' (*Third Generation*:31).

Life becomes like a weird dream, and the reality of oppression and seemingly monolithic power seems to make any opposition not only irrelevant but unreal: "I did not want to continue the lie of a struggle when it was a mere illusion - just another product of my fantasy" (*Third Generation*:155). In a situation where Lifa can compare himself to a rabbit being ferreted out - "'I can't take this rabbit's life in the country of my birth ... I am postponing a decent life by the day'" (*Third Generation*:158) - exile seems to be only way out.

Writing seems to have no effect on Lifa as the narrator of a novel *about* the struggle which seeks to become *part of* the struggle. *Third Generation* is a weapon, an example of "firing with the pen" (Ndebele, 1989:21). But this weapon does not seem to be effective. The time for talking and arguing has, for Lifa, passed, because "[w]ords were strewn all over our path of history achieving nothing but an improvement of our condition as Buda B had put it earlier" (*Third Generation*:163). The novel ends when its "story had come to an end" (*Third Generation*:154), when the only viable option seems to be to stop writing and to start shooting.

Within this context it is important to note the depiction of the one poet in the novel. Stompie Lukala is a journalist. He has also established himself as a poet "on the strength of one poem published in *Staffrider*" (*Third Generation*:144). However, "[w]hat the public didn't know, was that Stompie Lukala was on numerous cases Mr X in political cases" (*Third Generation*:145). Stompie's poem is, significantly, like his life an illustration of the separation between art and politics. This separation is masked by the poet's insistence that art does have a political role:

> He wrote on the power of the poet's pen: how a poet was an important instrument of the revolution although not a revolutionary himself, how necessary he was to bring to the attention of men their role in a changing society and the need to understand that the poet must stand aloof from the day-to-day activities to help the leaders - a kind of consciousness to their doings (*Third Generation*:144).

Through the figure of Stompie this kind of writing is rejected. *Third Generation* insists that writing must be political by being part of the struggle itself. The novel refuses to accept the type of divide between writing and political action advocated by Stompie's poem. But in the end it cannot continue. It cannot but be a conscience to the doings of the people. It cannot overcome the contradiction between reality and unreality.

The question as to the vantage point of the narrator is important because it would seem as if the novel consists of Lifa's narrating the history of the Third Generation group from a detached point. Lifa - as becomes clear later - is in exile.

More so than *Amandla*, *Third Generation* offers a view of the struggle in South Africa as having been a lost cause. If it does seek to be committed to the struggle, it does so in less idealistic and less heroic terms than novels like *Amandla*. But the heroic terms in which *Amandla* seems to be couched are also suspect. The final act in the novel - Pholoso's going into exile - is less heroic than it is a sign of defeat. The dialectical movement of reality and unreality, as noted earlier, culminates in exile. In the novel this dialectic of reality and unreality is comparable to that in *Third Generation*. But while the cause of this dialectic is more or less, in *Third Generation*, traced back to the overwhelming strength of the system of apartheid, in *Amandla* this root cause is sought to be denied.

Gramsy wants the witchdoctor Ramaime to help her. She wants Pholoso to be released, to escape from prison. Ramaime promises that he "would certainly do all in his power to bring about some relief" (*Amandla*:111). He notes that

> 'These are different times, troubled times, Gramsy. Who knew that we would live to see things happen like we are witnessing today? Our children are tossed around and chased like hares while we look on helplessly. There is no rest for us. The gods of the forefathers must indeed be angry with us.'

Pholoso and the other young activists - like Lifa in *Third Generation* (*Third Generation*:158) - are like rabbits being ferreted out. Unlike Lifa's scepticism towards the possibilities of meaningful resistance by means of a struggle which seems to be impotent, *Amandla* seems to present the cause of impotence not in the struggle itself but in a communal, tribal past of "[t]he gods of our forefathers" (*Amandla*:113). The material contradictions inherent in a struggle and a revolt which is at once heroically revolutionary and impotent are denied by means of a romanticisation of the past because of the present which is too real to be real. Pholoso's nightmarish visions of the angry mob's killing of the white man (*Amandla*:12-14, 147) are comparable to Sis Vi's visions while in detention. These visions strengthen the unreality of reality, and fulfil the function of implicating everybody in the defeat of the struggle by means of the strength of the system.

As is the case with *Third Generation*, this denial is furthered by the question of language and identity. Pholoso - in order not to be apprehended, and if apprehended, then to hide his true identity, "... is using another name and not his real name. He did not have any identifying papers so they do not know who he is" (*Amandla*:107). While in detention, Pholoso's "mind [is] a complete blank" (*Amandla*:146). He cannot remember who he is, what his name is:

> The fact that his mind dissolved into a complete blank when he tried to think - to remember what his name was and where he came from - was not, he decided, something that would concern him now. That would come in its own time. .....
> As Providence would have it, the very state of partial delirium and loss of memory was itself a blessing in disguise. Al attempt by his assailants to establish Pholoso's true identity and get a confession from him had been unsuccessful. They were only able to identify him by the dirty, crushed papers in his trouser pockets, which had the name Moses Masuku written on them (*Amandla*:148).

In order to survive, Pholoso has to stop being "Pholoso". This is why the elaborate scene with the codes in Chapter 12 (*Amandla*:81-93) - criticised so vehemently by Watts (1989:223) - is not merely "a naïve discussion of codes [and] invisible inks" (Watts, 1989:223). The activists have to hide their being by means of language; language must act as a mask, it must make the revolutionary programme unreal for the authorities. The true nature of the programme must be denied in order to carry this programme through in the same way that Pholoso has to mask his true identity in order to protect his revolutionary programme. Pholoso's survival depends upon

Phoioso becoming Moses. Like Lifa in *Third Generation*, he has to disguise himself - the final disguise is going into exile.
"Amandla" does not become more than a speech act doomed not to be performative. The crowds chant "amandla" during the revolt, but the revolt itself is doomed right from the start. Power is only to be found in "'Power' stoves", 'Power' children" and "*Power* canvas shoes" (*Amandla*:105; 141).

The dilemma of Soweto 1976 is addressed in the wider context of struggle and the success of struggle. Soweto 1976 is, for instance, seen by Buda B in *Third Generation* as having been an exercise in futility because the struggle has merely been accommodated by the system:

> 'We've all made our positions within the system comfortable. That's what we've done. Change? Not a thing! Don't let anyone fool you my son. There's been no change because no one really knows what's to be changed. Replacing an old car on the road with a new one does not change one's mode of travel. Think that one through and you'll see what I mean. I've travelled the road, remember' (*Third Generation*:160).

Buda B is like an alter-ego, a chorus, forever deflating what he believes are Lifa's idealistic views of struggle and "causes", because Buda B has "travelled the road". He has been to Robben Island; he has been betrayed by his comrades in the struggle; he has seen his wife locked up in jail and his son bent upon leaving the country with the idea of coming back to be killed in the name of justice and liberation.

Lifa sees what his father means. However, he still feels that his generation, the new generation, the third generation - and especially as manifested in a grouping of young people who present themselves as the Third Generation - can make a difference. But Lifa attempts to smooth over the contradictions of a system which in reality is harsh but which at the same time forces people to limit themselves to questions of survival and therefore deludes them into thinking that once they are able merely to survive, then change has taken place. This line of thought persuades Lifa that

> nothing short of a revolution in the lives of the people would create a better climate for people to see the truth about their lives. And for me it meant military training (*Third Generation*:161).

Lifa leaves, but on a profoundly ambiguous note. The imaginary resolution of so many previous novels of struggle is coming apart. Lifa knows that the contradictions against which he wants to fight will not be resolved as easily as going into exile and coming back armed to the teeth. The last lines of *Third Generation* capture the profound ambivalence of Lifa's leaving for exile:

> I left the house like one going to the toilet in the backyard. There never was a better way to leave home for a freedom fighter. There were no farewells, there were no trumpets blaring the last note.
>
> Africa I come! (*Third Generation*:163).

Third Generation, even more so than *Amandla*, can thus be seen as a novel of exile. The novel leads towards exile. It offers different perspectives of exile. Exile seems to be an object which is both loathed and desired.

Third Generation presents us with at least three distinct types of exile. The first is that personified by Bra Jeff, Potlako and Solly. The second is that personified by Thami, Solly's brother. The third is that personified by Buda B and by the novel itself.

Initially the members of Third Generation

> were all against skipping the country [but, i]f the trail behind each one seemed to hot up, the position was to be reviewed on an individual basis (*Third Generation*:41).

The traumatic consequences of going into exile are illustrated on the same page. Daniel Ndlovu, Solly's father, has committed suicide as the result "of a life of harassment. He was paying the price for his son Thamsanqa who skipped the country in the aftermath of Sharpeville" (*Third Generation*:41). One might reason that this price might still have been worthwhile had Thamsanqa's exile resulted in something other than his violent death at the hands of his enemies before he could strike at them.

Bra Jeff, Potlako and Solly's type of exile is the cynical, defeatist, unfulfilling exile which one finds in novels like Serote's *To Every Birth Its Blood*. It is the exile of indolent reactionaries who spend their time drinking and "telling some wench lies"

(*Third Generation*:99). Exiles like Bra Jeff do not leave the country in order to fight; they leave the country to escape a situation that has become unbearable and they do not seem to plan returning from exile to the country they want to liberate for the sake of "the cause of justice" (*Third Generation*:46). Despite Potlako's enthusiastic utterances of "'Never! Never!'" (*Third Generation*:47) and "'!'" (*Third Generation*:45), he gives up and leaves the country, disappearing from the novel. Indeed, his exile signals the end of the novel:

> His escape symbolised the defeat of the Third Generation. Its image lay shattered on the ground like many pieces of glass. The struggle? How was it that it seemed endless so that even the number of casualties was countless? (*Third Generation*:94).

The fact that Lifa can, eventually, leave the country into exile despite the clear intimations of defeat inherent in exile is significant.

In fact, Potlako, who relatively early in the novel decides to flee the country, is shown to have been seduced by a latter day Delilah (the white woman Sue). Lifa, who becomes sceptical towards on the one hand the struggle as it is waged internally (in South Africa) and, on the other hand, towards the very idea of struggle *for* something, very often makes it clear that he is opposed to exile.

The second type of exile is an exile of heroic fighting as against defeat. This type of exile is seen as at most - and at least - a stage of the struggle. It is a last way out - not for the individual but for "the cause". The trained freedom fighter returns to her or his country in order to contribute to the struggle for liberation in a particularly concrete way. However, as Buda B points out repeatedly, the return from exile is very often an irresponsible flight of fantasy and therefore an instance of unreality itself. Thami returns but is killed. What is the sense, then, of his return? Neither type of exile seems to be a viable option, and Buda B is sceptical towards both.

Then there is a third type of exile - the exile into the self. This is the exile of both defeated reactionaries like Buda B and defeated revolutionaries like Papa Tuks. It is at once a retreat into the self, and the inability to escape from the self. These different variations of exile into the self are intimately connected. It is no accident that Buda B and Papa Tuks are the father figures in the novel. They are both mentors, both with some grasp of the truth. Buda B and Papa Tuks should not be

seen as opposites, but rather as two sides of the same coin. Both are, for instance, bitter and pathetic, and like Thami's Uncle Miya's who reads the papers and drinks too much, they are alienated people.

Buda B is a travelling salesman. He "was often away from home and thus remained a stranger to us and our doings" (*Third Generation*:2). His travelling trips in a way become an escape into the self. These trips are mentioned at the same time as Buda B's scepticism. Like a journalist Buda B lays claim to having seen much, to being a detached observer: "His travels around the country brought him face to face with the new wave of youth's self-assertiveness but he remained sceptical. He spoke of youth and its dealings journalistically" (*Third Generation*:2).

In the end, Buda B is portrayed as somebody who has become a victim of the system:

> The terrors of the Island had taken command of Buda B. He didn't want any of his family to be landed on that infamous island. .....
> His negative stance at that hour was a pathetic graduation from the experiences of life. .....
> The two years on the Island brought with them disillusionment. He came out saying freedom was an individual concept ... the idea of freedom was relative (*Third Generation*:28-30).

He is said to be a man who has "thrown in the towel" (*Third Generation*:96) and has "insulated himself from [the fold] and went about his life as if there had never lived in his heart a conviction for the liberation of the fold" (*Third Generation*:95). But the most chilling indictment of Buda B is the use of his words in a different context on the back cover of the novel. When Lifa tells Buda B that Sis Vi has gone to Port Elizabeth for the sake of the recruits, Buda B says: "'... what's this you are saying to me? - a game going on right under my nose and nobody saying a thing to me! Hey, man!'" (*Third Generation*:26). And on the back cover we are told that in *Third Generation* "a life-and-death game goes on right under the nose of the forces of repression". Buda B is implicitly identified with "the forces of represion".

Papa Tuks is portrayed, like Buda B, as a defeated man:

> In the autumn of his days he seemed not any nearer to his goal. He was still engaged in a battle with a system - an impersonal one which would not

> hesitate to drag him down, knock his head against a concrete wall or leave him sprawled in the gutter (*Third Generation*:46).

Papa Tuks is "a self-employed man" and as such "was likely to be engaged in anything and the reading of newspapers was the most common pastime" (*Third Generation*:15). He is "like one oppressed from within" and is said to be "in a kind of trance". Papa Tuks "was like one in touch with his past" (*Third Generation*:45). Unlike Buda B, however, Papa Tuks still believes. This belief is almost foolhardy. As a mentor and father figure, he motivates the youth to carry on with the struggle:

> 'Come on, sons, let's not despair. Nothing is over yet. One setback cannot mean defeat. Not for me. Nor for you, sons. You belong to a new generation - third, fourth, fifth, what's the difference, you are of the new times. You carry weapons undreamt of in the past. How can we give up at this point? How can we?' (*Third Generation*:46-47).

But it is also that exile which is the implication of believing the struggle to consist of shouting "Amandla!" Lifa never seems to be able to provide any sensible answers to the dilemma of exile. Exile into the self is unacceptable for various reasons, most important of which is that it sustains the illusion, the seeming impossibility and unreality of real changes in circumstances ever occurring. Exile into the self is a fiction which sustains unreality as against the reality of "objective" and "real" circumstances.

However, Lifa, like Pholoso, does in the end opt for exile. And one has to ask whether Lifa and Pholoso have "come to insight" or whether the novels are faced with contradictions which can only be resolved (or seem to be resolved) by means of exile.

5.3 Characterisation: Ethics and Stereotyping

If one looks at "characterisation" in *Amandla* and *Third Generation*, then it becomes clear that it fulfils the function of the anthropomorphic presentation of ideas (Jameson, 1985:119-129). "Characters" are presented in terms of ethics. They are drawn in stereotypical fashion. Furthermore, there are disquieting instances of, for instance, sexism in both novels. In these ways, *Amandla* and *Third Generation* would seem merely to replicate the evil of that which they seek to attack: the dehumanisation of apartheid.

As was noted earlier, various commentators have pointed out the degree of moralising - especially through characterisation - to be found in both *Amandla* and *Third Generation*. The effect of an implied ethics such as this is that the conceptual problem of a real identity between, for instance, the black oppressed and the white oppressors is ignored in order to strengthen the implied class solidarity of the oppressed (Jameson, 1985:114-119). This would be associated with the strongest forms of Black Consciousness - which has, for instance in Serote's *To Every Birth Its Blood*, been called black racism before (*Third Generation*:250).

It would seem that this racism is present - even if in sublimated form - in both *Amandla* and *Third Generation*. If this were to be the case, then the result would be an inverted replication of apartheid. This process is dangerous because it is so subtle. Even as astute a critic as Ndebele (1989a) seems to fall into this trap.

Specific attention will also be accorded characterisation (in terms of sexual and racial stereotyping) under the rubric of "ethics". The instances of sexism and racism in novels which present themselves as fighting against an order based on prejudice constitute disquieting residues of this order.

As stated previously, *Third Generation* seeks to celebrate the courage of black women in the liberation struggle. It also presents itself as a novel of struggle.

We have seen how the novel is locked in a struggle with itself about the liberation struggle, and how it unwillingly presents exile as the resolution to the dilemma of struggle as presented in the novel. This proffering of exile as a way out undermines the novel's message of struggle because exile is - at the same time - presented as only a limited form of struggle and as a last way out.

However, the trope of exile may be read as an attempt at creating the space for struggle, the space for the novel itself. If the trope of exile seems to undermine the message of the novel, then this effect must be read and understood in terms of the material socio-economic and political circumstances of suppressed disillusionment within which the novel was produced.

Regarding the instances of sexism and racism within the novel we are faced within an altogether different situation. Sexism and racism form part of the very system of

prejudice to which the novel is opposed. As with *Amandla* many instances of sexism in subtle and not so subtle form can be pointed out. However, in *Amandla* what is of greater importance is the portrayal of black dissidents - specifically black policemen - as being "evil". As with white policemen, their evil nature is implied strongly through their lasciviousness.

Sis Vi is described as "a strong woman" (*Third Generation*:2) and as being "the anchor of the group: older, wiser. We depended on her as if she was an original member of the group" (*Third Generation*:4). She is shown to be strong-willed and courageous. She manages not only to survive the mental and physical torture afflicted on her by Major Danie Brink and his colleagues, but is also shown not to have given in. She remains defiant to the very end.

After a white woman pushes ahead of Sis Vi and Lifa in a supermarket queue, Sis Vi insists on the woman's taking her place at the proper end of the queue:

> Swiftly as a cobra Sis Vi reacted: she planted herself in front of the elegant lady and grumbled aloud: 'Our time is just as important as important as that of others. .....
> Look at me properly: I'm none of your kaffir maids!' (*Third Generation*:16).

What is peculiar about this passage is the preceding statement. Lifa is thinking about Sis Vi's not having returned from her mission to Port Elizabeth: "Sis Vi kept my mind engaged: she was alright, she could take care of herself: she had the *subtlety* to see her through any scrape" (*Third Generation*:16, my emphasis). Sis Vi, however, does not succumb to her temper often.

> To my knowledge that occasion was one of very few in her life because, like some of us, she had long accepted the fact that she lived dangerously. Survival demanded a subtlety of which she was quite capable: smite the enemy with endless smiles (*Third Generation*:16-17).

Sis Vi's strength consists of her softness:

> I always saw her as a strong woman. At the same time I thought she seemed to hurt easily. A contradiction? I don't know (*Third Generation*:2).

It is clear that Sis Vi is portrayed as a woman in a man's world. How is it possible for a woman to be both strong and easily hurt, to have both so-called masculine and

so-called feminine characteristics? The question as to the "nature" of men and women is addressed obliquely in the novel. Apart from the instances of clearly sexist points of view by some of the characters - which, even though uncorrected by the novel, might perhaps not be ascribed to the novel's ideological framework - there are more important instances illuminating the unquestioned assumptions as to the roles of men and women.

There are many instances of explicit sexism to be found in *Third Generation*. Lifa boasts that "very few women ... had ever said no to my advances" *(Third Generation*:66). He goes on to tell his readers about "[the] one girl in Pimville I could never forgive. She cost me a blue eye, the bitch!" *(Third Generation*:66). Lifa offers his readers the pleasure of this information as

> Thandi was a woman and her crushing bosom on mine that day related the fact once more to my sensitivity. ..... When she walked, her body teased my manhood. I recalled how she was said to have been easy meat by her former boarding school mates. ..... For the moment the struggle was of a different nature. The gods would have to forgive me because there was nothing I could do about the fact of my flesh and blood *(Third Generation*:64-65).

The passage relating to Lifa's designs on Thandi *(Third Generation*:64-68) might be discussed in many ways. One might argue that scenes of lust which objectify women are typical of popular literature read by the masses, that they add spice to keep the readers satisfied. One might also say that the passage is particularly significant because of the way in which the struggle is on the one hand relativised by comparing it to the struggle for a woman's heart (and her favours), and on the other hand by the way in which the struggle is shown to form part of everyday life. People who struggle can and do fall in love and in lust *(Third Generation*:65). One needs to struggle not only for political liberation but also for libidinal liberation:

> Strategy? I needed one badly. It appeared any means to her heart would be justified. I was determined to trample on any moral jury waylaying me to Thandi's heart *(Third Generation*:65).

However, Lifa wants to use Thandi. He seems less interested in her heart than in her body. This is borne out by numerous statements, for instance, that "[the] atmosphere was conducive to any course one wanted to take ... The tea and biscuits were enough

to continue to fan the fire started earlier by Thandi's bosom" *(Third Generation*:65). A descriptive passage follows:

> My moves towards her were slow and subtle like the sun and rain eating into a rock. I touched her hand. Felt the fingers, their warmth and tenderness. The hand was not withdrawn. My hand moved up, exploring the upper regions of her body, lingered in that area and then descended to the haloed regions of the human form, slipped past that area to weave patterns on her soft brown quivery thigh. And rested on the knee waiting as if a little creature awaiting signals from its antennae. She seemed glazed in the eyes and I took my cue. I pinched the thigh, she grunted whereupon I smoothed the joyfully pained area with delicate fingers. That leg was stretched forward and brought back into position once more.
>
> Some part of me assailed my conscience. A voice cried out in protest saying I was stretching my luck too far. Another said that I would regret the experience while in detention since my triumph over Thandi would haunt me in jail to the point of neurosis. The trail of my thoughts came to a sudden halt when Thandi said quietly: 'Let me check if the door is okay.' That was enough to settle all doubt in my mind. There was no way I could spurn my luck the day.
>
> Back within each other's arms the going hurled us into oblivion: the breathing was hard and fast. Our hands ran trips without care. I was able to discover the attraction of her soft, large breasts, nestled in an eternity created by her warm pulse. I was searching, conscious of her hips, her back and fleshy thigh, hunting for that which went beyond words because in the end touching offers its own rewards *(Third Generation*:67).

Lifa's "session with Thandi" (*Third Generation*:68) - his struggle for her heart - is interrupted by Uncle Miya's intrusion to tell them about the detention of Papa Tuks. Lifa is disappointed to note that "[n]othing told me that she regretted missing the end to our fun" *(Third Generation*:68). Lifa need not have despaired: "Thandi and I proved our love, as the saying went, on a number of occasions" *(Third Generation*:110). The point is, however, that Thandi and Lifa do not prove their love. Instead Lifa proves his lust. To Lifa Thandi is merely an object (of desire). It seems that the sexism inherent in the description of and commentary on what happens is indicative not only of a particular brand of popular fiction, or of the lives of ordinary people struggling for justice, but of the ideological framework of the novel.

Characters like Potlako *(Third Generation*:80) also make statements regarding the role of women:

> [Sue] flopped into an easy chair about the same time as Potlako said: 'ou know, I feel like something to eat. What's in the fridge?'

> 'Come on, why don't you get off your ass and find yourself something to eat?' said Sue, 'I don't know what you want.'
>
> Potlako got up: 'Women's Lib! The curse of Western civilization! The Africa of tomorrow can never allow Women's Lib.'

Papa Tuks tells Lifa and Potlako not to worry about Sis Vi. They need not worry about her, because "Nyawuza is a man" *(Third Generation*:16). Solly's father, broken by police harassment after his son Thamsanqa's flight into exile, is blamed for not fulfilling his role as the provider for the family: "MaNdlovu and her daughters Nomvula and Jennifer lashed out at the man for failing to provide for the home" *(Third Generation*:41-42). Sue Sonnerberg is portrayed as using her wiles as a female to force Potlako into exile. Potlako is guilty only of having been weak:

> 'I give up!' Sue rose to her feet. 'Honestly I give up. I can see you don't care for me'. .....
> I didn't know his whereabouts until he'd been made to take that decision. It wasn't an easy one because betrayal of vows was criminal to members of the group *(Third Generation*:83).

Potlako agrees to leave the country because "[f]or a period exceeding a year he'd come to know her as a woman, a loving and caring woman who had given herself up totally to him" *(Third Generation*:83-84).

Sis Vi's life at Healdtown College is interspersed with

> weekends ... at nearby Fort Hare University where freedom was said to be limited by the height of the sky; where girls were known to make advances on menfolk because permissiveness meant just that *(Third Generation*:88).

Bra Jeff tells Buda B about his terrible life in exile. What makes exile so bad is the feeling of alienation and loneliness: "'Women are the bottom-line in any situation. If I knew some Swahili, I would have had a chance to pass time telling some wench lies" *(Third Generation*:99).

Lifa is proud of Thami because she is such a capable woman. At Thamsanqa's funeral

> tea and cakes were served. Everyone said that the operation worked like a rehearsed act. I was proud of Thandi because she was the mastermind

> behind this serving. Dressed like an overgrown young lady, she directed the serving of the tea from the kitchen *(Third Generation*:120-121).

Finally, at the trial, Solly leads the defiant refusal to subscribe to the authority of the court. As far as Sis Vi and Thandi are concerned, "[t]heir answer was similar to their menfolk" *(Third Generation*:149-150). Despite Papa Tuks' concurring with Solly, no mention is made that he *follows* the example of either men or women. Even at their trial these courageous women are represented as, explicitly so, following men. Despite the demonstrable courage of women like Sis Vi and Thandi, as well as of MaNdlovu, whose

> sacrifice behind closed doors as it were, went beyond the shouts of clenched fists and the slogans of the day ... [and who] would remain the unsung mother of a brave son of the African soil (*Third Generation*:124),

and of MaMqwati, who

> was herself a stalwart of the struggle against injustice [and] in 1956 ... was part of the large group of women from around the country who took on the historic march on the Union Buildings (*Third Generation*:42),

women are presented not only in explicitly sexist terms, but are thrust into submissive roles. They are sex objects, tea makers, mothers and the dependants of men. Whether it is a residue of a primordially precolonialist tribal culture only, or a residue of a tribal culture as well as of the dominant Western apartheid culture, or a residue only of Western apartheid culture, such sexism in a novel which presents itself as a novel celebrating the courage of women, and the role of women in a liberation struggle, seriously contradicts some of the central tenets of the novel. It probably affects the role of the novel as an instrument of liberation as seriously as does the phenomenon of moralising.

Third Generation attacks the system on the system's own terms. This process is most visible in the stereotyped characterisation of white people, and especially of policemen.

Attacking racial and ideological stereotyping is a process fraught with many potential dangers. It is easy to be called reactionary since it is so that many people in South Africa do experience a reality in which whites are caricatures, and

policemen are to be feared. However, if this stereotyping is replicated and perpetuated in a novel, then the reason would be either that these stereotypes have become so deeply ingrained in black society that it is impossible to escape them, or that an attempt is being made at scoring political points.

The implication of the first possibility would be that society has become distorted to such an extent that the oppressed now inevitably portray the oppressor in precisely the same terms as those used by the oppressor to portray the oppressed. The result is a perpetuation of the status quo through residual elements of this status quo. The novel would thus become implicated in that which it attacks.

The implication of the second possibility is that the novel consciously seeks to portray certain characters in certain ways, and thus becomes propaganda. Propaganda cannot do without moralising, and moralising points to oversimplified versions of reality.

Whether we find in *Third Generation* and *Amandla* an inevitably compromised work subject to what Mphahlele calls the "tyranny of place" (De Kock, 1987:35ff.) and Chapman terms the "overwhelming social context" (1988a:43) or blatant propaganda is difficult to determine. The point is, however, that we do find some stereotyping, and that this stereotyping - whether conscious or not - detracts from the novel's efficacy as a document of struggle precisely because it makes itself guilty of what it attacks. If one were to see stereotyping as the implied construction of an opposition or of oppositions, then the opposition here could be called that of the victimiser versus the victim or of the oppressor versus the oppressed. The range of white oppressors extends from the

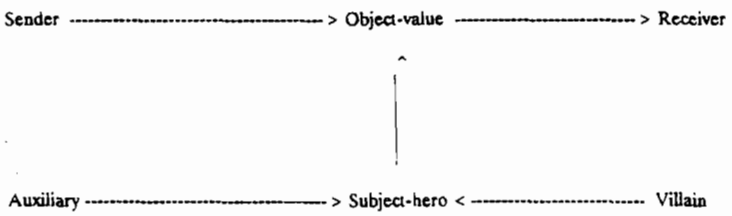
> neat highly polished lady from the north side of the railway line, cigarette clamped in her lips [who] pushed her way ahead of us *(Third Generation*:16)

in the supermarket to the Free State Provincial Inspector who "conducted his business seated in his car" *(Third Generation*:20) and who calls Bra Joe "my boy" *(Third Generation*:22-23).

In *Third Generation* as well as in *Amandla*, however, we find a significant movement. The oppressed are constituted by the black masses, and the oppressor by the white

minority. The members of the Third Generation and other characters directly involved with the struggle could then be called the victimised, and all other characters the victimisers. This movement would then assist in hiding the the basic opposition constituted by white oppressors on the one hand and black oppressed on the other. A deconstruction would seem to be carried out. Not only whites are guilty - there, are for instance, black informers and exiles. But this movement holds its own perils. Through the informers and the exiles everybody becomes implicated. The web of guilt is spread to embrace not only informers and policemen but also those with whom these informers and policemen have relations. They have relations with everybody. Not only could anybody be part of the system - nobody can be trusted - but through the portrayal of the informers and the black and white police the novels themselves become part of the system of prejudice.

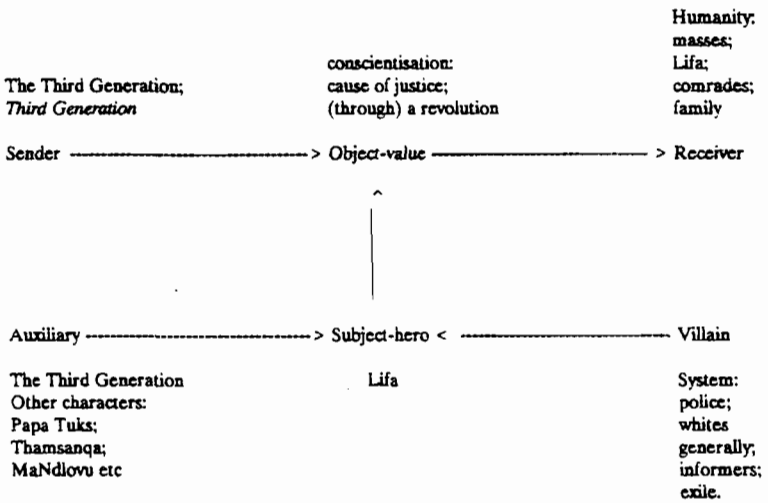
This all-pervading relationality could be illustrated by using Greimas's well-known actantial model[4]. The subtle, multipronged role of blacks, especially in terms of exile, could be indicated quite strikingly. According to this actantial scheme a Subject-hero is in search of an Object-value as goal. This search is aided by the Auxiliary and opposed by the Villain. In the end the Subject-hero (or another actant) acquires of the Object-value by means of the Sender and thus becomes the Receiver of the Object-value. The scheme could be represented as follows:



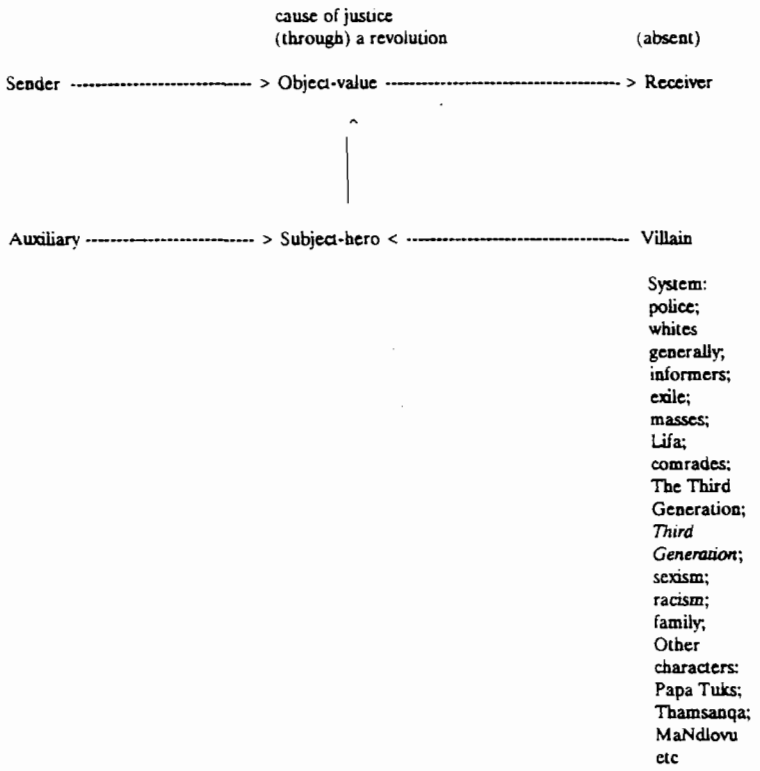
As a novel of struggle, *Third Generation* can be subjected to analysis in terms of the actantial scheme. Lifa can be seen as the Subject-hero. He dedicates himself to the attainment of the Object-value, to "the cause of justice at all times" *(Third Generation*:46) and, as an interim goal, to let "people ... see the truth about their lives" through "a revolution in the lives of the people" *(Third Generation*:161). In this Lifa is aided by his comrades in the Third Generation, as well as by an assortment of other characters in the novel. The Villain is personified by The System in the form of the police, whites in general, as well as by that

> new type of subgroup, the informers. Locations teemed with them so much that everyone thought that the next person was an informer. The struggle was in a state of paralysis, mistrust holding onto everyone like a vice" (*Third Generation*:108).

Exile is also, at least initially, presented as a Villain. The Sender is Third Generation as well as *Third Generation*, the novel itself. In this scheme the Receiver would be the masses, Lifa and his comrades, friends and family, as well as Humanity as such. This could for *Third Generation* be represented schematically in the following way:



This is the scheme of the novel *ideally* speaking. It presupposes the success of Lifa's quest. However, in practice, because that goal is never attained but deferred, all the actantial functions become suspect. Words (including *Third Generation* itself) become suspect and as inimical as the System - they become part of the very system they seek to attack. This is so because Lifa sees words as impotent; it is also so, however, because of the sexist - as well as racist - stereotyping of which the novel makes itself guilty. *Third Generation* therefore becomes a Villain rather than a sender. The Auxiliary characters are also seen to form part of the problem rather than the solution: they are incarcerated, their sons are killed, they go into exile - Lifa himself becomes a Villain. And because the goal is never attained, nobody receives the goal. Schematically, this could be represented in the following way:

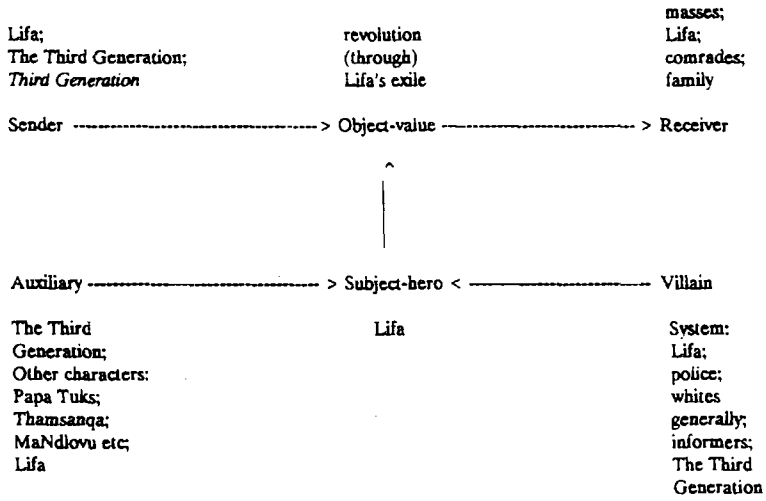


As can be seen from this scheme, we are left with a void. The novel signals defeat. This is why it is as if Lifa is going to the toilet when he goes into exile. However, this is not what seems to happen in the novel. With only a small adjustment the novel can again fulfil a hopeful, conscientising role. The contradictions which destroy a scheme like that of Greimas can be smoothed over by substituting the initial goal with another one: that of exile. In *Third Generation* the attainment of Lifa's initial goal is deferred. In order for the novel to make sense as a novel of struggle at all, which, as Kruger puts it, will continue "inspiring national pride and offering encouragement to the people's struggle" (1986:17), there has to be a resolution of the unbearable contradiction which the novel finds it has to deal with.

The "cause of justice" is displaced by exile as the Object-Value; words (including *Third Generation*) become the means of exile and thus the Sender; the System and all its trappings become the Auxiliary rather than the Villain; and Lifa as the Subject-hero is removed as an absent Subject-hero: the novel ends (Lifa disappears) *and* Lifa departs into exile (Lifa disappears). If Lifa writes the (hi)story of the Third Generation group, then one can see the novel as Lifa's ultimate defeat.

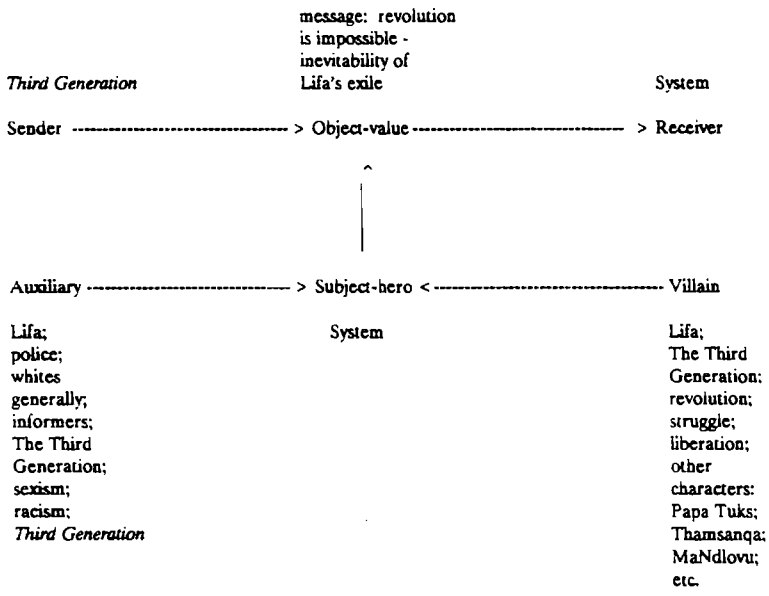
A story has come to an end *(Third Generation*:154) but Lifa tells the story of his failed attempt to attain the goal of the "cause of justice" which leads to his exile, and to his telling the story ...

Yet contradictions remain. Lifa, for instance, is both an unwilling exile and a willing one. The Third Generation opposes exile, yet there is no other way. The sexism and racism are suppressed, but still present even in absence; Lifa becomes the central figure of the novel. Schematically, this could be represented in the following way:



The process of resolving contradictions in symbolic and imaginary ways, however, is not yet completed. The scheme could be rewritten in another way. The version above is a version which is presented as the imaginary resolution to the real contradiction of impotent struggle.

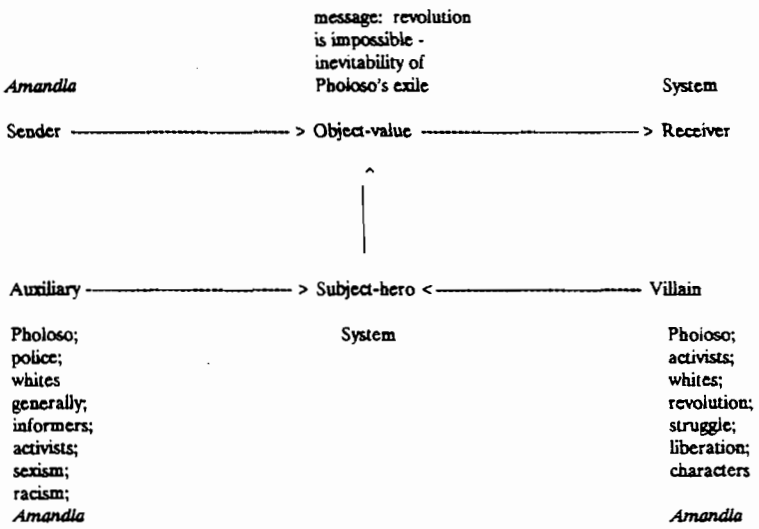
The following version of the scheme amounts to the final rendering impotent of *Third Generation*. Because of on the one hand the seemingly monolithic System of State apartheid, and because of the sexism and racism of this System which is replicated in the novel, the scheme must be redrawn in the following way:



In the end, the System becomes the Subject-hero of the novel. It subdues the novel into acting as it wishes the novel to act, and forms an Auxiliary out of the novel. Through residual elements of itself in the novel, the System manages to render the novel - on a structural level at least - impotent. These residual elements of the dominant ideology in the end literally force the novel to end, and Lifa to go into exile.

The novel's implied radicality thus hides a profound impotence. *Third Generation* therefore does not depict as much "a new generation of political activism in which armed resistance is presented as the only means of counteracting white oppression" (Holloway, 1988:49) as a new generation forced into political passivity in which exile is presented as the only means of escaping white oppression.

The same dialectical movement could be traced for *Amandla*. Exile is an inevitability from the start. Not only the police torturers (*Amandla*:144-146) and Niki, Teresa and Seipei but also the angry black masses who kill the white man become guilty. Guilt, and thus defeat by the system, inexorably leads to exile for Pholoso. The actantial scheme for *Amandla* would therefore be similar to that for *Third Generation*:



Obviously the scheme could be drawn in much greater detail, but the basic point is that *Amandla*, like *Third Generation*, would seem to implicate itself by means of sexism and racism - manifestations of the system it seeks to destroy - as an agent of the system. It therefore has to end in exile.

Notes

1. The novel itself comments on the significance of the title (*Third Generation*:22, 26, 31, 46, 81, 149, 158, 160).

2. This is a reference to the Fox Street siege in 1975, when the Israeli embassy in Johannesburg was occupied for a period of time.

3. The typescript in my copy of the novel is at this point illegible.

3. The typescript in my copy of the novel is at this point illegible.

4. As this model is very well-known, it is not discussed extensively or critically in this dissertation. The reader is referred to Du Plooy (1986:173-183) for a lucid introduction, and to Jameson (1985:46-49; 121-129) for a more critical discussion as well as for examples of how the model can be appropriated.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Amandla and *Third Generation* are not effective novels of struggle and resistance because they are not "autonomous" enough and because they are not artistically "good" enough. Rather, as texts ensconced in language they inevitably undermine themselves by undermining their implied message - that there is hope and that the struggle must continue. Both novels act out symbolically the contradictions inherent in a struggle perceived to be impotent, but which has to continue. They present the struggle in heroic terms by means of exile in order to strengthen their function as vehicles of conscientisation.

Exile, however, is already defeat. This is implicitly acknowledged in both novels, but especially in *Third Generation*. But the perceived strength of a system which can seem to quell a popular revolt like Soweto 1976 makes exile inevitable on two levels: on the one hand exile must fulfil the function of providing hope for the people; on the other hand exile is the only way out of a stalemated situation.

This stalemated situation is graphically illustrated by means of the opposition reality/unreality. Writing and language - and therefore the novels themselves - are shown to be elements of unreality. Language is made into secret codes and invisible inks, imaginary letters and the loss of identity for the sake of survival. The presence of sexism and racism in novels which explicitly present themselves as opposing prejudice and exploitation point to the seemingly monolithic nature of a system of prejudice and exploitation. The guilt and defeat of co-option by the system make the novels impotent in as far as their task is concerned.

Amandla and *Third Generation* would not seem to contribute in any significant way to the struggle for liberation in South Africa. On the contrary, they seem to perpetuate the system they seek to oppose by replicating its ideological structures in terms of a moralising which is often explicit, but even more often subtly ingrained in the very fabric of the structures.

Even leaving aside, therefore, more definite empirical questions concerning readership and literacy, as well as canonisation and censorship, *Amandla* and *Third Generation* as yardsticks would seem to paint a dark picture with regard to the possibilities of resistance through "literary texts". It is difficult, then, to avoid the

sceptical conclusion that hegemonic cultural discourses will institutionalise oppositional discourses like that of structuralism, deconstruction, resistance literature, *Amandla* and *Third Generation*.

7 Postscript

An anonymous reviewer of *Third Generation* notes that "[w]hen the book was launched, Serumula pointed out that he has written a current novel about current times" (1986:6). However, as the reviewer also notes, this is "[a] tricky thing to do. Especially with the rapidly changing scene in our townships" (1986:6).

This summarises the dilemma I have experienced over the last few months while writing this dissertation. I have often felt that history was irrupting at such a tempo that what I was writing one day would be irrelevant the next. A lot has happened in South Africa since I started writing this dissertation early in 1989.

This Postscript has been added because of recent developments in South Africa. These include, for instance, the unbanning of the African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress, the lifting of restrictions on numerous anti-apartheid organisations, the initiation of "talks about talks" between the African National Congress and the South African Government and the gradual return of exiles to South Africa.

F W de Klerk's speech on 2 February marks what must be seen as the start of at least an epistemological break. With the unbanning of the ANC and other liberation movements, voices long silent in South Africa have become audible again, while the dissemination of information in South Africa has become less constricted with the unbanning of organisations and persons, as well as with the lifting of emergency legislation.

Because of this new accessibility of knowledge and information, cultural and literary polemics in South Africa have been given added impetus. At the moment, therefore, a number of debates on the role of art as a vehicle for political change are taking place in South Africa.

As noted earlier in this study, an examination of specifically South African polemics regarding the role of culture, and specifically literature, could have been conducted. However, this avenue was decided against as the dissertation concerns itself more with the *theoretical* underpinnings regarding literature and resistance than with specific polemics themselves. Before examining the polemics in any detail, one

should first of all examine the broad theories espoused on this issue. A second reason for not taking this avenue would therefore be that the present study would have been too long had the purpose been to discuss the polemics raging in South Africa regarding the role of culture.

Such a study has become more urgent than ever before in the last few months, especially after the publication in *The Weekly Mail* (1990b:23) of an extract of Sachs's "Preparing Ourselves for Freedom" (1990a:1-9). This paper was first presented at an "ANC In-house Seminar on Culture" (1990a:1) and is called a "First Draft". As a result of this extract's having been published in *The Weekly Mail*, however, Sachs's paper has been disseminated widely, and has caused quite a controversy[1].

The most controversial part of this provisional ANC in-house paper on culture and the role of culture in a future South Africa is Sachs's implication that culture should not be a weapon in the struggle for liberation. "Cultural desks" all over the country were at first confused - and later enraged - by this stance, while many "aestheticians" were relieved by its import.

In the paper Sachs propagates an art which is not reduced to "politics" or "struggle". He makes it clear that culture should move beyond "the multiple ghettos of the apartheid imagination" (1990a:1) and then, jokingly, asserts that ANC "members should be banned from saying that culture is a weapon of struggle" (1990a:1).

Rather than an art which is caught up in "the apartheid imagination", which is "completely shut in by apartheid" (1990a:3) and in which it is "as though our rulers stalk every page and haunt every picture; everything is obsessed by the oppressors and the trauma they have imposed" (1990a:3), Sachs would like to see an art which

> is about us and the new consciousness we are developing ..... [which portrays] a cop-free world in which the emergent personality of our people manifests itself" (1990a:3).

Such an art, because it "tells us something lovely and vivacious about ourselves ... bypasses, overwhelms, ignores apartheid, establishes its own space" (1990a:3).

However, Sachs's view on culture - and especially on what cultural struggle implies - is suspect. He states that "culture [is not] merely an instrument to be hauled on to the stage" (1990a:4).

Such a view of cultural struggle does - probably - exist. However, it is a view comparable to that of the vulgar Marxist one briefly described earlier in the dissertation. Like the orthodox Marxist model, it reduces society to an expressive set of base/superstructure relations. This view of cultural struggle leads to totalitarian excess because it totalises society in its own terms. Furthermore, it contradicts itself with regard to the key areas of human agency and struggle.

Sachs assumes that people who propagate - or rather, view as inevitable - cultural struggle want to *make use* of culture. This view instrumentalises culture - it takes culture to be a separate entity which can in some way be used or abused. It views culture in exactly the same way as those who are accused by Sachs of using culture for their own ends.

Culture is not something which can be used either for or against a struggle. It is not something which is either political or apolitical, aesthetically good or not. Culture *is* struggle.

One agrees with Sachs in so far as he decries

> die soort kuns wat altyd 'n reaksie is teen die verdrukker, wat sy eie wêreld laat oorheers deur die gestalte van die verdrukker; wat dus vir sy bestaansreg afhanklik is van die verdrukker se aanwesigheid ...[; 'n kuns] wat verval in die modus van protes, homself verdruk en verarm tot 'n aanklag of 'n kreet (Olivier, 1990:12).
>
> [that type of art which is always a response to the oppressor; which allows its own world to be dominated by the figure of the oppressor; the existence of which, therefore, is dependent upon the presence of the oppressor ...[; an art] which degenerates into a modus of protest, oppresses and emasculates itself to an accusation or a cry.]

However, as Olivier (1990:12) also notes, "Sachs is nie 'n nuwe evangelie nie" (["Sachs is not a new gospel"]). Ndebele (1984b; 1989b), to name but one voice, has succinctly argued for a movement beyond protest and towards exploration.

Olivier's (1990:12) view is that culture cannot simply be used either for or against the struggle:

> Die opvatting dat daar twee eenvoudige posisies is waartussen die kunstenaar of kritikus moet kies - is jy vir of teen die "struggle"? - is 'n banale en gevaarlike retoriese vereenvoudiging wat aan beide kante van die debat voorkom.
>
> [The idea that there are two simple positions between which the artist or critic must choose - are you for or against the "struggle"? - amounts to a banal and dangerous rhetorical simplification which can be found at both ends of the debate.]

However, this seems to be precisely the opposition of which Sachs makes use in his paper. Despite Olivier's belief that Sachs supports another kind of cultural struggle - that of creating other spaces for the new culture of another South Africa - and despite Sachs's assertion that "it ill behoves us to set ourselves up as the new censors of art and literature ... Rather, let us write better poems ... and let us get the voluntary adherence of the people to our banner" (1990a:11), one feels compelled to doubt Sachs's bona fides. On the one hand he seeks to depoliticise culture, and on the other to employ it - in a different way - for the furthering of the democratic culture in South Africa. The "voluntary adherence" to which Sachs refers is qualified by an earlier statement that art will be acceptable because of "the manifest correctness of our policies, and not [because of] our prestige or numbers ... the criterion being pro- or anti-apartheid" (1990a:10).

There seems to be an uncanny ambivalence with regard to Sachs, on the one hand, propagating an art which will be correct because of correct policies, and on the other, Sachs's position that art must not be explicitly political. This point ignores its implication - that culture is struggle - while assuming that progressive art will be correct regardless of whether it is explicit or not.

This point is echoed by Geers:

> The context, in this case - South Africa under the tyranny of apartheid - will inevitably manifest itself in the work, without the artist resorting to state the obvious.
>
> The avant garde sets out to criticise those ideological bases that make up the work of art. Through its dissenting nature it threatens the conformity of the status quo, and therein lies its dissenting nature (1990:B5).

And Sitas, with his stress on the material conditions, reaches a similar conclusion. When the conditions have been changed, there will be - almost as a matter of course - "better art", or an art which is not captured by the oppressor to the extent that much of grassroots culture is.

Sitas (1990:25), although largely agreeing with Sachs, accuses him of oversimplification:

> [Sachs] is treading a difficult path when he decries the presence of oppression in its ugliness through people's works ... However provocative and accurate, he is also being simplistic: indeed, it is through the struggle to comprehend this ugliness, this grief, that hope and more complex emotions could be articulated.

Sitas's point is that people cannot but produce art which is an art of struggle - art offers a way of coping with the material conditions of oppression. He describes the different conditions of white and black artists in South Africa:

> Most grassroots creators are creating under different conditions and hardships ... we have come to know that unless conditions for creativity are transformed there is no way that such aesthetic freedom can be entertained ... we have been struggling to change those conditions, in a nutshell: as cultural workers (Sitas, 1990:25).

Sitas first justifies the grassroots people's culture which has been developing in South Africa by stating that this culture is shaped by material conditions. In order to produce "better" art, the material conditions have to be changed first. This is why grassroots art is an art which tries to create spaces by protesting against injustice and agitating for revolution. He then states that such grassroots culture is not necessarily - from an aesthetic point of view - bad.

What is interesting, ultimately, about the remarkably similar responses of Sitas and Geers is not only that these responses reach different conclusions. Geers opposes what he calls "popular" or "mass" culture, while Sitas supports mass culture or "grassroots" culture. Both Geers and Sitas - from their widely differing ideological perspectives - as well as Sachs move dangerously close to an agencylessness to that poststructuralist version of Foucauldian omnipotent power criticised by, amongst others, Eagleton (1985c) and Higgins (1986). However, what is important is that

these three commentators sidestep the real issue of a politically effective art, of an art which will create the space all three refer to. In the end, the Sachs controversy seems to amount to much ado about nothing. Despite seemingly ideological differences, Sachs, Sitas and Geers all seem to agree on the necessity of "good art".

This controversy would therefore seem not to address the crucial issue regarding Sachs's paper, namely the role of culture in a future post-apartheid South Africa. This brings me to the second reason for this Postscript - to point out possible further areas for research.

In a recent article Degenaar (1990:8-10) proposes that the current debate on the necessity of "nation-building" is irrelevant because of the assumptions inherent in the very concept of "the myth of the nation" (1990:8). The debate is irrelevant in that it will not provide answers to the convoluted problem of a multicultural society. In fact, the debate is an instance of mythologising - it valorises the concept "nation". This mythologising process is dangerous in its producing a "mentality of exclusivism" (1990:10). According to him, "gods and tyrants" must be held off, "whether in the form of totalitarianism ... or in the guise of the myth of the nation" (1990:10). According to Degenaar

> [t]he crucial question that we have to ask ... is not how to build a nation, but whether the building of a nation is the type of endeavour we should be engaged in .....
> What is needed in South Africa is not a concern for the building of a nation. Instead we need to create a democratic society and a commitment to tackle the most pressing problems related to political, social and economic injustices (1990:8-10).

Seen in this context the debate today in South Africa should not be *whether* art should or should not contribute to the struggle, but *how* art - and culture - as the social production of humans can contribute towards a more just South Africa. In the same way that one should prevent the myth of the nation from blinding one to the problematic questions of justice in South Africa, one should prevent the myth of the aesthetic from blinding one to questions related to the material, definite establishment of the space for a democratic culture in South Africa. There has to be a movement beyond the myth of the nation, the myth of the aesthetic and all other myths. There should also be a movement beyond the dialectic of positions grounded in an either/or structure, beyond the fruitless debates being carried on in

South Africa at the moment. There should be a movement away from asking whether culture can be a vehicle for resistance - the question posed by this dissertation - towards asking *how* culture can be a vehicle for resistance. In fact, the category "resistance" itself should be left behind and, as Ndebele and others have pleaded, the emphasis should be on "exploration" and the establishment of space, or "creating a democratic culture" (Degenaar, 1990:10).

Novels like *Amandla* and *Third Generation* do not seem to contribute to this establishment of space, of "creating a democratic culture" because they do not move beyond the myth of the simple opposition oppressor/oppressed not only in their portrayal of characters but also on the level of active resistance to the system. In fact, because they allow the system of apartheid prejudice and exploitation to appear monolithic, they unwillingly make this system their protagonist and inevitably strengthen it by perpetuating the ideological structures - the oppressor/oppressed dichotomy, the incidence of sexism, the seemingly monolithic nature of the system and so on - inherent in this system. The fact that they do attempt a resolution of this opposition and the contradictions inherent in it by means of the trope of exile merely confirms their dependence on the system.

How does one break the deadlock of the system? Should this be done by producing "better art" or by ignoring the system? Should this be done, as Sachs intimates, by both moving beyond the system and producing "better art"? Does one as a cultural worker attempt to change the material conditions within which art is produced, or does one produce good art notwithstanding those material conditions in the belief that an avant-garde art will somehow transcend both itself and its conditions of production? How does one move beyond the system, beyond "myths"? How does one deconstruct the oppositions and contradictions inherent in mythologising?

The debate should in the end not be about "art" on the one hand and "ideology" on the other in the simplified sense of "good" versus "bad" aesthetics, "correct" versus "incorrect" ideology. It should be about the very different problem of how "art" as cultural production within linguistic systems can and does shape reality.

At this moment there are no answers to the problems enumerated above. However, this would imply that research should be conducted with regard to these problems. Even though this dissertation - in the fast-changing conditions within which we as

South Africans find ourselves today - does not offer many answers, it does offer many questions. And Carusi's statement quoted earlier in this dissertation bears repeating at its (provisional) end:

> [i]t is doubtful that at this point any resolution can be posited instead the questions are proposed as possible directions for future research ... To be sure, questions are not enough, but they are one possible starting point.

Notes

1. Of the many articles, essays and reviews on the polemic which have appeared, those by Ahmed (1990:B5), Chapman (1990:12), Coetzee (1990b:B1) Geers (1990:B5), Molefe (1990:24), Olivier (1990:12), Olivier and Bowker (1990:1-16), Powell (1990:4), Pretorius (1990:B5), Sitas (1990:25) and Vinassa (1990:B1) were found to be especially useful and significant.

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10 Abstract

In this dissertation the possibilities of resistance through literary texts is examined. This is done in an exploratory and provisional way, on the one hand because of the fast changing South African situation, and on the other because of the wide variety of views on literature as resistance. Some theoretical positions with regard to the power of discourse are examined in order to arrive at some sort of provisional synthesis which could be used to read and explain texts in terms of resistance.

In the first part of the dissertation there is an attempt to read various theories and theoretical implications in terms of resistance. The implications of positions such as that of "deconstruction", orthodox Marxism, Neo-Marxism and Foucauldian New Historicism are discussed.

In the second part of the dissertation two recent South African novels (*Amandla* by Miriam Tlali and *Third Generation* by Sipho Sepamla) are discussed as exemplars of texts which present themselves as texts opposing and resisting the status quo. They are shown to make themselves guilty of what they attack by, for instance, stereotypical portrayal of women and of characters seen to be in cahoots with the system of apartheid. The result of this is that the texts in question would theoretically perpetuate the status quo by replicating its ideological structure of exploitation and prejudice. The only way in which these texts can fulfil their stated task of conscientisation is by denying the contradictions built into their ideological structures. This imaginary resolution is attained by means of the trope of exile.

The analyses of the texts in terms of the theoretical part of the dissertation would seem to lead one to a profound scepticism with regard to the possibilities of resistance through literary and other texts. Even though there do exist the possibilities of creating spaces alternative to that of the hegemonic culture, this hegemonic culture is found to be almost overwhelmingly strong.

Areas for future research are pointed out in the **Postscript**. These include the very essential task of creating a culture which will ensure unity, prosperity and justice in South Africa. It is suggested that such a truly democratic culture could only with great difficulty evolve, and that the first step towards such a culture would consist of

transcending the untenable oppositions of apartheid. This MA dissertation is then essential in such a process, as it examines the possibilities as well as the assumptions underlying the relations between power and discourse. This it does with special reference to the South African situation as manifested in South African literature.

10 Opsomming

Die moontlikheid van weerstand deur middel van literêre tekste word in hierdie verhandeling ondersoek. Dit word, weens aan die een kant die vinnig veranderende Suid-Afrikaanse situasie en aan die ander kant die wye verskeidenheid sieninge van literatuur as weerstand, gedoen op 'n ontdekkende en voorlopige manier. 'n Aantal teoretiese posisies ten opsigte van mag en diskoers word ondersoek met die doel om 'n soort voorlopige sintese - wat gebruik sou kon word om tekste as weerstand te lees en te verduidelik - te bereik.

Die eerste deel van die verhandeling is 'n poging om 'n verskeidenheid teorieë en teoretiese implikasies ten opsigte van weerstand te lees. Die implikasies van posisies soos dié van "dekonstruksie", ortodokse Marxisme, Neo-Marxisme en Foucauldiaanse Nuwe Historisme word bespreek.

Twee onlangse Suid-Afrikaanse romans (*Amandla* deur Miriam Tlali en *Third Generation* deur Sipho Sepamla) word in die tweede deel van die verhandeling bespreek as voorbeelde van tekste wat hulleself voorstel as opponerend en weerstandbiedend met betrekking tot die status quo. Daar word aangedui dat hulle hulleself skuldig maak aan dit wat hulle aanval deur, byvoorbeeld, die stereotipiese voorstelling van vroue en van karakters wat lyk of hulle die sisteem van apartheid ondersteun. Die gevolg hiervan is dat dié bepaalde tekste teoreties die status quo sou perpetueer deur die uitbuitende en vooroordelende ideologiese strukture daarvan te repliseer. Die enigste manier waarop hierdie tekste hulle genoemde doelwit van gewetensprikkeling kan volvoer is deur die kontradiksies wat in hulle strukture ingebou is te ontken. Hierdie kunsmatige resolusie word bereik deur die gebruik van bannelingskap as 'n troop.

Dit wil lyk asof die analises van die tekste in die lig van die teoretiese gedeelte van die verhandeling mens tot 'n diep skeptiese gevolgtrekking ten opsigte van die moontlikhede van weerstand deur literêre en ander tekste dwing. Al lyk dit tog moontlik om alternatiewe spasies ten opsigte van die hegemoniese kultuur te skep lyk dit ook asof hierdie hegemoniese kultuur amper oorweldigend sterk is.

Toekomstige navorsingvelde word in die **Naskrif** aangedui. Een so 'n veld het betrekking tot die essensiële taak om 'n kultuur wat eenheid, welvaart en

regverdigheid in Suid-Afrika sal verseker te skep. Dit word gestel dat só 'n kultuu alleenlik met groot moeite sal ontwikkel en dat die eerste stap na só 'n kultuur soo bestaan daaruit om die onaanvaarbare opposisies van apartheid te transende Aangesien hierdie MA-verhandeling die moontlikhede asook die vooronderstelling onderliggend aan die verhoudings tussen mag en diskoers met betrekking tot di Suid-Afrikaanse situasie soos gemanifesteer in die Suid-Afrikaanse literatuu ondersoek, is dit dus essensieel in só 'n proses.