

Alcina Sousa

Universidade da Madeira - Funchal

**ANDRÉ BRINK'S *A DRY WHITE SEASON*:
CONSTRUCTING THE PROTAGONIST'S IDENTITY
(IN)BETWEEN FEMALE «OTHERS»**

Abstract

Susan, Melanie and Emily, though differing greatly in ethnic and socio-cultural background, have the chance to articulate their voices in a male domineering world. Their narratives, as excluded «others» by gender, class and historical background, figure among Ben Du Toit's several testimonies and contribute greatly to his mental awakening. With them the protagonist learned to problematise old / new values, certainties, a supposedly humanistic universal truth, by means of unsettling questions, descriptions, differing life experiences portraying rape, death, social exclusion, poverty, famine, atrocities of war in Africa, which provided the postmodern reader with the metaphor: living across borders, beyond the pale.

What is at stake from the opening page of the novel onwards is the quest for an identity, for a character in fact, the narrator's task to interpret Ben's psychological, sociological and political exile in a multicultural society whose colonial hierarchical foundations have been the cause for everlasting conflicts. Actually, this setting is also the writer's world, yet he wishes to avoid any political commitment with Ben or any other venturesome character by means of a shifting focalisation: internal focalisation alternates with external focalisation.

Bearing in mind the Foucauldian concept of «otherness» I shall concentrate on female «others» self-reflexive and self-empowering discourses as presented by André Brink's main narrator. In order to understand the protagonist's conflict André Brink sets up a specific context in which power relations and specific socio-political constraints undermine topic, turn-taking and participant roles.

Therefore several representative extracts shall be analysed drawing on a cross-disciplinary theoretical framework so as to account for shifters (Roman Jakobson 1950), or «embrayeurs» (Dominique Maingueneau 1990) particularly *naming*, *reference* and *agency* as «means of resisting to» and/or cooperating with «pre-existing institutional rules» (Edward Said 1994).

With André Brink the contemporary reader perceives a novel mode of postcolonial critique since issues related to racial segregation, colonial imperialism

and feminine exclusion figure in the novel's agenda. Brink gives vivid voice and vindicates a place to marginal / undervalued characters in the South-African society in mid-twenty century as they stand for the «silenced voices by the process of minorisation» (Homi Bhabha 1998: 46). Their stories, to corroborate Edward Said (1994: Int., xiii), «also become the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history». It is also striking that Brink's literary characters, as posited by Michael Macovski (1994: 3-4), «interact not only with individual voices but also with other discourses themselves – political, religious, and historical... and the point is that they remain rhetorically differentiated and therefore capable of genuine interchange».

Consequently, *A Dry White Season* (first published in 1979) constitutes a change in the dominant literary representation, addressed to a large readership (also involving minority groups), and challenges the reader (a meaning-taker and a meaning-maker) with different perspectives, confronting narratives undoubtedly more memorable than any theoretical literature on the subject: insider's vs outsider's perspective by means of literary and spoken language. In this respect, it illustrates different ways of «speaking the English language» in terms of, and I borrow from Iain Chambers' statement (1995: 23), «linguistic, literary, cultural, religious, musical - of the dominator, of the master, but always with a difference. Language is appropriated, taken apart, and then put back together with a new inflection, an unexpected accent, a further twist in the tale».

Such is best achieved in the female various testimonies, dialogues, directly transcribed by Ben Du Toit, the protagonist/diarist and equally narrator in the novel, whose writings are then reorganised, readjusted by the main and omniscient narrator, actually Ben's former colleague, notwithstanding that this claims not to take risks as politics «isn't [his] line» (*DWS*, 15). At this point Michahil Bakhtin (in Emerson & Holquist 1990: 93) can not but offer a sound counter argument in that «the topic of the speaker's speech... does not become the object of speech for the first time in any given utterance... Various viewpoints, world views, and trends cross, converge, and diverge in it». And this is the more true for the main narrator/focaliser not only tries to make sense out of Ben's scribblings, torn pages, diary entries or newspaper scratches but also introduces other characters' utterances and individual words, consequently guiding their turntakings. On the whole they stand for the narrators' peculiar way of translating the story and shaping the communicative event:

- (1) A passport photo of a girl with a sweet provocative face. The other photograph. Names. Gordon Ngubene. Jonathan Ngubene. Captain Stolz. Stanley Makhaya. Melanie Bruwer. And the possibilities suggested by my often misused **imagination**. I have to immerse myself in it, the way **he** entered into it on **that** first fatal day. Except that **he** did not know, and had no way of knowing, what was lying ahead; whereas I am held back by what I already know. What was

unfinished to
In a sense I ow
the same time
sterile patch.

The first person
aright!» (1) must have
attributed to the main
cause» emphasised by
in English by the exc
real identity. In fac
expressed by «I», th
evidence in the text s
own words introduced

Also, the nuclear
and **Emily**, though
have the chance to
narratives, as exclu
ethnicity in Emily's
several testimonies a

Female «others»
commonly imposed
plurality of sources
role at different stag
rules albeit her conf
with social, cultural
fight against inequit

Concurrently, th
from oppressive pr
setting in which th
linguistic and social
Boers at that momen
at times a reader as
belief, disclosing th
colonial experience

«Humanity». No
integrity. «He is
different set of
(*DWS*, 161)

unfinished to **him** is complete to **me**; what was life to him is a **story to me** (...). In a sense **I** owe it to **him**, or even to Susan. *Report me and my cause aright!* At the same time **I** have to grasp at **him** in an effort to write **myself** out of **my** own **sterile patch**. A complicating and aggravating factor. (DWS, 33)

[Bold mine]

The first person reference «me» and «my» in «Report me and my cause aright!» (1) must have been Ben's words, still these might be misinterpreted if attributed to the main narrator's voice. A change of both *tone and topic* «my cause» emphasised by the *imperative form* of the verb «report», unusually coupled in English by the exclamation mark, force the narratee to reflect on the *speaker's real identity*. In fact, as the narrative evolves a multitude of voices mostly expressed by «I», the first person singular, challenges the reader to look for evidence in the text so as to identify the narrator, the protagonist or the characters' own words introduced by direct speech or free indirect speech at times.

Also, the nuclear female characters in the diegetic world, **Susan**, **Melanie** and **Emily**, though differing greatly in ethnic and socio-cultural background, have the chance to articulate their voices in a male domineering world. Their narratives, as excluded «others» by gender, class, race (particularly colour or ethnicity in Emily's case) and historical background, figure among Ben Du Toit's several testimonies and contribute greatly to his mental awakening.

Female «others» for their opposing views and resistance to the tyranny of commonly imposed globalising discourses (cf. Foucault) not only disclose a plurality of sources of resistance to the dominant power but also play a crucial role at different stages in Ben's life: (a) Susan - conformity with social, political rules albeit her contribution to Ben's upward mobility; (b) Emily - acquaintance with social, cultural, racial inequalities (visiting Soweto); (c) Melanie - personal fight against inequity.

Concurrently, the reader is invited to deconstruct the protagonist's liberation from oppressive practices, a dialectical search for identity in a multicultural setting in which the white English speaking domineering class still set the linguistic and social standards despite the unavoidable political dominance of the Boers at that moment. Moreover, the implied reader and narrator (for the latter is at times a reader as well) share / refuse a universe of values, a world of make belief, disclosing the writer's ideological pulls and dialogic interpretation of the colonial experience (under «Apartheid»):

«Humanity». Normally one uses it as a synonym for compassion; charity; decency, integrity. «He is such a human person». Must one now go in search of an entirely different set of synonyms: cruelty; exploitation, unscrupulousness; or whatever?» (DWS, 161)

As a consequence, the construction of identity, also a question of free agency, involves a cross-disciplinary analysis of the protagonist, as an individual, husband and father, a teacher, a Boer, thus a privileged member of the ruling middle class in South Africa to become a transgressor: in the family circle, a social / humanitarian fighter, a political enemy to be impeded of his social role, for instance as a teacher, before being silenced. The narrator comments therefore that «his death challenged everything [he]’d always thought or felt about him» and, to involve the reader in a make-belief atmosphere, he refers to a newspaper report concluding: «Survived by his wife Susan, two daughters and a young son» (DWS, 9).

In the same line, and eager to hedge commitment under unsettling risktaking political circumstances, the main narrator favours Susan from the novel’s outset with an internal focalisation whereas Emily and Melanie are presented from an external perspective having therefore to stand for and vindicate their own voice.

- (2) Once **I** spent a fortnight with **him** and **Susan** in Johannesburg.
- (3) But **I really believe Susan** knew how to **handle him**: how to **let him** have his way when he got one of his crazy notions; how to **prod him** when he had to do something constructive. (DWS, 10)

[Bold mine]

A direct reference to her *first name* (2) without further *reference* to a surname accounts for, on the one hand, the narrator’s familiarity with the character as he himself posits: «and in my efforts, at this stage, to sort out and clarify my meagre personal recollections of Ben I find it easier to explain Susan» (DWS, 21). The speaking voice introduces the present object of his narration in a privileged power-knowledge position undermined by his learning of Ben’s outcome after «**that** first fatal day» (3) as well as his personal acquaintance with Susan. She soon becomes the subject of the sentence, «I» coupled by dynamic verbs, «handle» or «prod», connoting her manipulative role in Ben’s external voice, social self.

On the other hand the narrator vindicates her role in Ben’s social recognition, economic stability, upward mobility. With Susan, Ben learned how to cooperate with long-established institutional roles otherwise, thus comments the internal focaliser in a *sardonic tone*, he «might have ended his life in some small, forgotten backveld village, quietly content to teach a bit of history and geography... or to spend his leisure time «uplifting» the children of the poor» (DWS, 20).

As the narrative unfolds the reader learns about Susan’s «outside voice» (cf. Bakhtin), representing her external «other», and depicting her active role as a dutiful wife, mother, teacher, daughter, a distinctive member of an educated and

economically privileged («they», the first social class). In this respect, social and political oppression, a particular «concern» (Goodman 1996) through an exception since she became a stranger to

- (4) «Is it really so? **She** stared at me. It wasn’t. **The** wild, I had to tell **people** think I met Ben.» (DWS, 21)
- (5) «After twelve years, I know me»... I’ve lost touch with the world.» (DWS, 22)
- (6) «If I’d been a dabbler. A fiddler. A tinker. Things. Do you know what my daughters mean by that?» (DWS, 23)

In the previous sentence, the «other»: Macovski, the sentence. Once longer statements, a from free direct to the unanswered by the unexpected cry for help.

Equally controlling Ben, on the contrary, transgressor (so reflecting pedagogy) within the to keep up appearances moment, though so had to come to the institutional role of social help.

to a question of free
 onist, as an individual,
 member of the ruling
 in the family circle, a
 ded of his social role,
 or comments therefore
 ight or felt about him»
 refers to a newspaper
 ters and a young son»

r unsettling risktaking
 om the novel's outset
 are presented from an
 cate their own voice.

sburg.
 how to **let him** have his
him when he had to do

[Bold mine]

urther *reference* to a
 familiarity with the
 stage, to sort out and
 sier to explain Susan»
 et of his narration in a
 is learning of Ben's
 nal acquaintance with
 e coupled by dynamic
 ole in Ben's external

ole in Ben's social
 san, Ben learned how
 ewise, thus comments
 ended his life in some
 n a bit of history and
 children of the poor»

s «outside voice» (cf.
 g her active role as a
 er of an educated and

economically privileged layer of society, a mask imposed by her family (4) («they», the first socialising institution), forwarded by society at large/«people». In this respect, society and family values prove to be as stifling for women as political oppression. For the attainment of this goal women are brought up with a particular «concern for appearance, dictated by norms of feminine attire» (Liz Goodman 1996) through the painful process of self-annihilation, and Susan is no exception since she silenced her inner desires all her lifelong. In the end, she became a stranger to herself in as much as to her husband.

(4) «Is it really so bad, Susan?»

She stared past me as if **she** were not really talking to **me** - and perhaps she wasn't. «**They** always kept **me** on a tight leash when I was small. **Said** I was too wild, I had to **control** myself. «Girls don't do this. Girls don't do that. What will **people** think of you?» **I** thought, once I'm grown up it will be different. Then I met Ben.» (DWS, 24)

(5) «After twelve years **I** still don't know **him**,» she went on... «Neither does **he** know **me**»... «The worst of all, I suppose, is that **I don't even know myself** yet. I've lost touch with myself.»

(6) «If I'd been able to play really well it might have been different. But I'm a dabbler. A bit of music, playreading for the radio, all sorts of unimportant things. **Do you think I should resign myself to the thought that one day my daughters may achieve something on my behalf?**» (DWS, 25)

[Bold mine]

In the previous passages the narrator introduces Susan's own voice (micro-«other»: Macovski, or «second voice»: Bakhtin), and she becomes the subject of the sentence. Once again the focaliser hedges commitment and lets her utter longer statements, a free expression of thoughts, pinpointed by shifting speech, from free direct to free indirect speech. She culminates with an interrogative left unanswered by the interlocutor «you» who does not seem to cope with Susan's unexpected cry for identity.

Equally controlled by the same elitist tradition, often referred to by Susan, Ben, on the contrary, undoubtedly attempted to act as a cultural translator and a transgressor (so refers Maria Koundoura to Henry Giroux's concept of border pedagogy) within the private/public sphere of his History classes because he had to keep up appearances and his behaviour should accord with the historical moment, though socio-political and cultural bias had to guide his practice. He had to come to terms with different realities: home, family relations and institutional role opposed to the private world of his study, teaching practice, social help.

In fact, Ben's metalinguistics of truth, the ideal course of justice (be it within the personal, social or political domain), has always guided his existence and gradually contributed to his becoming a stranger in his own conceited family circle, a suspicious subject shortly after his determination to rehabilitate undervalued non-white citizens, a subversive teacher of History and Geography to the senior lectures, in short a political enemy to the mainstream ideological policy. Only later did he realise that his own major failure was that he was too naïve to believe that he could be neutral, neither a "Boer", nor English, and unlike Stanley (a subversive character in the novel), he could not "have contacts on both sides of the fence, among the blackjacks as well as in the deeper recesses of the underworld" (DWS, 41).

Melanie who is a journalist and key character for Ben's mental awakening once reminded him that:

- (7) You're an Afrikaner, you're **one of them**. In their eyes that's just about the worst kind of treason imaginable. (DWS, 195)
- (8) My mother was a **foreigner**, don't forget. I'm working for an **English newspaper**. They've written me off long ago. They simply don't expect the same sort of loyalty from **me** that they demand from **you**.... I only want to make quite sure you have no illusions about anything. (DWS, 195) [Bold mine]

These social pulls between «I», «us» and «them/they» were definitely cleared out in Ben's mind when Melanie made him realise that he had to rethink difference/identity in such a multiethnic society crashed by a white dominant ideology equally at odds with British legacy and Dutch supremacy. Henceforth, the protagonist sees his «historical present *strange* to himself, *estranged* from the sources of its authority, harrowed in its very presence» to use Homi Bhabha's concept of «Culture's in Between» (in David Bennett 1998: 45). Before his tragic end, Ben comes to the conclusion that his fight was useless at that period, in that particular setting.

- (9) **I thought** that to reach out and touch hands across **the** gulf would be sufficient in itself: as if good intentions from **my side** could solve **it** all ... In an ordinary world, in a natural one **I might** have succeeded. But not in **this deranged, divided age**. (DWS, 161)

[Bold mine]

His speech is punctuated by: verbs of perception («think»); deixis and coreference to reinforce the opposition between his reality and an ideal ordinary world («the»/ «my»/«it»/«this» opposed to «an»/«a»); modality («might») and probability («as if») to be understood in a specific situation, «this age», subjectively described by the modifiers «deranged, divided».

A similar in focaliser when in the readers' attention raising style» (Li and question-posing features).

(10) «A passport photograph

(11) «It wasn't again, the photograph (DWS, 15)

«Melanie Br universality, refer world: education contemporary we ruling power and girl» (10), contra makes her stand o

(12) Look at n and come want to. I something construct

She is introduced narrator finds it physical evidence photographs» (11) their opposition confidence, share metaphor:

(13) «It's like reach the in. It's the

A similar inference could be drawn on the use of deixis by the external focaliser when introducing Melanie to the reader. Her ideas and behaviour strike the readers' attention, and the narrator is no exception, in a «consciousness-raising style» (Liz Goodman 1996: Int. x) as suggested by her inquisitive look and question-posing which is also to be seen with Emily (undoubtedly agency features).

(10) «A passport photo of a girl with a sweet provocative face. **The other** photograph.»

(11) «It wasn't until the following day, working through the cuttings and notes again, that I recognised **the same face on some of the newspaper photographs. Of course: Melanie Bruwer.** The recent rumpus in the press.» (DWS, 15)

[Bold mine]

«Melanie Bruwer»: the character's *particular naming* embodying both a universality, reference to first name and surname, and singularity in the fictional world: educational background, striking personality, writing from a contemporary western perspective, acting anonymously, thus silenced by the ruling power and excluded from the African society. Her physical appearance, «a girl» (10), contrasting with her maturity, determination, and self-assertiveness, makes her stand on her own in the world of discourse.

(12) *Look at me if you wish, you won't find anything I haven't discovered for myself and come to terms with. I've probed my depths: you're free to try too if you want to. Provided you do not expect it to give you any claim on me. - It was something along these lines I found in the photograph, used as I was to constructing characters.* (DWS, 15)

[Bold mine]

She is introduced by the main narrator's male biased perspective. At first the narrator finds it difficult to relate her to Ben's universe, should there be no physical evidence of their relationship «the other photograph» and «newspaper photographs» (11) marking their struggle to restore Gordon's search for truth, their opposition to political, social and racial discrimination. Restore his confidence, share the responsibility with her, posits Melanie, would stand for the metaphor:

(13) «It's like the river **I** landed in when **I** was in Zaire. You've got to believe **you'll reach the other side.** I'm not even sure it matters who or what you have faith in. It's the experience itself that's important.» (DWS, 195).

[Bold mine]

From her words, Ben learns that he can go on questioning the ethics of power relations in society, exert his power of thinking autonomously but his struggle should focus on «*practices* of everyday life ... rather than in terms of an appeal to a transcendent and invariant set of values» (Usher & Edwards 1996: 27).

Similarly, Emily's plight is illustrative of another focus for resistance in as much as Melanie's political and professional engagement: more than a quest for identity and survival she vindicates her husband's dignity and restoring of truth. Gordon Ngubene could have never committed suicide and given in his hope for justice no matter the physical and psychological punishments inflicted upon him. Hence, the reader is presented with a character who has to cope not only with her status as a female living in a predominantly "male" world, but also with her position as a black woman living in Soweto.

Unlike Susan, devoted to a lifelong psychological exile and victimised by her «inconveniently daring» husband, Emily reinforces her agency in a white male world despite becoming a victim of cultural exclusion after her husband's death: she willingly accepts her role as a widow to be dispossessed of her former shelter and move to a shabbier place. Yet, her misery offers no impediment to defy the white hegemonic system so as to restore her husband's truth, honour, strong wish to uncover their son's murder.

(14) «What's the matter, **Emily**? What brought **you** here?»

«It's Gordon, **my Baas**.»

The moment **she** said it, he knew. But almost perversely, he wanted to hear it from **her** before he would believe it.

«Last night. I don't know the time. I was too scared to look at the alarm clock.» Fiddling with the black fringe of her shawl **she looked up at him helplessly, a large shapeless woman** with a face aged before its time; but very erect, and without tears.

«We were asleep,» she continued after a while, still preoccupied with the fringe. «They knocked so loud we were stiff with fright. Before Gordon they kicked down the door. And then the whole house was filled with police.»

«What did they say?»

«**They** said: «**Kaffir, you Gordon Ngubene?**» The children woke up from the noise and the little one began to cry. They mustn't do that in front of the children, **Baas**,» she said in a smothered voice, «When they went away my son Richard was very bad. He's my eldest now that Jonathan is dead. I tell him to be quiet, but he won't listen to me. He's too angry. **Baas**, a child who saw the police take away his father, he don't forget it.» (DWS, 52-3)

[Bold mine]

In this realist personal reference large figure «do Moreover, and al focalisation), her woman because t this, a determining distressed situation

Puzzlement becomes determining singularity and language choice with language ac and register tow him and addressi under the circum intertwined with realised that she make the interloc the ones of his k Gordon Ngubene to cry. They mus

In the narrat Emily unexpected forms of both in simple present f anaphora (they) elliptical ones in

(15) «**They** chairs, t throw o everywh **they** ask **Baas?** **Kaffir!** «Was th «That w in my a good-by

g the ethics of power
usly but his struggle
rms of an appeal to a
996: 27).

s for resistance in as
more than a quest for
nd restoring of truth.
given in his hope for
s inflicted upon him.
pe not only with her
d, but also with her

le and victimised by
r agency in a white
a after her husband's
essed of her former
rs no impediment to
band's truth, honour,

y, he wanted to hear it

ook at the alarm clock.»
up at him helplessly, a
ne; but very erect, and

ccupied with the fringe.
re Gordon they kicked
police.»

children woke up from the
do that in front of the
they went away my son
is dead. I tell him to be
s, a child who saw the
(3)

[Bold mine]

In this realistic passage Emily appears in object position emphasised by the personal reference, *you*, term of address, *Emily*, the paradox arising from her large figure «looking up» at Ben «helplessly» (dominator, dominated). Moreover, and also seen through the eyes of a male biased narrator (external focalisation), her strong character does not make her different from any other woman because the reference *woman* is preceded by the deictic *a*, instead of *this*, a determiner pointing to proximity and singularity worthy of Emily's distressed situation.

Puzzlement and deceit take over this female character and her speech becomes determined, straightforward. The vindication of her own identity, singularity and agency is undermined by her courage, human dignity and language choice despite being illiterate. At this point she is neither concerned with language accuracy, nor with raising her language standards, switch her code and register towards a more educated interlocutor - Ben- albeit her respect for him and addressing him by means of *my Baas*. This intentional term of address, under the circumstances, is imbedded of ambivalent feelings, namely respect intertwined with social exclusion: «very erect, and without tears» (14). She realised that she had the necessary language tools to make herself understood and make the interlocutor feel «another», an hopeless stranger both to himself and to the ones of his kind - the white empowered subjects: «**They** said: «**Kaffir**, you Gordon Ngubene?» The children woke up from the noise and the little one began to cry. They mustn't do that in front of the children, **Baas**».

In the narrative instance immediately following the aforementioned one (15), Emily unexpectedly, still intentionally, changes the verb tense, from simple past forms of both irregular and regular verbs - *was/were*, *woke up*, *saw*, *kicked* - to simple present forms of dynamic verbs denoting violence equally emphasised by anaphora (*they*) and enumeration. Simple nuclear sentences alternate with elliptical ones in slow motion as if it were a scene played back by a camera:

(15) «**They turn over** the whole house, **Baas**,» Emily persisted. «The table, the chairs, the beds. **They roll up** the carpet, **they tear** open the mattress, **they throw out** the drawers of the cupboard. **They look** in the Bible. Everywhere, everywhere. And then **they start to beat** Gordon and to **push** him around and **they ask** him where he hide his things. But What can he hide, I ask **you, my Baas**? Then **they push** him outside and **they say**: «**You come with us, Kaffir!**»»

«Was that all **they** said?»

«That was all, **Baas**. I went outside with him, with the two smallest children in my arms. And when we get to the car one man he say to me: «Ja, better say good-bye to him. You not going to see him again.»

[Bold mine]

This time she uses free indirect speech owing to Gordon's probable silence, negative answer. And her narrative is suddenly interrupted by a rhetorical question, drawing on the interlocutor's attention so as to make him aware of the oppressors' cruelty, inequity towards disempowered innocent people. Apart from manipulating the language to get her *critical and reproaching tone* across, it might be also inferred that she can neither forget nor wishes the «others» to forget such outrageous arrest carried out by the Special Branch. Credibility and reliability of the narrative might be at stake unless Emily introduces the policeman's own words skilfully shifting the register into Afrikaans, also the language of the Boers. It is Stanley Makhaya (the taxi driver), as the dialogue proceeds, who *sarcastically* explains Emily's use of the simple past tense: «*Lanie*, with us, when a man gets picked up by the Special Branch, you just start talking about him in the past tense, that's all.» (DWS, 56). Consequently, their intentional use of broken English make part of their language choice and connote a social marker of their own individuality even among other countrymen living in the same community: Soweto.

Language choice ends up emphasising Black Afrikaners' «otherness» (Foucault 1966), distinctiveness or increase social distance. By means of a simple language, abbreviations featuring spoken register, slang, non-standard features of spoken language, highly contrasting with the narrator's formal register, André Brink manages to pass on to the reader what it means to be a foreigner and at home: feeling «another», or as Paul White (1995: Preface xv) advances «to live simultaneously inside and outside one's immediate situation, to be permanently on the run».

Only after visiting Soweto did Ben realise that he had been a foreigner in his own country, South Africa, and a privileged subject «as if you now exist in another time and another dimension», writes the diarist in a *confessional tone* and he adds, «You can still see the other people, you exchange sounds, but it is all coincidence, and deceptive. You're *on the other side*. And how can I explain it in the words of *this side*?» (DWS, 158). In his quest for authenticity, justice, individuality, Ben invites the reader to problematise a whole historical period, a culture, the ruling institutional power at his time, «but which neither he himself nor his contemporaries could consciously perceive or evaluate in the context of culture of their epoch», to borrow from Bakhtin's claim (1990: 4), and Ben himself adds:

(17) «Everything used to take for granted ... now turns out to be illusion. Your certainties are proven lies. And what happens if you start probing? Must you learn a whole language first?» (DWS, 161)

...

Alone. Alone to the very end. I. Stanley. Melanie. Every one of us. But to have been granted the grace of meeting and touching so fleetingly: is that not the most awesome and wonderful thing one can hope for in this world? (DWS, 161)

Before coming to Bakhtin's postulate, the result in merging of two cultures are mutually enriched, not be leading to a loss of identity, rather than overloading of identity preserved. If Emily's language choice undermines her identity in another which, the other's: Emily, Susan.

Similarly, from Edwards (1994: 16) but is rather a cultural and by discourses search for truth through outside reality, in effective learning, and History class by means of conflict he is still «subject» an entity that conflicts.

Bearing in mind should come to the different voices relevant in the field and question posed that these appear.

To conclude subscribe:

Establishing a language can be both emotional

Before coming to a major conclusion, I believe that I should refer once again to Bakhtin's postulates (1990: 7) that «a dialogic encounter of cultures does not result in merging or mixing. Each retains its own unity and *open* totality, but they are mutually enriched». In so doing, overlapping languages and cultures should not be leading to a common ground, and differences should be seen in context rather than overlooked so that individual values whatever their nature should be preserved. If Emily's identification with black African culture and her language choice undermines her peculiar agency, Melanie looks for the recollection of self in another which, in turn, leads Ben to envision his identity in self-defining other's: Emily, Susan, Gordon, Stanley.

Similarly, from a postmodern perspective, as advanced by Usher and Edwards (1994: 16), «the *centred* subject does not exist naturally and pre-formed but is rather a cultural *construct*, inscribed in the meaning system that is language and by discourses, particular and systematic uses of language». Besides Ben's search for truth transcends the educational setting and his involvement with the outside reality, including undervalued communities, constitutes a new site for effective learning, transcending the limited boundaries of both home (family life) and History classrooms. Thus in confessing, the protagonist asserts his identity by means of continual self-questioning, transgression (cf. Foucault) even though he is still «*subject* to the power-knowledge formations that shape subjectivity as an entity that confesses», Usher and Edwards (1994: 95) put forth.

Bearing in mind the female characters' interacting in the diagetic world one should come to the point that «there are no universal marks in the feminine rather different voices expressing their agency» (cf. Foucault). This is particularly relevant in the female voices presented hitherto, their conversation, turntaking and question posing which throw off male/female power relations to the extent that these appear «in an unplanned way» (Mary Bucholtz 1996: 276).

To conclude I shall borrow Macovski's words (1994: 145), to which I fully subscribe:

Establishing self in the novel is essentially a linguistic act, since only through language can the other both manifest itself and provide recognition ... In either case both emotional and inscriptive outness are necessary to enact the self.