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South African Literature and Narrating the Nation

Ampie Coetzee

Summary

Can one talk of a "South African (National) Literature"? Should the political construct of "one nationship" be extended to reading the various literatures in South Africa as one text? An epistemology will be necessary. The forms of knowledge identified by Michel Foucault for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are relevant to the first texts created in South Africa by European writers. The concept nation and nation-ness is investigated briefly, as well as the various language discourses present at the moment. Writing and the text, the signifying practices of signifier and representation, especially regarding travel writing and missionary texts can be seen as seminal. Can we find in these early writings the genealogy of South African literatures, the creation of a nation? Various possibilities have to be taken into account in the writing of a "History of South African Literature", but especially Benedict Anderson's view that the creation of a nation is the narrating of a nation, and Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of texts as national narratives. In this regard the matter of discontinuity arises where colonialism and the missionary enterprise as textual intrusions are posed as possible examples.

Opsomming

Kan mens praat van 'n "Suid-Afrikaanse (Nasionale) letterkunde"? Sou die politieke konstruk van "een nasie" uitgebrei kon word tot die lees van die verskeie letterkundes in Suid-Afrika as een teks? 'n Epistemologie is nodig. Die vorme van kennis geïdentifiseer deur Michel Foucault vir die sewentiende en agtiende eeue is relevant tot die skepping van die eerste tekste in Suid-Afrika deur Europese skrywers. Die konsep nasie en nasieskap word kortliks ondersoek, sowel as die verskeie taaldiskoerse hier op die oomblik. Skrif en die teks, die tekenpraktyke van betekenaar en representasie, veral met betrekking tot die reisbeskrywing en die sendingteks, kan as seminaal beskou word. Kan ons in hierdie vroeë geskrifte die genealogie van Suid-Afrikaanse letterkundes vind, en die skepping van 'n nasie? Verskillende moontlikhede moet in ag geneem word by die skryf van 'n "Geskiedenis van die Suid-Afrikaanse letterkunde", maar veral Benedict Anderson se siening dat die skep van 'n nasie ook die narratief daarvan is, en Homi K. Bhabha se konsep van tekste as nasionale narratiewe. Hier ontstaan die kwessie van diskontinuïteite, waar kolonialisme en sendingaksies as tekstuele indringing as moontlike voorbeelde voorgestel word.

At his inauguration in May 1994 the democratically chosen State President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, stated that a primary aim of the new

Government of National Unity would be "to build a nation that is unified in its diversity". South Africa has finally become decolonised, in the political and legal sense of the concept. Reconstruction is beginning and we are considering to forget the past. A new discourse has begun: of one-nation-ness, of an inclusive nationalism.

But after the euphoria has passed we should also be reminded of Benedict Anderson's words:

> Nations, however, have no clearly identifiable births, and their deaths, if they ever happen, are never natural. Because there is no Originator, the nation's biography cannot be written evangelically, "down time", through a long procreative chain of begettings. The only alternative is to fashion it "up time".
> (Anderson 1991: 205)

Literatures in South Africa have been written and described separately in the past. The question to be considered is whether the situation should remain as it is, or should there also be an attempt to find unity in diversity regarding the production of texts as signifying practices. Can one, therefore, ever talk of a South African Literature?

1 Theory

The question of finding a theory which will guide an attempt to unify the multiformity of literatures, is most perplexing, and one should be on guard against constructing a master narrative which would repress alternatives.

> A meta-narrative ... demands that all alternative narrative possibilities be repressed or subsumed into it; it is terroristic or totalitarian in the sense that it assigns every narrator, listener, and actor a place and makes each responsible for the place assigned to him. It programmes all responses in advance and blocks all non-programmed responses. From this perspective, a theory and practice of discourse can be considered to be critical, therefore, only if they resist, subvert, and undermine such blockages, if they reinsert openings that have been closed off through brute political force, philosophical coercion, or rhetorical persuasion. Any narrative that predetermines all responses or prohibits any counter-narratives puts an end to narrative itself by suppressing all possible alternative actions and responses, by making itself its own end and the end of all other narratives.
> (Carol 1987: 77)

I shall, therefore, rather prefer to work eclectically, allowing a theory to evolve from a description of the complexity of texts, making use of the concepts of Michel Foucault (1985a, 1985b), Benedict Anderson (1991),

Mary Louise Pratt (1992), Homi K. Bhabha (1990) and Aijaz Ahmad (1992).

The three kinds of knowledge that Foucault identifies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries - natural history, analysis of wealth and general grammar - are highly relevant in viewing the beginning of writing in South Africa. But, mindful of Nietzsche and Foucault, one has to be wary of the concepts "beginning" and genealogy (Foucault & Deleuze 1981).

2 The National

Before talking about nation or nationism it is necessary to pause for a moment to register the discontinuation of colonialism - the brand of modern colonialism that particularised the South African situation; especially the identification of South Africa's "social realities as a system of internal colonialism", or "colonialism of a special type" (Bundy 1989: 3). To avoid repeating what has already been sufficiently analysed the following quote will serve:

> Internal colonialism corresponds to a structure of social relations based on domination and exploitation among culturally heterogeneous, distinct groups.
> (Wolpe 1975: 231)

Because South Africa,

> combines the worst features both of imperialism and colonialism in a single national frontier ... "Non-White South Africa" is the colony of "White South Africa"
> (Bundy 1989: 4)

the argument has been that the overthrow of the colonialist state was necessary to establish a state of National Democracy.[1]

A discourse of "one nation-ness" has begun in South Africa. Whether one agrees or disagrees with the political concept, whether one accepts or rejects it: this discourse is coinciding with the formation of a "New South Africa".

But now: what is a nation? And does such an entity really exist?[2]

In his classical essay of 1882, "Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?" Ernest Renan reminds us: "The primordial right ... for genuine progress ... is just and legitimate" regarding the "national principle" (Bhabha 1990: 13).[3] If, as Anderson (1991: 148) argues, "nationalisms think in terms of historical destinies", how does this thinking come about? The importance of *consent* and *moral conscience* is emphasised by Renan (Bhabha 1990: 19, 20) - and

we can see that consent is being constructed in South Africa through the transitional "Government of National Unity".[4] These enunciations are constructing a discourse as Timothy Brennan remarks:

> The "nation" is precisely what Foucault has called a "discursive formation" - not simply an allegory or imaginative vision, but a gestative political structure which the Third World artist is consciously building or suffering the lack of.
> (Bhabha 1990: 46-47)

These statements, then, concur with Anderson's definition (1991: 6): that nation "is an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign".

3 Language as Discourse

Since decolonisation three major European languages - English, French, Portuguese - have remained the main means of expression of governments and the bourgeoisie in Africa. Within the discourse on language one has to look at the present language situation in South Africa and see it in the light of past developments regarding Afrikaans and English, as well as the position of the "other" languages.

The transitional Constitution of South Africa stipulates that there are eleven official languages at national level.[5] There are many questions to be asked, and few answers. Can a plethora of languages, instead of one national language, be a unifying force? If English becomes the official government language, can those who use it as a second and, particularly, third language really be reached emotionally and intellectually? Will a separate government language as apposed to several officially accepted languages not inevitably lead to class distinction? Are writers in English not specially privileged? Will localised languages in which a cultural life is lived, become marginalised?[6] Won't standardisation, planning, the creation of a meta-narrative, eleven languages by decree, prove to be a limitation to linguistic development, such as creolisation; and eventually - by a denial of heterogeneity - a danger to national unity?

There are, then, three main language discourses: Afrikaans, English and the "other" - "African" - languages. Each discourse is, in itself, part of the story of the nation.[7]

3.1 Afrikaans

It can be said with certainty that Afrikaans originated from Dutch, more precisely, from the Dutch spoken on the trade routes by the seamen, soldiers and traders of the East India Company in the 16th and 17th centuries (Van Rensburg 1994: 177). The Dutch and the Khoi of South Africa first met in 1595. From the travel journals we learn that the Khoi's speech was impeded and their language sounded like the clucking of turkeys (Frank van der Does quoted in Godeé-Molsbergen 1912: 5-6). Even after the beginning of colonisation in 1652 the Europeans failed to learn this language.

In March 1647 the first social contact was made with the indigenous people of the Cape which gave rise to the first temporary settlement. After a more permanent settlement was created, slaves were imported from the East which increased language intermingling. These events would lead to the development of three kinds of Afrikaans: Burgher Afrikaans, Khoekhoe Afrikaans and Malay Afrikaans (Nienaber 1994: 139 et seq.).

3.1.1 Nationalism and Ideology

Afrikaans became the language used by those in service: the language spoken between maid and madam, between master and slave or servant; a simplified, flawed, interlanguage (Van Rensburg 1994: 167; Davids 1994: 112). But this spoken language started penetrating the writing of intellectuals during the beginning of the 19th century, subsequently leading to a language movement which became an organised national movement.[8] Striving for acceptance among white speakers of the language, Afrikaans had to fight on two fronts: against the proponents of Dutch (Scholtz 1963: 257, 271) and against English after the final colonisation by the British in 1806. English and Dutch remained the official languages until Afrikaans was eventually accepted in 1925, when it became a language of power.

Since the founding of the "Genootskap vir Regte Afrikaners" in 1875 writers and journalists had already consciously been developing the language by standardising its orthography, and by creating literature. It can now be determined that Afrikaner nationalism came into being between 1902 and 1924:

> ... the manufacture of an Afrikaans literary culture ... was an important terrain in which nationalist ideologies were elaborated.
>
> (Hofmeyr 1987: 95)

It must, however, be clearly stated that this is a generalisation and only

partially true; for during that period contestation was already part of the writings of Eugene Marais and C. Louis Leipoldt. And in 1919 the leading Afrikaans literary critic of the time stated:

> Taaleenheid is die uitvloeisel van volkseenheid en 'n noodsaaklike voorwaarde vir 'n algemene, nasionale kultuur. Waar in 'n land dus verskillende afsonderlike dialekte bestaan, kan taaleenheid alleen tot stand kom wanneer één van die dialekte 'n bepaalde hegemonie oor die ander verkry.
>
> (Pienaar 1926: 142)

The development of a hegemony, the standardisation of a language, the creation of a literary canon and the making of authors are instruments of power. These factors culminated in the coming into power of the Afrikaner Nationalists in 1948 and the institution of apartheid. The erstwhile marginalised language had now become the language of the new colonisers, and Afrikaans eventually came to be seen as the language of apartheid and the language of the oppressor.[9]

Since April 1994 Afrikaans has lost its political power and its privileged status as one of the only two official languages. As English may well become the unstated state language, the future of Afrikaans may seem threatened as it still retains some of its ideological impediments. That is the perception among many speakers of the language, including some prominent writers. A paranoia is developing, almost reaching the proportions of a language struggle. An ongoing discourse of this nature could well create new alliances, where radical and conservative may even join ranks and disrupt the possibilities of the constructed "national unity".

The words of Anderson in this context are still valid:

> It is always a mistake to treat languages in the way that certain nationalist ideologues treat them - as *emblems* of nation-ness, like flags, costumes, folk-dances, and the rest. Much the most important thing about language is its capacity for generating imagined communities, building in effect *particular solidarities*.
>
> (Anderson 1991: 133)[10]

3.2 English

As far as we know English entered the country in 1592.

> A voyage with three tall ships ... to the East Indies by the Cape of Buona Speransa ... begunne by M. George Raymond in the yeere 1591, and performed by M. James Lancaster, and written from the mouth of Edmund Barker of Ipswich, his lieutenant in the sayd voyage, by M. Richard Hakluyt.
>
> (Hakluyt 1598-1600)

The description in English of the language of the indigenous Khoi is quite elaborate, and coincides remarkably with the experiences of the Dutch:

> ... their speech is wholly uttered through the throate, and they clocke with their tongues in such sort, that in seven weeks which we remained here in this place, the sharpest wit among us could not learne one word of their language; and yet the people would soone understand any signe we made to them.
>
> The people of this place are all of a tawnie colour, of a reasonable stature, swift of foot, and much given to picke and steale ...
>
> (Raven-Heart 1967: 23)

Missionaries, and especially British missionaries, created a hegemony in the 19th century. A.C. Jordan summarised the situation as follows:

> *In all speech communities of the Southern Africans, what literacy exists is* inseparably bound up with the Christian missionary enterprise. To be able to "preach the Word" the missionaries had not only to learn the languages of the people, but also reduce these languages to writing ....
>
> (Jordan 1973: 37)

But the missionaries also had to reinvent their converts, to discipline them, to teach them the meaning of British hierarchy. In short: to civilise them. Abdul JanMohamed characterises this process by stating that there is a

> profound symbiotic relationship between the discursive and the material practices of imperialism: the discursive practices do to the symbolic linguistic presence of the native what the material practices do to his physical presence.[11]
>
> (De Kock 1992a: 126)

The mission institution

> would isolate its pupils and seek to remake their discursive identity. In this, language - more particularly, English - would be their main instrument.
>
> (De Kock 1992a: 118)[12]

In research on the work of English missionaries, the view is held "that 'English' as discourse was implicated in a large-scale attempt to remake the subjectivity of Africans" (De Kock 1992).[13] English was the master language, the linguistic coloniser, the epitome of civilisation. The missionaries constituted themselves and the subjects in a world of that language. "The mind of the African is empty" (De Kock 1992a: 129) and it had to be filled with English and English culture. A report of the Glasgow Missionary Society of 1839 explains:

> ... the general education of the natives should be, in Kaffre, but in the Institution it is thought desirable, that generally the whole, or at least the higher departments, should be conducted in English. This would lay open the rich stores of English learning ...
>
> (De Kock 1992a: 127)

English as the master language paved the way for the standardisation of other languages into written orthography, particularly to facilitate the translation of the Bible and John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.[14] Missionaries had the written word, which they carried with them as a document of the faith, but also as proof of a civilisation. The African had to have his spoken language recreated in writing so that it could have lasting meaning. Writing and the text represented civilisation.

3.3 The "Other", the "African" Languages

The following statements within the discourse of the autochthonous languages can be made at this moment of transition in South Africa.

The language situation regarding the relationship between the original languages of Africa, before European language contact and colonisation, is summarised by Abiola Irele (1990: 47). He concludes that without a "common African language" there cannot be an "African literature" and "national integration in each of the African states", therefore,

> ... there remains the fact that language is not a mere functional tool, but that everywhere it is invested with the force of communal life. It is possible for a borrowed language to be so internalized by a community as to become totally identified with it, but this process requires a considerable time-span to be completed, and in any case, the language itself must have such a wide area of application within the community to make the process possible.
>
> (Irele 1990: 47)

Irele argues that most African states have adopted European languages as the linking language, with the result that the majority of people are ruled in a language foreign to them: "The vast majority of us move and live in a dim region of cultural and linguistic ambiguity" (Irele 1990: 49).

English and Afrikaans are the languages used at South African Universities, and they provide the academic infrastruture. To change this would mean instituting the other nine languages as academic languages, and if this is not done, higher education will remain in the hands of the elite - just as the major modern literary productions are produced and read in English and Afrikaans only.[15]

Are there, then, any reasons to agitate for the instatement of the nine languages as official? Recent research on the status of languages and multilingualism in South Africa indicates that no "African language" has country-wide status. In education there seems to be no relevant contemporary literature, because of censorship in the past by the missionaries and by the Language Boards. A survey finds that reading material is rejected by children. Paraphrased in the words of a teacher, it states: "We identify an educated person with English. Once you see a person reading Zulu, you think that person is not educated" (*Bua* 1994: 7).

In the labour market it is not considered necessary to learn "African languages" at school level. The irony is that although multilingual education is not acceptable without English, the comprehension level of conversational English is so low that monolingual education through the medium of English will bar the majority of pupils from effective communication (*Bua* 1994: 7).

The most important observation is, however, the following: "We find multilingual communication the *language* people felt the most comfortable in" (*Bua* 1994: 6).

Could this statement defy language planners? Could there be a discourse developing which would eventually, in years to come, change the complicated pattern of languages in South Africa, and narrate the nation in a constituted creole language?

4 Writing and the Text

When Jacobus Coetzee - the main character of J.M. Coetzee's (1994) novella "The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee" in *Dusklands* - travelled north to the Great Garieb in July 1760 to hunt elephants, having received a written permit from the Governor at the Cape,[16] he met the great Amacquas. They regarded him with suspicion. He, however, informed them that he had the written permission of his Excellency to shoot elephants.[17]

On his return an account of his journey was given to the Governor. This "Deposition" was given orally, taken down and signed by the narrator with an X.[18] It seems that he could not write;[19] and then probably not read either. Jacobus Coetzee's travel into the interior, and his return, is dominated by two texts: the "hunting permit" of the Governor, and the "Deposition". But these texts only had meaning to him insofar as they were pieces of paper which had been officialised: the hunting permit being in the nature of a signifier, a sign that he had the authority to hunt; and the other, the "Deposition", in the nature of a signified in which he had to represent the results of his journey.[20]

Just as J.M. Coetzee "translated" this text, one has to read the texts semiotically, and view the signifying practices of signifier and representation as it may have been for the colonial mind of the 18th century.[21] The episteme of language before the 17th century was one of similitude: the names of things were within the things themselves, the word was part of the thing.[22] This, however, shifted from the 17th century, and the "mode of being" became that of representation.

In this episode of Jacobus Coetzee's life, we may read something of the meaning of text in the colonial contact zone: as signifier or representation (for the hunter) against an emptiness of meaning (for the Amacquas). Representation in language, and its concomitant classification can be researched in terms of early travel writing; and thereafter the subjectivisation of the Other missionary representation. The emphasis on text, travel text, missionary text, is not merely for the sake of discovering the first texts, of rereading the perspectives of the early colonisers, of deconstructing their views. Within the discourse on national consciousness print-languages were seminal in the creation of intertextual valences, unified exchanges, languages of power, the book as information - and ultimately the book as "Literature".

The "Deposition" of Jacobus Coetzee - which was subsequently re- and deconstructed by J.M. Coetzee - is one such document created from the contact between colonisers and indigenous people. The steps leading to the colonising of South Africa, first by the Dutch since the 17th century, then by the British since the 18th century, and finally by the Afrikaner Nationalists since the second half of the 20th century, may all be reread within the context of the narrative of a nation.

Mary Louise Pratt (1992: 4) has convincingly argued for the importance of travel texts as the "history of imperial meaning-making". Writers of travel documents represent themselves in relation to Europe.[23] They write themselves in terms of science (classification), or colonisation (wealth), through the medium of their own language. What the eye sees and what is reproduced, is invented for others to read: subjects and landscapes are created for the colonial eye. A similar re-presentation of reality took place in missionary discourse. Their texts, their reports back - often presented as literary constructs with metaphorical solutions, were "discursive reinvention(s) of people, language and representation ..." (De Kock 1992b: 116, 124). In these texts there is also confluence of the journey, the gaze, with the missionary metaphors of pilgrimage and light.

How does the writer in South Africa (since the advent of travel and missionary writing, since the intrusion and development of languages from Europe and the growth of ethnic and national consciousnesses) represent this

country to him/herself? And can one read these representations in terms of the creation of a nation? Can we find in these early writings the genealogy of South African literatures?

4.1 Literary History and the Nation

Can one write a literary history which unifies all the literary productions in South Africa into one project, becoming a "History of South African Literature in all its languages and textual discourses?"

Some of the aspects to be taken into account in answering this question are:

- Historiography in South Africa has various approaches - and the new histories have yet to be written. Literary historians have not indicated clearly where they stand regarding "History".[24]

- A unitary approach regarding "Literature" does not exist among critics and theoreticians of the different languages: paradigms range from Formalism, through Marxism, to Post-Structuralism. This does not necessarily have to be an impediment, but for a "Theory of South African Literature" a history of the discourse of canonisation would require a serious scholarly undertaking.[25]

- Because of the constraints of apartheid education, the literatures of the nine "African" languages have developed unequally compared with those of Afrikaans and English. The probable expansion of English as a linking language of the State to become something of a "national language", as well as the absence of any kind of language struggle among the speakers of the nine languages, can point in the direction of a "South African literature" being constructed in English only. Compare Aijaz Ahmad on a similar position that could develop in India:

> In social processes at large, this privileging of a particular language is indicated by its uses in state administration, in those more powerful sections of the media which are considered "national", in higher institutions of education and research, in its differential availability to the propertied and the working classes respectively, in the greater access it provides to the job market and hence the great prestige that attaches to the person who commands it with fluency, and so on. Once these processes are fully in place, with the bourgeoisie and the professional segments of the petty bourgeoisie fully incorporated in them, two things about "literature", at the very least, become self-evident for all those who are thus incorporated. First, it seems inevitable

> that if an archive of a "national" literature is to be assembled, it can be done only in *this* language [English]. Second, as regards individual texts, only those that become available in *this* language can be said to have a *representative* character, so far as the "national" literature is concerned; all else is "regional", and a "regional" novel, let us say, can become part of the "national" archive only in so far as it is represented, either in full translation or through some extended summary and/or commentary, in the language designated already, through official proclamation or not, as the one appropriate for the construction of the "national" archive.
>
> (Ahmad 1992: 77-78)

Even if texts are translated into one language for the sake of building up a "National Literature", the question still is: who decides on what to translate? Ahmad says further:

> Nor can this privileging of the English literary text in the "national" media and archive - not to speak of the metropolitan university and the literary Establishment - be altered in any significant degree unless much else changes in areas far beyond literary studies *per se*.
>
> (Ahmad 1992: 78)

- There is also a deconstructional dilemma, similar to the question of standardising language. For the several literatures to be brought together, the implication is that they have to be described separately at first, therefore canonised as "a literature" before being integrated into a "national literature". This process could lead to the hardening into hypostasis of discourse, and inhibit the mediative function of discursive practices constituted by enunciations throughout all the literatures.

- The question of oral literature remains unanswered. Where does one begin? In the forgotten past, relying on reductions to orthography, or in the present, seeking the new *imbongi* and the storytellers of forgotten and isolated communities and recording and writing them? Thus creating new written texts?

- Finally, there is a practical problem. No single person exists - as far as I know - who knows modern and/or postmodern literary theoretical and historical discourse, and is also sufficiently proficient in all eleven official languages to produce a unified body of knowledge. Such a project will, therefore, have to be a team effort, perhaps preceded by the rethinking of theory.

When considering the possibilities of producing such a body of knowledge,

one has to return to the nation. Ahmad argues against nationalism as the prime unifying force against colonialism, criticising it from a socialist position. He does not, however, make a distinction between nationalism and nationness:

> I refuse to accept that nationalism is the determinate, dialectical opposite of imperialism; that dialectical status accrues only to socialism. By the same token, however, it is only from the prior and explicit socialist location that I select particular nationalist positions for criticism, even at times very harsh denunciation; a critique of nationalism without that explicit location in the determinate socialist project has never made any sense for me, either politically or theoretically. Nor do I accept that nationalism is some unitary thing, always progressive or always retrograde.
>
> (Ahmad 1992: 11)[26]

His criticism against Jameson's finding (1986: 98), that "all third-world texts are necessarily ... to be read as ... national allegories", is primarily against the "third world" concept and the idea of a national allegory. Without taking up the issue of third world, or taking national allegory "literally", as allegory, I think one can extend and conjoin the concepts national, in terms of nation; and allegory, in terms of narration.

In his introduction to the collection of essays *Nation and Narration* (1990), Homi K. Bhabha writes of "narrating the nation". I would like to extend this concept along the lines of Anderson's view that the creation of a nation is the narrating of a nation.[27] "Writing the nation", "national allegories", texts as "national narratives", the "cultural construction of nationness as a form of social and textual affiliation" (Bhabha 1990: 292) - here we may find possibilities for a different kind of "literary" history. Where the political construction is towards a signified: one nation; the cultural-literary is the signifier.

This does not mean that every text which is to be considered as part of a literary discourse is necessarily an explicit text about the nation or an ethnic group. If texts are read as signifying practices within certain discursive formations they may be seen in genealogical and narrative unity within the context of one-nationness.

4.2 Literature and Discontinuity

4.2.1 Introductory Examples

Central to my thinking, there follows a *specific* reading of Foucault's con-

cept of discontinuity, rupture, instead of the continuity of the period in history:

> ... in the disciplines that we call the history of ideas, the history of science, the history of philosophy, the history of thought, and the history of literature (we can ignore their specificity for the moment), in those disciplines which, despite their names, evade very largely the work and methods of the historian, attention has been turned, on the contrary, away from vast unities like "periods" or "centuries" to the phenomena of rupture, of discontinuity. Beneath the great continuities of thought, beneath the solid, homogenous manifestations of a single mind or of a collective mentality, beneath the stubborn development of a science striving to exist and to reach completion at the very outset, beneath the persistence of a particular genre, form, discipline, or theoretical activity, one is now trying to detect the incidence of interruptions. Interruptions whose status and nature vary considerably.
>
> (Foucault 1985b: 4)[28]

I would like to think of colonialism as part of a discontinuity - as an *intrusion*. Intrusions responsible for the creation of enunciations producing certain definite textual discourses, are then related to:

- Travel writing, where the European gaze has created several "statements", such as: the exclusion of the "Other"; description, representation and narrative within particular signifying practices - and ultimately the intrusion of the text itself. Examples to be investigated are, for instance, the representational techniques of Peter Kolb (1994: 21-38); the use of narrative as a strategy towards description.[29]

  The narrative develops: from travel writing, to the "beginning" of English Literature in South Africa with Thomas Pringle,[30] to the journeys in his native land of the exile's return in the "Paradise" books by Breyten Breytenbach (1976, 1993) where *writing* becomes object, to post-modernist deconstruction of travel journal in a short story by Koos Prinsloo (1982: 9-15), where the *text* becomes pure signifier.

- Missionary enterprise, where the missionaries' intrusion into the world of the Xhosa has been instrumental in creating texts. *The story of Ntsikana's* conversion to Christianity (Bokwe 1914) is a case in point.[31] The description of the missionary pitching his tent close to his prospective converts has its intertextual parallel in the poetic statement on tragic intrusion in a classical Afrikaans poem by N.P. van Wyk Louw.[32]

5 Conclusion

In an attempt at finding a common denominator for the various literatures in South Africa, I have taken the political reality of national unity as a point of departure for the narrative of a nation. This narrative would include the meaning of nation, the diversity of language and the creation of the "first texts" by Europeans.

A fractured narrative produced within the various discourses created by discontinuity, may be the alternative to a history of South African literature that aims to totalise.

Notes

1. It is interesting to note that where the national idea comes from imperialist countries, the age of exploration instigated the idea. (Cf. Bhabha 1990: 59; Anderson 1991: 11).

2. Yet a purely political definition of "nation" would seem inadequate to cover the territorial and constitutional frugalities of nineteenth and twentieth century history. Even adding other criteria, such as "common heritage", leaves things all too vague (Snead 1990: 231).

3. The matter becomes quite complex if one begins juxtaposing texts on race and nationalism, for example:
   Nairn is basically mistaken in arguing that racism and anti-semitism derive from nationalism .... The fact of the matter is that nationalism thinks in terms of historical destinies, while racism actually has its origin in ideologies of *class*, rather than in those of nation ....
   (Anderson 1991: 148)

4. "Yet the essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common, and also that they have forgotten many things!" Ernest Renan in *What is a Nation!* (Bhabha 1990: 11).

5. The languages are: Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, Sesotho sa Leboa, Sesotho, siSwati, Xitsonga, Setswana, Tshivenda, isiXhosa, and isiZulu. The Constitution also creates a central committee to initiate the Pan South African Language Board. One of its functions is to promote respect for and the development of community languages, including German, Greek, Gujerati, Hindi, Portuguese, Tamil, Telegu, Urdu, Arabic, Hebrew and Sanskrit. Within its ambit is also included other community languages such as Dutch, French, Italian, Shona, Nyanha and Chinese (Sachs 1994: 8, 11).

6. Cf. Ahmad on this matter in India (1992: 74-77, 98, 250, 268, 270, 271, 277). A literary approach to these problems sounds less frightening. In texture and word usage there are several examples of transgressions of standardisation - and many may yet come. The stories, in English, of Herman Charles Bosman, sound Afrikaans; the travel journals of Breyten Breytenbach sound Afrikaans. *In the Heart of the Country* J.M. Coetzee uses Afrikaans dialogue. Short stories using English, Afrikaans and Xhosa together are being written in the Western Cape. Adam Small's more recent poetry, as well as, the poetry written by other poets of the Cape Flats, is written in Cape-Afrikaans. Often Zulu and Xhosa speakers use both languages, Tsotsitaal is a mixture of Afrikaans, English and other languages, Scamto is a Zulu-based slang sometimes even spoken as first language (*Bua* 1994 9(1): 7).

7. In a recent book, *Nuwe perspektiewe op die geskiedenis van Afrikaans*, Gerrit Olivier & Anna Coetzee (eds). Southern, Halfway House, 1994, some contributions, without explicitly stating it, take a wider look at language and acculturation and within interlanguage context. Cf. Achmat Davids (1994); Christo van Rensburg (1994).

8. Language movements for the acceptance of *new languages* were, of course, at this time almost a universal discourse (Anderson 1991: 72-75).

9. With the intensification of the struggle against apartheid - especially during the 1980s - it became again a language of struggle. Black linguists, intellectuals and writers began reappropriating the language (Davids 1994: 113). The concept of "black" Afrikaans writers arose at this time. Simultaneously; student movements came into being such as the African Youth Movement, who see themselves as Khoisan in nature, and, therefore, close to Afrikaans.

10. Cf. also on the same topic: pp. 91, 134, 154.

11. Quoted by Leon de Kock, "'Drinking at the English Fountains': Missionary Discourse and the Case of Lovedale", *Missionalia* 20(2), August 1992a: 126.

12. A concrete example can be cited of missionary intrusion into the life of a community in the case of the "first" Christian convert, orator and *imbongi*, Ntsikana (Hodgson 1984: 25).

13. Paper presented to the African Studies Forum, University of South Africa, 22 July 1922 (unpublished paper).

14. Of which, according to C.E. Watson, there were thirty-three African versions by 1923 (Gérard 1971: 397). It is significant to what extent this narrative of a journey influenced the novel in African literature:

    Of the whole corpus of European literature, Bunyan's masterpiece is the most

> widely translated work in Africa. Because of its edifying purpose and allegorical structure, the missionaries found it eminently suitable for African readers, and it exerted considerable influence on the early stages of creative writing in Bantu languages.
>
> (Gérard 1971: 34, 35)

As this was often the only model early writers knew, this was the model they followed, cf. for instance the Lovedale publication of Henry Masila Ndawo's *Uhumba luka Gqoboka* (Gkoboka's Journey).

15. While Afrikaans and English Literary Histories proliferate the most recent history of the literatures of six languages - *Southern African Literature in African Languages. A Concise Historical Perspective* by D.B. Ntuli & C.F. Swanepoel (1993) is very brief (165 pages), although more than two hundred African-language authors are referred to during the course of the text. This figure excludes the hundreds of anonymous storytellers, bards and other performers who have created the oral literature tradition of the region. Together they have established the great body of Southern African literature in the African languages (Foreword).

16. "Dat den Relatant van den Edelen Heer gouverneur, bij schriftelijke ordonnantie Permissie erlangd hebbende, om zig tot het schietten van oliphanten Landwaarts in te moogene begeeven ...." *The Journal of Hendrik Jakob Wikar (1779) and The Journals of Jacobus Coetsé Jansz* (1760), *and Willem van Reenen* (1791). Edited with an introduction and footnotes by Dr. E.E. Mossop. The Van Riebeeck Society, Cape Town (1935: 276).

17. "Dus hier by de groote Amacqua gekoomen weesende ..." (1935: 280-282).

18. "Aldus gerelateerd ter Politicque Secretarye ... E.G. Clercq" (1935: 288-290).

19. According to the short history of his life, given by Captain Hendrik Hop at the end of *The Journals of Brink and Rhenius* being the Journal of Carel Frederik Brink of the journey into *Great Namaqualand* (1761-1762) made by Captain Hendrik Hop and *The Journal of Ensign Johannes Tobias Rhenius* (1724). Translated, and edited by Dr. E.E. Mossop. The Van Riebeeck Society. Cape Town (1947: 93) Jacobus Coetzee was a guide for the Brink journey, on the strength of his previous experience.

20. The Amacquas would have seen in him a representative of those previous traders and hunters who had killed some of them before. As narrated in *The Journals of Brink and Rhenius*.

21. The question of translation becomes quite a theoretical issue in this case, especially as Coetzee's translation of the original "Relaas" has been changed here and there. He has, therefore, transgressed from the original colonial texts,

as he has transgressed in the story *he* tells of Jacobus Coetzee. In a recent article, "Looking Backward to the 'New South Africa' - J.M. Coetzee's (1994) Exploration of the Protocols of Travel Writing", Michael Marais (1994: 21-34) deconstructs the discourse of travel writing in this text.

22. *The Order of Things* (Foucault 1985a: 135). "The men of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries do not think of wealth, nature, or language in terms that had been bequeathed to them by preceding ages or in forms that presaged what was soon to be discovered ... [t]his mode of being is that of representation" (p. 208). Compare similar findings regarding the episteme of sacred languages by Benedict Anderson (1991: 14).

23. Cf. for example *Discourses of Difference*. An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism. Mills (1993). Cf. also "Women and Language in Darkest Africa: the Quest for Articulation in Two Postcolonial Novels" (Brink 1992: 1-14).

24. One would have expected them to take note of Foucault's Introduction on *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1985b): "In short, the history of thought, of knowledge, of philosophy, of literature seems to be seeking, and discovering, more and more discontinuities, whereas history itself appears to be abandoning the irruption of events in favour of stable structures" (1985b: 6).

25. Researchers and literary historians have recently started this task. Cf. "Literatuurgeskiedskrywing en diskoers: die 'begin' van die Afrikaanse letterkunde" (John 1994: 97-114). Also: "Recent Changes in South African Literary Historiography: Theory and Practice" (Van Vuuren 1994: 8-20).

26. Cf. Ahmad (1992: 15, 32, 33, 68).

27. Anderson (1991: 201, 204) quotes instances of texts creating the "imagined community", where print-capitalism has made constructs, such as Eric Hobsbawm's example of the French Revolution. A further example is the case of Switzerland which, although its founding ostensibly occurred in 1291, it was only "narrated" in 1891.

28. Foucault (1985b) explains further about discplacements and transformations, etc.

29. Cf. The early account of Dutch seamen going ashore and meeting the Khoi, in 1595 (Commelin 1646).

30. Although the term "beginning" is not freely used, books on South African English Literature normally begin with Pringle, cf. Stephen Gray (1979: 4) (Chapman, Gardner & Mphahlele 1992: xi).

    The verbalising of "intrusion" is quite frequent in Pringle's narrative. Sub-

sections to chapters have titles such as: "Into the Interior", "Excursion to the Interior", "Intercourse with the Dutch-Afrikaner Colonists". And he often says: "... when I entered the place ..."; and on visiting the Dutch-African Boor: "On entering the house, I found .... The domicile of my hospitable neighbours, in which we were thus seated, was not calculated to suggest any ideas of peculiar comfort to an Englishman ..." (Pringle 1966: 14). The juxtaposing of the unknown with the known (English) is then typical of the intrusion of the gaze.

31. Cf. Jordan (1973) The Emergence of Literary Form in Xhosa (1973), and also "The Emergence of Xhosa and Southern Sotho Literature" within the context of missionary labour in *Southern African Literature in African Languages* (Ntuli & Swanepoel 1993).

32. (... they named him Nyengana, "the one who had appeared sneakingly"). Cf. a similar event in a letter of Georg Schmidt, the founder of the mission station Genadendal in the Cape, in 1737:

> Den 14ten gedachte ich, ein kleines Hüttchen zu machen, nicht fern von dem Häuschen der Hottentotten, damit ich möchte Gelegenheit haben, mit ihnen Umgang zu machen; ich hatte aber nichts dazu, um zu bauen. Der Korporal bot mir sein Zelt an, von Segeltuch gemach, darin sollte ich solange wohnen, bis ich könnte ein Häuschen bauen. So nahm it denselben Tag das Zelt und zog nahbei der Hottentotten Häuschen. Da schlug ich mein Zelt auf, aufs grüne Gras.
>
> (Schmidt 1981: 44)

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