"ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WASN'T AND THERE ISN'T": (RE)WRITING HISTORY IN ANDRÉ BRINK'S *CAPE OF STORMS: THE FIRST LIFE OF ADAMASTOR*

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ABSTRACT

This essay examines the short novella, *Cape of Storms: The First Life of Adamastor* (2007 [1993]), written by the South African novelist André Brink. Throughout the novel, Brink rewrites and recreates the mythical figure of the giant Adamastor from an Africanised perspective, at the same time that uses the text, *Os Lusíadas* written in the 16th century by the Portuguese poet Luís Vaz de Camões, to deconstruct the problematic binarism coloniser *vs* colonised. Therefore, my analysis focuses on the methods / literary techniques employed by the André brink, being magical realism, postmodernism and postcolonialism key elements in this study. It is also my argument that by means of parody, the author writes back to the empire while depicting the colonial encounter. Parody is, then, crucial in Brink's text to dismantle stereotypes as signifying practices, to reinvent the history of South Africa. Nonetheless, it is also problematic at times in terms of gender. Still, my argument is that by means of reinventing Eurocentric myths, Brink's novella presents an interesting if not crucial critique to the way colonised people were portrayed. In this specific analysis postmodern and postcolonial theories go hand in hand to convey the idea that historical records can be fabrications from which certain perspectives are excluded.

Keywords: André Brink; South Africa; Postmodernism; Magical Realism; Colonial Encounter; Storytelling.

RESUMO

Este ensaio examina a novela curta, Cape of Storms: The First Life of Adamastor, escrita pelo romancista sul-africano André Brink. Ao longo do romance, Brink reescreve e recria a figura mítica do gigante Adamastor numa perspectiva africanizada, ao mesmo tempo que utiliza o texto Os Lusíadas, escrito no século XVI pelo poeta português Luís Vaz de Camões, para desconstruir o binarismo problemático colonizador vs colonizado. A minha análise incide sobre os métodos/técnicas literárias empregados por André Brink, sendo o realismo mágico, o pós-modernismo e o pós-colonialismo elementos-chave neste estudo. Também procurarei concluir que, por meio da paródia, o autor

escreve sobre o império enquanto, retratando o encontro colonial. A paródia é, então, crucial no texto de Brink para desmontar estereótipos como práticas significantes, para reinventar a história da África do Sul. No entanto, é também problemático às vezes em termos de gênero. Ainda assim, a minha conclusão é de que, por meio da reinvenção de mitos eurocêntricos, a novela de Brink apresenta uma crítica interessante, senão crucial, à forma como os colonizados eram retratados. Nesta análise específica, teorias pós-modernas e pós-coloniais caminham juntas para transmitir a ideia de que os registros históricos podem ser fabricações de que certas perspetivas são excluídas.

Palavras-chave: André Brink; África do Sul; Pós-modernismo; Realisms Mágico; Encontro Colonial; Narrativa.

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"Eu sou aquele oculto e grande Cabo
A quem chamais vós outros Tormentório,
Que nunca a Ptolomeu, Pompónio, Estrabo,
Plínio, e quantos passaram fui notório."

Luís de Camões, *Os Lusíadas*

"But we know that for every person there is a wind which has been made just for that man and woman. This wind follows you like a shadow. And when you die one day, your wind comes softly to blow across your tracks and cover them with sand. Afterwards it goes on blowing your story through the world to make sure that distant people will pick it up."

André Brink, *Praying Mantis*

"Love, indeed. But what could be done about that? One does not live only through words, but through flesh as well."

André Brink, *Cape of Storms: The First Life of Adamastor* (italics in the original)

André Brink (1935-2015) remains one of the most acclaimed and dissident voices of South African literature, an author whose writing participates in a development of the liberal tradition, and which did much to further the cause of anti-apartheid internationally. Brink's novels, however, are often controversial and include creative aspects whether on their thematic and technical narrative forms. Moreover, his novels can be read as an exploration of the relationships among postcolonial, postmodern, and feminist discourses and they also demonstrate the pitfalls into which the principle of fictional critiques of racial, sexual, and colonial violence are frequently subjected to. Accordingly, Rosemary Jolly refers to Brink's novels as attempting to "challenge South African political authority and encourage his readers, both in and outside South Africa, to do the same" (1996: 17).

Indeed, Brink's fictional and critical work exhibits an "aesthetic of response" against the outrages of a nation; it is a work that can be clearly

located within the anti-apartheid field due to its consciously transgressive and resistant characteristics. In perceiving this, André Brink draws his own maps of South Africa, creating imaginary lands that work as metaphors and analogues of his country once divided by an autocratic system, so that he also graphically portrays different images of South Africa. Therefore, Brink's main themes are related to the exploration of the self and the other whose (hi)stories of marginalised voices have been enmeshed in the incongruities of national history. Consequently, André Brink re-imagines and re-invents South Africa through its iconography, its cultural symbols and national fantasies, manipulating and adapting them to his narratives which are somehow trapped in the political and social issues of his country. He was concerned with the politics of representation, dismantling the divisions through words, breaking down taboos and repressions. Writers became dissident voices adapting themselves and their stories to the historical context, including cultural debates over the construction of a space in which new formulations can be included and "can be earned – without imprisonment – by its ethical apprehension of the evils of the constructions of the race to which it, along with black South African subjectivity, has been subject" (Jolly 1996: 153).

Hence, literature in its multiple genres became a favoured site for contestation. It is, in fact, a medium in which the debate on the role of history to recreate a cultural identity may be productively sustained. Literature, in general, is particularly well suited to intertwining with complex social discourses. Martin Trump, in his introduction to *Rendering Things Visible,* notes that "literary works and their study offers particularly complex ways of describing society" due to "the hybrid, polysemic discourse of literature includes and might even be said to enlarge the epistemological realm of other discourses" (Trump 1990: x). The heterogeneous characteristics of the novel generate an appropriate site to represent the gaps, silences and displacements experienced in oppressed societies. André Brink's novels, accordingly, offer an apt paradigm of the way in which socio-political principles are embodied in South African culture, playing a crucial role in the opposition to apartheid as well as in the representation of liminal people, in what Homi Bhabha posits as a "double-inscription as pedagogical objects and performative subjects" (Bhabha 1994: 217). Among other things the reader is confronted with the significance of an oral historiographic tradition and the erasure of the female voice in history, in Brink's perspective of the culture of the Khoikhoi that has been "othered" and silenced as the "first inhabitants of Southern Africa" in *Cape of Storms: The First Life of Adamastor*.

Consequently, Brink, in his novels, suggests a similar emphasis on the importance of storytelling as a powerful device to re-inscribe marginalised voices in the multiple and polyphonic discourse of the nation. Brink states in *Mapmakers* that our "entire empirical world is 'storiefied'" (Brink 1981: 141). Once history can be manipulated and "storiefied" it is also made up of memories, stories, narratives, signs of the selves and others on which identity is constructed. It can, therefore, be assumed that through this manipulation of history, nation as Brink describes it can be conceived as a cultural artefact constructed by means of the invisible bounds of the imagination and in particular the horror of the stories of apartheid. Brink's novels thus grapple with the necessity of acknowledging the incompleteness of historical representation, and the "Janus-faced" ambivalence of the discourse of the nation.

Mostly set in modern South Africa, Brink's work calls up the notion of the collective knowledge articulated within the frameworks of oral traditions and storytelling and permits the appearance of an alternative and revitalizing history that includes the perspective of the so-called other. André Brink, nevertheless, makes use of postmodern theory to disclose history as fiction, deconstructing colonial representations and without unmediated access to the truth. He elaborates on this notion in his essay "Reflections on Literature and History" (1998) in which he compares history to the childhood game of "broken telephone":

> Is that not the way in which official history, too, comes into being? A chain of voices – resulting in the babble of Babel. And yet if it is repeated often enough, and with enough emphasis, it is accepted as a canon of received wisdom. And whole societies base their way of life on these "messages" transmitted by official history (1998: 137).

The postmodern use of parody in the work of Brink turns out to be one of the means by which culture deals either with its social concerns or with its aesthetic needs. Therefore, the breakdown of boundaries throughout the playfulness of magic realism and the marvellous gives Brink's novels a third space of contact where colonised and coloniser meet. Along with the "in-betweenness" generated out of this third space, different perspectives of perceiving the world also emerge with new and hybrid identities that alter the relation between the individual and the social.

Frequently, this imaginative (re)making of the nation commences with crucial references to physical geography and with the subtle or overt

alteration of symbolic space, its meaning, and the constitution of identities therein. It is in this way that the historical representation, despite being parodic, gets politicized, thus "parody, postmodernism taught, can be historicized as it contextualizes and recontextualizes" (Hutcheon 2002: 178). By confronting the process of telling stories it may be possible to read the features that are taken as typical of the postcolonial and postmodern novel, such as their fragmentation and deliberate inaccuracy and contradiction, in terms of a focused repositioning or even reordering of individual and national histories, and consequently the Other as it has been commonly represented is "never outside or beyond us; it emerges forcefully, within cultural discourse when we *think* we speak most intimately and indigenously 'between ourselves'" (Bhabha 1993: 4). There are real tensions arising from the relation between the Self and the Other; however, they also foreground a process of negotiation between various competing and compelling identities. Indeed, South Africa's late coming to democratic statehood is a fertile terrain for the recalling of forgotten, bypassed, and suppressed stories as well as the (re)invention of other stories forming a metanarrative that juxtaposes historical subjects and the myths of origin.

By presenting multiple narratives as equally valid, Brink seems to be giving voice to a panoply of conflicting claims, unmasking the silenced other, explicitly women who repeatedly appear as doubly colonised. In so doing his novels as metafictions are intimately related with metahistory, problematising and producing a series of diverse intersections of history, gender, sexuality, and nation which all participate in the complex politics of representation. Consequently, those narratives are not merely interesting stories or even the simple dissemination of historical facts; they encapsulate the exploration of personal and official histories in which the voices of women are reinscribed and revalidated calling for the excavation of those experiences in South African history. Brinkian fiction interweaves the public and historical material of South Africa into the realms of fiction, and by doing so he blurs the distinctions between them creating a subtext within the main narrative. Accordingly, Njabulo Ndebele posits that

> writing enables us to crack the surface and break through to the often deliberately hidden essence. What we find may either bring joy or sadness, hope or despair, but almost always yields insight. It is this masking and unmasking that often constitutes the terrain of conflict between the writer and official culture. Writers strive to remove the blanket which officialdom insists on spreading and laying over things (1994: 152).

Ultimately, it is my point that Brink's narratives deal with the problematic relation between history and the histories of marginality, and they operate by altering or embroidering the facts to present fictions which are turned into discourses of emergent cultural identities. By doing so the peripheral people, in the guise of Brink's narrators, return to re-write and inscribe their own history in the history of the metropolis which is in itself a process of hybridity that generates other sites of meaning and, in Bhabha's words, "in the political process, producing unmanned sites of political antagonism and unpredictable forces for political representation" (Bhabha 1993: 3).

Cape of Storms: The First Life of Adamastor, by André Brink, was initially written in Afrikaans in 1988 – *Die Eerste Lewe van Adamastor* – and later published in English in 1993. It is a playful and postmodern novella that "writes back" to Luíz Vaz de Camões' *Os Lusíadas* (1572), in a form of a hybrid short narrative that deals not only with the cantos composed by the first Western poet who crossed the Equator, but skilfully uses a magical realism topos to re-imagine and reinvent the past. Thus, in its textual strategies, the novella is postmodern while in its context it is overtly postcolonial. Brink clearly novelises the beginnings of colonial history, debating national allegories in a lingering exoticism which has also served the work of Salman Rushdie or Gabriel García Márquez, for example. Paradoxically enough Brink employs postmodern techniques in *Cape of Storms: The First Life of Adamastor* to reveal history as form of fictionalising the world, and also a form of rewriting history from a silenced perspective.

In fact, I argue that postmodern literature can be seen as an attempt to destabilise the foundations of conventional means of thought and experience as well as to expose the "meaninglessness" of existence and the essential "abyss", or "void", or "nothingness" on which any supposed safety is generated to be precariously suspended. Consequently, Brink's fable of T'kama – Adamastor, the major character in this short novella, illustrates how postmodernism renders certain frames of reference and sense of security meaningless and, at times, even useless, through the subjectivity associated with history, hence asserting that in recent years "postmodernism has opened our eyes to the way in which our entire world is 'storified'" (Brink 1996:142), which is precisely the mode of "storifying" the world that is at stake in *Cape of Storms: The First Life of Adamastor*. This short novella encapsulates Eurocentric myths of origins that are Africanised by suggesting that Adamastor's first life was that of T'kama, and it also shares cross cultural links with South American literature in its use of magic and the mythical to

explain events in the daily life of its characters. Profoundly postmodern in its textual strategies, the fable challenges realism by parodying history through magical realism and generates a fascinating narrative that at times glosses the carnivalesque and the bizarre embedded in the relationship between T'kama and Khois.

In this autobiographical tale, its protagonist, T'kama, embodies the myth of Adamastor, the Titan who fell in love with the sea nymph Thetis and who was condemned by Zeus because of that love and was sent to the seas of the Cape metamorphosed into an immense stone-creature to haunt the navigators. It is interesting to note that Brink reinscribes Adamastor as one of many Adams in his oeuvre that, to some extent, also seems to allude to the biblical figure. In this particular case, the fable is told by a reincarnation of Adamastor in one of his many lives. As the narrator explains in the beginning of the tale, T'kama is the re-creation of the "untamed" and "savage" giant as described by Rabelais in *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (1532) and also recreated by the Portuguese poet Luíz Vaz de Camões in *Os Lusíadas* (1572). Brink employs the mythical figure that Camões used to hunt the navigators, as well as the seafaring identity of the Portuguese explorations, and it is interesting to note that at the end, when T'kama and Khoi finally manage their sexual encounter and when Khoi, deliberately or not, as the explanation for her departure is too ambiguous to be taken for certain, leaves him and returns to her people, the lament of T'kama echoes through the Cape. To this respect Josiah Blackmore (2009) brilliantly suggests that it resonates like an old "cantiga de amigo", the medieval songs or poems in the voice of women who refer to abandoned lovers which were written by troubadours. In Brink's text, T'kama's lament is a hymn to love in its complexity, which is materialised as a powerful and cruel form of optimism, also materialised through the power of words.

In the Portuguese version of the myth, Adamastor is referred to as a gigantic creature imprisoned on the shores of the Cape who continues to be tantalised by the nymph Thetis who keeps appearing in the weaves. However, in Brink's appropriation of the mythical figure, his T'kama-Adamastor is somehow demythologised by means of parody to the point that only a single part of his anatomy assumes legendary proportions causing him great difficulties every time he tries to consummate the relationship with the white woman, and once again the magical events highlight the extraordinary nature of reality. Whilst "magical images and events, glowing alluringly from within the realistic matrix, often highlight central issues in

a text" (Faris 2004: 9) thereby suggesting that they facilitate strategies for diverse postcolonial traditions, dealing with a "world fissured, distorted, and made incredible by cultural displacement" (Boehmer 1995: 4). Crowded by disembodied figures of colonial history with its persistent myths, and also portraying pre-colonial Khoikhoi mythology, Brink's novella seems to claim the right to use the marvellous even as it also frames the fable within postmodern "world literature". Even as Brink taps several reservoirs of pre-colonial South African mythology, this novella tackles the original melodrama of Camões and his version of Adamastor; to some extent the excess of T'kama – Adamastor's anatomy and the grandiosity of the Cape as a mythical place also find a physical analogue in the Portuguese architecture of the time, the excessive and imbricated Manueline and Baroque style where "something of the original melodramas shines through it, as baroque and exaggerated as the arches and architraves, the sheer excess, the inspired bad taste of the Manueline churches and cloisters in Lisbon or Oporto" (Brink 1993: xi), the fantasies of the empire expressed through magnificent monuments. However, this mythical figure and his fantastic body is also a metaphor of Africa, a grotesque dramatization of the continent that Brink explores and seeks to dismantle through the playfulness of magical realism.

While Camões's Adamastor remains captive in the Cape, T'kama explores the landscape, and combines dissimilar historical moments and encounters, a sort of terrestrial odyssey that leads his people into the wild interior of the Cape. All the boundaries that they cross, real or imaginary, are also crossed by evoking oral narratives as a dialogue between ancient and modern. Given that, it is crucial to mention that the stories and the histories told either by T'kama or the wise man of his people establish an alternative mean of conceptualisation of culture, placing it on the political agenda, highlighting that "oral storytelling tradition gives expression to ways in which societies with a predominantly oral culture understand this question of the human subject" (Vaughn 1990: 202). It serves the purpose of inscribing other cultures within the mainstream, informs the silenced voices that were left on the margins. Even if T'kama's story is mainly the story of a failed love between a white woman and a black man, in its subtext it is a metaphor of the decay of totalitarian regimes and the colonial encounter, as well as a kind of counter-history to imperial expansion.

Ironically, Brink goes further by questioning the Portuguese text and its origins, maybe indicating that the material appropriated by Camões in his text should be read as fictional and not as an historiographic text:

> bearing all this in mind – and reacting to suggestion of Eurocentric revulsion implicit in that image of the cape, occult and grand, with its deformed stature, frowning visage, squalid bear, black mouth and yellow teeth – I have nagged for a long time now by a particular question: from what "raw material" could Camões have fashioned his typically sixteenth-century version of the story? Is it possible that behind it looms an original, an unwritten Urtext? (Brink 1993: xi).

Though the point here is not the answer but what he explains next that maybe this myth has survived through the ages and maybe there is another version of it as valid as the one described in Camões. It is important to note that *Os Lusíadas*, also used by Brink as a palimpsest, can be read as an allegory of European expansion and the fantasies of empire. By doing so, Brink is overtly locating his tale within the history of European expansionism, giving his male character a prominent status in order to tell another version or another life of the mythical figure, also enabling awareness about what writing history entails, an excavation of the other, neglecting other versions of the colonial arrival. Ironically, the process of telling a story is done through the framework of magical realism and parody just as Gabriel García Márquez did in *Cien años de soledad* (1967) or *El otoño del patriarca* (1975) where implausible situations happen on a day-to-day basis and are accepted as ordinary facts, while history is revealed throughout the lens of parody and carnivalesque situations.

The introduction of the novella and the footnotes, that are *per se* another sub-text, clarify the intention to give another perspective of Adamastor's myth; however, those sub-texts also demonstrate that Brink is using the Portuguese poem, and some of the European mythopoeia to present his own version of the colonial encounter as a way of rewriting history. Subsequently, Brink developed and manipulated elements of the European Renaissance, creating his own version of the Titan and re-creating his own version of the colonial encounter in order to map out new imaginary terrains, and also in order to inscribe in a particular moment of history how the silenced stories of the Khoikhoi people, myths and storytelling described their cultural landscape before the colonial encounter. There is, for instance, the reinterpretation of Khoikhoi ancient myths within a magical realistic envelope which plays an emblematic if somewhat enigmatic role in the novella being also a way to deconstruct the colonial encounter as well as a metaphor of the apartheid and the recovery of cultural memory. In fact, the

concept of memory needs, as André Brink has clarified, to be reconstructed and completed in the imaginings of narratives. Henceforth, Brink notes that fiction "reaches well beyond facts: in as much as it is concerned with the real (whatever may be 'real' in any given context) it presumes a process through which the real is not merely represented but imagined and reconstructed. What is aimed at is not reproduction but an imagination" (Brink 1996: 30). Therefore, T'kama-Adamastor does not clearly reproduce the moment the presumably Portuguese navigators reached the shores of his land, for naturally he focuses on his own history and the memory of his people that was altered the moment they had contact with the coloniser. The novella confronts the customary rejection of the complexity of the country's history and its former circumventing a multiplicity of voices.

It is my argument, then, that through both parody and allegory, the narrative of T'kama-Adamastor deals with the atrocities of the apartheid, and that Brink relied on two Eurocentric myths and tried to re-tell them from the colonised point of view. In this novella, the author seems to be mainly preoccupied with the dialogue between European ideas and South African identities by creating a counter-narrative where alter/native views can be represented. On the one hand, Brink revisited the myth of Africa as the "heart of darkness", mysterious but at the same time threatening. On the other hand, the idea of the black male's sexual aptitude that is portrayed by the enlarged penis of T'Kama also embodies a threat to the white and civilised European man, and the role that sexuality plays in the construction of the history between white and black males and the tension of meaning generated out of the encounter between black bodies and white bodies that exacerbates "not Self and Other but the otherness of the self-inscribed in the perverse palimpsest of colonial identity" (Bhabha 1994: 63). To some extent this can also be applied to the coloniser who perceives the prowess of black males as superior to theirs generating a need to tame the colonised while demonising them. Fear and desire are here at stake and remain crucial in the relation established between subjects, which is clearly a relation based on power and superiority.

Brink's novella attempts to (re)constitute the historical vertigo that results when the native people saw the caravels, the wagons, and the men in broad-brimmed hats who speak a sort of bird language intruding on the land of the Cape, evoking a sense of utter newness in the encounter. Moreover, there is an attempt to reinscribe the moment of the colonial encounter and the invasion by re-telling it through a different perspective and discourse.

However, when telling the reader that "I cannot say for sure today that they were Vasco da Gama and his men on their way to or from the East" (Brink 1993: 13), this is a double-edged sword in T'kama-Adamastor's speech, both revealing and hiding as history itself does. In fact, the narrator cannot be sure if the navigator is either Bartolomeu Dias or Vasco da Gama, though he had seen paintings representing the two Portuguese navigators, he brilliantly explains that one cannot trust a painting made so long "after the event" (Brink 1993: 12-13). Hence, the narrator leaves this sense of mysterious uncertainty throughout his narration that serves as a way of "mysteriously" silencing the navigators' identity and, consequently, their relevance in the recollection of historical moments. T'Kama is not sure about the navigators' identity, or he does not really find it interesting enough to be ascertained since his own identity is not a European concern either. By not telling for sure who the navigators are, T'Kama is erasing them from his own history, putting not only emphasis on the woman he meets, but also on his pre-colonial culture, showing the displacement of his people, the assimilation which is the basis of the colonial encounter as well as problematising the notion of "first contact" as encountered in European historiographical narratives which describe voyages of discovery, instantly conjuring up an unequal relationship between "discoverer" and "discovered".

In contrast, Brink's fable parodies the encounter, reversing the moment which is initially friendly but later on develops into a battle as the navigators try to subjugate the Khoikhoi people by means of Christianisation, imposing religion at the same time as introducing weapons and alcohol to corrupt the native people, while raping the native women. The moment the navigators interact with T'kama's people it generates a tragic-comic scene, and as soon as T'kama realises that the men are interested in the Khoikhoi women he starts to negotiate the bride price for each but he becomes bemused when watching the odd ritual: "a few drops spattered on their faces while the men mumble something and touched their own foreheads and chests and shoulders [...] naming them Maria-this, Maria-that [...] Each time they took a woman to the bushes they paid the price anew. A man could get rich like that" (Brink 1993: 10). In a midst of surprise, ingenuity and irony, the Eurocentric and phallogocentric supremacy is criticised in a matter-of-fact way that uncovers the hypocrisy and the gender violence that were beyond the colonial endeavour.

Nevertheless, the Eurocentric disdain with which the black "other" is treated and described is, to a certain extent, problematised throughout

the narrative, and its parodic description in the novel proves to be effective to the extent that it allows conflicting versions of history to co-exist within the same realm ensuring that the crumbling of boundaries between the self and the other is no longer a threat. It is also important to note that, through the same use of parody and satire, Brink inverts the image of white people entering "Mother Africa" by concealing their identity and attributing them animal-like features. T'Kama's description of the navigators is ironic and resembles the way Europeans used to describe indigenous peoples in dehumanising and exotic ways. Subsequently, Kate Darian-Smith when referring to the entrance into the southern hemisphere by Europeans points out that the colonial encounter "was observed in ritualized, carnivalesque forms by sailors and passengers alike" (1996: 5), and paradoxically this is the way used by T'kama to describe the navigators. By doing so, Brink is reversing the paradigm and the exoticism embodied in the colonised becomes a feature of the coloniser. Henceforth, T'kama-Adamastor makes his own selection from a reality that is endowed with exceptionality from his specific point of view by rehearsing the trauma of first contact.

"Once upon a time there was and there wasn't" (Brink 1993: v), a postmodern meta-construction which is the ambiguous first line in the (hi) story of T'kama is the motto for a possible rewriting of the colonial encounter. The ambiguity lies in the fact that story-making re-creates events in the narrative, and several "truths" may be operating simultaneously, discourses that are equally legitimate, or equally illegitimate, because in this text "everything is possible because everything exists for the sake of my story" (Brink 1993: 29). Hence, Homi Bhabha has formulated that cultures interact not on the basis of "the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity" (Bhabha 1996: 38), concluding that "it is the 'inter' – the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the in-between space – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture" (Bhabha 1996: 39). Thus, fictional characters become hybridised, and their interstitial identities are located on the thresholds which are the sites where those cultural identities are performed and contested, as well as celebrating the increase of cultural hybridities and the rupture of cultural boundaries. Although the narrative of T'kama-Adamastor can be seen as a reconstruction of the past, it also offers a new metaphor which may contribute to a wider understanding of history, without completely deconstructing old myths; instead the narrator presents counter-myths, and the need to storify the past might be an urge toward the entertaining of several realities.

Nonetheless, the fable of the mythical creature, T'kama-Adamastor, indicates the need for old myths to be re-examined through a different lens in order to facilitate new postcolonial beginnings.

If on the one hand the myth of Adamastor has been employed to re-invent history, on the other hand the myth itself was examined through the possible sexual encounter between T'kama and Khois (the white women). Contentious as it may seem, given the nature of the white woman's portrayal, T'kama's story is also a quest for love and his (supposed) naivety in the arts of loving led him to put into question the safety of his people. It is a quintessential magical realist moment that after T'kama being bitten by a crocodile causing him the loss of his penis, the wise man through enchanting tales and a prosthesis made of clay restores the lost member, giving him back his virility. However, the process is only completed after Khoi accepts T'kama as her man, the sexual encounter between them closes the circle of enchanted powers, and it is clear when the woman states that "There's only the two of us, T'kama. It's up to us." (Brink 1993: 109). Indeed to prosper and to lead his people into another journey, T'kama needs Khoi, and that will be the only moment when the female character is relevant. In fact, and contrary to other Brink novels, this short fable does not give much agency to any of its female characters. Moreover, Khoi is only visible when attached to the man who abducted her; she is also powerless with only two exceptions in the fable which are when T'kama needs her to have his masculinity restored and when she leaves him by her own choice. Otherwise she is peripheral and powerless, acknowledged as a victim. In other words, she is not given much relevance as a subject.

However, when Khoi addresses T'kama her words raise controversial issues of displacement and dislocation:

> My God," she said softly. "Don't you understand? I couldn't bear it any longer. I can't do anything right. I understand nothing about you and your people or this god-damned country. There's nowhere I can go to. My own people abandoned long ago. Everything is impossible. I have nothing left, no possessions, no future, no hope, no faith, not even clothes. What am I doing here? (Brink 1993: 93)

Rather than being acknowledged just as a victim of the colonial endeavour, she is locating herself on the threshold of the process, clearly stating that she belongs neither to her people that abandoned her, nor to T'kama's people. Although the relationship between T'kama and Khoi appears to be

a source of cultural problems, it can also be read metaphorically as they are connected because the imaginary frontiers that History had enshrined and deemed uncrossable had finally been infringed.

Nonetheless, it is my argument that the possibility for love through the sexual encounter between T'Kama and Khoi may be read as metaphor for the future given the fact that a child was conceived. Vargas Llosa also refers to the symbolism of this encounter as the "rapprochement between human beings of different skins, languages and customs is impossible, for even with the best will on both sides it will inevitably be frustrated by cultural conditioning" (Vargas Llosa 1993: 25). However, this formulation is highly questionable in several aspects not only because it is overtly essentialist, but also because one of the characters in the fable explains that "she did not go willingly, T'kama" (Brink 1993: 121); later on T'kama sets his hopes on the child born out of their relationship who embodies a cultural fusion based on Bhabha's theorisation of hybridity.

The problematic but also bizarre sexual encounter between T'kama and Khoi involves a major concern with the dialogical representation of different bodies and the differentiation of them. First acknowledged as strangers "bodies materialize in a complex set of temporal and spatial relations to other bodies" (Ahmed 2000: 40). Khoi can be read as a body out of place, and thereby the contact with other different and strange bodies is both deformed and re-formed. Initially, T'kama perceives Khoi merely in terms of her corporeality as inassimilable, untouchable, then and after the making out of the boundary lines between them she becomes familiar, assimilable and touchable. Hence, it is also relevant to mention the body as marked by skin, given that T'kama is mesmerised by Khoi's whiteness, and she is noticed as a visual pleasure, an object embodying the fetishism inherent to difference and/or otherness. To some extent, she is the main element of the play of that difference. In Ahmed's formulation, "the skin is also a border or a boundary, supposedly holding or containing the subject within a certain contour, keeping the subject inside, and the other outside" (Ahmed 2000: 44-45).

The controversial relation between T'kama and Khoi ultimately suggests that the world and its cultural aspects permeate private life and the way locations can shape not only merely desires but also questions regarding alterity and its multiplicity. Paradoxically, T'kama and to some extent Khoi are acknowledged along the axis of an "authorized version of otherness" (Bhabha 1994: 86), because both remain in the realm of otherness that is

feeble at best when they see each other as strangers, and it seems that the ongoing dialectic self/other is disrupted by the consideration of their mutual differences. Indeed, T'kama's blackness defines itself not only in its own expressions but also in antagonism to the other, Khois, as the white other that in turn defines her-self against his black otherness. Henceforth, their identities have to be understood in relation to each other, and they question identity in relation to alterity; they carry the ambiguity of foreignness that can also be understood as otherness which at first makes then physically different, and consequently, it is this sense of otherness that disrupts a monolithic construction of the real where the boundaries between self and other can be deconstructed.

Ultimately, in colonial discourse, the horror of being polluted and contaminated by the black-other is explicitly connected with interracial sex, and in order to prevent that the state sought to regulate it by means of the ideology of normativization through which social behaviour was supervised (Young 1996). Given that the legislation of sexual activity became a pivotal rule in some societies, consequently that was the rule that was overtly subverted in fiction. The colonial practice of controlling sexual behaviour was typically aimed at the perilously wild sexual appetites of women and their hyper-eroticised body. Ostensibly, *Cape of Storms: The First Life of Adamastor* endorses the image of the white woman as both lacking sexual desires and objectified as the black male's subject of yearning. However, initially the white woman is not even perceived as a woman. From a certain distance T'kama could not recognise if the body bathing on the shore was male or female because he was not familiar with European traditions of clothing, he had the impression of observing another man, albeit with longer and more colourful clothes. Once he recognised her sexual identity he felt compelled to approach her, obviously with the intent of a sexual encounter, stating that "this rearing mamba in my loins – erect like the tall cross now planted in Heitsi-Eibib's sacred cairn – would not know any peace again before had come to rest deep in the kloof made for it" (Brink 1993: 18), though he could not foresee the hazardous consequences of his impetuosity, and he eventually duplicates the behaviour of the navigators who have chased the native women.

Critics have noted that Brink's depiction of the relationship between T'kama and Khoi somehow validates the colonial stereotype of the sexual prowess of the black male who desires and hunts the Western and white female. Hence the erotic can usually be related with discourses of power

and possession, and clearly though Khoi is a peripheral character in terms of psychological depth, her body is relevant given that she is etched in a system of differences in which the male holds power. The fact that T'kama imposed himself on her by abducting her and stating that she belonged to him encapsulates controversial issues, metaphorized in the colonisation of her body and the dispossession that she was subjected to. Furthermore, the parodic mode employed to describe T'kama's gargantuan phallus that quite often pops up throughout the novella can also be analysed as a Freudian symbol of fetishization and multiple manifestations of desire. Yet, it is the parodic trope that prevails as a framework to destabilise pre-established conceptualisations of male and female genitalia, and consequently the role of sexuality in the constructions of identity. Brink's employment of parody to depict T'kama's inability to achieve a proper sexual encounter with Khoi is also used as a way to ironize the intersections between colonial power and colonial desire, claiming otherness and alterity in terms of cultural differences and the need to demystify it.

Borrowing Bhabha's assertion that bodies engage in all possible struggles of identity and difference, Brink's novella seems to have opened up a space for negotiating both identity and difference as well as issues of representation, and, thus, history-mythology took on new dimension and illustrates the paradox of the distortions of recording history both private and public. Perhaps, parody and magical realism are utilized in order to investigate the margins between self and other and to some extent how they can be opened, subverted and altered. Moreover, it re-creates alternative spaces through that "contestatory nature of parody" (Hutcheon 2002: 109) being capable of a political and phallocentric critique.

T'kama, just as Caliban in William Shakespeare's play, *The Tempest* (1610-1611), is charged with an attempted sex crime. However, the supposed crime that T'kama is accused of deals not only with his physical desire of penetrating the white woman, but it mainly deals with the metaphor implicit in it, that is the desire of penetrating the West, which from the navigators' perspective represents the ultimate fear of miscegenation and the fear of being invaded by the black other. However, Brink is preoccupied with the way in which the encounter between coloniser and colonised would have been from the perspective of the coloniser, given that through this Pantagruel-like grotesque, yet amusing, fetishization of T'kama's penis he seems to suggest that, from a male standpoint, identity may be synonymous with a sexuality that is identified with mastery and domination. Yet, the inability

of consummating his relationship with Khoi due to the excessive size of his phallus, and later the incident with the crocodile that ended up causing the resizing of T'kama's penis, also encapsulates a metaphor of re-education or the taming of his monstrosity. Moreover, perhaps Brink is suggesting in a parodic and ironic way that the "black savage" needs to be re-educated in order to be able to "communicate" with the civilized other. Obviously, the origin of these relationships between colonised and coloniser are based on sexual intercourse and how it influences the interaction between self and other, thus the encounters whether sexual or not are overtly fetishized and "precipitated into aggressive competitiveness (concurrence), from which develops the triad of others, the ego, and the object" (Lacan 1966: 15).

The (hi)story that T'kama tells evokes a genealogy engendered only by male figures and deals for the most part with the eroticised male body eager to achieve the female body, the thwarted desire that was awakened because of her otherness, her white and perhaps exotic features if compared with the women in T'kama's tribe. However, the novella encapsulates this primordial idea of "aggressive competitiveness" and the horror of miscegenation when the white navigators return to take the woman back to the ship and they trap T'kama, presumably assuming that they were teaching him a lesson "that will teach you to consort with our white women!" (Brink 1993: 127). Their supposed superiority is taken into consideration when they sexually abuse the "coloured women" taking them as property or as the exotic savage that must be colonized and tamed on the account of their "lustful bestiality". T'kama's body has been hypersexualised, rendered rapacious and monstrous in a Rabelesian sense of the world, and to some extent his body encapsulates the fear of the (other) white men being possessed by former's prowess and not only being dispossessed of a supremacy that is intrinsically associated with power and masculinity in terms of sexuality but also carries the fear of being physically invaded by the black figure who is seen as an uncivilised savage.

Indeed, it can be argued that this primordial fear of contact hides homophobic assumptions, that it presumes that all sexual contact between people with different skin colour seems to be embodied in "phobic ability to think of interracial sex in any other than violent and abased terms" (Graham 2012: 7). There is thus homophobic agenda somehow hidden as a common subtext in some postcolonial literature, ultimately representing the fear of the white self being possessed by the black grotesque other. According to T'kama his name means "big bird", clearly referring to male genitalia and he seems to be proud of it until he realises the incompatibility between

him and the woman that is not imbricated in their cultural differences, but also in his gigantic phallus as a sign of monstrous alterity. Thus, Lucy Valerie Graham refers to twin penetration anxieties related with the colonial encounter and the revulsion caused by the other, thus "not only is the white settler threatened with engulfment by the alien land into which he has thrust himself, but his women are in danger of being penetrated and contaminated by the monstrous other who inhabit this territory" (Graham 2012: 18).

Despite the parodic mode of the narration of the events between the two characters – T'kama and Khoi – Brink tackles controversial issues that are at the basis of some colonialist philosophies, such as differentiation based on skin colour and revises colonial anxieties based on race. Though seen as a border or a frame, in this specific case, skin functions as a destabilizing logic which questions the exclusion of the other as well as it ensures that the individual body is also a politicised body. Accepting that Khoi is for the most part peripheral in the personal (hi)story of T'kama, it is clear that she becomes central if one considers the relation between corporality and formulation of the body-politic. The moment of sexual access to the body of the other is crucial in the fable and imbricates the idea of the exotic other and the fantasy of sexual communication with that exoticized other. When referring to the dialectic relation between black and white subjects and the figure of the dissent Afrikaner, Rosemary Jolly points out that

> Desire for the other, then, is reconfigured to express the desire to save oneself from becoming / remaining one of the tribe. Yet fascination with the origin of the self as master, even when it is phrased in order to understand and redesign that sense of self for a different future, complicates the very end to which it aspires (1996: 30).

It can be argued that the story of Khoi and T'kama encapsulates the desire motivated by fascination, and their relationship is linked with the land. Moreover, T'kama's desire is described in purely sexual terms and Khoi's body serves as the trope of the land as being colonised, as the narrator suggests when referring to the coastline of his land "our shore was exposed and open, like a woman already taken. The way it had been it could never be again" (Brink 1993: 120). Likewise, when their encounter was achieved successfully, T'kama's giant penis was replaced by a more conventionally-sized one made of clay by the medicine man of the tribe; the land that had suffered several droughts was finally blessed with abundant rain: "but the land has been generous and kind ever since the day I first entered the

woman" (Brink 1993: 120). The analogy between the land and the woman is evident, and it participates in the idea that either land or women belong to men, whatever side they are on.

The account of the arrival of a woman aboard an exploratory caravel is noted with some strangeness by the narrator who speculates about such a situation:

> You may well ask me what a woman was doing on those ships. It is a question that was often plagued me in my later lives. Nowhere have I found any evidence that da Gama or Cam or Dias or d'Almeida or any other seafarer of the time took along women on their ships or brought them home from elsewhere. On the contrary, such a practice would have run counter to all social, economic, moral, religious, or pragmatic considerations of the time (Brink 1993: 13).

In fact, his suspicions are accurate; women were not commonly seen travelling in explorers' ships. Occasionally it may have happened, but it defied all the social, moral and religious considerations of the time. However, the narrator promptly dismisses his beliefs: "it hardly matters what history records" (Brink 1993: 14) because in terms of his story the woman was effectively there, "in the midst of all those outlandish men, there was a woman" (Brink 1993: 15), whom he found or "discovered", to use Western terminology associated with the exploratory voyages across the world. In this way, T'kama-Adamastor may be conjuring up events that may or may not have happened, setting up his own logic as an ultimate authority, even if the events he recalls conflict with official historiography.

The first line of this narration "once a upon a time there was and there wasn't" (Brink 1993: v) is explicitly advising the reader that it may contain some ambivalent ideas of what may or may not have happened or what may or may not be the truth, if there is one. Nevertheless, it is precisely this ambivalence that motivates his story. History does not really matter if one considers that its records have overlooked female figures for centuries, but it does not mean that they were not part of it whatsoever, whereby Brink included Khois in T'kama's story. Her presence, for the most part a physical and objectified presence, is required in the novella in order for it to develop, though she becomes the reason of T'kama's downfall. In the presence of her beauty and overwhelmed by it, T'kama neglects his duties as the leader of the tribe, actions that result in chaos and hardship for his people.

The impact of the Portuguese arrival is harmful for native people's daily life. Chaos and the rage of the gods are intrinsically associated with

the white woman and her inability to behave according to their mores. In a semi-anthropological way T'kama describes the genealogy of his people and how rituals have always been performed. The moment he decides that the woman is meant to be his he changes the course of his people's history and the journey into the hinterland, a common trope in Brink's novels. Ultimately, T'kama and Khois' journey represents escape but also the attempt to inscribe Khoi in T'kama's history. However, neither she can assimilate his customs, nor can he deal with her otherness, and all those unsolved issues cause the breakdown of the hierarchical order of the group. Ironically the succession of misunderstandings conducts the tribe in general and T'kama in particular to chaos and all sorts of magical happenings that culminate in the loss of the wholeness of the tribe and T'kama's authority as leader, so that the journey is a wandering through the "shadows of the Valley of Death" pursued by evil spirits and Gaunab, the god of darkness. In that matter, the white woman is deeply connected with the inexplicable disorder and tribulations that befall the tribe even though they make their journey further into the interior and keep worshiping their pantheon of gods in order to overcome their condemned faith. Despite T'kama's desire for Khoi their relation seems to be doomed and it is perceived as unnatural by all the external elements that surround them.

Brink employs magical realism in order to emphasize the challenging agency that lies behind the relation between his black-male protagonist and his white-female character. The quest for interracial "jouissance" seems to upend the natural order of the world, with unexpected trees bursting into flames, rivers boiling, bushes and thorns that grew faster overnight, and people fighting without a reasonable explanation. After trying to understand their misfortune, Khamab, the medicine men, tells T'kama that "this may be a thing of blood and years" (Brink 1993: 26). In fact, his presaging of events that resonates like a Greek chorus inevitably culminates in a battle between the white navigators and the native people, and yet this is a battle that has had its manifestations throughout the following centuries. The mismatch of T'kama and his white lover had terrible consequences and led to T'kama's death (one of many) at the end of the fable. However, it leaves us (readers) a sense of cruel optimism when a child is conceived.

Paradoxically, T'kama and Khoi live on through their child, and Brink seems to imply in a utopian mode that either white or black people may free themselves from prejudice and discrimination and learn how to cope with otherness and alterity as Khoi did with her black suitor after she had learnt

to overcome their sexual difficulties. Despite the utopian tone of the novella, miscegenation seems to be the cause of destruction the text implies. Still in the epigraph using the words of T. S. Eliot in the third movement of "Little Gidding" in Four Quartets:

> This is the use of memory:
> For liberation – not less of love but expanding
> Of love beyond desire, and so liberation
> From the future as well as the past. (quoted from Brink's novel, 1993)

I argue that it may be through memory, the recalling of stories-myths and therefore the acceptance of the past, identities can be re-constructed within a frame of tolerance and liberation. The unity between self and other in its several guises is thus seen to be the source of South Africa's identities. Memory and hope function as decolonial tropes in the sense that they may open up the possibility to re-imagine the future from a more auspicious perspective.

The narrator asserts that "all I ever had ran from my empty hands. All of it. Except this: somewhere, in the land, I knew, somewhere, behind the thickets of euphorbia and burning aloes and undergrowth, was the child. He would live on. They could not kill me" (Brink 1993: 128). For that matter, the child represents hope in the future, that he might transcend the colonial power and its racial restrictions. This notion of transcending and subverting the pre-established rules is always a current theme in Brink's narratives. The forbidden love affairs between white and black people might be acknowledged as his affirmation against apartheid laws, uncovering their inadequacies when referring to people's choices in terms of sexuality. Though he clearly points out when referring to the love and relationships in his books that they are "a point of departure only, from which to explore a condition that transcends the *faits divers* of sociopolitics. Human solitude, and the urge to reach out and touch the Other, will remain long after its political metaphor, apartheid, has disappeared" (Brink 1996: 15). Nonetheless, the text as a polyphonic construction is the "discursive site" where a diversity of multiple postcolonial meanings is generated, and the sexual relationship between characters also assumes specifically postcolonial dimensions as well as socio-political ones that cannot be simply excluded.

In 2002, Cyril Coetzee, a South African painter, influenced by the novella written by André Brink, painted what can be designated as an appropri-

ate ekphrastic understanding of the literary, and T'kama who argues that in one of his several afterlives he had seen paintings of other people portraying (un)known navigators, can today be seen in the amazing canvas at the Willian Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. The visual narrative created by Cyril Coetzee is part of a triptych that includes two other paintings, "Colonists 1826" by Colin Gill (1934) and "Vasco da Gama – Departure from Cape" by John Henry Amshewitz (1935), and just like Brink's fable, the three mural-like paintings form a dialogue between them. The story they tell is similar to the one that Brink describes in *Cape of Storms: The First Life of Adamastor*. For instance, Cyril Coetzee's painting embeds some of the Renaissance iconography which Brink had overtly inverted by placing it not in the features of the colonised but as features of the coloniser. Hence it can be assumed that in both the narratives embodied a kind of fetishization and exoticism, hiding desire and eroticism that are fundamental in colonial fantasy. Graham Huggan asserts that "clearly, fetishism plays a crucial role in colonialist fantasy-structures, which draw on the relationship between the exotic and the erotic to set up the narratives of desire for, and partial containment of, the culturally othered body" (Huggan 2001: 18), yet this desire encapsulated in the exotic whiteness of the woman is what moves T'kama who is astonished by her difference.

Nonetheless, the painting also exposes some other sources that can be traced within the European tradition, as is the case of the parody of errors made by early natural history books which depicted native people, the fauna and flora of unknown places in very gauche ways, and the phantasmagorias of Hieronymus Bosh, or the winged images resembling saints often introduced in colonialised territories to convert native peoples. At the centre of the picture, the figures representing T'kama and Khois resemble an Eden-like portrayal, and following the myths of origins, they can be understood as the African god and goddess of creation, which also draws on William Blake's painting, Adam Naming the Beast (1810). Yet, instead of the fingers raised in signal of blessing, T'kama has his arms raised as if singing and perhaps dancing with Khois, inscribing her in that process of creating. Perhaps, this visual element illustrates a passage in Brink's fable in which his protagonist joins in a sort of singing moment with the earth in an incantatory celebration, a trance-like instant:

> I sing my land, in my tongue and throat I give it sound, I name it. I say: wood, and turn to wood. I say: mountain, ill, rock, river, sea, and become each

> of them in turn. I say lion, jackal, mockingbird, partridge, *kiewiet*, I say *kombro*, I say *dagga*, I say *kierie* and *kaross*, I say *khuseti*, I say *t'gau*, I say *k'hrab*, I say *k'arahup* [...] I say creature, I say man, I say woman [...]. I say plains turning into flesh, I say blood and bleeding, I fill the day with names, I inscribe the plains like a sheet of paper [...] I say everything that is still to happen and everything no one has ever thought up. (Brink 1993: 36, italics in the original)

In a very García Márquez tone, T'kama's gaudy discourse, combined with such lavish visual fantasia, all reverberates with magical realism that is used to voice both a pre-colonial culture and the colonial encounter. In this way, Brink also takes part in the satirical and parodic modes of the marvellous and the fantastic as a form of "writing back". In contrast with Aureliano Buendía (*Cien años de soledad*, 1967) who after the plague of insomnia and amnesia was compelled to name common daily life phenomena in order to establish connections between language and the world, preventing his world from disappearing, T'kama sings the world almost in a messianic way to make his reality exist outside the realm of language. He sings to create reality, where Aureliano names everything to save his reality from being eroded. By singing, T'kama is standing up to decode the emptiness and the possession of the destructive nature of the colonial enterprise. Subsequently, T'kama in this process of naming and "filling the days with names" by using his native language is materialising and inscribing that reality as a subliminal form of decolonising his reality.

The visual narrative by Cyril Coetzee resembles a carnivalesque dance turning the world upside down and leaving a trace of a topsy turvy reality of utter disorder and confusion where everyone and everything is parodied. It is important to note that Cyril Coetzee gives emphasis to the two main characters, and he recreates a sort of chaotic scene around them while they dance, and they seem to bless the world resembling an act of creation, the exotic and the fantastic play along to underline what Brink has already written as the way of fantasy and extravagance to challenging monolithic views of reality. In fact, it is the context of parody that liberates submerged voices, as in the example of T'kama in his otherness, but also Khoi. Moreover, the polivocality of both narratives, visual and written, indicate impending resistance to oppressive conventions, as well as incorporating multiple voices of the cultural web.

Cape of Storms: The First Life of Adamastor re-presents a dialogue across the Atlantic and Indian oceans, and it presupposes an expansion within the shadowy realms between myth and history which mixes literary ancestry,

history and myths, glossing not only the text written by Camões but also giving voice to neglected South African voices and to a wide variety of contemporary dialogues framed by postmodernism and magical realism, thus suggesting again how Brink envisions literature as a work of collaboration and collective redress. It can, therefore, be assumed that identities are constructed through the conjunction of diverse elements, and the notion of history depends on contact or even previous acquaintance of others.

In fact, identity, memory and history are central issues in Brink's narration of South Africa, specifically in *Cape of Storms: The First Life of Adamastor* where he focuses on South Africa as the centre, not the periphery. Furthermore, the main characters are indigenous people, and it is through their eyes that the event of the colonial encounter is told, through their storytelling the reader acknowledges the moment when two cultures met, addressing issues of representation as construction which explore narrativized trappings of the historical archives. Brink's fable combines dissimilar influences, creating a kind of postmodern melting pot of narratives. Consequently, the narrativization of past events: "no longer seem to speak for themselves but are shown to be consciously composed into a narrative, whose constructed – not found – order is imposed upon them, often overtly by the narrating figure" (Hutcheon 2002: 63).

The (hi)story that T'kama narrates is not an imposition of his voice over colonialism, and it does not seek to dominate, though reveals specific subjectivity within a framework of unmasking and interrogating historical silences, not a simple repetition of issues as miscegenation or the fear of the first contact but a parody of them. Indeed, it is through the trope of parody that Brink analyses and subverts the mystification of Africa, and instead of a monster his protagonist is a man with an anomalous penis, the only part of his body that is grotesque. T'kama-Adamastor's stupendous body ("estupendo corpo" in Camões description of his mythical figure) and his grotesqueness reveals a certain fascination with monstrous bodies that was part of the European imagination during the Medieval and Renaissance periods, though from Brink's perspective it is the mocking of those presumptions that are encapsulated in the character. T'kama's embodiment of the mythical figure that has hunted the imagination of navigators can be acknowledged at first as the fear of the unknown, but ultimately it may suggest "new epistemologies or ways of knowing the world" (Blackmore 2009: 124).

Brink's intention is to make the reader aware and perhaps choose between an entire spectrum of available narratives that constitute the

historical record. *Cape of Storms: The First Life of Adamastor* constructs an alter-native and consistent version of the events, but those events were told from another point of view. The novella of T'kama-Adamastor and Khois employs postmodern writing devices in order to highlight and undermine the authority of historiography such as that endorsed by the apartheid government. Above all, the author has explored postmodernism and magical realist features such as multiperspective narration and "the conjunction of two worlds" (Bowers 2004: 83) with a special concern for the incorporation of female voices. Moreover, Brink's turn to postmodernism and magical realism can also be seen as an attempt at rehabilitating Afrikaner identity on a national and international level, so that the use of magical realism adds a new and enriching dimension to the culture and history of the country. This argument is supported by the formulations of Stephen Slemon who has discussed the critical points of magical realism understood as a postcolonial expression of resistance. In his essay "Magical Realism as a Postcolonial Discourse" (1995), he discusses the fact that magical realistic narratives depict the rebuffing of ethnic cultures by Eurocentric criticism, and that it is a mode where marginalised cultures find assertion. As he comments:

> The incompatibility of magic realism with a more "established" becomes itself interesting, itself a focus for critical attention, when one considers the fact that magic realism, at least in a literary context, seems most visibly operative in cultures situated in the fringes of mainstream literary traditions.[...] magic realism as a literary practice seems to be closely linked with a perception of "living on the margins"(1995: 408).

In fact, the male narrator of *Cape of Storms: The First Life of Adamastor* partakes of this perspective of "living on the margins" given that he uses magical realism and the marvellous to portray the lives of their ancestors or their own experience as the reincarnation of a mythical figure. Hence the necessity of the revision of history is necessary, but it had been increasingly neglected, as is the case of the oral traditions of the Khoikhoi people or "the people of people", later derogatorily called Hottentots by the colonists in the 16th century. Brink reverses the course of history by placing T'kama at the centre of it rather than on the margins, but he also recuperates the myths and stories of the native people.

The overlapping of myths is constant throughout the fable that starts with the myth of Adamastor and ends with the evocation of Prometheus after T'kama has been chained by the navigators and left alone in the shores

of the Cape till he eventually dies or is born again, because this was only "one of his many lives":

> It was a great boulder to which they had lashed me with their seaman's ropes, my arms and legs stretched out, the knots so tight I could not move, no matter how fiercely I pulled and struggled. (...) A black shadow came swooping down from above. A vulture. Then another, and several more. (...) Eat my heart, I thought, tear out my liver, devour my intestines. You won't ever kill me dead. Tomorrow when you come back I shall be here again. You will have to start anew on me. And every new day when the sun comes up. I shall never die. Not for you (Brink 1993: 126-7).

T'kama's rebellion against the gods' will resonates with the myth of Prometheus and his upheaval affirms the eternity of his acts and he turns out to be indestructible either because he refuses to die and metamorphoses into the Table Mountain or because he effectively had already planted his seed, the son conceived with Khois "somewhere in the land (...) somewhere behind the thickets of euphorbia and burning aloes" (Brink 1993: 128), so that he will live on through the child. Nevertheless, in both cases the myths of Adamastor and Prometheus are ultimately used to express the resistance to colonialism and tyranny. Thus, it also hints that the reintegration of history in contemporary societies can be achieved in a successful way through the imaginings of literature, and it is the multifarious approach to the past that permits a re-imagining of history in terms of beliefs, stories or perceptions from various angles.

Mikhail Bakhtin's formulation of the dialogic imagination of novels as hybrid creations that include the ability of one voice to ironize and unmask the other proposes the possibility of Brink's narrative undoing authoritative discourses by allowing a renewed contact between the pretext written by Camões and his own perception and re-interpretation of myths and the descriptions of colonial encounters. Given that, Brink's novella does not simply mimic the mythical voyage of the Portuguese navigators as described in *Os Lusíadas*, but rather challenges the perilous presumptions on the idea of "first contact" as embodied in the cultural notion of "discoveries", earnestly questioned in T'kama's discourse. Characterised by a plethora of narrative voices, the short fable of T'kama-Adamastor manipulates the reader into complicity with his points of view, and it also develops the idea of polyphony as Bakhtin has theorised. Therefore, by means of storytelling T'kama provides the context for the narration of European myths and the

folk tales of his native people which are the basis of the origin of his country's cultural identities. Brink is aware of the importance of the narrative and the social implications of his fable so that when discussing the Titans from whom Adamastor originated, the narrator states that "some of them, as we know from Greek mythology, are buried under huge mountains" (Brink 1993: viii), possibly alluding to the crimes perpetrated during apartheid and that are left untold.

Stories, like origin myths, are conjured out of the conterminous subsistence of disparate realms of the reality and the magical, and consequently that interaction shapes and perhaps reconstructs the physical reality that is at the basis of Brinkian narratives. Questions related to issues of identity and alterity are re-addressed through fictionality where the boundaries of public and private identities blur in order to generate other meanings. Thereby, Rushdie posits that "given the gift of self-consciousness, we can dream versions of ourselves, new selves for old" (Rushdie 1991: 377). Assuming that different versions of reality can be dreamt, and perhaps acknowledged as valid ones, Brink's narrator represents himself and his people, the myths and history with the power of storytelling. Clearly an issue foregrounded in that process is that of narrative and power, which Brink has developed through re-imagining history in which, in his own words:

> the best we can do is to fabricate metaphors – that is, to tell stories – in which, not history, but the imaginings of history are invented. Myth may have preceded history, but in the long run it may well be the only guarantee for the survival of history" (1998: 42).

His narratives can be described as a search to understand the present through the recreation of the past, hence they explore narrative constructions of gender and race whilst considering the cultural and social background that give rise to such depictions.

Thereby, Brink shifts the common focus from the perspective of the white male's interactions with the black female subject, who suffers doubly both because of her gender and on account of her race, and it is Khoi who in a way embodies the figure of the black woman, though at no stage had she suffered any sort of sexual violence and T'kama pronounced his love trying his best to communicate with her. However, there is the issue of being taken to the interior against her will that to some extent can be read as a metaphor for the native women who really have been assaulted and suffered all sorts of violence. The paradoxical nature of this ambiguous relation can be perceived

in terms of power and resistance as well as "the desire for the unknown" (Lyotard 1984: 67) within the postcolonial context, a paradoxical nature that entails the urgencies of desire, anxiety and the ambivalence of affect. Surely there is the risk of reinserting the essentialist fallacies of opposition – male versus female, blackness versus whiteness or identity versus alterity – although Brink strives to avoid them, seeking a vision of the "equality of cultural identities" but glossing Nietzsche's formulation that there are no facts, "only interpretations", a formulation that was developed by Lyotard in a very utopian mode and intersecting it with postmodern perspectives in which he speaks of cross-cultural contact between uneven "traditional" and "modern" cultures.

Brink's narrative partakes in this idea of cultural identities and facts being merely constructions and interpretations; hereby it also portrays the "traditional" and its oral traditions and folktales in contrast with a kind of civilised and Westernised reality that serves as a metaphor of the "modern". Memory and historiography deal with present predicaments that seem to evoke the dislocations of the past, and thus the fragmentation of the colonial past points to a neo-colonial present and how they relate one another. *Cape of Storms: The First Life of Adamastor* evokes "a soberba tradição do relato oral" in the words of Plínio Apuleyo Mendonza (2007) when referring to García Márquez's oeuvre. Brink's skilful way of deploying storytelling and oral tradition conveys the characterisation of places and people through myriad of methods utilized in postmodern novels. In fact, Brink develops the concept of "in-betweenness" as a third-space of contact between different cultures in order to include marginalized groups that are given full insight as well as new agendas through the tropes of magical realism. Moreover, he places his characters in a position of liminality which represents "a productive space of the construction of culture as difference" (Bhabha 1990: 209) that inevitably emphasizes alterity or otherness. Therefore Brink's novel depicts identity as neither monolithic nor stable, rather as multiple, oscillating between dissimilar elements, continuously changing, and migrant identity that excludes fixity, a (de)construction that oscillates between different components socio, political and cultural.

Eventually, postcolonial intertextuality in *Cape of Storms: The First Life of Adamastor* assumes a variety of forms, tactically deployed allusions, intertexts as structuring frameworks for the plot, the juxtaposition and parody of those intertexts to generate meaning, and the dialogic engagement between the novella and aspects of cultural discourse such as the master

narratives of history. Moreover, postmodern, and postcolonial theories acknowledge the importance and the power of re-imagining history which Brink skilfully manipulates and transforms through this novel, overtly reinventing new historical paradigms in which silenced and marginalised subjects are given agency and visibility.

In sum, more than a "humanism of reconstruction" or the rhetoric of historical reparation what is at stake in *Cape of Storms: The First Life of Adamastor* is the postmodern view of history as a metanarrative of turbulence and fragmentation where silenced voices may be inscribed, proving that history is multifaceted rather than monolithic, so that there is a preoccupation with those silences as well as the need to fill out the picture of what comprises South African identities. In a sort of "hermeneutic of suspicion" (Ricoeur), Brink, thereby, redefines a particular moment in history etching in the blank spaces the untold stories, creating a dialogue with the past which creates a bridge between the self and the other, and this hybrid and polysemic discourse works better to generate the complexities of national identities. It is through the cultural process of imagining, (hi)storicising and remembering that (hi)stories are validated, that identities are inscribed upon them. "Imagining the real" is one of the main concerns in Brink's work, particularly in a repressive society and through representation protests against that same society, so that his work can be commonly described as *littérature engagée* due to its characteristics that partake in what Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin described as "a continuing process of resistance and reconstruction" (Ashcroft *et al* 1989: 2).Ultimately, his preoccupation with the past is not only based on postmodern or Western influences but also tied up with the South African context, given that his narratives are sites of reconstruction or even resistance within an always politicised polity.

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