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UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

**VERSES, SUBVERSES AND SUBVERSIONS IN
CONTEMPORARY POSTCOLONIAL POETRY**

The arts of resistance in the works of Linton Kwesi
Johnson and Lesego Rampolokeng

J. L. FRANÇA JUNIOR

Supervisor: Harry Garuba, Ph.D.

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To my mother *in memoriam*

University of Cape Town

It is not the mere existence of deviant subcultural themes that is notable, for they are well-nigh universal, but rather the forms they may take, the values they embody, and the emotional attachment they inspire.

James Scott *Weapons of the Weak*

We speak
for the same reason
that
the flowers bloom
that the sun sets
that the fruit ripens

because temples built
to honour myths
must crumble
as the dawn breaks

Merle Collins *Because the Dawn Breaks*

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation seeks to analyse insubordination and resistance manifested in postcolonial and postapartheid poetry as ways of subverting dominant Western discourses. More specifically, I focus my analysis on textual strategies of resistance in the poetry of Linton Kwesi Johnson and Lesego Rampolokeng. The syncretistic quality in the oeuvres of both poets is related to diaspora, hybridity and creolisation as forms of writ[h]ing against (neo)colonially-based hegemonic discourses. Postcolonial critiques at large will frame this analysis of strategies of domination and resistance, but some discussions from the domain of history, sociology and cultural studies may also enter the debate. In this regard, there is a great variety of theories and arguments dealing with the contradictions and incongruities in the question of power relations interconnecting domination and resistance.

This study is arranged in three pivotal debates. There is firstly an in-depth discussion of underpinning theories that deal with strategies of domination and resistance in the postcolonial domain. This is a threefold task carried out by scrutinising (a) the origins of colonial discourse and its binarist tendencies, (b) the pitfalls of anticolonialist resistance based on dualistic opposites, and (c) the hybrid and insubordinate nature of resistance as an efficient alternative to transcend such binaries. Afterwards I seek to investigate how strategies of diasporic resistance and cultural hybridism employed in the poetry of Linton Kwesi Johnson can contribute to moving away from the limitations of dichotomies and also subvert hegemonic power. And, finally, I look at creolisation, mockery and insubordination as strategies of resistance in the postapartheid poetry of Lesego Rampolokeng. Besides that, this project is concerned with the increasing importance of academic studies on postcolonial literatures. The present research aims therefore to analyse postcolonial and postapartheid poems as strategic techniques to decentre dominant Western rhetoric that tries to naturalise inequalities and injustices in the relations between power holders and the powerless in both local and global contexts.

Keywords: postcolonial theory, postcolonial poetry, colonial discourse, domination, resistance.

The poet is he who, beneath the named, constantly expected differences, rediscovers the buried kinships between things, their scattered resemblances. Beneath the established signs, and in spite of them, he hears another, deeper, discourse, which recalls the time when words glittered in the universal resemblance of things.

Michel Foucault *The Order of Things*

The main objective of this work is to examine how textual strategies of resistance and subversion are employed in contemporary postcolonial and postapartheid poetry as tactical reversals to destabilise hegemonic Western discourse. The theoretical analysis in this research will look, on the one hand, at the emergence of colonial discourse and its dualistic strategies of domination and power control. On the other hand, there is an effort to formulate strategies of resistance as a hybrid, syncretistic, diasporic, subversive tool employed in postcolonial literature and poetry to distort and decentre hegemonic power. This investigation is, thus, an attempt to discuss textual tactics of resistance in a kind of politically committed aesthetic that, apart from being a modern vanguard of recent postcolonial literatures, is a revisionist engagement aiming to shake up the grounds of colonial, neocolonial and imperialist rhetoric.

The analysis continually points out how the verses under examination try to subvert and rewrite notions of hegemonic power by counterpoising, satirising, sabotaging and decentring culturally and politically dominant discourses. Such discourses, shall we see, are constantly trying to neutralise conflicts and naturalise inequalities between dominant and subordinate groups. They can manifest themselves, to name a few examples, through classist, racist, linguistic, sexist tendencies and so on. They tend to create reasonable justifications for the oppressors' hegemonic position by emphasising its superiority in relation to the position of the subordinated. One can feel the full weight of this analysis by simply bearing in mind that textual discourse is power discourse, and so textual strategies of resistance are *active counteractions* to intervene in the political

arena and lay bare injustices perpetrated and perpetuated by (neo)colonial discursive texts and practices.

For that reason, the pages of this work are devoted to appraising and revising Resistance as a postcolonial think-tank in and from the third-world literary production that challenges the Western hegemonic, dominant discourse at global and local levels. I must provide beforehand an outline detailing the rationale of this research and how it will be carried out.

Firstly, a theme inspired by David Spurr's *The Rhetoric of empire* (1993) has fired my enthusiasm for this analysis. The basic principles of discourse of colonialism in Spurr's viewpoint are 'rooted in the very foundations of Western culture', and so 'constitute the discourse of imperialism'. As a result, 'imperialism has survived the formal ending of colonial rule, but so has colonial discourse' (1993:5). And 'postcolonial', according to Spurr, is a term that sparks off even more debate than 'colonial', to a certain degree because of 'the ambiguous relations between these two' (1993:6). Hence he refers to postcolonialism in these two ways:

As an historical situation marked by the dismantling of traditional institutions of colonial power, and as a search for alternatives to the discourses of the colonial era. The first is an object of empirical knowledge—new flags fly, new political formations come into being. The second is both an intellectual project and a transcultural condition that includes, along with new possibilities, certain crises of identity and representation.¹

(Spurr 1993:6)

The sum of these two points proposed by Spurr to define postcolonialism could be channelled into one word: Resistance. In the first case, resistance presents itself as the very praxis of guerrilla tactics, armed struggle and political activism carried out by nationalist liberation movements. The second case portrays the postcolonial intelligentsia that fuels theoretical resistance as, perhaps, a never-ending strategy to rectify past and present injustices committed by the perpetuation of (neo)colonialism and imperialism. In other words, the key premise that guides this investigation is that colonialism does not recede with the flying of new flags and the mere achievement of political independence; the fact is that all postcolonial societies are still subjected, no matter the extent, to open or subtle forms of neocolonial domination. In addition, there are many situations in which internal political elites in postcolonial countries collaborate with imperialist intervention and exploitation. Seen from this perspective, postcolonialism can

¹ This dissertational text follows the grammatical and spelling rules of South African English language. Where authors are quoted, their words are reproduced verbatim. Stylistic and grammatical variations are maintained as in the original.

thus be conceived, in the words of Ashcroft and his colleagues, as 'a continuing process of resistance and reconstruction' (Ashcroft *et al* 1995:2), and such a process can offer us a privileged field for rereading and rewriting both colonial discourse and the production of knowledge of the Other. They also employ the term postcolonial to deal with those cultures on which the imperialist process had an impact from the moment of colonisation to the present day. The reason these authors present is that there is a constant concern about the historical process initiated by European colonial intervention. They hint that 'it is most appropriate as the term for the new cross-cultural criticism which has emerged in recent years and for the discourse through which this is constituted'. Therefore their concern is with 'the world as it exists during and after the period of European imperial domination and the effects of this on contemporary literatures' (Ashcroft *et.al.* 1989:2).

The idea of resistance, in a word, 'far from being merely a reaction to imperialism, is an alternative way of conceiving human history' (Said 1993:260). It additionally bears plural meanings and one may look at and choose among distinct classes of resistance. Some of them might be claimed as legitimate and others not. One may correlate resistance acts to terrorist-related activities, or anti-establishment and anti-capitalist riots, or sit-down strikes, or communist-backed unionism, or merely non-violent organised protests. Similarly the colonial system sanctioned as legitimate only certain forms of anticolonial resistance such as moderate nationalism, for instance. Perhaps oddly enough, sometimes it is the very hegemonic, imperialist power that makes this selection possible, and we can observe, for instance, how third-world resistance is recognised as legitimate when it dovetails with human rights discourse. It could even be argued that human rights are the only kind of authorised manifestation of resistance today. However, I do not claim here that resistance through human rights is not legitimate or that certain forms of resistance are more 'authentic' or more 'legitimate' than others. The aim is just to point out the way imperialist dichotomies and hegemonic powers constantly infiltrate the discourse of resistance. Afterwards I explore if there are alternatives to or recodifications of resistance in the cultural interstices emerging from the written praxis of socially and politically committed postcolonial and postapartheid poetry.

Accordingly, in order to bring forth all the proposals for this debate in a coherent and organised sequence of ideas, this dissertation is divided into five chapters. This first one simply introduces the debate and preliminary considerations of theories, procedures and analyses. The second chapter is a crucial one because it provides an in-depth analysis of strategies of domination and resistance, as well as establishes the rationale for the main discussion thereafter.

The claim of that chapter is that theories and tales of Manichean disputes between and within domination and resistance must be continually debated and revised in order to come to terms with complex dual interactions such as self and other, coloniser and colonised, dominators and subordinates and so forth. Hence the need is tackling the problematic of the binary depiction of domination and resistance in the postcolonial domain. I further investigate how the notion of resistance is insubordinately transformed by the postcolonial theory itself and, as will be discussed afterwards, the anti-hegemonic discourse of postcolonial/postapartheid poetry. The chapter is therefore marshalled in three sections that analyse, respectively, (a) dichotomies and strategies of domination employed by colonial discourse; (b) strategies of anticolonialist resistance in the postcolonial world as an extension of binary opposites from the colonial era; and, finally, (c) a quest for a sort of beyond-the-dichotomic-divide resistance in the works of recent postcolonial critics whose theories on hybridity, mimicry, the third space, weapons of the weak and so on, this study benefits from.

In the first section, my interest is the intrinsic relation between colonial discourse and dualistic constructs, a crucial aid to the establishment of hegemonic power since it is the very language used as strategies of domination and institutionalisation. I explore this topic on two levels. On the first one, based on Tzvetan Todorov's analysis of categories and subcategories of 'other', I summarise the different forms of 'othering' inside the systemic nature of colonial discourse. On a second level the point of interest is Edward Said's influential concept of 'orientalism' and the assumption that the European world has described the non-European world according to its wishes of representation and domination. Such a retrospective study will help to outline the references to and influences of a hegemonic creative process of the 'other', which is decisively the self-definition of ruling Western countries and the maintenance of imperialist control to date. However, wherever there is domination there is resistance too. Thus, since colonial discourse dovetails with imperialist discourse, as Spurr has observed, and imperialism and colonial discourse has survived colonialism, so has resistance. Another way to enunciate this idea is that resistance continues even after the (un)successful production and institutionalisation of its goals (nationalism does not represent the final goal of the anticolonial struggle, for instance). Nevertheless, hegemonic power does not care about this dynamic and would rather contemplate the new national institutions as functional incorporations of legal rationality, and resistance as a grassroots aberration that must be repressed apace. To some extent the legal apparatus and institutionalisation of hegemonic power depends a great deal on resistance. Given that imperial power is ever ready to establish the pace of its self-government and obeys no orders

or pressures from below, past rebellious heritages and claims of disobedience can quickly be turned from serious inconvenience in power relations into precious political advantage. The age-old strategy of divide and conquer prevails. Therefore the intrinsic links between domination and resistance come up for consideration in the following section.

In the second section of chapter II, I observe the sort of tragic reality that resistance must face before power and how it can be perilously engulfed within the parameters established by that to which resistance is opposed. This generates the constant menace that resistance may turn itself into a cooperative or co-opted enterprise. The point of departure for this debate is the insurrections against unlawful, despotic regimes during the 1960s and 1970s third-world revolts. Examples of these occurred in Latin America with the fight against dictatorships, and in Africa with the struggle of nationalist liberation movements to dismantle the late colonialist campaign. The major problem is that after gaining power, some of these resistance fronts failed to deliver on their promises. Many of the liberation factions and parties turned into regimes as oppressive and archaic as the toppled ones. Edward Said diagnoses this effect as the 'partial tragedy of resistance': i.e. to a certain extent it must work to recover forms already established, or at least be influenced or impregnated by imperial culture (1993:253). We will then discuss the question of power according to Edward Said, Michel Foucault and Frantz Fanon, and try to understand the failures of 1960s and 1970s nationalist leaders who have merely substituted themselves for the old colonial masters. Nonetheless, the postcolonial world is now fully aware of this misfiring and there are many efforts to rethink a form of resistance culturally based. Many theorists of social movements welcome this perspective by nourishing alternative visions of modernity to those ones which hegemonic discourse employs to oppose resistance. This will be the focus of discussion in the third and last section.

This closing section maintains that the idea of resistance is not always merely a reaction against hegemony, but that it is in reality a complex multitude of alternative visions of social relations and, in consequence, of human history. This is based on a broad approach to the nature of resistance by rejecting an absolute divide between resistance and all forms of hegemony. Another way to put it is that there is no such thing as an absolute dichotomy between modern versus traditional, advanced versus primitive, developed versus underdeveloped. Another proposition is that to look at forms of resistance as diverse and valid attitudes towards conceiving the world refuses the dogma that resistance, to be legitimate, must work either within existent theories about human liberation or as completely 'new', 'universal' paradigms that are applicable at any place and time. So the intention will be to rethink strategies of resistance according to

hybridism, cultural syncretism, hidden transcripts, weapons of the weak. This intention will be much helped by ideas and theories put forward by critics such as Homi Bhabha and James Scott.

The following chapters will finally discuss strategies of resistance in the oeuvres of the poets under consideration, who are two eminent word artists of the contemporary postcolonial literary vanguard. They are, respectively, Linton Kwesi Johnson and Lesego Rampolokeng. The initial focus concerns the work of Linton Kwesi Johnson (popularly known as and hereafter LKJ), who was born in Jamaica, in the Caribbean region, but migrated to the UK when he was very young. While still a student in Brixton, South London, during the early 1970s, he started to appreciate music and poetry and soon joined a militant, Black Nationalist group inspired by the US Black Power movement. He took part in poetry performances and recitals and produced his work with other musicians and poets. LKJ started writing his verses at an early age, and later his language became rooted in the speech patterns of Jamaican Creole mixed with so-called dub music. His poetic texts are mostly influenced by political activism and social engagement. The poet is concerned with themes such as anticolonial and anti-imperialist struggle, afro-diasporas, Creole languages, state-sponsored violence, migrants and working class conditions. His writings are also intended to depict and reaffirm the presence and influence of the Caribbean diasporans in Britain in an effort to broaden the notion of British citizenship according to diversity and difference. So the investigation seeks to comprehend how the strategies of resistance and subversion employed in his dub poetry can contribute to moving away from the limited binaries of colonial discourse, as well as bringing about new tactics to decentre hegemonic rhetoric.

The ensuing chapter approaches the work of Lesego Rampolokeng, a South African born full-time writer and poet. He has been considered a prominent outspoken word artist whose voice and writings bring fresh air to the new, postapartheid South African literary scene. The passion and urgency that guide his orally presented texts turn his thoughts into words and sounds expressed with an enthusiastic passion that get irony and anger to blend. As a poet who belongs to the 'Soweto generation', Lesego Rampolokeng was born in Orlando West, Soweto's backyard. And despite the meaning of his name ('all the best'), he grew up in a quite violent milieu in the years of segregation and anti-apartheid struggle. He also took a strong stance against the regime. He started writing at an early age and attributed this to the situation of oppression he underwent. All these circumstances of hardship and struggle against a segregationist system were crucial in later shaping the poet's writing perspectives. Rampolokeng's poetry tackles the problematic of power corruption, social injustices and political deception in present-day South Africa, but without losing sight of so many problems accumulated with the past experience of colonisation

and racial segregation in the country. His political commitment, however, does not only concern his country. The Sowetan poet is an artist connected to his own time and aware that the struggle against hegemonic power's abuses is a worldwide task.

Furthermore, his artistic links to and influences from various diasporic black artists, including Linton Kwesi Johnson, put his literary achievements on the tracks to the new hybrid, syncretistic and transnational third-world literature. Concerning the 'very different black Atlantic intervention' in the works of South African poets Lesego Rampolokeng and Seithlamo Motsapi, Laura Chrisman asserts that 'their poetry seeks to engage and participate in a radical alternative social imagination that embraces international socialism and Third World nationalism in the case of Rampolokeng, and pan-Africanism in the case of Motsapi' (2006:32). Indeed, Rampolokeng's works and performances are critically engaged with South African postapartheid politics, economics and society. Internationally, he addresses capitalist exploitation, war and corruption as dangerous to societies, and links the responsibility of these threats to those political leaders and institutions that collude with an inequitable system. He decries therefore several dehumanising conditions and socio-economic injustices in both local and global contexts. Thus the analysis of creolisation, hybridism and mimicking as an insubordinate strategy of resistance in his poetry is a fruitful task.

The names of Linton Kwesi Johnson and Lesego Rampolokeng certainly come to the fore as representative of a new milieu of vanguardists since 'black diasporans,' in the words of Laura Chrisman (2006:29), 'are currently being positioned as a global vanguard, an elite, thus moving from the countercultural margins into the centre of modernity'. Both poets produce a sort of literature that evokes the construction/reconstruction of the subaltern subject, the articulations of the margin, specific contemporary sensibilities to social injustices, and provides tactical reversals of subversion and insubordination to defy official rhetoric. Such an approach to postcolonial literary representation recognises that Western hegemonic discourse is not the only one envoy or authority of modernity, but it is also affected, decentred and reformulated by counterarguments or reverse accounts elsewhere.

In addition, as Rustom Kozain describes it, LKJ's poetry 'is overwhelmingly popular and counter-hegemonic in its opposition to some of the dominant, conservative economic and political visions of specifically Thatcherite Britain' (1994:9). And in Flora Veit-Wild's study of the carnivalisation and hybridisation of language in the writings of Dambudzo Marechera and Lesego Rampolokeng, we learn that Rampolokeng's 'rap poetry' can offer 'an expressive example of the syncretistic art that arises out of the multi-ethnic blend of an African city such as Johannesburg'

(1999:99). She also considers that Rampolokeng's oeuvre 'fuses influences from Jamaican dub poetry with American ghetto rap, jazz and contemporary popular music as well as some indigenous sounds and rhythms'. Then she quotes De Waal's statement that Rampolokeng is 'putting dub and rap together and adding a touch of the European with the use of rhyming couplets...' She furthermore considers that 'Rampolokeng's very existence embodies postcolonial syncretism' (1999:99). Both poets' writings thus afford handy means to rethink and relocate the concept of resistance in the realm of subversion, hybridity and diaspora. All these similarities between their politically-engaged works truly justify the comparative approach this dissertation is devoted to.

This apparently favourable scenario, however, does not mean that we are facing a symmetrical dispute between diasporic postcolonial aesthetic and Western hegemony. Certainly overpowering Western control still dominates the realm of symbolic representations and aesthetics, and it counts largely on international support of publishers, art producers, designers, manufacturers, distributors. By contrast, even though LKJ and Rampolokeng have been launching poetry collections since, respectively, the late-1970s and the 1990s, their works have still been poorly explored in literary debates of the various fields of arts and literature. So these writers have not yet received the critical evaluation they deserve, not even the internationally acclaimed Linton Kwesi Johnson. Whether that mainstream denial might be a sign of confining dub poetry to the margins as 'petit literature' or subculture, yet the dub poet's communal voice has no room for cultural subservience at all. Thus, an underlying topic in this thesis has to do with the use of subterfuge chiefly by postcolonial writers to sabotage literary canons and traditions in order to create new paradigms that can better reflect their own cultural origins and differences, as well as their literary expressions.

As for the methodology applied to this research it will rely on a comparative socio-historically based literary analysis. The theoretical grounds benefit from postcolonial criticism and works in social sciences that address the questions of power relations, colonial discourse, anticolonialism, decolonisation and resistance. Once we have gone through this theoretical debate, the next step is the critical readings of the selected corpus. The search for works of both poets will be carried out in the print, recorded and virtual media; the critical review will rely on a handful of comments and analyses that have been released in papers, online articles, theses and interviews. Thereupon, a refined poetry selection will rely on the dual criteria of a *chronological* nature, covering the classic poems of LKJ and Rampolokeng in different phases of their writing life, and a *methodological* nature, choosing the relevant poems that best sustain the rationale of

strategic subversion and resistance to hegemonic power. Later on the excerpts will be tested to their limits by revision and repeated rereading so as to accurately ground the arguments at hand.

The corpus of verses and subverses (subversion between the lines, or subtextual transgression) to be looked at in the present study will take into consideration LKJ's published works in the late-1970s, 1980s and 1990s, and Rampolokeng's works from the 1990s to the present. Regarding the deconstructive lyric mood of both poets, some questions arise: What are the strategies of domination embedded in the colonial or hegemonic discourse? What are the strategies of resistance present in contemporary postcolonial literatures and critiques? What sort of resistance do LKJ and Rampolokeng bring forth in their respective writings? In an attempt to investigate as comprehensively as possible such questions, the methodology for this work is to look first at discourses of domination and then at counterstrategies of resistance that can be both read and listened to through the 'oraliture' of LKJ and Rampolokeng.

This research also considers the broadly accepted notion that a text does not exist without a context (Said 1979), so a literary analysis built upon a socio-historical intertextual experience is welcome. Therefore the comparative approach observes the differences and similarities of styles in which the two poets write, apart from looking at particularities of the linguistic and social diversity arising from the respective British-Jamaican and South African contexts. This procedure will be worked out taking into account that, besides the fact that the poets come from different ex-colonies and colonised experiences, there is a transnational train of thought that crosses their poetic discourses in the way their politically-engaged texts tackle the problematic of power-laden inequities, even though a great deal of their writings are directed to specific social problems in their own environment. This method of analysis will be worthwhile because it will look simultaneously at the general and the particular. This procedure, besides contemplating the diasporic issue, will be useful in validating the thesis that these authors, apart from their distinct origins, keep in their mindful compositions the dehumanising injustices of local and global exploitation. By working with their different writing styles, I further intend to tackle the problematic of power-laden relations and ideological, mythic (mis)representation imposed by hegemonic discourses. The contribution is then twofold since it makes an attempt to generate more academic debate on these authors, as well as helps to make known a few contemporary South African and British-Caribbean verses, subverses and subversions.

The last chapter proposes to recapitulate and conclude the whole discussion in this research. The main goals for this closure are calling to mind how this project has been conceived and designed, and setting out a summary account of the debate, research findings, and

perspectives of postcolonial theories and literatures. As a niche of resistance and revision of the political distress in the Third World, such outstanding writing productions are worthy of recognition not just for their literary prestige, but equally for their discussion of emancipation and self-determination of peoples in the current context of global imperialism, neocolonialism and globalisation. Moreover, these literatures are valuable because of their pertinence in engendering the expunging of all sorts of slander that power holders have imputed to the reputation of (post)colonial communities, with the efficient intention of putting people to use and land to incorporation.

Besides that, the very act of talking about poetry and literature of resistance means by itself an uphill struggle against literary stasis and conformity, grounding the reference to a literature that aims to transgress the limits of myths established by dominant colonial discourse. This practice of deconstructing and rewriting is indeed a recognised characteristic of postcolonialism. And one of the strategies to reach this new approach is through a fictional experiment of employing words imbued with new meanings. The writer who shares the postcolonial experience ends up writing from this new perspective, creating not only a new interlocutor, but also a new discourse. This new point of enunciation attempts to address other references that are not contemplated in the traditional canon as, for instance, a distinct, cross-cultural perspective, a trenchant sense of history and the sheer declaration of new possibilities.

A final word: taking the unfamiliar reading audience into account, it will certainly be useful to introduce a brief examination of what dub poetry is in the chapter addressing LKJ's work, as well as the impact of colonialism and apartheid on South African literature and how it has influenced Rampolokeng's writings, under analysis in the fourth chapter. Such historical background will be useful in situating each poet in their different cultural contexts and understanding how it affects their writing production. Nevertheless, they do present similarities regarding the creativity and employment of verses, subverses and subversions to resist Western discursive naturalisation of exploitation. Moreover, the opportunity to develop this research in South Africa—a country still undergoing the aftermath of a recent experience of institutionalised racism—will be a privileged site for my broadening of perspective when dealing with the harsh consequences of power-laden situations of inequality. Finally my reflections on subversions of dominant discourse in this work will be formulated from an equally engaged social perspective and therefore will be uncontained by possible boundaries or distinctions between the 'critical' text and the 'creative' text. Here the critical debate is also regarded as an engaged art, and so there is room for employing subversive writing in the academic text as well.

CHAPTER II STRATEGIES OF DOMINATION AND RESISTANCE IN THE POSTCOLONIAL DOMAIN

Gentle, hidden exploitation is the form taken by man's exploitation of man whenever overt, brutal exploitation is impossible.

Pierre Bourdieu *Outline of the Theory of Practice*

The general objective in this chapter is to set out the debate on strategies of domination and resistance. It has three aims and is organised in three sections. The first considers the question of colonial discourse through two particular concepts: 'othering' and 'orientalism'. In this regard Tzvetan Todorov's and Edward Said's theories will serve as points of departure for the ensuing criticism of the dichotomies in the colonial discourse suggested by such concepts. The next section focuses on the infiltration of imperialist binaries into the realm of resistance. This will be scrutinised through the 1960s and 1970s liberation movements and their pursuit of liberty from relentless colonialist and imperialist encroachment. The failure of these movements in achieving democratic regimes will be looked at with the help of Foucault's and Fanon's discussion on power and resistance. Finally, the third section is an analysis of resistance as encompassing a complex range of different reactions beyond binary representations. This broadened idea of resistance will rely mainly on Homi Bhabha's concepts of hybridity and third space, as well as James Scott's notion of hidden transcripts. This procedure will furnish a foundation for the postcolonial poetics that emerge in the following chapters.

2.1 Colonial Discourse and Rhetoric as Strategies of Domination

In recent years postcolonial literary studies have engaged in investigations dedicated to the analysis and understanding of how previously colonised cultures have been conceived, evaluated and described by Western (especially European) colonisers. The objective is to comprehend the structures and functions of what is conventionally termed 'colonial discourse', i.e. the ways of thinking and speaking about the colonised world. The concepts and languages of such discourse were formulated mostly by the dominant, imperialist European world in order to deal with and relate to their colonies in Asia, Africa, or in the Americas and Caribbean. In short, the world is gauged under the dominator's eyes. Colonial discourse, as a concept, comprises the unequal relation of power that had its heyday in the 19th-century imperial order. It was expressed both in descriptive genres such as exploration narratives, travel writings, colonial administrators' memoirs and so forth, as well as in fictional genres. The common ground in these descriptions is a perspective of superior power, real or imagined, from which the observer gazes at the other's culture.

From this authoritative, privileged viewpoint, observers (or colonisers) legitimated their descriptions as indisputable and absolute truths. Colonial discourse can thus be considered as an expression of the encounter between two highly different worlds: Western culture and the culture of the community under description/domination. This is an encounter of realities that existed at a certain moment in the colonised world and the preconceived images projected by invaders. Travel writings, for instance, are full of such incompetent and self-interested descriptions because they became a highly popular literary genre, especially from the 17th to the 19th centuries, a period of colonisation and colonial expansionism, particularly the British imperial expansionism. For a better grasp of the topic of imperial gaze and its projected visions and judgments on the colonies, we have first to look at the concept of 'other'. As will be shown, the 'other' plays a fundamental role in the process of discursive hegemony, mainly when it comes to the collision of different cultures. Tzvetan Todorov and Edward Said are key authors in the discussion of this question.

The Bulgarian, French-based scholar Tzvetan Todorov addresses in *Nous et les autres* (1989) the problem of how one culture or socio-cultural group faces and contemplates another different

socio-cultural group that counts as the 'other'. The author is particularly interested in analysing the forms in which the so-called non-civilised or backward cultures were conceptualised by the self-conceited advanced cultures. So he is concerned in avoiding the dangers of distorted universalism and scientism, as well as the pitfalls of relativism, for he is demonstrating how theories on human diversity were formulated in the 18th century and then systematically perverted in the hands of 19th-century theorists so as to justify racism, nationalism and the search for exoticism. For this reason, Todorov explores the category of 'other', a quite recurrent term earlier used in the French intellectual tradition. The author divides this category into distinct subcategories and then advances his argument based on the writings of key French thinkers who have reflected on human diversity, such as Montaigne, Rousseau, Lévi-Strauss, Gobineau, Tocqueville, among others. The first one is 'ethnocentrism': the overvaluation of one's own society, claiming that one's own values are *the* values and that is enough; i.e. it consists of the gratuitous setting up of particular values of one's own society as universal values, but there is never a real intention to demonstrate it. The unconscious tendency to project ourselves onto others is defined by Todorov as a 'scientific ethnocentrism' (1989:29-31). That was a predominant vision regarding the foreign or colonial world, and became the basis from which this world would be looked at afterwards (1989:21-34).

The next subcategory is called 'racism' and what Todorov denominates 'racialism'. Here a doctrine of 'races' is formed and it focuses on the behaviour of other *maç*. 'Racism' implies despising them, whereas 'racialism' aggregates the construction of an ideology to support such behaviour. In other words, racism is an old behaviour whose extension is probably universal; racialism, on the other hand, is a movement of ideas forged in Western Europe, whose most important period goes back to the early 18th until the early 20th centuries. Once the 'facts' are established upon a morally superior basis and a scientific determinism, the racialist extracts from them a moral judgment and a political ideal. Therefore, the subjection of inferior *maç*, or even their elimination, can be justified thanks to accumulated knowledge with regard to 'races'. At this point racialism is merged with racism and the theory is put into practice (1989:133-79).

According to Todorov, the concept of *maç* is replaced by that of culture during the 19th century and from it derives 'culturalism', which is homologous to racialism. From the combination of ethnocentrism and racism, as the author claims, emerges 'scientism'. This category he considers as not less perverse, 'et probablement plus dangereuse, car on n'est pas souvent fier d'être ethnocentriste, alors qu'on peut s'enorgueillir de professer une philosophie "scientifique"' [but probably even more dangerous, since one may not be proud of being

ethnocentric, whereas there are those who take pride in professing a “scientific” philosophy] (1989:35). Here the study of humankind is part of the study of nature, mingling in only one concept both morality and human nature. From this assumption emerged a great interest in ‘scientific’ observation of nature in its ‘purest’ forms, always having the ‘savage’ in the spotlight. It is important to underscore that the methodology was direct observation, be it in the original place of the ‘savages’, or in the very European land with the displacement of some ‘species’. The inclusion of human sciences in the natural sciences implies the immediate reduction of the human being to the condition of object.

It is also relevant to understand that ‘exoticism’ and ‘primitivism’, two other categories under analysis, carry a strong self-criticism on the part of the observer, manifesting itself as an over-idealisation of the ‘other’ based on the myth of the noble savage. Todorov (1989:355) defines exoticism as ‘a form of relativism’ symmetrically opposed to nationalism: ‘dans les deux cas, ce qu’on valorise n’est pas un contenu stable, mais un pays et une culture définis exclusivement par leur rapport avec l’observateur. C’est le pays auquel j’appartiens qui détient les valeurs les plus hautes, quelles qu’elles soient, affirme le nationaliste; non, c’est un pays dont la seule caractéristique pertinente est qu’il ne soit pas le mien, dit celui qui professe l’exotisme.’ [‘in each case, what is valorised is not a stable content but a country and a culture defined exclusively by their relation to the observer. The values of my own country, whatever they may be, are superior to all others, the nationalist proclaims. No, the exoticist replies, the country with superior values is a country whose only relevant characteristic is that it is not my own.’] It is thus a relativism that eventually has been trapped under a quandary of judgement (we are better than the others; at the same time, the others are better than ours). However, in this context the definition of the entities that compares them, ‘we’ and the ‘others’, remains purely relative. It is rather a criticism of oneself than a valuation of the other, rather a formulation of an ideal than a description of a reality (1989:355-76).

Hitherto, we have seen that different forms of ‘othering’ are possible. We can insert the ‘other’ into different time lines: into the past, or into eternity. It is possible to describe the ‘other’ as an entire person as well as a set of parts (face, limbs, feet), focusing the ‘other’ as an assemblage of oddness rather than a full human being. Furthermore, it is possible to describe the ‘other’ as a country or nation, referring to its smells, colours, filth, problems and incapacities, as though the nation were an individual under observation. Evidently, such methods of ‘making the other’ work as restrictions on the text, so that authors less describe this ‘other’ than create or invent it based on their own preconceived ideas. This process falls inevitably into huge,

stereotyped generalisations that engender the chief ideological mechanism of discrimination and domination that culminated in colonialist intervention.

To address the question of how the other is seen implies situating this debate within a broader, more general context, by incorporating the concepts of orientalism and colonial discourse. Edward Said, in his seminal text *Orientalism* (1979/2003), postulates that the non-European world has been described in such a way that it represents what the European world wishes it to represent. Therefore, it has been more 'produced' than described. Said denominates this process of redefinition of relations between European cultures and their colonies as 'orientalism'. This concept represents the vision Western Europeans had of the oriental world under their rule. Hence 'orientalism' is a 'distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, romantic, sociological, historical, and philosophical texts; it is an elaboration of a whole series of "interests"' (2003:12). It is thus an elaboration not only of one basic geopolitical distinction (the world comprises two unequal halves, East and West), but also of a great series of 'interests'. It represents an eagerness to grasp, control, manipulate and incorporate what is an overtly different or alternative world. It is above all a discourse that is not at all direct and correspondent to the relation with sheer political power, but it is more elaborated and exists in an unequal exchange with several sorts of power (1979:2).²

From this perspective arises a dependent power relation between the dominant European countries and the non-European dominated. This relation has been presiding over Western culture and politics for a long time now. Orientalism and the discourses emerging from it are neither a myth nor an invention, only 'a sign of *EUROPEAN-ATLANTIC POWER* over the orient...a created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been a considerable material investment' (1979:6).³ In other words, by maintaining the concept of 'we' (Europeans, white, civilised) and 'others' (non-Europeans, coloured, savages), a hegemony in inter-colonial relations has been maintained, which contributes to legitimate Europe as superior. To study the functioning of orientalism it is necessary to call to mind a priori that it is not possible to separate authors from their contexts, nor circumscribe the interests of Western Europeans as a creation of an imperialist culture. Almost all 19th-century authors, as Said has it, were extraordinarily aware of the fact of the empire, from John Stuart Mill to Karl Marx

² It is important to stress that even though Said refers to the European vision towards the Orient, or more specifically the Middle East region, the concept of Orientalism can be applied to the Third World as a whole. What counts here is the look that has taken by European imperialist countries upon the rest of the dominated, (post)colonial world.

³ With regard to this point, it is worth noticing that textual power should not be seen as a reflection of any other sort of power, be it economic or political, but as the power manifestation itself. Therefore texts *are* relations of power.

(1979:14). Thus the empire had a particular presence that should not be seen as the expression of an imperialist plot, but as a reference, as a point of definition, as a place of travelling, a source of richness and services easily taken for granted. The empire works in the greater part of 19th-century Europe as a complex ideological configuration; and imperialism and the novel are therefore intrinsically correlated. The normative pattern of narrative authority of the imperialist ideology and the novel nourished each other (e.g. the fictional hero and heroine representing the relentlessness and energetic trait of the enterprising bourgeoisie, on the one hand; and the depicted servants in the big houses, whose servitude is treated carelessly, taken for granted, who are rarely named, studied, analysed or developed, on the other). Thus, Said observes elsewhere, without the empire there would be no European novel, which is finally a product of bourgeois society (1993:82-4).

In short, if orientalism analyses the Western European view of the Orient, colonial discourse incorporates not only the general view of colonisers—whether from France, Britain, the United States or wherever—towards the world under their domain, but also the discourse that such perspectives produce. Peter Hulme was one of the first authors to search for a definition of the concept of ‘colonial discourse’ and to highlight its importance. According to him, colonial discourse is

[A]n ensemble of linguistically-based practices unified by their common deployment in the management of colonial relationships, an ensemble that could combine the most formulaic and bureaucratic of official documents... with the most non-functional and unprepossessing of romantic novels.

(Hulme 1992:2)

By means of the colonial discourse, a great deal of the world was produced or created by and for Europe. More recently, other authors have been looking at new and varied aspects of orientalism and colonial discourse.

Timothy Mitchell (1992) interprets orientalism as part of the process in which Europe organised the world according to her own necessities. Nicholas Dirks (1992) in turn adds that by establishing a new system of complex relations of world power in the 17th and 19th centuries, it was necessary for Europe to create a safe nation-state. That was accomplished by means of its colonial knowledge in the world, which was obtained through the process called orientalism. Thus colonialism and orientalism represent a culture of control and superiority that defined and framed international relations especially in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Lisa Lowe reaffirms this posture by pointing out that ‘studies of colonialist discourse have suggested that a coherent

and dominant European colonial identity is represented and justified in terms of the subordination of non-European cultural and racial differences' (1991:22).

Having said that, the common ground among all these analyses is the reference to a hegemonic creative process of an 'other', which is crucial to the self-definition of dominant Western nation-states. David Spurr (1993) adds that the cultural situation of colonialism can be understood as the imposition of a minority on a majority, a means of legitimating the supposed moral, technological, cultural, or political superiority. This subjection of the majority as a tool for the minority's sake is reinforced by the ideology and might enclosed in the written representation and justification of the text. As a matter of fact, the author goes to the roots of the culture of domination, when he observes that

Culture and colonization are etymologically as well as historically related; both derive from the Latin *colere*: to cultivate, to inhabit, to take care of a place. The Latin *colonus* designated both a farmer or husbandman and a member of a settlement of Roman citizens, or *colonia*, in a hostile or newly conquered country (*OED*), while *colere* referred both to tilling the soil and to refinement in education and civilization.

(Spurr 1993:5)

So these 'hostile' domains were regarded as propitious terrains to the colonialist discursive construction of the colonised as 'a population of degenerated types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction' (Bhabha 1994:70). It inscribes a form of 'governmentality', as Bhabha claims, that 'in marking out a "subject nation", appropriates, directs and dominates its various spheres of activity' (1994:70). Some of its practices recognise the difference of race, culture and history as being elaborated by stereotyped knowledge, racial theories and administrative colonial experience. Upon this basis it institutionalises a rank of political and cultural ideologies that are prejudicial, discriminatory, vestigial, archaic, mythic, and which are decisively recognised for all that. By 'recognising' the native population in these terms, discriminatory and authoritative forms of political control are considered appropriate (Bhabha 1983:9).

As a result, a space of unequal power relations emerges in the colonial context, and the colonial discourse authorises and legitimates such a space.⁴ David Spurr describes the colonising process as 'a form of self-inscription onto the lives of a people who are conceived of as an extension of the landscape'; to both the coloniser and the writer 'it becomes a question of

⁴ See also Timothy Mitchell (1992) and Edward Said (1979) about the creation of power and knowledge by means of orientalism.

establishing authority through the demarcation of identity and difference' (1993:7). In consequence of that, the differentiation between author and subject (or native) is crucial because it legitimates power and the ideology promoted. So that such a thing works efficiently, a radical and extreme differentiation is necessary. The definition of 'other' is not always clear and simple though. There is a dichotomy in the perception of the colonised subject. This 'other' is, on one hand, a savage but, on the other hand, it is an obedient, sexual servant; even though innocent and foolish, mystic and primitive, a liar and a manipulator; the 'other' is totally strange and represents the unknown and is in turn a 'fixed' reality. Thus, it is predictable, unchangeable and incapable of developing and modernising itself. Such a dichotomy works to deny the colonised subject the capacity for self-government, legitimating therefore the colonising mission. It is necessary to emphasise that the basis of this order lies in the created images and not in the deep knowledge of the colonised subjects (Bhabha 1983, Todorov 1989, Williams 1994).

Several other authors, in the domain of postcolonial studies and elsewhere, have been addressing the question of dichotomy and binary oppositions in colonial discourse. In fact, the examination of notions of subject-object and the relationship between these dichotomised parts can be carried out in several literary works that voice colonial discourses. In his essay *No-man's land: Nuruddin Farah's links and the space of postcolonial alienation* (2008), Garuba explores how the 'epistemological division' organises and polarises the order of things in both rural and urban areas of colonised Africa. The former space is depicted by Somali novelist Nuruddin Farah and other writers as a locus of tradition, culture, collectivity and homogeneity; the latter is a representation of modernity, citizenship, individuality and heterogeneity. In this regard, Ashcroft *et al* argues that, '[c]olonialism could only exist at all by postulating that there existed a binary opposition into which the world was divided'. Hence the progressive organisation of an empire 'depended upon a stable hierarchical relationship in which the colonized existed as the other of the colonizing culture'. Therefore, the notion of the savage could exist 'only if there was a concept of the civilized to oppose it'. Thus it follows that 'a geography of difference was constructed, in which differences were mapped...and laid out in a metaphorical landscape that represented not geographical fixity, but the fixity of power' (1998:36).

Observing how the formation of identities takes place, Said comments in *Orientalism* that

[The construction of identity] involves establishing opposites and "others" whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from "us". Far from a static thing then, identity of self or of "other" is a much worked-over historical, social, intellectual, and political process that takes place as contest involving individuals and institutions in all societies.... It should be obvious in all cases that these processes are not mental exercises but urgent social contests involving such concrete political issues as immigration laws, the legitimization of violence and/or insurrection, the character and content of

education, and the direction of foreign policy, which very often has to do with the designation of official enemies. In short, the construction of identity is bound up with the disposition of power and powerlessness in each society, and is therefore anything but mere academic wool-gathering.

(Said 2003:332)

So the subject and object in postcolonial societies integrate into a hierarchy in which the oppressed is settled according to the oppressor's supposed and imposed moral superiority. In this order of things and ideas, 'it is not the colonialist Self or the colonized Other, but the disturbing distance in-between that constitutes the figure of colonial otherness' (Bhabha 1994:45). In order to narrow such distance and hierarchy, it is essential that the subject recognises the other also as a subject in their own cultural environment, since according to Abdul JanMohamed 'genuine and thorough comprehension of otherness is possible only if the self can somehow negate or at least severely bracket the values, assumptions, and ideology of his culture' (1995:18).

In this respect it is worth recalling what Todorov has said in *The Conquest of America* about the moral teaching of the Spanish occupation: 'unless grasping is accompanied by a full acknowledgment of the other as subject, it risks being used for purposes of exploitation, of "taking", knowledge will be subordinated to power' (1992:132). In other words, the coloniser, facing a new, 'alien' reality, could theoretically choose either difference or identity. If he chooses identity, he would recognise differences and would acknowledge the other in conformity with his own values, but if he chooses difference, he would look at differences and would judge the other according to his own paradigms, a way of showing no respect to diversity. As long as the coloniser chose difference, the result was a Manichaeism of ideology, binary opposites and dichotomy. In fact the colonialist European was less inclined to establish an equal relationship with the other than to consider him/her as subaltern only because he/she was different.

The material assessed thus far is sufficient to reckon the impact of the 'other' in the debate around colonial discourse. However, even if this question has been widely scrutinised from many and different perspectives, there is still a lot to look at, especially in the effort to overcome the binarist trap it involves. Patrick Williams, for instance, postulates that both orientalism and colonialism create categories of knowledge presented as unique and unquestionable truths. Orientalism, as an accessory of colonial control, is pre-eminently bound up with the production of several categories of knowledge on 'the natives': historical, linguistic, religious, moral and political. Such knowledge is most often presented in the form of an audacious synthesis, universal parameters and unchangeable truths about the Orientals. And one of its obvious effects is the capacity to exactly say how they will or not behave themselves. This, being a product of their

eternally unchangeable oriental society, means that they have been behaving in exactly the same way throughout the centuries (Williams 1994:486).

David Spurr (1993) in turn supports such a proposition by arguing that there are different 'rhetoric modes' that work to set up a place from which it is possible to speak and maintain the colonial authority. These modes can be mixed up and coincide with each other as in the case of administrative discourse, journalism, novels, travel writings and so forth. All of them, as he claims, are part of the 'landscape' in which the relations of colonial power are developed. It is also fundamental for this study to realise beforehand that both colonial power and colonial discourse are not fixed monoliths. Even though colonial discourse, as Spurr has it, may be influential to this day, it is neither unmistakable in significance nor immutable in the face of historical pressures. The theories on colonial discourse and orientalism have therefore been widely criticised and it is necessary to illustrate this point.

Many authors have challenged Said for his simplification and generalisation regarding what is said by the 'orientalists'. The creation of a concept such as orientalism, which covers a long historical path and includes a multitude of writers, denies the diversity of texts and authors. Dennis Porter, for instance, formulates questions like these: Can anyone at any time speak of a unified Western discourse, even in a specific historical moment, and less throughout the course of centuries of historical change? Should one not at least speak of varieties of discourses about nationality and class that shed light on all sorts of overdetermined cultural products? In short, is not the theory of discourse in its pure form subject to the weight of essentialism and insensitive to historical fundamentals? (1994:154).

In her effort to scrutinise orientalism as a monolithic construct of the Orient as the Other of the Occident, Lisa Lowe argues that orientalism is by definition something heterogeneous, full of contradictions and constantly changeable. According to her, a discourse such as the colonial discourse is not a set of fixed laws externally imposed upon individuals, but has to do with a set of variable conditions that regulate a range of possible articulations at any moment. In each articulation the set of conditions include not only changes in the means of regulation, but also modification of these means and the relations of representation, changes in the frequencies and modes of articulation, fluctuations in locus and register and finally, quoting Foucault, 'partially or totally new statements...in accordance with which it can be modified' (1991:14).

Hence it is necessary to look at orientalism and colonial discourse according to the heterogeneities that constitute and redefine them. To conceive of orientalism as a simple and uniformed expression of imperialism is to deny the intrinsic and basic heterogeneity of any

discursive system. Accordingly Lowe maintains that discursive formations are never singular: 'Discourses operate in conflict; they overlap and collude; they do not produce fixed and unified objects' (1991:8). That is to say, one cannot so easily speak of 'binary oppositions', of blacks and whites, of good and evil, of conquerors and conquered, as Said's thesis may suggest. The dichotomy proposed by Said and others cannot therefore be assumed without any questioning. According to Lowe, a stance taken like Said's comes to reinforce the imperialist system that he himself aims to criticise because such a stance ends up legitimating the same powerful hegemony that it intends to condemn and, by means of the negation of varieties and differences, refuses to recognise possible resistant forces that could emerge. That is to say, since 'logics of domination and subordination are embedded within binary conceptions of difference',

One risks certain dangers in continuing to essentialize notions of either the Other or its foe the dominant discourse. Not only does the essentializing of otherness inadvertently valorize, by further enunciating, the powerful hegemonies it seeks to criticize, but also theories that create monoliths of managing discourses greatly underestimate other points and positions of struggle and resistance operating in a specific hegemony at any moment. The view that a dominant discourse produces and manages otherness, univocally appropriating and containing all dissenting positions within it, underestimates the tensions and contradictions within any discursive terrain, the continual play of resistance, dissent, and accommodation. Most important, this type of dominant discourse theory minimizes the significance of counterrepresentations and countercultures, and continues to subsume the resistance of emergent or minority positions to apparently dominant formations.

(Lowe 1991:24-5)

It is thus important to recognise the existence of conflictive viewpoints within the colonial discourse. This is where points of challenge and resistance lie. It is always possible to resist the forces that forbid for it is not a determination. Both Porter's queries and Lowe's argumentation are therefore quite relevant to this dissertation. The worth of an analysis of discourses and concepts such as colonial discourse is still undeniable to studies such as this one; nonetheless, if the aim is to move beyond dichotomies, it is necessary to incorporate the existent diversities and heterogeneities in this arena of rhetorical strategies of subversion and resistance. So the main goal in this research is to emphasise the significance of counterrepresentations and countercultures by demonstrating that postcolonial and postapartheid poetry are privileged loci of literary resistance, subordination and vanguardism to disrupt the influence of dominant discourses. And such discourses are not seen as fixed and unified at any time. As we shall see, both Linton Kwesi Johnson and Lesego Rampolokeng inveigh against different sorts of dominant discourses, at local and global levels. In this case, this dissertation also contributes to subvert and contradict postcolonial critiques such as those ones of Ashcroft *et al*; when commenting on Spivak's *Can the*

subaltern speak? they observe that 'one cannot construct a category of the 'subaltern' that has an effective 'voice' clearly and *unproblematically* audible above the persistent and multiple echoes of its inevitable heterogeneity'. And '[Spivak's] conclusion is that for "the true" subaltern group, whose identity is its difference, there is no subaltern subject that can "know and speak itself"' (1995:8, emphasis original). As will be demonstrated, both poets under analysis use their difference exactly to express their writing identity, speak for themselves and also give voice to other 'subalterns'.

Therefore, the main assumption here contends that not only are texts plural and heterogeneous, but also the contexts in which they are embedded. Each text is constituted by a variety of factors (social, political, economic) that determine its structure and reception. For that reason, the text cannot be approached from just one perspective, but from a multiplicity of factors that condition it. It is necessary then to recognise these particularities and incorporate them into the study. Aiming to emphasise the plurality of colonialism, Lowe, for example, defends the study of different forms of colonial discursive expression. She points out that the colonial can be developed within different contexts such as, for instance, the French and the British. In short, neither the text nor the author can be analysed as coherent entities. Inside each text, and even inside each author, there is a set of dispersions and conflicts that is necessary to recognise. Colonial texts, as with any other writing, are produced within the conflict of several discourses. Both are textual conventions, as long as they are texts circulating within a society. These various and different discourses can come into conflict among themselves and at the same time they can reinforce each other.

In brief, this first section has observed the forms in which Europeans in previous centuries have looked at and conceptualised the colonised countries according to their own motives and rationale, which terminates at the complex structures of 'colonial discourse'. Such visions have worked many times to justify the presence and the economic, political, social, or cultural domination of non-European countries in areas such as Africa, Asia and Latin America. As a result, before employing these documents as historical sources and then drawing conclusions from them regarding the past reality of colonisation, it is fundamental to carry out a specific study of their discursive structure as well as relation to binary opposites. Such an analysis is not only of benefit to historicity, but it also enriches the perspective under which the opposition of colonisers and colonised, dominators and dominated, are considered in the past and present. In a world where multiple confrontations among cultures are still so frequent, the capacity to know and comprehend the looking of one culture upon another is an invaluable tool for the better handling of complex cultural relations. Hence to better get at the root of the problem it has been

necessary to include an account of the colonial rhetoric of empire and how its dualistic oppositions shape the imperial narratives.

In the next section I will underscore what seems to be the thing that most obscures a good understanding of what is social life in both colonial and postcolonial contemporary reality. Therefore, in spite of decrying the Manichaeism of imperial narratives, the 1960s and 1970s liberation movements, for instance, could not perfectly get rid of colonial ideology. Their efforts of resistance were still tainted with the same dichotomist, monolithic colour of colonial epistemology, even though this epistemology may assume new forms in different colonial contexts. What appears now are polar oppositions such as 'modern versus traditional' and 'domination versus resistance', as will be shown.

2.2 Anticolonial Discourse and Strategies of Resistance

Forms of marginalisation of native peoples across the world marked by contact with disparate cultures, narratives of expropriation by imperial invaders and their technological mastery have been a recurrent motif in canonical works of the postcolonial literatures, such as Chinua Achebe's *Things fall apart* and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of darkness*. A good example of the intrinsic relations between domination and resistance in colonialist enterprises can also be found in lesser-known but no less important postcolonial texts, such as Gioconda Belli's *La Mujer habitada* ('The Inhabited woman'). *La Mujer habitada* (2006), the first novel of this Nicaraguan poet and novelist, is a storytelling of the indigenous warrior Itza. In the narrative Itza draws a parallel between her past struggle against the Spanish vanquishers and the present guerrilla tactics of the Sandinista protagonist Lavinia. The lead character Lavinia is a modern woman who studied architecture in Europe and then moved back to live and work in Central America. Itza, who fought to the death during the Spanish invasion of the continent, is now a spiritual entity living in an orange tree in Lavinia's yard. Itza's spirit inhabits and accompanies Lavinia in her revolutionary commitment with the Sandinista National Liberation Front to fight Somoza's dictatorship in Nicaragua. So long as this section aims to scrutinise the dichotomist influences of power and domination on resistance, the following excerpt from Belli's novel, which thematises the very question of binary

opposition and dualist struggle, is therefore useful to introduce the topic of discussion. Despite the fact that the excerpt is somewhat long, it is worthy of full quotation:

The Spaniards said they had discovered a new world. But our world was not new to us. Many generations had thrived in these lands since our ancestors, worshipers of Tamagastad and Cipatoyal, had settled here. We were nahuatls, but we also spoke chorotega and niquirana; we were able to measure the movement of the stars, to write on strips of deer fur; we tilled the soil, we lived in large settlements alongside the lakes; we used to hunt, weave, have schools and sacred parties.

Who knows what all this territory would be now if they had not killed the chorotegas, caribes, dirianes, niquiranos?...

The Spaniards said they should "civilise" us, make us give up "barbarity". But they and their barbarity dominated and displaced us.

In a few years they made more human sacrifices than we had ever made ourselves in the history of our festivities.

This country was vastly populated. And despite that, in the twenty five years of my existence, there were less and less men; they sent them in huge ships to build a faraway city called Lima; they killed them, the hound dogs tore them apart, they hung them in trees, cut their heads off, shot them down, baptised them, and prostituted our women.

They brought us a strange god who knew neither our history nor our origins and they wanted us to worship it in a way we were unable to comprehend.

"And after all, has any goodness remained?" I wonder.

Men are still on the run. There are bloodthirsty governors. The scene is still one of carnage, the war still carries on.

Our heritage of drums beating will keep on throbbing in the blood of these generations.

This is the only thing of ours, Yarince, which has survived: resistance.

(Belli 2006:104-5; translation mine)

Itza is narrating the resonance of the Nahuatl resistance against the Spanish empire. She was the only woman in her clan who adamantly decided to join the warriors in combating the invaders; she was in love with the chief of the warrior group, Yarince. She, Yarince and the rest of the warriors strategically ran into the hills trying to hinder the Spaniards from moving forward. In her recollection of the brutal struggle, Itza rebuts the stereotypes that the autochthon people did not fight back against the Spanish imperialism in the American continent and were submissive to the *conquistadores*—those blond men with growth of hair on their faces, who wanted 'to civilise the barbarity' with their ships, beasts and sticks of fire (Belli 2006:73-6). By joining the battle side by side with her beloved one, Itza also deconstructs the myth of female passivity at that time in history and brings those events to light from a feminist-Marxist perspective.

This particular excerpt is also of interest because there is a parallel running between the interstitial relations of the struggle against domination in the colonial and postcolonial periods. There are similarities, according to Itza's tale, between the war waged against the *conquistadores* of Central America and the revolutionary political activities in a particular social scenario: the struggle against Somoza's dictatorship in late-1970s Nicaragua. Hence the 'bloodthirsty governors' in a dictatorial State are not so different from the Spanish invaders: 'the scene is still one of carnage, the war still carries on'. As a matter of fact, from 1978, the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) organised guerrilla tactics and training in the countryside and in popular areas of Managua. In May 1979, the Sandinistas started a 'final offensive' against the regime, which combined general strike, popular insurrection, armed struggle and intense diplomatic activities overseas. On the 17th of July, Somoza fled the country and a council of national reconstruction took power. The 40-year dictatorship of the Somoza dynasty slaughtered more than 50,000 people.

Eventually the movement of resistance came to power and another problem arose. The Sandinista inner leadership, personified by the Ortega brothers (FSLN former leaders), started a politics of ideologically-determined authoritarianism. Soon they were trapped in the net of Cold War strategic interests, and became an easy target for US imperialist intervention. Nicaragua was brought to chaos and war. The very Gioconda Belli, a good-looking daughter of the Nicaraguan upper middle class, who had taken part in the Sandinista movement during the struggle against Somoza, became afterwards one of the fiercest critics of the authoritarian tendencies under the Ortega brothers' rule. In her book on 'memoirs of love and war', *The Country under my skin* (2002), Belli expresses her disillusionment with the failures of the Sandinista movement. She also attributes a great deal of blame to the interventionism the United States has put into action in Latin America, based on misguided foreign policies, criminal and dishonest tactics like covert wars, attacks on many social project reforms on the continent (not only in Nicaragua but also in Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, Chile and Peru, among others). Thus a sad example of a movement of resistance and revolt that turns into a subdominant system, at the same time fragile and prone to be bogged down by hegemonic power influence. The Sandinista regime was voted out in 1990, undermined partly by the United States but also by its own overweening mistakes.

The question that immediately arises is: How can this mirror image between domination and resistance be possible? This enquiry alone suffices to develop a great deal of discussion to the benefit of this work.

The rising of oppressed people against illegitimate, pro-imperialist governments, in which thousands of individuals gave their lives for the cause, was part of 1960s and 1970s third-world history. In Latin America, as in the previous example, several countries fought against despotic dictatorships, many of them promoted and supported by US geopolitical strategies and imperialist intervention. In Africa, there was a massive liberation movement searching for national independence and the expulsion of European late colonialist encroachment. Notwithstanding the wish to reaffirm their own subjectivity in face of an authoritative repression, many of the liberation parties and fronts became part of a new government representing an archaic ideology and practice, which converted the revolutionary leadership into regimes as equally oppressive as those which had been previously toppled. The reason for this mirror image phenomenon may be better understood with a discussion of some ideas on resistance, power and domination developed by Said, Foucault and Fanon.

After the publication of *Orientalism* (1979), Edward Said carried out the formulation of a set of ideas that he had not yet expressed and that would provide, fourteen years later, the argument for *Culture and imperialism* (1993). In this long-elaborated production Said shows that imperial power in its most subtle way, in the culture, kept a broad grasp upon overseas territories during the 19th and 20th centuries. He scrutinises through the prism of literature how the power of words can maintain ideological control over cultures, history, nations and people. The author so addresses, on the one hand, how the 19th- and 20th-century Western (specifically European) literature speaks of the former colonised world; on the other hand, he analyses the rise of oppositional indigenous texts that were written as individual and collective acts of resistance against imperial domination, whose pinnacle lies in decolonisation struggles after World War II. He also mentions the disappearance of binary oppositions and the emergence of new conceptions such as crossing borders, nations and substances. The general and worldwide schema of imperial culture and the historic experience of resistance against the empire are, thus, the two main lines of discussion that frame the work.

In *Orientalism* Said is not concerned with the topic of resistance to colonial domination. His intention is basically to describe and analyse power formation and development, and also its correlation with the knowledge in an imperial context. In *Culture and imperialism*, by contrast, he decides to tackle the problem of resistance, and one of the important critiques he brings to the hegemonic system of Western thinking (also including the critical debate), is that rarely are the theories of liberation writers acknowledged with the authority and universalism of their contemporary counterparts, mostly westerners. To call this order of things to mind he makes a

comparison between Frantz Fanon and Michel Foucault. He launches a critique of Foucault that cannot be read as totally fair, but can be useful to develop some questions. Thus the author invites us to

[C]onsider the roughly contemporary work of Michel Foucault and Frantz Fanon, both of whom stress the unavoidable problematic of immobilization and confinement at the centre of the Western system of knowledge and discipline. Fanon's work programmatically seeks to treat colonial and metropolitan societies together, as discrepant but related entities, while Foucault's work moves further and further away from serious consideration of social wholes, focussing instead upon the individual as dissolved in an ineluctably advancing 'microphysics of power' that it is hopeless to resist. Fanon represents the interests of a double constituency, native and Western, moving from confinement to liberation; ignoring the imperial context of his theories, Foucault seems actually to represent an irresistible colonizing movement that paradoxically fortifies the prestige of both the lonely individual scholar and the systems that contains him.

(Said 1993:335-6)

Additionally, to Said's mind, both authors were inspired by Hegel, Marx, Freud, Nietzsche, Canguillem and Sartre, but only Fanon put such a theoretical arsenal to the service of anti-authoritarianism, whereas Foucault, apparently disillusioned with the 1960s revolts and the Iranian revolution, keeps his distance from politics (1993:336). Commenting on the affinities and dissonances between Said and Foucault, Karlis Racevskis (2005) notices that, after the publication of *Orientalism*, Said expresses in many essays and interviews his growing disenchantment with Foucault's thinking. Meanwhile, Said's approach to Foucauldian reflections reveals a number of misperceptions regarding Foucault's ideas. Said would finally rectify these misunderstandings in his last essay on the French thinker by offering an eloquent analysis of Foucault's contribution to contemporary critical theory. The controversial point, nevertheless, remains and it has to do with how Said critically assesses Foucault's stance as being futile to resistance, his supposed distance from a serious and rigorous tackling of social totalities, and his supposedly complete detachment from politics.

At least for the purposes of this study, Foucault's position is not, *pace* Said, a sense of frustration at questions of politics and resistance. If Said has sometimes chosen to turn a deaf ear to Foucault's occasionally incisive rhetoric for the sake of a personal disenchantment, now I would like to recur to Foucauldian basis as a contribution to resistance. Firstly, because the path Foucault went along by analysing the 'microphysics of power' is still an invaluable theoretical tool to the study of social groups and power relations. Secondly, this path gives Foucault's theories an essentially liberating nature (a characteristic that Said only recognises in Fanon's). Thirdly, Foucault's ideas have made a clear contribution to the principle that insurrection against power is

useful and necessary. And lastly, rather than completely detaching himself from politics, as Said argues, Foucault still counts as an important thinker of a general theory of politics.

One of the reasons for Said's growing disenchantment with Foucault, as Racevskis notes, was related to the question of Palestine. Said was once invited to a seminar on peace in the Middle East organised by Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir in Foucault's apartment, even though Foucault himself was not there. 'The seminar,' Racevskis tells us, 'turned out to be deeply disappointing and Said was forced to conclude that de Beauvoir and Sartre "knew nothing about the Arab world and were both fantastically pro-Israel"' (2005:84-5). Moreover, Foucault launched on 11 May 1979 an inquisitive missive titled *Is it useless to revolt?* (1999:131-34). This newspaper article, which was written at the height of Foucault's disappointment with the regime brought about by the 1979 Iranian revolution, reveals, on the one hand, the author's stance for the principle of revolt and, on the other, his sensibility to any kind of domination and subjection of individual subjectivity. These circumstances might be interpreted as ambivalent and lacking in political commitment, as Said alludes to in his critique.

In fact, it could be argued that in the aforesaid article Foucault is ambivalent with regard to the question of revolt because at the moment of posing the question, 'Is there or is there not a reason to revolt?', he replies by saying, 'Let's leave the question open' (1999:133). This abstentious position evidently lacks an emphatic stance for revolt. However, he further argues that: 'There are revolts and that is a fact. It is through revolt that subjectivity (not that of great men but that of whomever) introduces itself into history and gives it the breath of life' (1999:133). This latter statement is particularly worth noting, and if we link it to other Foucauldian texts, we can discern his political commitment to individual liberation from the subjection of powers. Thereafter the supposed ambivalence fades away.

Said concurs with Foucault's thoughts in his own theoretical approach to *Orientalism*. In the preface to this work, he acknowledges Foucault's contribution by mentioning particularly the significance of *The Archaeology of knowledge* and *Discipline and punish* (1979:3). Indeed, it is not difficult to realise that *Orientalism*, Said's most prominent book in the field of postcolonial studies, is indebted to Foucault's key concepts such as discourse, discursive formations, the power/knowledge relations. On the other hand, in *Culture and imperialism*, where Said seeks to analyse the relations of political and cultural domination in contrast to resistance and opposition between empires and their overseas domains, Said agrees with some reservation with Foucault's reasoning.

Foucault's oeuvre provides, however, a basis for thinking about power and domination far beyond the phenomenon of colonialism. He recognises a special character of the state as both a totalising and individualising institution of power. And given such power, all other institutions must refer to it. When fighting against such dominant power, it seems, the most confrontational path is not necessarily the most effectively revolutionary, and this certainty increases rather than diminishes with examples hither and thither along the passage of time. Besides, picking a fight against this state may imply a paradoxical stance for the revolutionary cause, as Foucault argues

In order to be able to fight a State which is more than just a government, the revolutionary movement must possess equivalent politico-military forces and hence must constitute itself as a party, organised internally in the same way as a State apparatus with the same mechanisms of hierarchies and organisation of powers. This consequence is heavy with significance.

(Foucault 1980a:59)

We should consider this analytical viewpoint when looking at Said's study on the decolonising process. And I suspect that the author himself may have taken it seriously into consideration if the liberation of the subject was what he was pursuing. The significance of bringing this Foucauldian text to light is that it suggests why many of the countries where anticolonial resistance had attained victory, or better still seized power, fall afterwards into categories such as despotic regime, pragmatic authoritarianism, radical nationalism, or neofascism. Hence at this point, it is important to pose some questions: What has resistance triumphed over? If the purpose of liberation was setting the country free, are those individuals who live in such countries free? More importantly, even if those countries had become independent as democratic regimes, it would be equally pertinent to ask the same questions.

In effect, this analysis aids us to think of a theory of liberation beyond the transitory process of domination, as was in fact the case with colonialism. It helps us to query the freedom conditions of our subjectivity in circumstances where we feel 'free', free because we can vote, or because the police protect us, or because law ensures our freedom, or whatever. If we think of *politics* as a relationship—especially as a relationship of domination, where some give orders and others obey, equivalent to Foucault's definition of power relations as 'a mode of action upon actions', or as a government in a broad sense of conducting, guiding and governing the actions of the individuals (1982:208)—, then it is certainly a sort of relationship that manifests itself massively and universally in all spheres and institutions in the fabric of society. Therefore, political power relations cannot be reduced only to the relations between State and society.

Likewise, in regards to colonialism, power cannot situate itself only in the Metropolis as a specific place, across the whole area there are several powers in play. In this case the Metropolis' power is the most visible (to the same extent that in metropolitan societies the State is the most visible power), but in any case is the *only* one power in exercise. (This may give us a clue to the reasons why there are ideological and disciplinary hierarchies and rules inside the national liberation movements.) In short, Foucault's analysis separates the different sites of power, and by connecting the diverse aspects we are given a vision of the political anatomy of the society as a whole. And to think of politics as a relation helps us to get closer to a rightful analysis of the complexities in social and political components. It sheds light on the political relations that are undisclosed, or disguised as non-political, and therefore as non-domination.

In addition, power, according to Foucault, is not something transcendent or merely a substance which someone can possess or delegate, but is something immanent, which manifests itself as practice, exercise. Resistance, on the other hand, is inherent to power—i.e. 'where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power. Should it be said that one is always "inside" power, there is no "escaping" it, there is no absolute outside where it is concerned' (Foucault 1980b:94). Elsewhere Foucault also argues that the most propitious way to investigate power and resistance is not only by establishing close relations between theory and practice, but also by using resistance as

[A] chemical catalyst so as to bring to light power relations, locate their position, find out their point of application and the methods used. Rather than analyzing power from the point of view of its internal rationality, it consists of analyzing power relations through the antagonism of struggles.

(Foucault 1982:210)

Fanon also seems to agree with Foucault in some aspects of power relations, but we are not exactly speaking of Fanon's work as a microphysics of power. It is a fact though that the Martinican-born author perceives situations of domination and violence that were not perceived by many others who analysed the phenomenon of colonialism before. He has an interesting theory about the relations between the Metropolis and its colonies, since he was fully aware of the deep impact of colonial domination in the psychology of people. In *Black skin white masks* (1986), originally titled as 'An Essay for disalienation of the black', Fanon introduces an antithetical paradigm in the analysis of colonialism. His contribution consists mainly in broadening the analysis of colonial system from a mere investigation of political, cultural and economic factors, which was then focused on by many theorists of colonialism and

decolonisation, to a psychological and phenomenological approach. Furthermore, his emphasis on the fact that colonial relations were also clothed in fantasies, dreams and sexual desires made it susceptible of being examined psychologically. The book is thus a 'clinical study' that seeks to report the particulars of the cultural and ideological processes, as well as the socio-psychological pressures that generate in many black groups the desire for 'whiteness', in the same way as the traumatic feelings of self-alienation.

Fanon defends that the stability of the category 'white' depends on its negation, 'black'. None exists without the other, and both were created in the moment of imperial conquest. An instance of Fanon's perception is the topic of language: the psychological subjection of the colonised about the inferiority of their language. When this aspect is added to the insistence on their racial inferiority, it produces in the colonised the necessity of being the 'other'. This in turn generates a dynamic of subjection of consciousness in the colonised: one is not for oneself but for the 'other', the black person wants to be to the white, they want to be white, the black man desires the white woman and the black woman desires the white man. To the same extent that such reactions are produced in some individuals, the reactions produced in others are of self-affirmation of negritude, the black reaffirms himself as black before the white. However, the subjection of consciousness is persistent. While the former wants to be the 'other', wants to be a white for the white, the latter wants to be a black for the white, and therefore they are not for themselves either. In a sense, the fundamental problems black people grapple with, such as a severe self-alienation, are consequences of the colonialist subjugation.

In this 'colonial condition' what Fanon sees is a Manichean scenario which encapsulates both European and non-European world. The whites are trapped in their 'whiteness', the blacks are trapped in their 'negritude', each one playing a fixed role before the other. Fanon's ultimate goal was the attempt to escape such a Manichean world and, thereafter, to bring to an end the unbroken human tragedy that makes this situation possible in both sides of the colonial division. His suggestion for the liberation of the human being is this ethical position: 'I recognize that I have one right alone: That of demanding human behaviour from the other. One duty alone: that of not renouncing my freedom through my choices' (1986:229). He further explains that

I have no wish to be the victim of the *Fatum* of a black world. My life should not be devoted to drawing up the balance sheet of Negro values. There is no white world, there is no white ethic, any more than there is a white intelligence. There are in every part of the world men who search. I am not a prisoner of history. I should not seek there for the meaning of my destiny. I should constantly remind myself that the real *leap* consists in introduction invention into existence. In the world through which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself.

(Fanon 1986:229; emphasis original)

To Fanon this call to reason and cognisance is, however, an ideal thing. His work presents the crudest depiction of the practices of subjection of the colonialist powers: both of the physical and psychological violence, as well as the complexes and pathologies brought about thereafter. In *The Wretched of the earth* (1965), he claims that the anticolonial struggle cannot be carried out in any other way than resorting to violence, as a response to the large-scale violence inflicted by colonialists. He recognises the limits of non-physical resistance as well as the vanguardist conception of the role of theory. But hoping that this alone will change the real thing is naivety since the colonised has no choice but to struggle against exploitation, oppression and hunger.

I do not carry innocence to the point of believing that appeal to reason or to respect for human dignity can alter reality. For the Negro who works on a sugar plantation in Le Robert, there is only one solution: to fight. He will embark on this struggle, and he will pursue it, not as a result of a Marxist or idealistic analysis, but quite simply because he cannot conceive of life otherwise than in the form of a battle against exploitation, misery and hunger.

(Fanon 1986:224)

On the other hand, it is no less attractive to think of a human liberation according to which the oppressed succeeds in developing a human consciousness rather than a binary consciousness. Consequently, the dispossessed, the women, the working class, and all those ones who have been oppressed throughout history will start seeing their specific history as part of human history. Fanon additionally recognises that only the leaders who really comprehend the authentic causes of resistance—lack of land, food and dignity—can unite spontaneous rebellions into a disciplined struggle against colonialism, as well as successfully conduct a new nation towards decolonisation.

For the weight of its conclusions, Fanon's work is worth entering this debate. Even though some part of his work seems to bring forth an obsolete anticolonial resistance (let us say the part referring to direct confrontation and violence), his conclusions come up with a universalist aspect, setting the human being free from the structures of binary thinking that, as Foucault would have it, keep individuals apart, and, as Said would have it, keep our minds colonised. In effect, to the present day the works of Edward Said, Michel Foucault and Frantz Fanon as theories of liberation are prevalent and thought-provoking. In such times when although colonialism no longer exists as concrete action, there is still an imperialism as violent or perhaps

even more vicious than the past colonialism. And, even worse, in circumstances where the decolonisation of minds is not yet complete.⁵

As a result, all the very antagonisms and struggles through which power relations are expressed work like a linking element between resistance and imperial narratives. I would like to draw attention to what seems to be a thread of historical continuity of power relations in social life in both the colonial period and the postcolonial contemporary reality. In spite of decrying the Manichaeism of the imperialist narratives, the 1960s and 1970s national liberation movements, for instance, could not perfectly cut the Gordian knot rooted in the binarist logic of colonial ideology. Their efforts were still tainted with the same dichotomist vision of colonial epistemology, even though this epistemology may assume new forms in different colonial contexts. Instead of the dualistic opposition 'civilised coloniser versus primitive colonised' of the imperialist narratives, what appear then are polar oppositions such as 'modern versus traditional' and 'domination versus resistance'. As a result, the treatment of (post)colonialism in this regard generates a choking historical process where things are bipolar, bicoloured, where no mediation is possible and life is thrust into a fierce all-or-nothing alternative.

The efforts of the revision of colonial discourse, namely postcolonial critical intervention, have already been consolidated in at least two closely related points: the criticism of the idea of resistance and the necessity to go beyond the dichotomy of resistance versus domination. Used as a magic formula that could explain everything in the 1960s and 1970s anticolonial struggle, resistance turned into a concept that apparently can bear an unsustainable ambiguity, which jeopardises the analytical view and its capacity for scrutinising subtler textures and colours.

Certainly, colonial governments faced individual acts of disobedience, dissimulation and sabotage of all sorts, hidden insubordination on the side of the most varied groups of inhabitants in the colonies, opposition in the argumentative field of politics and in the narrative field of rumours, besides having to deal with nationalist armed struggles. However, the simple idea of a confrontational resistance does not allow for a deeper comprehension of the dynamics in colonial and postcolonial encounters. The idea of resistance becomes especially problematic when it gains the status of superior power, when it is expanded to the point of encapsulating everything. This is what seems to be the path the concept took in the interpretations of 1960s and 1970s liberation writers and theorists. With an excess of explanatory power, such perspectives limit a healthy understanding of history and politics because it suggests that colonialists and anticolonialists have nothing else to do but resist each other. It becomes totalising and impenetrable to the analytical

⁵ For further readings see Edward Said's chapter on *Yats and Decolonization* (1993:265-88) and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Decolonising the mind* (1986).

eye because it is full of pretension while attempting to convey a transparent meaning. Naturalised, that is to say, it has been used indistinctly to refer to trivial acts of everyday indiscipline and dissimulation, institutionalised political confronts, religious revival movements among peasants, national liberation armed movements and so on. Therefore resistance carries a huge range of meanings and its definition is sometimes diffused or totally centred in an unremitting opposition. This is a tricky situation since the concept may lose its strength and runs the risk of ending up meaning nothing at all.

The critique of resistance has also to be a criticism of the theoretical shortcoming in debates on colonial domination that resonates in the modes by which we understand postcolonial regimes. Resorting to dichotomies such as colonised versus coloniser, resistance versus domination, traditional versus modern is problematic not only because it might induce a romantic and historically untenable nativist reading that colonised people resisted in order to preserve an idyllic past of self-sufficiency and self-government where there could be no room for starvation, violence or inequality. It may also presuppose an anachronistic project of retrieving reified and reinvented cultural traditions. Therefore the great problem lies in the direct transplanted of these polar opposites to the postcolonial moment. The employment of dichotomies played a crucial political role in the years immediately before and after the 1960s and 1970s liberation movements, when it was necessary, for instance, to reconstruct the past of colonised people and put it to the service of the anticolonial struggle (as Fanon did in *The Wretched of the earth*). Although it is decisive to recognise the 'crucial importance, for subordinated peoples, of asserting their indigenous cultural traditions and retrieving their repressed histories' (Bhabha 1994:9), the use of such dichotomies became subordinated afterwards to the necessity of legitimating the newly independent States. And contemporarily, postcolonial states confront the tragedy of political, economic and military dependence, unsuitability for competition in a global market, lack of infrastructure, technologies and skilled workers, brain drain, political corruption, fragile democratic institutions, et cetera. All these factors contribute to an appropriation of resistance as a symbolic weapon to engage in manipulation and fabrication of 'historical facts' (or a making-up of 'repressed histories') as well as a reinforcement of a rhetoric of culpability where the empire is forever to blame for any and all internal failures.

For all those reasons, the scenario does not seem to be yet conducive to overcoming the binarism domination/resistance. Nonetheless a set of studies have been conducted in order to stress the understanding of politics as a practice to exult freedom, showing that there is much more to power relations than static dichotomist oppositions. So if we are to move beyond the

binary account of domination and resistance processes presumed by traditional narratives of colonialism, we need to rethink power relations by looking at its internal contradictions, the role of hybridism in postcolonial literature and what has been conceptualised as third space and hidden transcripts (Homi Bhabha and James Scott), as well as the growing importance of diasporan subversions and interventions, deterritorialised agencies, displacement, homelessness, border studies and so on. This is the purpose of the discussion in the next section of this chapter.

2.3 Rethinking Resistance in Conformity with Hybridism, Cultural Interstices and the Weapons of the Weak

In this section I am still concerned with the notion of resistance not as a never-ending confrontation against hegemonic power, but rather as a complex incidence of different reactions in the interstices of social groups, cultures and politics. So the main thrust now is to broaden the notion and nature of resistance, and thereafter employ them as an analytical tool to examine a corpus of postcolonial poems. The first attempt has been done by refusing an absolute divide between resistance and the dominant power; i.e. there is no such thing as an absolute dichotomy between modern versus traditional, advanced versus primitive, developed versus underdeveloped and so forth. This current approach will therefore rely on the theories of hybridity, third space and cultural syncretism that have been put forward by Homi Bhabha. Accordingly, applying the same principle to exploring forms of resistance as diverse as possible, the intention is to refuse dogmatic ideas that resistance, to be legitimate, must work either within existent theories of human liberation or as an entirely new, 'universal' paradigm to overtly confront power at any place and time. Actions of resistance do not always require coordination or planning; and they normally evade direct confrontation with dominant powers. This conceptual aid comes from the notions of 'weapons of the weak' and 'hidden transcripts' developed by James Scott.

For the benefit of transcending the analysis of colonial relations in the form of fixed dichotomies, Bhabha seeks to underscore the notions of ambivalence, hybridity and mimicry as strategies to fracture the dominant discourse as well as to indicate new spaces for possible resistance. He has demonstrated that the dichotomist relations of coloniser versus colonised are

more complex and heterogeneous than what is implied by Fanon and Said, for instance. In this context, it is worth underscoring the originality of his theoretical approach in the postcolonial domain. To start, then, let us have a look at Bhabha's comprehension of the postcolonial.

According to the author, the critical field of postcolonialism provides evidence of the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation inherent in the competition for social and political control in the modern world order. Hence, postcolonial perspectives stem from 'the colonial testimony of Third World countries', as well as from the discourses of 'minorities' inside the geopolitical chart of East and West, North and South. Such perspectives intercede in the ideological discourses of modernity that try to give 'normality' to unequal developments and to distinct histories of peoples, nations, communities and races. These perspectives also devise their own critical reviews on questions of cultural difference, social authority and political discrimination to reveal antagonistic and ambivalent periods inside the 'rationalisations' of modernity (1994:171).

If we follow Bhabha's thread of reasoning, it could also be argued that such a critique aims to comprehend imperialism and its influences, bringing to light the new perspectives documented and put forward in the literature produced by the peoples once regarded as 'savages', 'primitives', 'uncultivated' and 'uncivilised', according to the old-fashioned imperialist taxonomy. The retrieval of alternative sources based on the cultural strength of the formerly-colonised peoples, the realisation of distortions produced by imperialism, and the condemnation of the continuation of such errors by the capitalist system are also objectives of the postcolonial critique. In short, in order to decentralise and question the practices of domination, such a critique aims to do away with the distortions and misrepresentations that imperial discourse has established so far.

One of the terms that have been attached to Bhabha's postcolonial theory is 'hybridity'. He uses it to speak of the interdependence and mutual construction of subjectivities of both coloniser and colonised. Bhabha introduces the concept of hybridity as 'a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other "denied" knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority' (1994:114). Hence the concept can be read as an objective part that articulates the colonial and native knowledge, and can enable *active* forms of resistance. Hybridity thus 'unsettles the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power but reimplicates its identifications in strategies of subversion that turn the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power' (Bhabha 1994:112). This backward-looking act can produce forms of resistance and subversion that turn discursive practices of domination into terrains of intervention.

Another key element in Bhabha's theory of hybridity is the argument that all declarations and cultural systems are built in a space he calls 'the Third Space of enunciation' (1994:37). According to him, a hybrid cultural identity does not constitute itself in a merely synthetic form in which the essence of one identity is blended with another. It is rather to be supposed that it originates from the double process of substitution and correspondence in cultural translation. Since all translation requires a certain degree of improvisation, the hybrid identity therefore does not stem from the transference of the familiar, but from the conscience of untranslatable pieces that lies in the translation. In a word, cultural identity always appears in this ambivalent and contradictory space, which makes untenable any affirmation of a hierarchic 'purity' of cultures.⁶ The recognition of this ambivalent space of cultural identity may be useful to surpass the vision of cultural diversity as something exotic. It makes possible the recognition of an empowering hybridity from which cultural difference can be understood in a constructive manner. So Bhabha's suggestion is that

It is significant that the productive capacities of this Third Space have a colonial or postcolonial provenance. For a willingness to descend into the alien territory... may reveal that the theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualizing an *international* culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*. To that end we should remember 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. It makes it possible to begin envisaging national, anti-nationalist histories of the 'people'. And by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves.

(Bhabha 1994:38-9, emphasis original)

In this regard it is quite exciting as well to think of resistance as interstitial practices of rebellion on the borders of cultural differences. 'Forms of popular rebellion and mobilization', in Bhabha's view, 'are often most subversive and transgressive when they are created through *oppositional cultural practices*' (1994:20, emphasis added). This enunciation is an important contribution to rethink the concept of resistance in this section. Since 'the enunciation of cultural difference problematizes the binary division of past and present, tradition and modernity' (1994:35), so should the enunciation of resistance, from a postcolonial perspective, problematise the binary opposites in which it is trapped. Resistance can no longer be identified and assessed as

⁶ 'Ambivalence' is a term that has been developed in psychoanalysis to mean an incessant fluctuation between the longing for both one thing and its opposite (Ashcroft *et al* 1998:12). Bhabha employs the concept of 'ambivalence' to describe complex mixtures of attraction and repulsion that characterises the relation between coloniser and colonised. The most important aspect of Bhabha's theory of ambivalence is the proposition that it serves to overcome the authority of colonial domination, disturbing thus the simple relation between coloniser and colonised (Ashcroft *et al* 1998:13).

the object of a stark moral or epistemological confrontation, to the same extent that cultural differences are not out there merely to be seen or appropriated. Otherwise the forging of models and the consequent negation of the 'other' will turn into a never-ending vicious circle. The understanding of resistance as a wide political process, and power relations as a space of negotiation and pulverisation of microphysical powers, brings about the perception that dominant discourses are also liable to rearrangement and compromise. 'The wider significance of the postmodern condition,' as Bhabha has it, 'lies in the awareness that the epistemological "limits" of those ethnocentric ideas are also the enunciative boundaries of a range of other dissonant, even dissident histories and voices' (1994:4-5). To speak of resistance from the viewpoint of dissident groups (women, colonised people, minority groups, the bearers of policed sexualities, and the like), and their subaltern histories or non-histories, implies rearticulating and rewriting such identities. This possibility is enabled by concepts such as 'in-between' and 'cultural interstices', which provide bordering spaces for differences and negotiation.

Bhabha therefore affords a new face to the notion of hybridity. The term is even an indication of the process in which the discourse of colonial authority attempts to translate the identity of the other into a singular category; yet it utterly fails and gives birth to something else. The interaction between the cultures of coloniser and colonised proceeds with the illusion of the existence of transferable forms and transparent knowledge, but it increasingly leads to some resistant, opaque and dissonant exchanges. Therefore, within this tension where the 'third space' appears, it is possible to think of effective forms of political change that go beyond the antagonistic dichotomy of dominators and dominated.

In brief, the concepts of hybridity and third space seem to make reference to a moment of defiance and resistance, thus questioning the validity of the essentialist logic of opposition between the polar sides of colonial dichotomy. As a result, they afford the possibility of a cultural policy that avoids the 'politics of polarity' between coloniser and colonised.

Bhabha's theorisation on hybridity brings, however, its own fundamental problems. Even though the author affirms his efforts to bring about a non-dichotomist form to explain cultural difference in modernity, the great irony is that the means he intends to employ to achieve such theoretical goals depends entirely, to be validated, on the structures he aims to pull down. For instance, hybridity obviously depends, to gain explanatory force, on the supposition of the existence of its antithesis. This not only implies a new set of dichotomist oppositions, but also engenders the peril that hybridity (and consequently the postcolonial identity or space it represents) will become essentialised. Besides that, especially to avoid polarities and emphasise

the contiguity and productive dynamics of 'cultural translation', Bhabha is forced to recognise that *all* cultures are impure, mixed and hybrid. In this sense, he maintains that 'all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity' (Bhabha 1990a:211). Likewise, as Said has observed in *Culture and imperialism* (1993), in the debate on politics of identity, in part because of the existence of empires, all cultures are in relation to each other, none are any longer unique and pure—they are all hybrids, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated and non-monolithic. The question that arises here, however, is that, if this is really the case, what is the use of concepts such as 'third space', 'hybridity' and 'in-between'? And how could they be conceived as specific postcolonial modes or spaces of cultural intervention? Although these are not points of discussion in this work, such questions are important in revealing some tensions and incongruities in Bhabha's theoretical approach to hybridity.⁷

As a matter of fact, the focus on the analytical complexity of relations between rulers and subordinates is not only made by rediscovering resistance, but also by qualifying the circumstances and forms in which the interaction of the parts maintains the relation. In this sense, rethinking resistance means making the effort to defy domination by means of unmasking and demystifying colonial discourse and authority, in order to recover or give space to plural identities and norms in a broadened space of debate. For this reason, it is necessary to rely on a revisionary strategy of *re-reading* the imperialist canonical works to unveil subjacent ideologies, as well as *re-writing* discourses of such works to question the Eurocentric assumptions upon which they are based.

This is why Bhabha acknowledges that an anticolonial discourse should never be 'read' only as an opposition to the coloniser's strategies, since such a discourse has to be more than merely 'the under/other side of "colonial discourse"', and that it 'requires an alternative set of questions, techniques and strategies in order to construct it' (1990:198). Accordingly, the anticolonial discourse does not exist isolated from or independently of the colonial discourse. As Bhabha illustrates in his essay *Of Mimicry and man*, mimicry has grown into a main strategy of the colonialist knowledge and power. Nonetheless, mimicry for him is not a mere emulation of the imperial ruler. Instead, it typifies the ambivalent relationship between both the coloniser and the colonised. This unavoidably happens because when imperial rulers exhort their colonised subalterns to 'mimic', the result is not necessarily the same. As Bhabha argues: 'mimicry represents an *ironic* compromise' which entails that 'colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite' (1994:86, emphasis

⁷ For a full debate on Bhabha's theories of hybridity see Moore-Gilbert (1997) and Loomba (1998).

original). From the colonised people's viewpoint, mimicry is about metamorphosing into the coloniser while remaining different. However, mimicry comprises a threatening aspect: it counts on the possibility of becoming mockery and parody. As the author points out, 'mimicry is at once resemblance and menace' (1994:86).

In other words, coloniser and colonised constitute two sides of the same coin, as long as both are constituted dialogically. This situation indeed reflects the deep ambivalence embedded in the condition of the colonised and, according to Bhabha's lesson, the reaction against the presence of the coloniser, which is 'half acquiescent, half oppositional, always untrustworthy' (1994:330). Moreover, as Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin affirm

Anticolonialism signifies the point at which the various forms of opposition become articulated as a resistance to the operations of colonialism in political, economic and cultural institutions. ... Paradoxically, Anticolonialist movements often expressed themselves in the appropriation and subversion of forms borrowed from the institutions of the colonizer and turned back on them. Thus the struggle was often articulated in terms of a discourse of Anticolonial 'nationalism' in which the form of the modern European nation-state was taken over and employed as a sign of resistance.

(Ashcroft *et al* 1998:14)

Thus what is hereafter innovative and crucial in both political and theoretical terms is to address resistance as a transcendence of discourses of originality and dichotomist opposites and to insert it into those effervescent processes of interchange generated in the articulation of cultural differences. Such 'in-between' spaces can offer after all 'the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular or communal—that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself' (Bhabha 1994:1-2).

In conclusion, by reading Bhabha's strategies of resistance we can at least retrieve a fundamental idea of cultural differences. Cultures serve as a means to broaden our conceptions and comprehensions of what life is, what the world is, what a human being is. This access to the 'other' or the 'different' can certainly contribute to our better living with ever-increasing cultural exchanges, not to make us feel much happier or wiser or more virtuous, but simply to aid us in taking a bit of worldly pleasure in looking beyond the borders. And such pleasure comes, to a certain degree, to redeem the inevitable mishaps of our condition.

Still regarding the topic of resistance, it is also necessary to consider the forms by which it expresses and gains significance, though being careful to avoid the fallacy of linking resistance actions to revolutionary acts. From this perspective of what resistance may be, this research is certainly indebted to the studies of James Scott. This author has been exploring strategies of everyday resistance to hegemonic power through examples from the age of slavery and colonisation across the world to present-day peasantry. He has made a valuable contribution towards the understanding that perhaps the great majority of subordinates are not interested in changing the broader structures of society, but rather, quoting Hobsbawm, 'working the system...to their minimum disadvantage' (1985:xv).

Taking a point of departure in a two-year study in a Malaysian village, James Scott's *Weapons of the weak* (1985) insists on the importance of understanding the 'everyday forms of peasant resistance—the prosaic but constant struggle between the peasantry and those who seek to extract labor, food, taxes, rents, and interest from them' (1985:xvi; emphasis original). Heed is paid to the simplicity of weapons employed by those relatively powerless: 'foot dragging, dissimulation, desertion, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so on' (1985:xvi). Underscoring these forms of resistance, the author raises some questions concerning the ethnocentrism that tends to look for—or privilege, among the dominated groups—classic manifestations of organisational and institutionalised expressions of resistance. On the other hand, as the author argues, on many occasions actions of resistance 'require little or no coordination or planning; they make use of implicit understandings and informal networks; they often represent a form of individual self-help; they typically avoid any direct, symbolic confrontation with authority' (1985:xvi).

In this sense, Scott's *Domination and the arts of resistance* (1990) has analysed the conflict between dominant and subordinate groups as a dramaturgy in which there are onstage and offstage performances. He distinguishes between 'public transcripts' and 'hidden transcripts' as a way to tell apart, respectively, the different discourses that are voiced in official and unofficial contexts. 'What may develop under such circumstances,' according to the author, 'is virtually a dual culture':

[T]he official culture filled with bright euphemisms, silences, and platitudes and an unofficial culture that has its own history, its own literature and poetry, its own biting slang, its own music and poetry, its own humor, its own knowledge of shortages, corruption, and inequalities that may...be widely known but that may not be introduced into public discourse.

(Scott 1990:51)

Refusing an essentialist explanation of the forms of domination, the author tries to elaborate a structural analysis in which he makes an effort to demonstrate that the structures of domination operate in a similar way when they are, by and large, subjected to the influences of the same factors. So James Scott distinguishes the public transcripts from the hidden transcripts and defines the first one as specific to a determined social space and a particular group of actors. In a broader sense, these transcripts also contain language acts and a wide range of social practices.

By definition, the hidden transcript represents discourse—gesture, speech, practices—that is ordinarily excluded from the public transcript of subordinates by the exercise of power. The practice of domination, then, *creates* the hidden transcript. If the domination is particularly severe, it is likely to produce a hidden transcript of corresponding richness. The hidden transcript of subordinate groups, in turn, reacts back on the public transcript by engendering a subculture and by opposing its own variant form of social domination against that of the dominant elite. Both are realms of power and interests.

(Scott 1990:27; emphasis original)

Within the social order the dominators seek to establish their hegemony and, conversely, the subordinates make an effort to resist somehow. Yet the latter does not dare to defy the condition of subordination openly; most probably they will create and defend positions through which they can express a marginal dissidence to the official discourse of power relations. This space where the subordinates try to resist in a subtle manner is what Scott denominates *hidden transcripts*. And so it is that hidden transcripts are constructed by members of the subordinate group in 'offstage' congregation to speak and act beyond observation by the dominators (1990:4). They carve out spaces for themselves so as to get hold of territories in which collective identities are constructed, and where alternative communities can be formed. These are what Scott calls '*off-stage social sites*' in which resistance is developed and codified, and where the 'hidden transcript grows' (1990:119, emphasis added). Hence, 'a resistant subculture or countermores among subordinates is necessarily a product of mutuality' (1990:119).⁸

The hidden transcripts are therefore specific to a determined social space and a particular group of persons such as, for instance, the black slaves in the United States who used to vent anger at their masters through songs, poems and, on certain occasions, small theatrical

⁸ Scott also explains that 'the hidden transcripts of dominant and subordinate are, in most circumstances, never in direct contact' (1990:15). As such, interactions between members of the opposite groups usually take place in the *public transcript*.

performances. So resistance takes place as a sort of performative reaction against domination, and the more threatening the power is, the thicker the mask worn by the subordinates. The hidden transcript exists only to the extent that it is practiced within marginalised social spaces. In these social spaces it is no longer necessary to repress retorts, hold back anger, or bite the tongue because one can speak freely and safely since there will not be reprisals. In such ways Scott explains the forms in which the subordinates struggle to survive in the world of domination, the forms through which they resist being dominated and at the same time seek to preserve their cultural and ideological roots. Hence the autonomous domination of the subalterns engenders an offstage site where the organisation of the dominated is possible.

As a matter of fact, the author refers to relations of domination using expressions extracted from the dramaturgical lexicon: onstage, offstage, dramaturgy of power relations and so on. He argues that any system of domination demands everyday continuity via small, routinised dramatisations of power. The accomplishment of the play depends on the façade of unanimity and consent between dominant and subordinate groups, so that it is crucial to sideline those who are not in accordance (1990:45-69). In this sense, Charles Tilly associates Scott's oeuvre with Goffman's as follows:

Scott's conception resembles that of Erving Goffman: two parties encountering each other, putting on a shared performance, simultaneously conspiring, concealing, and struggling. Meanwhile, behind the scenes, they communicate anxiously with others on their side and with themselves (Goffman, 1971). More so than Goffman, however, Scott emphasizes the continuity between onstage and offstage performance; although the public transcript disappears offstage except as an object of ridicule or bitterness, the hidden transcript persists in the wings. Indeed, it forms chiefly in the wings. Hence the necessity of scrutinizing everyday existence for clues to its character.

(Tilly 1991:597)

In the political, sociological and historical bibliography we find a great deal of investigations concerning the dominant groups and political elite (as in Max Weber, Emile Durkheim and John Stuart Mill, to mention a few). Rarely is the role of subordinates considered, since the common belief is that they play no role at all in political interactions other than being mere receptors of orders. And they must obey such orders if they intend to keep on performing in the societal playing field. This evidence adds even more value to the way Scott exposes chapter by chapter his propositions of a subaltern world where dominated groups come to the fore. So it is important to keep in mind Scott's quotation of Václav Havel in the beginning of the book:

Society is a very mysterious animal with many faces and hidden potentialities, and...it's extremely shortsighted to believe that the face society happens to be presenting to you at a given moment is its only true face. None of us knows all the potentialities that slumber in the spirit of the population.

(in Scott 1990: No page)

So at this point some questions arise: How can those people living under conditions of oppression survive? Does it make the revolution possible? Is there any sense for resistance in times when power holders keep other peoples' roles under fierce control? Scott gives some insightful perspectives to think of such questions within the power relation context. Beyond the apparent forms of hegemony, he follows up a discernment of everyday practices that are carried out behind public affairs: 'Every subordinate group creates, out of its ordeal, a "hidden transcript" that represents a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant' (1990:xii). Thus, he considers not the official discourses, but the procedures of linguistic disguises, hidden codes, employment of anonymity and intentional ambiguity, in order to unveil what he calls 'the art of resistance'.

Scott refutes, by contrast, the idea that disguised ideological aggression works as a vent because, 'while the dominant ideology does not entirely exclude the interests of subordinate groups, it operates to conceal or misrepresent aspects of social relations that, if apprehended directly, would be damaging to the interests of dominant elites' (1990:71-2). There is little or no conflict, what really exists are subtle and uncertain negotiations between oppressors and oppressed. In his reflexion about the existence of a false conscience, the author states that the thick version of a false consciousness occurs when 'a dominant ideology works its magic by persuading subordinate groups to believe actively in the values that explain and justify their own subordination', and the thin version of the false consciousness, on the other hand, 'maintains only that the dominant ideology achieves compliance by convincing subordinate groups that the social order in which they live is natural and inevitable' (1990:72).

If Scott's analysis lies almost exclusively upon the hidden transcript of the oppressed, he signals that dominators act in a codified way with their subordinated (to feed their high status and keep a cold distance from the subordinated). By contrast, dominators act among themselves with a freedom in which there are few conventions. In both cases the nature and form of relations between dominators and dominated change according to the interlocutors' status and the presence or not of witnesses.

The author points out that the notions of dignity and autonomy intervene directly to understand the complexity of social interrelations in the milieu of a stratified differentiation.

Human dignity is what is most affected by a situation of servitude, in which dominators have the power of life and death over their subordinates (1990:5-10). In contrast, a ritualised and routinised relation of domination tends to nourish a more elaborated construction of public transcript, upon which a wide range of suppositions and non-sayings intervene. When referring to the practice of subordination in this context, Scott affirms correctly that it 'produces...its own legitimacy, rather like Pascal's injunction to those who were without religious faith but who desired it to get down on their knees five times a day to pray, and the acting would eventually engender its own justification in faith' (1990:10).

When power relations are most acute, the hidden transcript is most autonomous and hegemony is less significant. Those who try to use Scott's conceptions in other milieus, where power relations are not as precise and axiomatic, will have to settle upon a purpose of how to decide which power relations are important in the political context. This semantic vagueness certainly sets a limit to Scott's analytical scope regarding the principles and strategies of domination and resistance. Even though, at the level of inter- and intra-group relations we could say that coexists a social or classist differentiation based upon an interdependent relation of domination/submission, as well as an unequal relation of interdependence between master and slave. In order for domination and reproduction of domination to exist it is necessary that certain unanimity exists inside the groups. The structure of domination requires a minimum of homogeneity within the oppressor group. Enforced submission generates acts and behaviours that allow the reproduction of submission patterns when domination is no longer enforced. Moreover, it produces a counter-reaction to such attitudes. On the other hand, in order to resist, the dominated must develop implicitly and explicitly a nexus of solidarity that goes with creating cohesion and unity. Yet if '[s]olidarity among subordinates...is achieved at all, is thus achieved, paradoxically, only by means of a degree of conflict' (1990:131).

This happens due to the fact that, in some cases, the dominated produce an internal hierarchy as arbitrary as that which the dominators inflict on them. In reality, '[r]esistance...originates not simply from material appropriation but from the pattern of personal humiliations that characterize that exploitation' (1990:111-112). Therefore, after speaking of two antagonist classes, it would be more reasonable to refer to two vertical structures that are interrelated by characters such as overseers, butlers, tattlers... This means that a certain power of watchfulness and coercion is given to some individuals who initially belong to the dominated group.

Likewise, the structure of domination does not manifest itself merely through the discursive and non-discursive practices of dominant and dominated, but also through key characters situated on the border of the social universe. These figures of mediation are called upon to play a determinant role in the reproduction of a distinction order because they have, variably according to each case, access to the two worlds. By contrast: 'Inferiors who actually assemble at their own initiative are typically described as mobs or rabble' (1990:46).

Resistance against ideology thus requires a negation, the invention of a counter-ideology whose purpose is to bear a normative system of defence of the identity and dignity of the oppressed. This subculture does not lie only upon the application of codes and rules. Scott has argued in *Weapons of the weak* that any hegemonic ideology produces within itself the raw materials for clash and contradiction (1985:336). So a kind of anti-hegemonic political consciousness develops in the exclusive spaces of subordinates: they assure freedom of speech and the security of those who speak there. They explore 'niches' of autonomy (night, holidays, taverns, fairs, secluded places, carnivals...) to find again their dignity as people, as well as the subordinated group.

The powerless groups negate and also turn upside down the dominant ideology through a discursive reconstruction process that may become part of a political action (rightful defence) or a religious action (reference to the Old Testament, practice of spiritual possession cults, and even the creation of messianic movements). Although Scott does not mention it, there is also a minority of actors who explore their situation of being dominated to their own benefit; an example of this would be minorities or disenfranchised groups that seek to redress politics in order to attain positions of power in the social hierarchy.

From the account thus far, the fantasies of subordinates constitute after all a reaction, almost a vital impulse, to survive adverse conditions. Far from being incapable to envisage political change, powerless groups 'have typically learned...to clothe their resistance and defiance in ritualisms of subordination that serve both to disguise their purposes and to provide them with a ready route of retreat that may soften the consequences of a possible failure' (1990:96). The jokes, gossip and rumours are symbolic weapons of resistance that allow the dominated to overwhelm what Scott calls the 'frustration of reciprocal action', which means an obliged acceptance of a situation of total inequality. 'Without the sanctions imposed by power relations, subordinates would be tempted to return a blow with a blow, an insult with an insult, a whipping with a whipping, a humiliation with a humiliation' (1990:38); yet the subordinates are more prone to employ symbolic weapons. Among them Scott distinguishes the elementary disguises

(anonymity, euphemisms, grumbling) from the elaborated (oral culture, popular stories, engravings, carnival). Thus, the subordinates undertake the task of inventing forms of symbolic resistance that are quite difficult to contend with, such as gossip and rumours. The lower ranks use language subversively as a defence weapon: they handle ambiguities and double meaning discourses. This codified reconstruction of language that we could denominate as a cryptology of survival rests upon the shared use of ambiguities and double meaning discourses, which gives enough room for misinterpretation.

The hidden transcript is a self-revelation which power relations usually exclude from official discourse, given that subordinate groups defy 'elaborate ideologies that justify inequality, bondage, monarchy, caste, and so on'; and for this reason 'resistance to ideological domination requires a counterideology—a negation—that will effectively provide a general normative form to the host of resistant practices invented in self-defence by any subordinate group' (1990:118). Scott adds something important to this discussion when he argues that '[t]he elaboration of hidden transcripts depends not only on the creation of relatively unmonitored physical locations and free time but also on active human agents who create and disseminate them' (1990:123). So it is important to recall here the role of 'social bridges' which are there to be played by artists, hawkers, bards, diviners, gypsies, nomads, performers and those whose professional activities lead them to travelling. These are people who can successfully reformulate the hidden transcript of the dominated as well as channel their longings to the point of becoming representatives of the subordinated. When representatives appear in such a charismatic leadership phenomenon, usually through prophetic visions and scatological images, they make public the hidden transcript of the dominated. When transgressing the established order, these leaders put their lives at risk though.

Indeed, making public a part of the hidden transcript is a form of trespassing the established order and this exposes the self to severe retaliation. At the same time, however, this act of freedom that consists in saying publicly what oppressors forbid telling is an act that liberates oneself. Scott therefore states correctly that the hidden transcript relies not only on unmonitored physical sites, but also on active human agents who produce and disseminate them (1990:123). So a resistant subculture is essentially a product of mutuality.

2.4 Assumption: Employing the Postcolonial Arts of Resistance to Unveil Ideological, Mythic Discourse

In a nutshell, the conditions and events to which the colonial subjects were subjected from the first moments of colonisation until the present time constitute the manure of colonial discourse. Such discourse is pervasive and persists to date. Now the focus of this research is the revised practice of resistance, which is openly or covertly presented in most postcolonial texts and reveals not only the colonised subject's redress, but also ambiguities and fragmentation in the coloniser. Acts of resistance mean not only breaking through the puppet play of imperial power, but also searching for non-repressive alternatives to the official discourse which such acts engage with. For the purpose of having a theoretical path to go along, I will name these strategies of subversion, which encapsulate the most direct and subtlest forms of confrontation, as *postcolonial arts of resistance*. And bearing these points in mind, the goal in this work is not to substitute the force of colonial discourse for a stronger anticolonial discourse, but rather to establish an agonist process where the apparent authority and certainty of the colonial, dominant discourse are questioned, subverted, sabotaged, satirised, decentred and destabilised through comments and analysis on a contemporary corpus of postcolonial/postapartheid poetry. And the postcolonial domain here looks for forms of doing away with binary relations between coloniser and colonised, dominators and subordinates, insisting on a revisionary, reconstructive and resistant role.

A theory of resistance inside the context of postcolonial critique and literature should pay special heed to the reformulation of four questions: against what? (the nature of power exercise within the modern state and the current international society); to what end? (the nature of human liberation that is pursued, including the relation between resistance and psychological distress); with what strategies? (the relation between reformist and radical resistance); and what is the role of the postcolonial state in resistance? (the state as a plural, fragmented and unstable territory). Even if this study does not contemplate a detailed analysis of these questions, they can be useful to identify some of the possible inspirations of resistance in the works of Linton Kwesi Johnson and Lesego Rampolokeng.

It is also crucial to stress that traces of resistance can be found in contemporary postcolonial texts produced by colonial subjects educated in their homelands or in former colonial metropolises. In fact, such traces have become increasingly evident since the post-independence period, as long as these authors decided to re-examine the metropolitan literature and assumed engaged literature as the consonant expression of their culture and subjectivity. In the field of resistance poetry, for instance, we can mention names such as Assata Shakur (USA/Cuba), Claude McKay (Jamaica/USA), Elisa Lucinda (Brazil), Françoise James Ousénie Loe-Mie (Guyana), John Agard (Guyana/UK), Victoria Santa Cruz (Peru), among many others. In addition, as Veit-Wild has it, Dambudzo Marechera's and Lesego Rampolokeng's 'violation of culturally defined limits' does not stand alone:

There is a host of African writers—Taban lo Liyong, Nuruddin Farah, Bessie Head, Kojo Laing, Ben Okri, Sony Labou Tansi, Mia Couto, to name a few—who have transcended the realist mode of writing and employed new stylistic methods and narrative perspectives. These writers attempt to take the syncretic reality of postcolonial experience into account, while putting monolithic, obsolete and repressive notions of national unity into question. They have made it clear that the nationalistic image of Africa to which many of us still refer is not only outdated, but extremely dangerous. While discourses of identity still had a progressive, critical function during the colonial period, they have in the postcolonial era been used by the new black elites to justify and stabilise their autocratic power. It is within this terrain that a postcolonial carnivalisation of literature locates its interventions.

(Veit-Wild 1999:102)

For the purposes of this critical analysis, the postcolonial condition and inscription are evident in the writings of LKJ and Rampolokeng, as well as the events they deal with. The other objective of this research, which has been done thus far, is to query the notion of resistance and how it occurs in the postcolonial poetic events—i.e. how the colonial subjects objectified by the coloniser reconstruct their subjectivity and re-assume autonomy and agency. This work is justified by the fact that, to date, the emergence of postcolonial literature and criticism has brought about a great change in the way questions related to contemporary history are approached. Moreover, the development of postcolonial theory has provided a new literary aesthetic to reread and reinterpret several canonical literary works, mostly those written in French, English, Portuguese and Spanish.

This happens because several of the texts traditionally read merely as Western representations of the colonial world are now considered as examples of models for the historical process of colonisation. From this perspective, they are now studied as colonial constructions of meaning. The postcolonial aim is therefore to understand how the Western writers used to

represent and appropriate, in a manner 'coherent' to Western eyes, those incomprehensible realities with which they were confronted in the non-Western world (Spurr 1993, Said 1993).

In this regard, the postcolonial critique should analyse not only what is uttered, but also and especially what is omitted or muted in the text. One of the proposals of this investigation is thus to lay bare the ideological content of colonial discourse. In this regard it is important to bear in mind that ideologies, according to Althusser, are composed of omissions, and thus appear in a masked form. 'One of the effects of ideology,' he argues, 'is the practical *denegation* of the ideological character of ideology by ideology: ideology never says, "I am ideological"' (Althusser 1971:29; emphasis original). Thus postcolonial criticism should base itself on a methodology that is able to reveal what is conscious or explicit in the text, as well as what is unconscious, which means: what counts as ideological disguise.

Therefore this approach has the key role of shaking the grounds of meanings and myths inserted in the hegemonic discourse, blending and remixing the substrata of texts because, according to Edward Said:

It is in the logic of myths, like dreams, exactly to welcome radical antitheses. For a myth does not realize or solve problems. It represents them as already analysed and solved; that is, it presents them as already assembled images, in the way a scarecrow is assembled from bric-a-brac and then made to stand for a man.

(Said 2003:312)

And:

Mythic language is discourse, that is, it cannot be anything but systematic; one does not really make discourse at will, or statements in it, without first belonging—in some cases unconsciously, but at any rate involuntarily—to the ideology and institutions that guarantee its existence. These latter are always the institutions of an advanced society dealing with a less advanced society, a strong culture encountering a weak one. The principal feature of mythic discourse is that it conceals its own origins as well as those of what it describes.

(Said 2003:321)

If, within the realm of theory, postcolonial criticism aims to unveil ideological substrates through anti-discursive practices, there evidently exist in the realm of such literature texts that reveal an engaged nature. These are texts that, counter-arguing a hegemonic discourse based on Eurocentric ideology, attempt to destabilise stereotyped meanings by bringing to the front line characters subjugated under the colonial power. However, such characters do not accept their

degrading situation, and they are insurgents by means of strategies of resistance. This is a particular characteristic of texts whose authors focus especially on identity and subjectivity of the colonial subject who, once silenced by the coloniser, conquers now voice and struggle in defence of his/her own cultural expression.

Let us now turn to the following two chapters that seek to analyse, respectively, the works of Linton Kwezi Johnson and Lesego Rampolokeng. Lets us see how these two postcolonial and postapartheid poets can make their contribution to promote strategies of resistance to and deconstruction of such colonialist myths and old-fashioned representations.

University of Cape Town

In this chapter, I will proceed first by briefly introducing a biographical account of Linton Kwesi Johnson and the intellectual trends that shape his work, covering issues such as his moving from Jamaica to England, dub music and poetry, the socio-political concern of his work and so on. Then I will go on to read some critical works on his poems and thereafter I offer my own analysis clearly foregrounding the issue of strategies to write over the rules of standard English; the deterritorialised Caribbeanness and the diasporic movements towards a hybridisation of Great Britain; the depiction of public spaces populated by migrants and the working class dealing with state violence, unemployment and racism; and finally, the support of social movements, forms of popular rebellion and mobilisation, and differing hybrid identities as reversal discourse to hegemonic power.

3.1 A Short Account of the Poet's Life and Work

Linton Kwesi Johnson was born on 24 August 1952 in Chapelton, a locality of Clarendon, Jamaica, and initially lived with his parents in Kingston and then with his grandmother in the countryside.⁹ At the age of 11, he moved to England to join his mother, who had immigrated earlier to look for a better job and live in Brixton, South London. He attended Tulse Hill high school and Goldsmith College, University of London, where he obtained a degree in Sociology in 1973. While still a student, during the early 1970s, he started to appreciate poetry and soon joined the Black Panther Youth league, a militant and Black Nationalist group inspired by the US Black Power movement of the late 1960s. While in this movement he helped to organise poetry training

⁹ These biographical details are largely based on Chevalier (1991), Davis and Simon (1982), Dawson (2006), Hitchcock (1993) and Johnson (2006).

courses in association with Rasta Love, a grouping of drummers and poets with whom LKJ produced some of the poems that were released in his first album *Dread Beat an' Blood* (1978). The connections in this political and cultural environment provided LKJ with the inspiration and commitment to write his poetry and perform it publicly. LKJ's verses make witty use of the unpatterned dictation of Jamaican Creole blended with the dub style. His poetry usually entails the reciting of his own verses over dub music, and its discursive contexts are significantly influenced by political activity and social engagement.

His poetry first appeared in the magazine *Race Today*, a publication of Race Today Collective which, under the leadership of LKJ's friend Darcus Howe, has become a leading force in British with a radical black political orientation, and for which LKJ became an official member and arts editor by 1976. Through this publication, he launched his first collection of poetry, *Voices of the Living and the Dead* (1974; it includes a play). His second collection, *Dread Beat An Blood*, was published in 1975. The following years saw the release of *Inglan is a Bitch* (1980) and *Tings an Times* (1991). LKJ's best known sound recordings comprise his debut semi-album *Poet and Roots* (1977), and then the first full-length record edition *Dread Beat an' Blood* (1978), followed by *Foras of Victory* (1979), *Bass Culture* (1980), *Making History* (1984), *In Concert with the Dub Band* (1985), *Tings an' Times* (1991) and *More Time* (1998). Throughout these records, we find classics of dub poetry performance—and, in fact, of reggae itself—such as *Dread Beat an Blood*, *Independent Intavenshan*, *Inglan is a Bitch*, *New Craas Massahkah*, *Sonny's Lettah* and *Want fi goh Rave*. LKJ was a discerning activist and his track *All Wi Doin Is Defendin* accurately foresees the Brixton riots in 1981. Regarding the beginning of LKJ's career, Ashley Dawson comments as follows:

LKJ was quickly immersed in the radical currents that circulated throughout the black and Asian diasporic world at the time. The Black Panthers, whose youth wing he joined while still attending secondary school, exposed LKJ to the fertile blend of socialist political-economic analysis and black consciousness that characterizes the internationalist strands of the black radical tradition. In addition, as a young member of the Caribbean Artists Movement (CAM) in London during the early 1970s, LKJ participated in the groundbreaking debates that took place within that organization concerning the appropriate forms and themes of artistic production among members of the Caribbean exile community in Britain. Popular culture acquired increasing significance as these artists struggled, under the weight of the increasingly incendiary political events of the period, to forge a role for themselves as artists and popular leaders.

(Dawson 2006:54)

The greatest part of LKJ's poetry is politically oriented, and one of the topics he chiefly addresses in his writing is the experience of being a black Briton and a West-Indian descendant in London. Apart from his ethnic-racial and diasporic concerns, he has also dealt with other issues

such as British foreign policy and support for the working-class British community. His most famous poems were composed during the Thatcher era. These poems give vivid accounts of the alleged routine police violence against minorities occurring at the time, as in the case of the death of Clement Blear Peach, a New Zealander special-needs schoolteacher who became a symbol of resistance and anti-racist struggle.¹⁰

Reggae fi Peach

everywhere yu goh it's di tak af di day
everywhere yu goh yu hear people say
dat di Special Patrol dem are murder, murder
wi cant make dem get noh further
...
kaw dem kill Blear Peach, di teacher

(Johnson 1998: disc 1, track 17; transcription mine)

During the 1980s he dedicated much of his efforts to journalistic writing, working closely with *Race Today*. Among many cultural activities, LKJ has promoted international poetry readings and concerts, narrated his 10-part radio serial about Jamaican folk music for BBC Radio 1 called 'From Mento to Lovers Rock', and also presented a BBC television documentary on Carifesta called 'From Brixton to Barbados'. One of only two living poets to have had a Penguin Classics collection devoted to his work, LKJ in 2004 was elected as an Honorary Visiting Professor at Middlesex University in London. Since the late 1970s the author has received awards and honours including fellowships and prizes. In 2005, he was honoured with the silver Musgrave medal from the Institute of Jamaica for distinguished reputation in the art of poetry.

¹⁰ Kozain mentions that one of the poems of note on *Bass Culture* is 'Reggae fi Peach', 'a lament in memory of Blair Peach, an anti-racist activist killed by police in South Hall, April 1979, during demonstration protesting against National Front activities' (1994:97).

3.2 Critical Readings of Linton Kwesi Johnson's Poetry

In a recent newspaper interview, journalist Nicholas Wroe begins with the following comments about the importance of LKJ's poetry in changing the attitude of British teenagers in the late 1970s:

Thirty years ago, it was not uncommon to encounter white, middle-class suburban and provincial teenagers wearing badges that proclaimed "SMASH THE SPG". The primary spark for their opposition to the Metropolitan Police's Special Patrol Group and its role in policing London's immigrant communities came from the work of Linton Kwesi Johnson. When the SPG was eventually disbanded in 1986, it was under a deluge of public condemnation. It is not too outlandish to suggest that Johnson's poetry and music shaped that opinion: so much for Auden's claim that "poetry makes nothing happen".

(Wroe 2008:[Online])

As a matter of fact, it is not prudent to place all the weight of LKJ's influence in his writing solely, because his music has been also very important in spreading his work. As he declares in an interview:

People already knew me as a poet before the first record, and when the record came out my audience, of course, increased dramatically, because a lot of people who wouldn't have bothered to maybe come to a poet reading, or even buy a book, *were attracted to the music*. And I rationalised it by saying that with these records at least I am trying to reach a wider audience, trying to bring poetry to a music audience. But I suppose one is fooling oneself with that because, at the end of the day, most people who buy records buy them for the music rather than the poetry.

(in Caesar 1996:67, emphasis added)

A couple of words may therefore be required to describe the influence of dub music on LKJ's poetry. Indeed, critical analyses of LKJ's verses are often associated with the study of dub poetry.

Rhythm and poetry were blended to generate not only a prominent music style known as rap music, but also another one, less known to audiences, so-called dub poetry. By the late 1970s, a new poetic movement, related to students of the Jamaica School of Drama, had emerged. Dub poetry was the label given to the new style of verse that reflected a revival of orality in Caribbean 'sound' poetry, and is commonly referred to as a kind of poetic recital or performance art that

mixes (usually politically oriented) rhymes with an instrumental basis on reggae music. Dub is instrumental reggae with various sound mixing effects (echoes, loops, reverberation, vocal bites, et cetera) replacing the removed lead vocal track. Like in rap and techno music, it challenges the ideology of the artist as original creator or performer. And dub poetry lays down a voice closely allied to the beat of the reggae rhythm (Hitchcock 1993).

The famous exponents of and influences on this genre are Oku Onuora, Malachi Smith, Poets-in-Unity, M'bala, Jean Binta Breeze, Linton Kwesi Johnson, Benjamin Zephaniah, Mutabaruka, Brian Meeks and Michael Smith. The Jamaican poet Oku Onuora, according to Stewart Brown, is considered the inventor of the term 'dub poetry' so as to portray a sort of oral art that had been developing in Jamaica since the early 1970s (1987:51). He characterises the dub style as poetry with a built-in reggae rhythm since even when the poem is read out with no backing reggae song, it is possible to distinguish the reggae rhythm emerging from the poem. Afterwards, Oku Onuora made that definition more comprehensive and included all types of music-influenced poetry in the label of dub poetry. Hitchcock (1993) nevertheless tells us that LKJ claims to have coined the term in that period, contradicting Brown's contention that 'dub poetry' was first used by Oku Onuora in 1979. But above all it is important to bear in mind that 'most West Indian poets resist easy classification, even in terms of style, shifting across boundaries of the oral and the literary, the private and the public, as the poems they are writing demand' (Brown and McWatt 2005:xix).

Being forged from signs of violence immanent to the crisis connected with conflicts of racial and cultural difference, dub poetry discourse emerged with the question of what out-of-the-native-land intercultural initiation represented to the West Indian diaspora. For that reason, it has obliged British nationalist selfhood to face its postcolonial history. Being related to forms of cultural identification and disjunctive temporalities experienced by West Indian immigrants in political-economic centres of power, dub poetry is a voice trying to subvert the kind of rationality that has hindered the displacement to and relocation of hybrid signs in the metropolitan areas. Furthermore, it has fired a poetic and political question at British nationalism, exposing the rejection or incapacity of this nationalist model to articulate heterogeneity, a distinctive aspect of the postcolonial population.

Donnell and Welsh, quoting Braithwaite, consider that the genre dub poetry was 'one of the most exciting developments to emerge from the "explosion of grassroots artistic/intellectual activity" in the late 1960s and 1970s' (1996:18). These authors explain that the great names of this poetic style, as those above-mentioned, 'were strongly influenced by Rastafarianism and the

politics of an ascendant black power movement on both sides of the Atlantic' (1996:18). In the case of an increasing presence of this sort of poetry in Britain, the main reason was that

Although dub poetry had specific roots in Jamaican popular culture, it also found fertile soil in the newly militant atmosphere and confrontational politics of 1970s Britain; the 'touch-paper' of two decades of discrimination against blacks in Britain being lit with the sparks of high black (especially youth) unemployment and the perception of heightened police intolerance and brutality in urban multi-racial areas.

(Donnell and Welsh 1996:18)

In such cases, shall we see, LKJ's writings played a pioneering role in relation to the conflictive scenario affecting West Indian immigrants in Brixton and London, as his poetry (especially the 1970s verses) was particularly intended to provide evidence of this environment of discrimination and violent incident. As the poet himself makes known in an interview:

My initial impetus to write was political—from the very beginning—it wasn't a need to clear things of my chest or to, in any way, express any profound, deep inner emotion or anything like that. From the very beginning I saw myself as giving voice to, and documenting, the experiences of my generation.

(in Caesar 1996:66-7)

Hence LKJ's poetic career has been dedicated to express his community's anger and frustrations, hopes and aspirations, first within the Black Panthers and then with the Race Today Collective. Although Donnell and Welsh recognise LKJ's pioneering voice and great influence in confronting a pervasively, visibly racist British society, they are also aware of the fact that the oppositional and subversive stance assumed in LKJ's early verses 'has not always worked in favour of the reception of dub poetry' (1996:18). As they argue, 'it has enacted to "muddy the waters" of any critical appreciation by instigating the notion that dub poetry dealt only in the kind of protest rhetoric' (1996:18). This perception has hindered, for instance, the appreciation of dub poetry as a fully fledged literary form, and it has been sidelined by a great deal of literary critics.

The Jamaican critic and writer Mervyn Morris (1997) looks at the poetic styles elaborated by singers who employ dub music. He recalls that Linton Kwesi Johnson's work is clearly influenced by the lyricism of this style both in his poems and dub songs. As a result, singers who belong to such a musical genre have to be considered on the whole as poets. He underlines that according to Oku Onuora, dub poetry can use the whole gamut of rhythmic styles originating in Africa. The author estimates that dub singers wish to inspire themselves with all musical styles,

including European ones. Morris furthermore makes an analysis of the impact of musical performance on dub songs. Accordingly, as time has gone by the concept of dub has encapsulated a literary style widely based on principles of traditional ballads, heroic poems and many other contemporary oral genres such as pop songs, folk and protest songs, and especially reggae music.

As Bhabha argues, 'it is the space of intervention emerging in the cultural interstices that introduces creative invention into existence' (1994:9); so dub poetry can be distinguished as a 'performance of identity as iteration, the re-creation of self in the world of travel, the resettlement of borderline community of migration' (1994:9). Also because, as Frantz Fanon puts it in *Black skin, white masks*: 'I am my own foundation. And it is by going beyond the historical, instrumental hypothesis that I will initiate the cycle of my freedom' (1986:231). In this sense, LKJ's poetry helps to disclose a key and interesting dimension to the concept of creolisation, especially the creolisation of language, as long as his writing raises questions about what composes the relationship between vernacular/official versus Creole languages, constructions of self-narratives and self-ethnographies, discourses of subversion and resistance in the Caribbean migration/diaspora.

By making an effort to give a voice to a community forged on the borders of privation and marginalisation, dub poetry is composed of a deeply antagonistic and conflictive nature (as most of the legitimate claims made from the minorities' perspective). This poetic genre affirms the existence of an insurgent and interstitial culture through the performance of a migrant voice; a voice coming from the margin of the empire, coming out of endurance, to make itself socially, culturally and historically visible in a hostile, excluding modern world. Consequently, the zenith of aspirations in this literary art is to reach a space of social articulation of differences, contributing to redefine the British ideal of community and society because, as Bhabha puts it:

When historical visibility has faded, when the present tense of testimony loses its power to arrest, then the displacements of memory and the indirections of art offer us the image of our psychical survival. To live in the unhomely world, to find its ambivalences and ambiguities enacted in the house of fiction, or its sundering and splitting performed in the work of art, is also to affirm a profound desire for social solidarity. 'I am looking for the join . . . I want to join . . . I want to join.'

(Bhabha 1994:18)

From the viewpoint of 'interstitial perspective', dub poetry heats up the debate on solidarity, social, historical and ideological limits of the community understood as a system

resulting from contiguous transmissions of historical and cultural traditions. Therefore, dub poetry aims to be considered as a sign of the rising of a community whose revisionist spirit reconstructs current political conditions, as long as it depicts a social scenario where there is an open possibility of acceding to or preserving the difference, without entailing the hazard of an implicit reaffirmation of a Western dogma of universality.

This debate brings us again to the question of domination, alterity and otherness, which reveals the strategies used to subject the colonised/dominated/subaltern/powerless through degrading stereotypes and usurpation. However, things do not occur necessarily in this sequence of events. The intervention and resistance are processes that disclose the way the subject groups fight back against the hegemonic power by means of what is theoretically termed as *mimicry*, *parody*, *slip civility*, *weapons of the weak*, albeit without direct confrontation or explicit violence in many cases. Thus the subjugated (namely in the specific case here West Indian immigrants) may reinstate themselves in the position of subjects of their own reality. The hegemonic power reaction when being decentralised is usually based on violent counter-resistance and strategies of division among the insurgent group, as Fanon argues in *The Wretched of the earth*. Again, shall we see, this is not necessarily a rule and that sometimes fruitful compromise may occur between power holders and subordinated groups.

Dub poetry and reggae music are interesting examples of how all these phenomena occur, as long as such artistic trends bring colonial subjects to the forefront, as protagonists, and look for an autonomous discourse that joins colonialist and colonised forces in an environment of commitment that inspires and looks forward to democratic liberty. Thus, the colonial and postcolonial encounters do not always lead to blood, death and tragedy; they can also precipitate scenarios of two-way exchange and constructive agreement.

As for the concept of creolisation, it gains a special and thoughtful contribution in LKJ's lively poetic style since his writing looks at the Caribbean and its social and cultural body beyond the boundaries of geographical circumscription as well as racial, linguistic and nationalist determinisms. Thus his work explores the construction of self in the interstices of domination and resistance, coloniser and colonised, oppression and subversion in accordance with the view that "in-between" spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular or communal—that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself' (Bhabha 1994:1-2). As a result, the poet's discourse dovetails with works that look through and analyse Caribbean nationalism and its relation to Creole identities, cultural hybridity, and the importance of creolisation to diaspora

studies. Here Shalini Puri's *The Caribbean postcolonial* (2004) plays an important role in the disciplinary imagination of postcolonial and cultural studies.

Puri underscores the impasses of non-comparison and non-elucidation of multiples pros and cons that characterise the Caribbean region and its literatures. Her study seeks to interpret social performances along the range of West Indian practices and identities (manifestos, novels, national languages...) not only to take on some of the ways in which hybridity is recognised, depicted and praised in West Indian theory production, but also to demonstrate how interpretative communities in the region contribute to the creation of both official and unofficial recitals and accounts of their own history. Shalini Puri charges postcolonial debate with sidelining West Indies and the central position of its cultural hybridism as its prevalent condition. Puri's discussion does not only try to remedy this mainstream denial of the Caribbean, but also exhibits its effects for the cross-examination of hybridity's poetics and politics.

Moreover, throughout the last decades, one of the predominant trends in cultural studies has been the practice of putting away essentialist discourses on race and nationality and turning the focus on the dynamics of a hybrid socio-cultural legacy. Such a perspective comes especially from the historical interchange of multiple heritages that are repeatedly fragmented and recreated to accommodate new configurations. Examples of studies addressing these questions are Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* (1993), Brent Edwards' *The Practice of diaspora* (2003) and again Shalini Puri's *The Caribbean postcolonial*. By and large, such authors tackle the problematic around the violence in the Atlantic crossing, black transnational culture and the huge ethnic heritages brought from the African continent to re-elaborate, transform and be transformed in the New World.

The poet Linton Kwesi Johnson is aware of this multi-faceted culture and its tensioned reality, and he uses his work to make a draft of the official history and show its interstices and lapses. The poet does not deny the so-called classic culture, but he revisits and rewrites it, subverting it by inserting his diasporic, Afro-Caribbean experience into it. For this reason, his writing is sometimes ambiguous and can present aspects of Jamaican oral tradition, concerns for civil rights and minority struggles, as well as rhythmic inspiration from reggae music. That is why his literary style is conventionally labelled as 'dub poetry'.

For some critics LKJ is considered the pioneer of dub poetry. And his quest for a *sui generis* poetic style has acquired a key significance since his dub poems have given a voice to the oppressed and expressed concerns about riots and confrontations. Hence, he has inspired black Britons and other minorities in England to stand up against police brutality and fight for their

rights. Attached to the rhythm of reggae music, dub poetry then turns into a strategy of resistance and a weapon of liberation. The diasporic experience, however, will invariably let the West Indian subject know that he/she is a distinctive kind of creature in the social order, or the Other, which means that when it comes to talk about 'human rights', other kinds of people have been addressed historically.

Nonetheless, the eight dub poems that comprise the seminal 1978 work *Dread Beat an Blood* have a clear-cut political vision and LKJ, as Kozain points out, 'calls attention to and asserts, in a defiant and confrontational manner, the presence of black West Indians in Britain' (1994:84). This radical change of viewpoint certainly contributed to a definitive transformation of the image of West Indian Diasporans in the English metropolis. In this sense, Bruce King (2004:108-109) states that LKJ played a decisive role in the consolidation of a marked diction and language within black British poetry. Furthermore, he helped to consolidate the idea that West Indians were not only immigrants living in England, but were in fact legally and historically British citizens. This stance made it clear that political dialogue would not be enough to change the white British population's attitude towards the blacks, and thus the necessity for a constant battle against the hegemonic social order.

LKJ also explores an apparent lack of confidence in his work in a humorous manner in one of his key poems. Robert McGill finding 'troubling taxonomies' in LKJ's 'If I Woz a Tap-Natch Poet' points out how the poem 'explores its own slippery position in relation to the polarities of music and poetry, of "high" art and popular culture, of politics and aesthetics' (2003:561). According to McGill, the text is aware not only of dub poetry's debarment from the literary canons, but also of its potential to assimilate itself into those canons and even change them. For him, both literary canons and LKJ's persona come out as visualised formations that call upon, intermingle and remodel one another. The poet then exploits the poem's indefiniteness to make himself a subtle subject within the canonical milieu, unable to be situated, subverting the classificatory stratagem to which canons are attached (2003:561).

if I woz a tap-natch poet
like Chris Okigbo
Derek Walcott
ar T. S. Eliot
...

I woodah write a poem
soh rude
an rootsy
an subversive
dat it mek di goon poet

McGill furthermore analyses how LKJ's dub poetry defies the stability of (US-European) literary canons themselves by emphasising 'the imaginative, subjunctive aspect of subjectivity—who he *might be*—undermines the taxonomical strategies which they might use to decide who he is' (2003:564; emphasis original).

It is not surprising, then, that while various institutions and anthologies have dismissed dub as something less than poetry, others would accuse dub poets as 'selling out' and having 'degenerated mento, ska and reggae'. Gilroy condemns such attitudes, which imply that to have 'mixed' is 'to have been party to a great betrayal. Any unsettling traces of hybridity must be excised from the tidy, bleached-out zones of impossibly pure culture.' Preferring routes to roots, Johnson operates in what Homi Bhabha calls the 'interstitial passage between fixed identifications'. By oscillating between the third-person goon poet and the subjunctive toponotch one, Johnson offers no single subject position.

(McGill 2003:564)

Now let us turn our discussion to the examination of some of Linton Kwesi Johnson's poems and look at the importance of this writer in promoting strategies of resistance by combining aesthetics and politics in the guise of dub poetry.

3.3 Diaspora, Differrence and Grassroots Movement in Linton Kwesi Johnson's Poems

It is beyond the scope of this analytical study to look at all poems of Linton Kwesi Johnson in detail, as time and space permit only the examination of a few examples of his work. This research will therefore try to do its best to cover LKJ's classic poems in three different decades: the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. The rationale for carrying out a debate on a selected corpus of his poems will be considered through the following aspects: firstly, the poetic strategies by which the formalisms of standard English language are deconstructed (this is an aspect that has been to some extent discussed in the work of both LKJ and Rampolokeng, so my purpose is just to

mention *en passant* this characteristic of resistance in LKJ's poetry); secondly, I will look at LKJ's defence of the West Indies immigration and the diasporic movements towards a hybridisation of Great Britain; the third aspect is the depiction of public spaces populated by migrants and working class dealing with state violence, unemployment and racism; and finally, the support of social movements and differing, hybrid identities as reversal discourse to hegemonic power. Presenting LKJ's selected poems according to this scheme will also be a stimulus for the readers, whose interest in his poetry may be stirred up since they will be allowed an insightful perspective on his most important poems and the topics of discussion arising from them.

At this initial stage, it is worth giving heed to the multiple aesthetic interpretations that LKJ's work is open to, ranging from the postmodern forms of combining discursive texts and contexts of popular culture and 'high art', to the expressions and celebrations of voices of the disadvantaged, the oppressed, the subalterns, the diasporans, as well as to the poeticising of bottom-up movements making grassroots demands within the spectrum of postcolonial arts of resistance. The most evident aspect of his work tackles the problem of putting neglected and peripheral narratives onto the pertinent stage of postmodernity and difference. He is entirely aware of the power of words and discourses as modes of recognition and domination. Thus, if discourses have the capacity to establish the patterns of recognition and domination, his poetry aims at discursive formats as pertinent spaces to articulate the enunciative potential of a peripheral modernity. Such spaces are composed of a hybridisation formed in-between the contact zones of imperialist powers and postcolonial territories and peoples.

This heterogeneity is the first element to be noticed when the poet employs the Jamaican Creole to distort the formalisms of Standard English so as to create a different space of enunciation, as we can infer from the majority of his poems. Let us take 'Want fi Goh Rave' as an example:

I woz
waakin doun di road
di adah day
when I hear a likkle yout-man say

him seh:
yu noh si mi situation
mi dont have noh acamadaeshan
mi haffi sign awn at di stayshan
at six in di evenin
mi seh mi life gat noh meanin
I jus livin widout feelin

still

mi haffi mek a raze¹¹
kaw mi come af age
an mi want fi goh rave

(Johnson 2006:33)

As usual in his compositions, the poet turns a blind eye to the formal patterns dictated by English grammar and makes a sheer written carnivalisation with the orality of creolised and slang languages. Journalist Vicky Allan once observed that the poetic fusion of the Caribbean language of LKJ's home and the urban patois of the street with rhythms of reggae was partly 'the best means of expression for his message, but also he liked the idea of subverting the English language, of knocking at the foundations of "Queen's English"' (2004:7). In the particular message of 'Want fi Goh Rave' the poet provides a setting where common young people suffer constantly from the pressures of not having a roof over their heads, lack of jobs, lack of security, but still keeping alive the hope of getting some money at least for going to a rave. This poetic perspective resounds in Julia Kristeva's argument that, 'carnavalesque discourse breaks through the laws of a language censored by grammar and semantics and, at the same time, is a social and political protest. There is no equivalence, but rather, identity between challenging official linguistic codes and challenging official law' (1986:36). So LKJ's basic strategies of resistance to challenge official codes and traditional poetic formulas are mostly based on language experimentation with the objective of amplifying the practice and comprehension of radical literature and political uneasiness.

LKJ describes the link of this orally-linguistic experimentation to real-life experience and community thus:

The kind of thing that I write and the way I say it is as a result of the tension between Jamaican Creole and Jamaican English and between those and English English. And all that, really, is the consequence of having been brought up in a colonial society, and then coming over here to live and go to school in England, soon afterwards. The tension builds up. You can see it in the writing. You can hear it. And something else: my poems may look sort of flat on the page. Well, that is because they're actually oral poems, as such. They were definitely written to be read aloud, in the community.

(In Salkey 1975:8)

From the very beginning, the reader will notice LKJ's purpose is focused on the language of the poem, in order to establish a new way of interacting with that reader. When creating

¹¹ 'mek a raze': get money.

ruptures in the written language, sometimes difficult to comprehend, the poet demands a less passive behaviour from the receptor so as to decode the message. As a result, the reader is invited to cross the conventional boundaries of poetry and writing, and has more participation in the construction of meanings. At times, of course, this intention may also create uneasiness or non-conformity (a predominant tactic in the way the author deals with his own creation). In addition, the poet will use the ruptures with formal language for several purposes: the political non-conformity is a way to rethink poetic practice; the incorporation of elements least recurrent in traditional or canonical poetic conventions, as a norm of exploring new themes and experiences especially from the margins, is a way to oppose the values established by the market and mainstream; the subversion of grammatical rules and discourse codes is also a denouncement of tainted power structures, neither renouncing the very act of experimentation, nor resorting to dangerous political naivety. Such linguistic and ideological ruptures can be seen, for instance, in the poem 'Di Anfinish Revalueshan':

now watchya mistah man
 mi noh like di way yu tan
 an yu tan soh too lang yu know man
 a meditate yu a meditate pan di same sang soh lang?
 well hear mi man:

mi naw preach
 mi naw teach
 mi jus a how yu
 ow mi seit
 caw di trute well sweet
 jus like a African beat
 like wen yu si whey yu coming fram
 like wen yu site whichpawt yu reach
 soh mi noh care if yu waan vex
 ar even gwaan like yu perplex
 mi a goh show yu whey mi si mistah man

(Johnson 2006:107)

Among other new and privileged aspects of this innovation in the use and dominance of language, the poet creatively incorporates, as in a social ceremony, the element of colonial repertoire and legislative control (namely the official language) and the system of non-official communication, which is composed, among other things, of a myriad of rumours, gossip and all sorts of idioms, music, poetry and songs. With this new communicative tool at hand, LKJ sets down a chronicle of social life and political criticism blended with dub songs and other genres of popular culture that comment, for better or worse, on the deeds of power holders. Hence, the

interference and influence of hegemonic power is taken and understood as a phenomenon that reaches the most recondite realms of everyday life and that belongs to the domain of perception and experience. Employing this mix of codes, LKJ is therefore able to defy the 'mistah man' in a conflictive opposition (Fanon 1965) as well as using the typical weapons of the weak such as sabotage, dissimulation, feigned ignorance, slander, foot-dragging, rumours, among others (Scott 1985, 1990).

Street 66

di room woz dark-dusk howlin softly
six-a-clack,
charcoal lite defying site woz
movin black;
di soun woz muzik mellow steady flow,
an man-son mind jus mystic red,
green, red, green... pure scene.

...
di mitey poet I-Roy¹² woz on di wire,
Western did a scank an each one lawf:
him feelin irie, dread I.
'Street 66,' di said man said,
'any policeman come yah
will get some righteous raas klaat licks,
yea man, whole heap a kicks.'

hours beat di scene movin rite
when all of a sudden
bam bam bam a knockin pan di door.
'Who's dat?' asked Western feelin rite.
'Open up! It's the police! Open up!'
'What address do you want?'
'Number sixty-six! Come on, open up!'
Western feelin high reply:
'Yes, dis is Street 66;
step rite in an tek some licks.'

(Johnson 2006:9-10)

As a matter of fact, LKJ's poetic style relies widely on a blending pattern where aesthetics and politics are used to depict public spaces. In such milieus everyday facts of life are surrounded by common people (especially young people) suffering from shortage of employment, police violence, segregation, misgovernance, scepticism, lack of perspective, et cetera. Moreover, the exploration of poetic language by depicting public, open spaces of conflict and hardship brings forward a preoccupation with the crisis of public spaces in contemporary urbanised societies. Projecting a perspective of experimental poetic creation, generally in association with left-wing

¹² Jamaican reggae rapper popular during the 1970s.

politics, LKJ's ditty is both an addition to other critical worldviews of social problems and a mouthpiece to claim representation for marginalised individuals, be it in racial, diasporic, political, social or other contexts.

last satdey
I nevah deh pan no faam,
so I decide fi tek a walk
doun a Brixton
an see wha gwaan.

di bredrin dem star-up
outside a Hip City,¹³
as usual, a look pretty;
dem a lawf big lawf
dem a talk dread talk
dem a shuv an shuffle dem feet,
soakin in di sweet musical beat.

but when nite come
policeman run dem dung
beat dem dung a grung,
kick dem ass,
sen dem paas justice
to prison walls of gloom.

(Johnson 2006:3)

The poetic discourse, despite dealing with local problems in a creolised language description, also presents a state of affairs that is adaptable to the need of widening our perspective to the facts of both globalism and difference. For instance, it points out differences carefully scrutinised, in a scenario of accommodation of knowledge where the subaltern assumes their own voice, their own history. From the moment when the poet denounces politicians as morally corrupt and policemen as gratuitously violent, and when he gives space for the 'likkle yout-man [to] say' what he thinks and what afflicts him, there will come to the front line a crucial deconstruction of several categories that classifies such individuals as distinct, or subaltern, or second-class citizens. This is due to the fact that recognition of differences emerges from the spaces of marginalised zones, which is not always prone to share the Western tendency to rationalise monolithically. And such a transit is enunciated permanently within both the physical and subjective displacement observed in contemporaneity, where there is room for developing particular and collective, local and global imaginaries.

¹³ Desmond's Hip City: a popular record shop in the 1960s and 1970s for Jamaican music, on Atlantic Road, Brixton.

The very fact of displacements and transits of subjects from the periphery to the centre of power puts forward the deconstruction of a marginal subjectivity marked territorially, culturally, ethnically, linguistically. The physical phenomenon of dislocation and resettlement, the backbone of diasporic movements, disrupts old structures of meanings and reshapes central, hegemonic discourses on the grounds of postmodernity, postcoloniality, globalisation, hybridisation and difference. Working as an operative means to provoke and persuade the central discursive programs, this 'incursion' has nothing to do with an analysis of external forms surrounding a centrality. Indeed, it is a reality that entails comprehending, internalising, and reshaping the practices of knowledge and colonial discourses that have been historically based on the recognition of the other as an odd figure. But this other comes from the multiplicity, the plurality that is part of us, and therefore it is increasingly and permanently linked to ontological questions in contemporaneity.

In this regard, the Caribbean migratory experience places a considerable weight on the balance of diaspora. In their explanation of the question, 'Who counts as a Caribbean poet?', Brown and McWatt argue that

If we take a fairly conventional notion of 'nationality' as someone born in the region, who lived and worked for most of their lives there, then a significant percentage of the [Caribbean] writers... would not have been eligible. Migration has been a fact of Caribbean life—indeed, it is arguably the defining experience of Caribbean 'being'. Historically, with the exception of the few surviving Amerindian communities in the islands (and, of course, in the mainland South American territories), all the people of the Caribbean are 'incomers', whether from Africa, Europe, India, China, or the Middle East. So a sense of being 'half home' as Derek Walcott put it, is perhaps part of what it means to be a West Indian. That being so, it's not surprising, then, that so many Caribbean people have been willing to uproot themselves 'again' to pursue economic opportunities or other ambitions. All through the last century West Indians migrated in significant numbers, to Panama, to England, to Canada, and to the USA. Many writers were among them, most famously the group who ventured to Britain in the 1950s and collectively drew attention to the region's literary ambitions... Hardly any of those writers returned to live in the Caribbean, but all continued to write about the region throughout their careers.

(Brown and McWatt 2005:xvi-ii)

This diasporised Caribbeanness and its flexibility in appearing in different corners of the world is sometimes explored by LKJ as a way of protest and resistance. An example of it occurs in the poem 'It Dread inna Ingran', in which LKJ pays homage to George Lindo, a Jamaican worker living in Bradford, a 'family man' living in the melting pot of England who 'nevah do no wrang' and despite that was wrongfully convicted of armed robbery under the regime of Margaret Thatcher. So LKJ's poem, despite campaigning for Lindo's release, sounds like a very utterance

for diasporans to unite and 'stan firm inna Ingran' against a hegemonic power that insists in treating the different, or the 'minority', as a subaltern:

mi seh dem frame-up George Lindo
up in Bradford Toun
but di Bradford Blacks
dem a rally roun...

Maggi Tatcha on di go
wid a racist show
but a she haffi go
kaw,
rite now,
African
Asian
West Indian
an Black British
stan firm inna Ingran
inna disya time yah
far noh mattah wat dey say,
come wat may,
we are here to stay
inna Ingran,
inna disya time yah...

(Johnson 2006:25)

Hence, as Hitchcock (1993) once noticed, the Afro-Caribbean peoples and their postcolonial Asian fellows are caught up in the Manichean logic of exclusion/inclusion that drives the British hegemonic ethnic group. When questioned about the notion of black British identity and how it fits into the whole experience of afro-diaspora, Linton Kwesi Johnson answered more or less in consonance with V. S. Naipaul's conclusion when, after graduating at Oxford, the latter found himself on his own in early 1950s London, racially marginalised, without a job or prospects, unable to have his first literary attempts published, desolately homesick, but reluctant to admit defeat and return to Trinidad, even after his father's death. Then LKJ's stance is pro diaspora as a way of realistic resistance:

From an early age, in fact from when I was in the Panthers, I realised that black people were in this country [Great Britain] to stay and we had to accept that we weren't going anywhere, and this whole thing that our parents had come with, a dream of coming to work for a few years and then going back home, that wasn't on at all and we had to accept that we're a part of Britain and that we had to build our own independent institutions here—cultural, political and social institutions—and accept the reality of our situation.

(in Caesar 1996:69)

This clear-cut political vision in LKJ's work, which as Kozain argues, 'calls attention to and asserts, in a defiant and confrontational manner, the presence of black West Indians in Britain' (1994:84), is particularly present in the late-1970s and 1980s verses, a period marked by radical change in the political awareness of West Indian immigrants in the British metropolis. As a result, when LKJ establishes the Jamaican diction and Creole language as a pattern for his poetic writings, he helps to consolidate the idea that black communities were not only immigrants living in England and serving as blue-collar workers, but were in fact legally and historically British citizens. LKJ always takes a clear stance that he has been living in Europe since he was 11 years old, so he has put down roots in British soil: 'Whether we want to accept it or not, our children and grandchildren are Europeans'. And he does not mean that merely in a racial sense, but in a geopolitical sense as well: 'We are Europeans and we are part of Europe. In the same way that one can speak about African-Americans, one can talk about black Europeans, because we are part of Europe. Europe will never be white again. Never.' (in Caesar 1996:76-7). (To the same extent it is also crucial to begin the deconstruction of the myth that Africa is the black man's land, given the complexities and diversities of the continent. In addition, diaspora and globalisation are currently changing the demographic maps of the world, so determinisms based on the association of racial typologies with different territories will sooner or later vanish.)

'Inglan is a Bitch' is another poem dealing with the West Indian migrant experience in Great Britain. In this poem LKJ empathises with the immigrants, recording the many difficulties they have to go through to survive in the 'land of opportunity'. Apart from the diasporic element reflected upon, the protest element is easily noticed: protest against alienating chores, inequality, racism, class prejudice, exploitation, oppression and so forth.

wen mi jus come to Landan toun
 mi use to work pan di andahgroun
 but workin pan di andahgroun
 yu dont get fi know your way aroun

Inglan is a bitch
 dere's no escapin it
 Inglan is a bitch
 dere's no runin whe fram it

...
 well mi dhu day wok an mi dhu nite wok
 mi dhu clean wok an mi dhu dutty wok
 dem seh dat black man is very lazy
 but if yu si how mi wok yu woodah seh mi crazy

(Johnson 2006:39-40)

The depiction of public spaces and mass organisations, intertwined with discursive resources for storytelling and dub sounds, are also a common base in the construction of LKJ's ditties. Thus, a fully current overview of the dramas and strains suffered inside the West Indian collective based in 1970s and 1980s London is recorded in his poetry. Since the beginning of his artistic production Linton Kwesi Johnson has amalgamated poetic expressions and public performances, resorting to a whole arsenal of (un)subordinated rhythmic discursiveness. This is the reason why in *Dread Beat an Blood* we can find perceptible funk sonorities, as in the case of 'Doun di Road' or 'Song of Blood,' or the firing nature of the street engagement. As an instance of this engagement, we can inspect the poem 'Forces of Victri,' a poem that sounds like a rally chant dedicated to the Race Today Renegades and the Carnival Development Committee, the pro-carnivalists who won over the anti-carnivalist forces that tried to prohibit the Notting Hill Carnival in the late 1970s. Like a griot of the people, LKJ brings together story, poem, song and dance in a couple of dub verses that celebrate the maintenance of the carnival as a symbolic weapon, as well as a 'niche' of autonomy where people find their dignity as a subordinated group:

we're di forces af victri
 an wi comin rite through
 we're di forces af victri
 now wat yu gonna do

wi mek a likkle date
 fi nineteen-seventy-eight
 an wi fite an wi fite
 an defeat di State
 den all a wi jus fahwod
 up to Not'n' Hill Gate
 ...
 wi dressed in red
 an wi feelin dread
 wi dressed in green
 an wi feelin mean
 wi dressed in purple
 an wi dressed in yellow
 wi dressed in blue
 an wi comin rite through

(Johnson 2006:37)

The poet himself remembers with great enthusiasm the deeds of the event in an interview:

Foras of Victory itself was a celebration of the victory that the pro-carnivalists had won over those people who had tried to ban the Notting Hill Carnival, because, remember, they tried to police the carnival off the streets

with so many policemen in 1976 it led to a riot, and another riot again in 1977. And in 1978 I celebrated because Race Today Renegades, which is the mas' band to which I belonged at the time, were playing a mas' called 'The Forces of Victory' and the mas' was also symbolic of the victory of the pro-carnivalist forces against the anti-carnivalist forces, and it was a military mas' with tanks, infantry, airforce, sailors and so on and so forth.

(in Caesar 1996:69)

In his analysis of the configuration of social conflicts, LKJ brings forward an environment of deep social and economic problems, where the functionality of State usually does not reach, and into which a brutal police force is brought instead. The result is a fuelling of tensions as crowds gather to manifest, protest and fight for their political and economic rights, in a practical demonstration of the objective coordinates of social class disputes. This is also a parameter LKJ uses to reflect immediately on the struggles of social movements and their demands for improvement of public politics. On the other hand, the poet does not think twice to express his disapproval when these movements seem to be internally fragmented, oriented to liquidate their own autonomies, leaving room therefore for the truculent repressive strategies of the State to be continued. No doubt the poet also recognises the challenges of social movements and exhorts the willing possibility of situating such struggles in a horizon of rights conquest and gaining the battle of ideas.

As an example of strategies of resistance of social movements in urban areas, it is worthwhile to emphasise the Notting Hill Carnival conflicts and the violent 1981 Brixton riots. Both events were described by LKJ's verses respectively as 'Forces of Victri' and 'Di Great Insohreckshan'. These confrontational events highlighted the need to put pressure on the government to assure the end of institutional racism in the Metropolitan Police, the continuous harassment the (black) population felt they were under, the combating of segregation and social inequality, and the promotion of a positive general view of the dynamic celebration of Britain's multicultural diversity. Doing battle with the degeneracy of a conservative intelligentsia, and avoiding the traps of ideological cocoons, have been essential steps for social movements like these ones continually adjusting to urban spaces in a changing world. Such movements have then too much to say about modern-day postcolonial trends, such as hybridisation, third spaces, creolisation, diaspora, et cetera. As a matter of fact, hybridity with an inbuilt tendency to resist and transform has been an implicit subject in Bhabha's theories: 'The process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognisable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation' (1990:211).

madness... madness... war.

night number one was in brixton
soprano B sound system
was a beating out a the rhythm with a fire
coming down his reggae-reggae wire
it was a soun shaking down your spinal column
a bad music tearing up your flesh
an the rebels them start a fighting
de yout them jus turn wild
it's war amongst the rebels
madness... madness... war.

(Johnson 2006:6)

Although the persona could keep a distance from the depicted events, there are moments in which it is possible to spot and determine his position in relation to the happenings. Therefore, when two police officers, or 'babylonian tyrants', are victimised in the violence fired by discontent, the poet has no qualms in singing: 'righteous righteous war'—celebrating thus in a defiant manner what will undeniably end as precedent for a series of tragic events to come.

night number three
over the river
right outside the rainbow¹⁵
inside james brown was screaming soul
outside the rebels were freezing cold
babylonian tyrants descended
pounced on the brothers who were bold
so with a flick
of the wrist
a jab an a stab
the song of blades was sounded
the bile of oppresson was vomited
an two policemen wounded
righteous righteous war.

(Johnson 2006:7)

The landmark of this social convulsion, which shortly after would literally set afire the streets of the English capital, came when 'a bran new breed of blacks' (as LKJ defines the members of his generation in the poem 'Yout Rebels') realised that white British ruling class were out to trample upon their legitimate aspirations and rights. It is not fortuitous then that poems such as 'It Dread inna Ingran' and 'New Craas Massakah' had been composed in the heyday of community outrage, mobilisation and protests against the judicial proceedings in which the

¹⁵ A former music venue in Finsbury Park, London.

British establishment, particularly the Thatcher government, were accused of both committing violations of rights in the case of George Lindo by finding him guilty of offences he had not perpetrated, and neglecting the racially motivated arson attack at Yvonne Ruddock's birthday party in South London in 1981, which resulted in the deaths of fourteen young blacks and twenty-six seriously injured (Hitchcock 1993, Johnson 2006). Racial hatred was certainly the main reason why these individuals either seemed immediately suspicious to or suffered neglect from the police authorities. Moreover, when we listen to or read 'All Wi Doin is Defendin', text in which LKJ makes a seminal contribution to dub poetry, we may assume that the album *Dread Beat an Blood* is an authentic time bomb:

war ... war ...
mi seh lissen
oppressin man
hear what I say if yu can
wi have
a grevious blow fi blow

wi will fite yu in di street wid we han
wi hav a plan
soh lissen man
get ready fi tek some blows

doze days
of di truncheon
an doze nites
of melancholy locked in a cell
doze hours of torture touchin hell
doze blows dat caused my heart to swell
were well
numbered
and are now
at an end

all wi doin
is defendin
soh get yu ready
fi war ... war ...
freedom is a very firm thing

(Johnson 2006:11)

Another poem worthy of note is 'Sonny's Lettah', whose features are not only responsible for a rich expressiveness and a communicative strength characteristic of dub poetry, but also for its capacity for instigating revolutionary action. LKJ himself declares that a lot of people could identify with this poem because the events described in it 'was so prevalent an experience in the black community'; he also recognises that 'Sonny's Lettah' 'struck a chord in the black

community' and that people who know him still thank him for that particular poem (in Caesar 1996:69). This text was originally and fully edited in the album *Forces of Victory* (Island, 1979), and then was included in the compilation *Inglan is a Bitdi* (1980). As the author gives the subtitle 'Anti-Sus Poem' to the above-mentioned poem, the reading and analysis of this undeniable classic of dub poetry deserve some explanatory lines regarding the SUS law.

Established in the 1824 Vagrancy Act, the category SUS, short for 'suspicion', was employed by the British police to arrest any person suspected of having the intention of committing an illegal act. According to what was declared in this act, a magistrate could throw anybody into prison simply by considering the testimony of police officers who could affirm having seen the detainee acting suspiciously on two distinct occasions. According to an article published in *Race and Class* no. 6 of 1979, more than 40 percent of people arrested and sentenced to prison under this law were black youths. Nonetheless, perhaps nothing has been as decisive in denouncing the arbitrary nature of the SUS law as the poem 'Sonny's lettah'. The law was only repealed in 2000 (Campbell 1997:194, Johnson 2006:27).

Dear Mama,
Good Day.
...
I really dont know how fi tell yu dis,
cause I did mek a salim pramis
fi tek care a likkle Jim
an try mi bes fi look out fi him.
...
mi an Jim stan-up
waitin pan a bus,
nat cauzin no fus,
wen all af a sudden
a police van pull-up.

Out jump tree policeman,
di hole a dem carryin batan.
Dem waak straight up to mi an Jim.
...
dem tump him in him belly
an it turn to jelly
dem lick him pan him back
an him rib get pap
dem lick him pan him hed
but it tuff like led
dem kick him in him seed
an it started to bleed

Mama,
I jus coudn stan-up deh
an noh dhu notn:
soh mi jook one in him eye
an him started to cry
mi tump one in him mout

an him started to shout
mi kick one pan him shin
an him started to spin
mi tump him pan him chin
an him drap pan a bin

an crash
an ded.

(Johnson 2006:27-9)

The format of 'Sonny's Lettah' resorts to the epistle genre. Therefore, the persona is the sender of a letter in which he unveils to his mother some regrettable events that have occurred to both him and his brother. Since the sender could not resort to an alternative means of communicating with his mother, it is reasonable to infer that she does not live in London. Sonny tells his story, therefore, literally and updates the storytelling role of this poetic genre. It is also worth noting the spontaneity of his narrative performance which is exempt of ideologically dogmatic designs, commonly found in certain 'socially committed poetry', including, we cannot help saying, part of the very same Linton Kwesi Johnson's production. Furthermore, the entire text is immersed in a musical atmosphere that stresses the dramatic characteristic of the account. This aspect, in turn, is strengthened by the onomatopoeic nature of the vocabulary that the poet chooses, especially in the last verses that communicate the maximum dramatic tension of the poem: verses literally conformed by a firing of acoustic impacts and authentic signifiers to depict a sequence of violent actions that ends in homicide and arrest.

As for the poem 'More Time', LKJ launches a vigorous attack on the workaholic and technocrat world that does keep workers imprisoned in an exhausting, unremitting and usually competitive activity and routine, especially a pressured urban working life spent trying to get ahead with little time left for leisure, for contemplation. The very first stanza delineates the scenario of this rat-race phenomenon, bringing up a deconstructive, unconventional discourse about such theme. Basically, the poet states that contemporary human beings are living through a technological revolution that has been transforming the way in which we work, create, communicate and so on, so that social movements have to push for shorter working days and shorter working weeks, and resort to idleness, pleasure and educational activities as a strategy of resistance:

wi want di shatah workin day
gi wi di shatah workin week
langah holiday

wi need decent pay
more time fi leasure
more time fi pleasure
more time fi edificaeshun
more time fi reckreashan
more time fi contemplate
more time fi ruminare
more time fi relate

(Johnson 2006:86)

To come to this conclusion the poet recounts briefly the history of work:

wi mawchin out di ole towards di new centri
arm wid di new teknaology
wi gettin more an more productivity
some seh tings lookin-up fi prasperity
but if evrywan goin get a share dis time
ole mentality mus get lef behine

(Johnson 2006:86)

Work then is represented as a synonym of degradation, torture, or at least a burdensome activity. The poem recounts the ideology of 'prasperity' through the centuries, as work activities grow increasingly into new technologies relying on the Western status or parameter of growth and productivity. However, the persona argues that old mentality still hinders an equal share of such development, and that human and social values must be cultivated instead. Next, some advice is given as an attempt to improve and develop the human condition. The idea of pleasure is then defended as a salutary way of life. Here the notion of hedonism is brought back as a salvation from a technological world that tends to transform human beings into automatons, living in a continuum consisting of pain and stress.

In fact, from the 20th century onwards the notions of entertainment, leisure and also good health have been massively associated with consumption of goods alongside the increasing of workaholic activities. No doubt, 'More Time' is a relevant critical poem attacking compulsive work, unemployment and low wages. The way out, according to the poet, is that leisure, rest and pleasure give us more time for contemplation about our own human condition, therefore the need to exercise it. On the other hand, the question that immediately arises is how to loaf our life away in a society that demands so much of us? An implicit answer in the poem seems to be that we should practice our critical mind by ruminating, meditating, living and creating our everyday

activities, taking heed though whether our desires and necessities are true or fabricated and modelled by a capitalist advertisement-oriented media and market.

Notwithstanding, the poem fails in not considering that today the sheer ideal of 'leisure' has been engulfed by the roll of obligations dictated by the rules of labour and 'teknalagy'. Workers usually engage in holiday activities as an obligation of travelling, staying in nice hotels, going to clubs, buying many goods and so on. In other words, leisure has become a ritual of consumerism and a product of the necessity imposed by the media and the market. Another point worth considering is that there are those people who regard the work they do as a fountain of pleasure. Such people can work weekdays, weekends and holidays, and they might not be annoyed with it. Of course, these are usually highly skilled workers occupying privileged positions in big companies; in a sense, they comply with the hegemonic rules of power since they are part of it. On the other hand, what the great majority of workers really want is more time away from the chores and exploitation of their workplaces. Thus, the poem is one more chant for workers to unite and resist the impositions to obey a technocratic, workaholic schedule, so that they can achieve more time to develop their full human potential. In addition, as Scott explains: 'Everyday forms of resistance make no headlines. Just as millions of anthozoan polyps create, wily-nilly, a coral reef, so do thousands upon thousands of individual acts of insubordination and evasion create a political or economic barrier reef of their own' (1985:36).

In short, besides being a writer, Linton Kwesi Johnson can also be considered a socially engaged activist and performer who contributes greatly to voicing the desperation of oppressed communities at local and global levels. He conveys his political issues in his poetry, songs and performances, as well as through his activism. Even though at times his work levels criticisms against old-fashioned socialist states and the plenty problems of autocratic and bureaucratic control stratagems, such as in the poem 'Mi Revalueshanary Fren':

mi revalueshanary fren is nat di same agen
yu know fram wen?
fram di masses shattah silence—
staat fi grumble
fram pawty paramoncy tek a tumble
fram Hungary to Poelan to Romania
fram di cozy kyawsl dem staat fi crumble
wen wi buck-up wananada in a reaznin
mi fren always en up pan di same ting
dis is di sang him love fi sing:

Kaydar¹⁶
e ad to go

¹⁶ Kadar: last communist leader of Hungary.

Zhivkov¹⁷
e ad to go
Husak¹⁸
e ad to go
Honnicka¹⁹
e ad to go
Chowcheskhu²⁰
e ad to go
jus like apartied
will av to go

(Johnson 2006:67)

Notwithstanding LKJ certainly remains committed to fair principles of equal sharing of the world's wealth and ending the exploitation of labour the lot of hundreds of millions of civilians across the world live under. In addition, the poet also shares his theories about what it means to identify oneself as part of a 'minority', as well as his own experiences as a Caribbean immigrant in Britain who tries to find his discourse outside imperial paradigms of recognition by emphasising his own identity and difference.

The black lesbian feminist Audre Lorde, once commenting at a 1979 panel upon the role of difference of race, sexuality, class and age within the lives of US women, asserted that

Those of us who stand outside the circle of this society's definition of acceptable women; those of us who have been forged in the crucibles of difference; those of us who are poor, who are lesbians, who are black, who are older, know that *survival is not an academic skill*. It is learning how to stand alone, unpopular and sometimes reviled, and how to make common cause with those other identified as outside the structures, in order to define and seek a world in which we can all flourish. It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. *For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house*. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. And this fact is only threatening to those women who still define the master's house as their only source of support.

(Lorde 1983:99; emphasis original)

The strategy Lorde suggests by advocating empowerment through differing identities as an effective way to undermine the neglect and non-acceptance of poor, black, third-world women in the circles dominated by patriarchy and white feminism relates to significant extent to LKJ's subterfuge to get past the master's stronghold. By exploring the question of language as a weapon of the weak, the poet is giving a voice to those who had been silenced and helping resurrect

¹⁷ Last communist leader of Bulgaria.

¹⁸ Last communist leader of Czechoslovakia.

¹⁹ Honecker: last communist leader of East Germany.

²⁰ Ceausescu: last communist leader of Romania.

discredited discourses from society's systems of exclusion; so he is aware of Lorde's preoccupation and is employing the subaltern's tools to assail and dismantle the master's house (or language=power). As aforesaid, LKJ's pen struggles to write over the OED and bend the rules of English grammar by emphasising the native voice (as much as Kamau Brathwaite emphasises orality in his essay 'History of the Voice'), and in doing so LKJ's work makes an effort to transform the prejudice against speaking and writing the Creole language into an innovative source of poetic creation, for the lyrical shifts in language and music, style and content are closely linked to West Indian diasporans' colloquialisms and subjective experiences. He is deconstructing and recreating syntax, spelling sentence structure, verse pattern, level of forms..., in a way that in other circumstances would in fact appear nonsensical, for it is very different from conventional usage. Nonetheless, it must be surmised that such tactical style is crafted with artifice and elegance to subvert and almost deliberately eradicate the possibility of a derisive heckling of emerging identities that wants to break with dominant tradition and formalisms.

In a sense, those people subjected to Western imperialism experience a need to acquire a notion of self beyond the contamination of totalising concepts or images, and LKJ is conscious that bringing different, hybridised identities to the forefront of the battle of ideas is a key strategy in subverting the power hierarchy of arts, politics, class, gender, et cetera. Such identities emerge from the experience of marginalisation engendered by universal or Eurocentric concepts and images. Hence LKJ's stance on not being a 'tap natch poet' makes a claim for new sorts of political and cultural resistance, new identities, new forms of creation, new representations and 'new word hawdah'. And dub poetry, pure, simple, apparently inoffensive, remains his weapon of first resort.

The adopted route leads to the unveiling of the histories of (post)colonial territories and peoples, leaving an opening for them to represent their geocultural characteristics and mutations. This changing effect is increasingly present in the arts, where most postcolonial production finds its place, as in literature, music, visual arts and so forth. The whole scenario, however, is encapsulated in the unequal development of advanced capitalism, which has serious difficulty in keeping a common cultural logic, and manifests itself permanently in inequalities and imbalances. In the next chapter we will see how these complexities of inequalities and imbalances in the contemporary capitalist world are dealt with in the literary work of Lesego Rampolokeng, along with the context of South African history and literature.

This chapter comprises three sections. And since all academic work is generally directed at an international audience of scholars, I feel the necessity to locate Lesego Rampolokeng's literary work within the context of South African history and literature as a task for the first section. To profile his work in connection with the country's literary background to readers who are not familiar with it is of great importance, especially because Rampolokeng's poetry collection is not as internationally acclaimed as Linton Kwesi Johnson's. For this purpose, in the first section of this chapter, rather than simply narrating the country's history, I will go shortly through two historical events that are major topics in South African literary production: colonialism and apartheid. Hereafter I will show how Rampolokeng's work fits into the broader context of current South African history and literature by discussing, for instance, how his upbringing in Orlando West, Soweto's backyard, in the years of hardship and struggle against the segregationist regime, was crucial to fashioning his writing outlook afterwards.

In the following section, I will look at Rampolokeng's life details and his subversive approach to language and literature: a consistently eclectic, experimental and explorative postcolonial/postapartheid poetic syncretism. As yet, however, there is not much review of his work, and my research is therefore based upon a handful of interviews and a few critical debates, some of them found in internet-based journalistic and literary articles. Exploring these alternative sources, I will furnish the reader with a bit of biographical detail on the poet and then provide an overview of the critical aspects of his work.

In the third and last section, I will scrutinise the Sowetan poet's work adopting four aspects as parameters. In a clear sign that his literary eclecticism conjoins strategies of resistance and refusals of labelling, Joanna Wright argues that this procedure 'allows Rampolokeng the alchemic ability to evade categorization and to situate himself at the interstices of culture' (2006:90). Indeed, the refusal of labels and association with specific groups and positions as a political strategy seems to be sought as a mode to create a subjective space in his poetry. That will be the first aspect of Rampolokeng's work to be discussed. The following points to be looked at are the poet's rejection and mockery of South African rainbowism, black African nationalism and

autocratic regimes. His engagement against corruption and oppression, shall we see, is both nationwide and international in scope. The third aspect of his work is the way language and literatures are employed as subversive weapons: 'the subversion of authority by inverting hierarchies through parody and laughter' (Wright 2004:92-93). Here the poet makes special use of two tools to express his poetic contestation: the rewriting, wordplay and creolisation of the English language, and the depiction of social degradation through scatological, iconoclastic imagery. The last aspect to be discussed is how Rampolokeng employs methods of insubordination to reverse the hegemonic discourse against the oppressors themselves by planning textual conspiracies, mimicking the hegemonic discourse and forging reversal weapons as a strategy of resistance.

4.1 Effects of Colonialism and Apartheid in South African Literature

Misadventurous da gama journeys
rediscovery of rotten columbus dark day dias

Rampolokeng *Daun of a Dying Time*

in south africa the tail wags the dog

Rampolokeng *mp 6*

Five hundred years ago, at a site on a mountainous promontory near the southern extremity of the African continent, home to a belt of winds that girdle the globe, countless tales of shipwrecks and hazardous navigating conditions on this treacherous coastline reminded the sailors why it was named the Cape of Storms. Sighted towards the end of the 15th century by Portuguese navigator Bartolomeu Dias, this great marine graveyard was circumnavigated for the first time by Vasco da Gama and then renamed as the Cape of Good Hope—these were the first Europeans

who landed in South Africa. Nonetheless, those navigators would not be the colonists to settle in the area. Their interest was only in South Africa's geographic location as a strategic point to load ships that were heading towards the shortest route to India. The colonisation occurred when the Dutch settlers came in the 17th century, and during the Napoleonic wars, when British settlers grabbed the Cape of Good Hope from the Dutch descendants, known as Afrikaners or Boers, as part of the Treaty of Vienna. In the 1960s and 1970s, members of the South African liberation movement were engaged in a life-and-death struggle to free the country from white minority domination and framed the basis of a democracy they were fighting for. Fashioned as a blood-shedding dictatorship, the white minority regime did not hesitate to exterminate adversaries or arrest black leaders, such as Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The regime was gradually dismantled from 1989 under the government of President Frederik de Klerk, who advocated racial reconciliation. In April 1994 occurred the first democratic election to the new Parliament. Nelson Mandela formed a government of national unity and became the first black South African president. Today, even though democracy is a trend in recent South African history, the country faces big social problems generated by the previously institutionalised segregation. Low educational levels, public health deficiencies, high unemployment rates, criminality and xenophobic violence are example of the major problems South African's fledgling democracy faces since its birth in 1994.

Racial segregation was a reality throughout almost all of South Africa's history. Today, although much has been done to reconcile the parts affected by a segregationist regime officially enforced from 1948 (when the National Party came to power) and meant to promote dehumanisation and socio-economic privileges on the basis of skin colour, racialisation is still a big issue in the country. The practices of institutionalised racial stereotypes can be understood in the few words Fanon uses to criticise racism: 'The white world, the only honourable one, barred me from all participation. A man was expected to behave like a man. I was expected to behave like a black man—or at least like a nigger' (1986:114). Or as Rampolokeng poetises it in rap 16: 'in the land of the racial staircase/strung from an inhuman base/nkosi sikelela²¹ we've sung/fighting to climb from the bottom rung' (1990:26). Today the brutality of the regime is condemned by all and sundry, but much has to be done to free people from racist thinking. Rampolokeng's verses, for instance, follow a general attitude that sees racial hierarchy as worthless and old-fashioned, as he poetises in 'rap 11':

²¹ nkosi sikelela: (zulu) God bless (Africa), national anthem of revolutionary South Africa.

supremacy of race is a decadent notion
running man in backward motion
a warranty of pestilence
bandied about with impudence
by the western bandleaders of its advocacy
cursed with degeneracy
race is no course to prosperity
but a disease-riddled path for posterity

(Rampolokeng 1990:20)

The days of institutionalised racism, as Rosemary Jolly and Derek Attridge argue, 'demanded strategic opposition'. In such a milieu, the rise of the Black Consciousness Movement in the 1970s, centred on the figure of Steve Biko, and the establishment of the United Democratic Front in the 1980s 'drew together a large number of disparate anti-apartheid groups' (1998:2). In this conflicting context, Steve Biko argues that black consciousness was necessary so that 'blacks can learn to assert themselves and stake their rightful claim' (2004:22). And the claim came in a chain of events that led to extensive strikes by black workers, the formation of independent unions, mass protests ('primarily in reaction to the introduction of Afrikaans as the language of instruction in their schools'), and confrontation with the police in townships where at least 575 people died (Attridge and Jolly 1998:xiii).

Hence, the bleak history of racial discrimination legally imposed on South Africans inevitably binds the country's past to apartheid. On the other hand, there is a fresh and welcome initiative to find a peaceful equity in the present. But still a considerable part of that past, or at least its aftermath, still exists in present-day South Africa. Moreover, the polarisation of political issues regarding colour and race in the country cannot be ignored. And, as Lewis Nkosi remarks, this division is even visible in literary production: 'in South Africa there exists an unhealed—I will not say incurable—split between black and white writing' (1998:75). Nonetheless, part of the effects of this segregated past have been modified thanks to the effort of politically committed writers, both black and white. Now that the time has come to live in a democratic state, these writers, in Pauline Fletcher's view, 'will continue to live in interesting times, and such times are unlikely to allow them the luxury of an escape from the pressures of history or politics' (1993:13-14).

As the apartheid regime ensured a rigid separation of the white inhabitants from the remainder as a way of life, the whole process served as well to generate an identity crisis in the society, given the psychological and moral tensions brought about by de facto segregation. Such effects have also been reflected in the literary scene, and it seems that, as Fletcher puts it, 'South

African literature has been held hostage to apartheid' (1993:12). The French scholar Alvarez-Péreyre discusses this idea in detail when he comments that the procedure of apartheid has meant that the social groups are separated and so they live and work in different and unequal conditions. Consequently, '[t]his division recurs in the literary sphere as well, and writers have no option but to take it into account, even though they deplore it' (1984:2). Fletcher also comments that a great deal of writing about South Africa has inclined towards apocalyptic images, 'whether it predicts the dark apocalypse of racial war, revolution, and chaos, or looks forward to the millennium of postapartheid racial harmony and peace' (1993:17). Certainly a Manichean assessment does not do justice to the whole complexity of South African literature, but a polarisation of debate seems to have existed as 'South Africa's colonialist policies have forced many of its writers [from all South Africa's race categories] to adopt a protest stance which pits the oppressed majority against a dominant minority' (Matsikidze 1993:125).

Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin once said that 'all writing in South Africa is by definition a form of protest or a form of acquiescence...since all writing in South Africa has obvious and immediate political consequences' (1989:84). JM Coetzee's viewpoint also emphasises the political issue in South African literature: 'no-one writing in South Africa could be apolitical' (*Cape Times*, 9 April 1987). And so Rajendra Chetty comments that South African black literature has in general been connected to the constant and dominant topic of the struggle and combat against the white oppressor and against their injustices and abuses. This was certainly intensified in the 1960s and 1970s, given the circumstances of anti-apartheid struggle and resistance, the 1960 massacre in Sharpeville, the treason trials, the increasing of the Black Consciousness Movement, the states of emergency, and so forth (2000:15). This atmosphere of political conspiracy against the regime is depicted in Rampolokeng's 'rap 18': 'states of emergency in emerging states/bound together as childhood mates/rumbles in the land's bowels/storms in the people's silence' (1990:30).

The development of South African literature has thus been mostly influenced by elements of displacement, exile, hardship, exclusion and atrocities that were inflicted on black people's daily lives. Lewis Nkosi claims the existence of a very 'split between black and white writing, between on the one side an urgent need to document and to bear witness and on the other the capacity to go on furlough, to loiter, and to experiment' (1998:75). For Dorian Barbour, the situation of state-sponsored segregation implies a world of experience which sets people apart from each other in their individual distress and also is correctly represented through an isolated individual perception. Barbour also adds that from an epistemological perspective, 'what is captured here is the psychological response to a battering external world: it is the way in which

the environment acts upon and damages individuals that is explored' (1984:174). Nadine Gordimer also considers that the existence of an identity crisis gives rise to 'a situation in which all South African writers find themselves':

Any writer's attempt to present in South Africa a totality of human experience within his own country is subverted before he sets down a word. As white man...the one thing he cannot experience is blackness...As a black man, the one thing he cannot experience is whiteness...The white writer...is cut off by enforced privilege from the greater part of the society in which he lives...The black writer is extremely limited in this presentation of white characters...because of those large areas of the white experience he is excluded from by law.

(Gordimer 1976:199)

Gordimer furthermore reminds us when reflecting upon the cultural apartheid imposed on all South Africans that the stereotyping of the differently categorized person or group is not just a problem for white writers but also for black writers:

In the work of white writers, you often get the same gap in experience between black and white lives compensated for by the projection of emotions about blacks into the creation of a black typology. Guilt is the prevailing emotion there; often it produces cardboard and unconscious caricature just as [black] resentment does.

(Gordimer 1987:21)

As for black South African literary work, Nkosi points out that it has been held under a kind of colonial status. Therefore he has it that the formal insufficiencies of this genre, the disappointing breadline asceticism and prim disapproval of irony, and the well-known predilection for what Lukacs called 'petty realism, the trivially detailed painting of local colour', the entirely naive 'uncouth disfigurements' of which many critics, including himself, have sometimes complained, 'can be seen as a result, in part, of a claustrophobia related to this internal colonialism from which, it is hoped, a post-apartheid condition will set it free' (1998:77).

Fletcher argues that the pernicious condition imposed by this 'internal colonialism' has given South African writers 'a subject of great power and moral urgency', while simultaneously 'denying them the luxury of certain choices if they want to be taken seriously' (1993:12). This means that they cannot simply disregard politics: 'Daily life is permeated by politics and the novelist who aspires to reflect the quality of life in South Africa cannot escape the political' (1993:12). Perhaps this might be the reason why Coetzee insists that South African literature is not totally human; being too much preoccupied with the question of power and the torsions of

power, 'it does not know how to pass from the elementary relations of contestation, of domination, and of subjugation, to the vast and complex human world which extends beyond' (in Gallagher 1991:17).

Mphahlele argues that the novel in South Africa has almost grown to be a long short story as 'it is so compact'. He says it looks like a poem in prose since 'it has a singleness of melody, a singleness of point. It doesn't sprawl all over; it works in flashes. Just a flash here and there will illuminate the truth. This is how it approximates the poem so much' (1976:15). Another problem is the disparity of time and resources between white and black writers which was observed by Peter Nazareth in the apartheid years. Nazareth pointed out the problem of a 'technical question of writing itself', and that a writer like Nadine Gordimer, for instance, can spend time writing a 'five-hundred-page novel', while the black writers have to overcome a series of obstacles to use their language creatively, so 'South African writers had to find a way of communicating in the minimum of words' (1976:17). The problem still seems to exist in postapartheid South Africa, as Nkosi notices that the imbalance between white and black writers can be interpreted as a sign of 'social disparity' and 'technological discrepancy' (1998:75), even though this difference is 'often treated as natural, sometimes as a positive sign of our cultural diversity and richness, and as such a reason for celebration rather than regret' (1998:75). He explains further that it is worth observing that much of the 'backwardness of black writing' is related to 'its state of internal isolation and surveillance under apartheid regime and some of its disabilities to wounds inflicted by cultural deprivation and social neglect' (1998:79).

South African literature has therefore been connected to political aspirations and the effort to denounce and solve the country's political-economic, racial and social problems. Such a political approach is especially found in the writing of novels, but poetic writings also have a privileged space to reflect upon social and political conditions in the country. If Lesego Rampolokeng has not been able to escape the politics in his writing, he certainly has made a great contribution to bridge the gap in the notion of a split between black and white writings. He has no predilection for 'petty realism', or 'local colour', or 'skin colour', or whatever. He is launching torpedoes from his pen aimed at disfiguring critics, literary arbitrators, imperialists, autocratic rulers and oppressors at home and abroad. He has proved as well that there is no 'backwardness of black writing', and the supposed 'formal insufficiencies' in this genre can be overcome with a fusion of chaos, protest, creolisation, mockery, subversion, parody, scatology and laughter. He is concerned with the turmoil and turbulent context in which people are immersed in postapartheid South Africa, in particular, and across the world, in general. His style and his uneasiness as a bard

usually generate widely divergent and completely opposite emotions, from admiration to bitter sorrow. Nonetheless, his poetic tactics and strategies of resistance grip the readers' attention and their thoughts go inevitably into his work, demonstrated in the upcoming two sections dedicated to scrutinising his life and work.

4.2 Critical Comments on Lesego Rampolokeng's Life and Work

pablo didn't give birth to the poetry of resistance
killing lkj won't bury the dub of defiance
a well-coordinated relay team
we race to beat the truth-decay scheme

Rampolokeng *mp* 20

The prospects of new social relations as well as a new literary scene in postapartheid South Africa offer an invitation to reflect upon a much broader range of problems. Today's experience is shared by writers who have similar concerns and commitments regarding fiction, culture, everyday reality and so forth. With the ending of the apartheid era there can now exist a space for much more freedom of speech and the interchange and exploration of thematic areas that were so difficult to become immersed in before, such as a cross-cultural, heterogeneous and non-Manichean fictional representation. If under the apartheid regime poetry played a decisive role, a vector of rebellion and engagement, as in the black literary renaissance of the sixties and seventies, now within the current democratic urbane culture some indelible traces from that time will probably remain in present poetic production.

Lesego Rampolokeng's writings have thus been emerging as a prominent outspoken text and voice in the new South African literature. Commenting on his work, Flora Veit-Wild enthusiastically argues that, '[t]he great frenzy and urgency that drive him to spill thoughts into words and sound imbue his orally presented texts with a mad quality' (2006:77). In fact, when

one reads Rampolokeng's verses for the first time most probably one realises by force of word persuasion that too much misdeed and villainy is perpetrated in this world.

South African full-time writer and poet Lesego Rampolokeng was born on 27 July 1965 in Orlando West, Soweto.²² Currently regarded as a postapartheid generation poet, he earlier grew up in a harsh environment during the years of segregation and anti-apartheid struggle: 'soweto's streams are crimson/crystallized only by fiction/dark is split by the light of violence/angels live only in the heavens' (1990:9). He was brought up in a religiously puritan household where his relatives, especially his mother, tried to inculcate him with Western and christian values by encouraging him to attend the church, speak English, play the violin and so forth. Later, suffocated by the god-fearing austerity at home, the European literary tradition imposed by Bantu education during his school days, and the political turmoil caused by the clash between police and anti-apartheid mobs in the ghetto streets of Soweto, Rampolokeng made the acquaintance of the black consciousness writers and their protest poems. He then took a stance/stanza to resist all forms of autocratic authority and that became a leitmotiv in his subsequent poetic creation. Veit-Wild also underscores that the poet belongs to the 'Soweto generation', so-named after the apartheid-era police turned their guns on hundreds of school children in Soweto during a demonstration in 1976 (2006:77). He became increasingly involved in political activity and the struggle against apartheid rule, often at his own risk. In his subsequent poetic production, his preoccupation with apartheid-induced inequalities perpetrated on a mass-scale is evident. Accordingly, memories and minutiae of the turbulent past the poet went through are evoked when Beate-Ursula Endriss traces his biography:

Lesego (which means 'all the best') was eleven at the time of the schoolchildren's revolt in the townships of Soweto in which hundreds were shot dead. He too rebelled. He began writing at an early age, and attributed this to his situation of oppression: 'I was brought up to celebrate my own slavery. To me, what people call poetry became the means of explaining the world to myself'.

(Endriss 2003:[Online])

After undergoing 'the corrosive effect of bantu education [that] gave my mind radiation' (1990:21-2), the poet started studying law at the University of the North in the early 1980s. There he became even more involved in political activities and poetry performances, predominantly writing for the anti-apartheid struggle and following a black consciousness philosophy. He

²² The biographical data in this section rely mostly on Berold (2003), Eisenhuth (2008), Endriss (2003), Khumalo (2004) and Veenbaas (2008).

dropped out before finishing his degree. Shortly after he worked as manager for a Johannesburg company that later declared bankruptcy, and then he began eking out a living as a full-time writer, rap poet and playwright. In fact, we could even infer he started writing from the time he was born because, as he claims: 'I do not really know if we can draw a line of demarcation between orality or the word as spoken or the word as written down' (in Brückner 1996:264). About the beginnings of his career as a poet, Eisenhuth remarks that:

After aborting his law studies, Lesego Rampolokeng concentrated on writing and performed his works at various political gatherings. At the end of the '80s, he also started his regular musical performances and met Vusi Mahlasela, another promising talent of the South African music scene, with whom he started a fruitful collaboration in the performance *The Devil And The Saint* (1990). In the same year, Rampolokeng published his first volume of poetry, *Horns for Hondo*, and subsequently toured with the band *The Kalahari Surfers*, performing works from this book live. This tour made him widely known to a South African and also international audience. Since 1993, when his second poetry volume *Talking Rain* and his—so far one and only—album *End Beginnings* were released, he has been working with many different collaborators, including an own band as well as the African Axemen, a project of Zimbabwean-born guitarist Louis Mhlanga and has become one of the most sought-after poets in readings on the stages of the world. In 1999, he released his third poetry volume—*Bavino Sermons*.

(Eisenhuth 2008:[Online])

Rampolokeng has performed in many countries, sometimes accompanied by musicians such as Gunther Sommer, Julian Bahula, Louis Mhlanga and Soulemane Toure. In 2005, Geoff Mphakati and Aryan Kaganof directed the documentary 'Giant Steps' which showcases Rampolokeng alongside the poet Lefifi Tladi. His collections of poetry are *Horns for Hondo* (1990), *End Beginnings* (Shifty CD with the Kalahari Surfers, 1993), *Talking Rain* (1993), *Rap Master Supreme: Word Bomber in the Extreme* (1997), *End Beginnings* (1998), *Blue V's* (1998), *The Bavino Sermons* (1999), *The h.a.l.f. mythology* (CD with various musicians, 2002). He also published a play entitled *Fanon's Children* and two novels: *Blackheart* (2004) and *Whiteheart* (2005).

Rampolokeng's faith in the power of the word as poetry and music in itself led him to amalgamate different literary and musical influences in the early 1990s so as to express his radical poetic style. He has adopted an uncompromising artistic attitude to look critically at social and political problems both countrywide and abroad, due to his artistic and social concerns for an international struggle against oppression. The poet states his purpose as an artist in few words: 'Whether that pleases the kings and princes of this earth is absolutely of no importance to me' (in Eisenhuth 2008:[Online]). Especially the 'kings and princes' at home are targets of Rampolokeng's poetic assailment. Mbongeni Khumalo (2004:85-6) recalls that the prose-poem 'ORLANDO WEST-COCKROACH CHRONICLES' takes the reader for a walk in socio-

critical perspective through the poet's district Orland West that has become a tourist hot spot due to its Hector Pieterse Memorial Museum and the Standard 4, room house in which Nelson Mandela used to live in the 1950s:

the struggle house a museum 'buy a piece of struggle-dream'
...
the leader's house stands behind hope-high walls, eyes fall on
.....electric fence
and surveillance cameras while next door old blind woman bends
under disability's years' weight of rape & robbery recipient the grant
a societal ill brunt. ... while the leader's body-guard-&-vigilance
principal look-out & hooked up assault rifle over an oooh & grunt
nursery school opposite greed attacked & need-wrecked

(Rampolokeng 2003:5-6)

Likewise in the first collection of poems, *Horns for Horatio* (1990), Andries Walter Oliphant in his introduction to the book comments on the prevailing scathing tone of Rampolokeng's poetry in denouncing dehumanising conditions:

This world of human degradation does not simply involve a hierarchical classification of human beings. It also refers to a situation in which people are tramped upon and trampled. The social order is premised on violence and murder. Every sphere of social life and every turn in history is haunted by horror. Walter Benjamin's thesis that 'every document of civilization is simultaneously a document of barbarism' is particularly apt with regard to Rampolokeng's work. The stains of dehumanisation, splashed over and seeped into the social and psychological fabric of South Africa, are made visible in his poetry....It is therefore not surprising, that the overriding tone of Rampolokeng's work is revulsion and condemnation of this dehumanising order. His denouncement couched in biblical and juridical imagery is unremitting. This is so, even when he strikes a humorous cord. The only irony he allows himself and us is directed at those who pose as literary arbitrators.

(Oliphant 1990:i-ii)

While examining the poet's influences, Eisenhuth comments that Rampolokeng can be labelled 'as an artist who easily bridges the gap between the culture on three continents':

As a child, he was inspired by dithoko talking songs of the SeSotho who brought this tradition to the huge African melting pot of Soweto as street poets. Later, as a teenager, he was devouring comics and—quite unusual for a youngster—the poems of the English romantic poet John Keats (1795-1821) and the works of William Shakespeare. North American rap à la Gil Scott-Heron, the recordings of Jamaican dub poet Linton Kwesi Johnson, the poems of William Burroughs and the poet of the Black Consciousness movement, Madingoane turned out to be the creative starter kit for a new talent at the end of the '80s. The material for his own poetry he found on the streets of Soweto: the dreariness, despair and violence of a place which had not naturally evolved but was created by ruthless economic necessity, arrogance and racist psychomania.

(Eisenhuth 2008:[Online]).

All these harsh experiences during his childhood gave the poet greater awareness of how a past struggle can contribute to change things in the present. Yet, he poetically insists the battle has not finished and there is too much hard work to be done: 'yesterday's soweto blood vanished into the ground like water/to emerge today as the exploding sweat of pretoria' (1990:39). In this regard Eisenhuth also comments that:

Lesego Rampolokeng did not stop to be the angry voice when apartheid finally was officially abolished. He still stirs up people, and in a revealing word game, a journalist of a South African newspaper once changed Rampolokeng's musical label from 'dub poet' to 'dubious poet'. Surely he will continue to embarrass the kings and princes on this earth for some time to come.

(Eisenhuth 2008:[Online])

The dismantling of the apartheid regime and white minority government in South Africa meant the end of a repressive cultural atmosphere, and South African poets had so finally entered a free environment in which to express their ideas. In this regard, Jabik Veenbaas comments that 'as citizens they [South African black poets] had been treated as inferior, as poets therefore, they were bound to lend their voice to the struggle for freedom' (2008 [Online]). He also considers that Rampolokeng's writing is best judged with this milieu in mind: 'His aversion against racial and neocolonial repression speaks clearly in his poetry, and it partly explains its incisive, aggressive tone' (2008 [Online]).

Discussing the carnivalisation of language in Rampolokeng's work, Flora Veit-Wild underlines the important influence of Dambudzo Marechera for the South African poet. She argues that the rising generation of African artists does not wish 'to bind itself to folklore and tales, because it is precisely this restriction to the exotic, and, in the end, to the primitive that entails an acceptance of Western hegemony'. On the other hand, these younger artists prefer the syncretic blend, for this is what is 'new, exciting, and liberating'. This implies striking European influence with the weapons that have been left at hand—i.e. 'writing back' according to the postcolonial literary terminology, or handling the 'postcolonial arts of resistance' according to the argument in this study. Veit-Wild's exemplification portrays a Rampolokeng recital in a 'typically postcolonial mood' (1999:99):

that i rime is not a crime
i don't mime my wrinkled time

long-lost in the distance of slime
i only shoot the british
with the bullets that are english

She further comments that

Rampolokeng's 'rap' offers an expressive example of the syncretic art that arises out of the multi-ethnic blend of an African city such as Johannesburg. It fuses influences from Jamaican dub poetry with American ghetto rap, jazz and contemporary popular music as well as some indigenous sounds and rhythms....Rampolokeng's very existence embodies postcolonial syncretism. Asked why he writes in English, rather than in his African mother tongue, he answered, 'I don't know what my mother tongue is. My mother gave me a Tswana name, but I don't speak any Tswana. I speak English and the Johannesburg slang, a mixture of Xhosa, Zulu, Afrikaans, and English. So for me, English is also an African language'.

(Veit-Wild 1999:99)

In accordance with Veit-Wild's observations, Veenbaas affirms that 'Rampolokeng's work reflects strong influences from Caribbean dub and the rap poetry, as well as elements from his native oral tradition'. The influence of rap music appears in the poet's repeated use of 'internal rhyme and end rhyme, the staccato phrasing and the free, improvisational form. The oral tradition echoes in the hypnotizing repetitions'. For Veenbaas, listening to Rampolokeng's oral performance is similar to being in a verbal line of fire, since the poet punishes the audience with the scourge of South Africa's pain and violence (2008 [Online]).

Veit-Wild furthermore remarks that one key element in the postcolonial text is the 'creolisation and reappropriation of the former colonial language'. Hence she agrees that Rampolokeng clearly employs 'a playful, parodic infiltration and reinterpretation of the master-language: a carnivalisation'. Then quoting Kobena Mercer she states that Rampolokeng's rap poems 'decentre, destabilise and carnivalise the linguistic domination of "English"—the nation-language of master-discourse—through strategic inflections, re-accentuations and other performative moves in semantic, syntactic and lexical codes'. Moreover, Veit-Wild suggests that Bakhtin's idea of 'parodic travesty' can be relevant to the poet's verbal fire 'where everything seems to be in quotation marks, an indirect discourse which mocks and mimics what others have said, foregrounding and ironising language in all forms'. As an oral poet, she adds, Rampolokeng continually uses word and sound plays, 'punning and rhyming in assonant and dissonant ways'. Throwing himself into an 'argument between styles of language', the poet satirises 'the traditional English rhyming couplet, makes jokes by transforming the English language with his African accent (in his pronunciation "ship" rhymes with "sheep", for example) and creates unusual,

comic, often absurd and impure rhymes'. The effect, according to Veit-Wild, is an everlasting subversion of his own words and their common sense, of power systems and ideologies: 'Marx rhymes with ducks and Lenin with adrenaline, as in the following extract from "rap 31"' (1999:99-100):

when i'm rapmaster supreme
word-bomber in the extreme
i'm called subversive
when i'm only creative
i write to fight
to make a dark land bright
they say i'm kinky
when i'm only inky
...
but they came sailing in a ship
to make me bleat like a sheep
now they drive up in a van
to silence me with a ban
for i sing of engels
when i should sing with angels
i rap karl marx
turn them literal ducks
i unleash vladimir lenin
& flood them with adrenaline

Veit-Wild further argues that another remarkable aspect of Rampolokeng's 'carnivalisation of language' is the scatological tropes he uses. Establishing a correlation with Bakhtin's notion of the 'grotesque body', she states that the poet employs 'low' language to secularise what is 'high': 'while Bakhtin studied this phenomenon in a specific historical context, e.g. "Rabelais and his world", the inherent counter-discursive strategy seems applicable to modes of postcolonial writing, such as Rampolokeng's' (1999:100). In fact, as Stallybrass and White point out:

The grotesque body, as Bakhtin makes clear, has its discursive norms too: impurity (both in the sense of dirt and mixed categories), heterogeneity, masking, protuberant distension, disproportion, a focus upon gaps, orifices and symbolic filth (what Mary Douglas calls "matter out of place"), physical needs and pleasures of the "lower bodily stratum", materiality and parody.

(in Veit-Wild 1999:100)

The excerpt below from the poem 'Sebokeng Siege' reflects, according to Veit-Wild, Rampolokeng's strategy to desacralise by using the 'grotesque body' (1999:100-1):

in a 6 & 9 jesus bled wine

made vampires of holy believers
 still the preachers say
 there's a heaven up above
 coming down your way with biblical love
 a love as sweet as shit that stalks & stinks up
 the street from the bowels of a christian law
 the present is a time of war
 where
 measuring the time of the tide's turning
 gauging the gait of a heart's yearning
 weighing the wind of a wing's flapping
 the shattering song is breaking glass
 in the gloom of the singing of the morning
 in the evening light
 in the sight of plight in the smell of death
 in a dead tent caught
 in the rant & rave of writhing phantasms
 in the grave in spasms
 in god gone beserk
 in a black on black
 black attack
 white lead eats up a head
 it's the blooming seed of a bleeding night
 black sunlight in the silhouette of death
 & birth ... between the teeth ... of a bullet hot ... in flesh
 & the axe in a grinning mood that hacks no wood
 but skulls & bones & dashes of dripping blood
 first sate in a death flood
 in sebokeng ... in sebokeng 'long live the king!
 shout abortions & abominations

Veit-Wild finally remarks that Rampolokeng's rough representations of the 'grotesque body' are mocking commentaries 'on the monstrosities and violence of the "present time"', and also that 'at the same time he exposes the double-standards inherent in South African society by a linguistic subversion of values and meanings' (1999:101-2). 'Marechera's and Rampolokeng's eccentric imagery,' she continues, 'their violent offences against semantic expectations, and violation of culturally defined limits, are all ways of striking back, of infiltrating hegemonic linguistic discourses' (1999:102).

Neil Lazarus, exploring the myth of exceptionalism in South Africa, approaches Rampolokeng's work based on the following question: 'what ought South Africans to learn from the experience of decolonization elsewhere in the continent?' He is confident that Rampolokeng has learned a lot from this experience and that a great deal of what the poet has grasped he now employs against those who continue to mimic the line of 'South African exceptionalism'. About the poem 'The Cry of Disillusion,'

boil-fortresses burst

wall to wall notions crumble
a miscarriage
where a larval flow of possibility
degenerates into dead-end putrescence

he says that 'one is struck by the poet's raging at the loss of hope, at his identification of the human wastage involved'. Lazarus also remarks that 'in this poem as in so many by Rampolokeng, the excrementalism of the imagery, his language full, as Armah's is—and Ouologuem's, and Marechera's—of boils bursting, degeneration, putrescence' (2004:625).

According to Simon Lewis there has been a far-flung interest in current South African poetry regarding landscape and the issue of what milieu the poet fills up in that landscape. And he claims that this question arises mostly due to the formal ending of apartheid. Lewis points out that Rampolokeng's writing situates the recently democratic South Africa 'in a global world order which effectively denies the freedom that 1994 appeared to inaugurate' (2001:2100). With his 'powerful, punning raps such as "Habari Gani Africa Ranting"' the poet makes a verbal assault upon a Europe that 'gathers the dust of a fallen berlin wall/[while] africa rolls in the mud of its tropical brainfall' (2001:2100). Comparing Rampolokeng to Cronin and Motsapi, Lewis suggests that the Sowetan poet 'saves some of his most splenetic wit for the international news media, which foster public complacency and political manipulation':

habari gani africa
for everything the media sells
foul winds of small change fanning both flag waving & burning
on both sides clogged-up brain-cells
commerce's judas coins always spinning
tails or heads of state turning
and vanity before humanity only beasts beauty contesting & winning.

(Lewis 2001:2100-1)

In all, based on these and other previous critical analyses as a point of departure, this research aims to look at the importance of strategies of resistance in postcolonial writing as ways of subverting (neo)colonial and hegemonic discourses. And this chapter particularly concerns the poetry of Lesego Rampolokeng as illustrations of such strategies. The examination will focus specifically on ways of resisting political and cultural domination, tracing the non-aligned, engaged stance that this poet has taken. The syncretistic quality of Rampolokeng's poetry can also be connected to diaspora and hybridity as forms of rewriting (or writing back to) the colonial

discourse. The argument will try to demonstrate how he employs carnivalesque writing techniques blended with tactics of anticolonial struggle to subvert privileged forms of 'high art' and decentralise dominant discourses.

4.3 Lesego Rampolokeng: A Glimpse into the Poet's Mind and Guts

In this section, I will take four aspects as parameters with which to look at the Sowetan poet's work. The first one will be the aspect of his refusal of labels and connection to specific groups and positions as a political strategy which seems to be a form of developing a subjective space in his poetic creation. The second point deals with the poet's disapproval and mocking of the notion of a 'rainbow nation' among South Africans, as well as African 'revolutionary' leaders who are prone to impose autocratic governments over people. Lesego Rampolokeng is committed to fighting corruption and oppression both in South Africa and globally. Those leaders who arouse hatred or are involved in illicit gains to cement their own grip on power are special targets of his poetic criticisms. After that the way language and literatures are employed as subversive weapons will be the focus of investigation. The rewriting, wordplay and creolisation of the English language, and the depiction of social degradation through scatological, iconoclastic imagery are topics related to his poetic subversion. The next debate examines literatures as subversive weapons more closely. The fourth aspect in question will consider Rampolokeng's methods of strategic insubordination by reversing and mimicking hegemonic discourses against the oppressors themselves.

For a start, the work of Rampolokeng is sometimes classified as rap poetry or even as dub poetry, but he is prompt to raise adverse criticisms to this labelling tendency. As Beate-Ursula Endriss observes, the Sowetan bard 'was celebrated primarily as a rap poet, but now he increasingly rejects this limited categorisation of his work'. In an interview for the weekly Swiss newspaper *WochenZeitung* Rampolokeng states:

In the late seventies I was involved in the Black Consciousness Movement. We wanted first to break the mental chains, to give up our slave mentality. Without this there could be no political liberation. We were interested in what people like Malcolm X, Che Guevara and Ho Chi Minh did. And so the things sung about

by Gil Scott Heron in the USA and Linton Kwesi Johnson in Britain were important to us too. But that doesn't make me a rap poet. ...We live in a global Potemkin village. Political hip-hop is no longer important to young people in South Africa. ...At the beginning hip-hop had something to say, it was on the margins of capitalist society. But when it started gaining in significance, it was absorbed by the system. That bothers me.

(in Endriss 2003:[Online])

Joanna Wright notes that even when Rampolokeng's verses are polemical, he avoids either disapproving of or speaking for a specific group. He avoids an anticipatory allegiance to any homogeneous group and clearly rejects 'the notion that apartheid violence was only white oppression visited on hapless blacks' (2004:90). Hence, the poet 'overturns the accepted currency of a homogenous and unified group being oppressed by the monolithic power of the apartheid government.', and his verses declare that '[a]nyone who uses violence against another is implicated in the pathological oppressive order' (2004:90). Indeed, as Kelly Berman correctly observes, the poet refuses to be 'contained' by any obtrusion of authority as he 'inveighs against the orthodoxies of power that cannot accommodate dissent of any kind, thus turning him into a transgressor', and Rampolokeng is quoted as having proclaimed 'my alleycat condition meows a discordant NO to regimentation's' (1998:50).

His political liaisons and the poetry itself elude easy categorisation. The slippery aspect of and the syncretism in his poetic style come together to structure the resistant vein in his writing. In fact, the poet shows elsewhere his contempt for both labels and literary critics: 'I'm part of no group no school no cult, I'm out here to shave the beards off these little gurus' (in Berold 2003:140). This stance does not mean the poet has no sense of collectivism and communal endeavour. Even when he talks about himself he is not considering the individual, but the microcosm he is. The representative of a certain segment of humanity—although he would not say he wants to be seen or to see himself as representing anybody. As he puts it in his own words, 'I do not represent anybody. I do not speak for anybody else. I speak and I write about what I see, what I feel and in the way I feel it should be written' (in Brückner 1996:268). Hence, by avoiding being incarcerated by labels and groupings, the poet resists the academic traditionalism or conventionalism that urges the categorisation of arts and literatures in order to dissect them. So he is trying at the same time to defend and create his subjective literary space as a self-made poet and not to let it be reduced to an 'enemy'.

In verses, as in the below excerpt of 'rap 37', he overtly confirms his disdain for pundits who have a penchant for labelling and classification, and embraces 'love' as a guide for his course of actions:

i belong in no shelf
i put no labels on myself
save to say love is my way
turning night to day
...
academics remain dead silent
until their breath turns pungent
on me attach no stigma
lest you reduce me to an enemy

(Rampolokeng 1990:61)

And, of course, he could not forget to leave a punning 'DEDICATION (for the critic)':

this is for the critic
sticks with static
street-WORD-dynamic
i sing dinnovators of the form
swing a pissstorm upon the norm
boresstorm lift the poem a worm
drop it a bomb

(Rampolokeng 1993:17)

Rampolokeng's work, as has been already discussed, is sometimes likened to that of the late, iconic Zimbabwean poet and novelist Dambudzo Marechera, who was victim of AIDS in 1987 when he was just 35 years old (see Veit-Wild 1999, 2006; Gaylard 1993). In the Sowetan poet's words, 'Dambudzo was trying to fight rules set by old men. He was the most free spirit on this continent' (in Veit-Wild 2006:77). Some similarities emerge in both poets' writing experiences as they provoke the hegemonic power and do not fit in with the particularly delusive, harsh, post-liberated scenario of their respective countries. Also, the two of them, in Veit-Wild's words, 'unhinge and decentre dominant discourses by stripping them of their façades of false rhetoric—metaphorically speaking' (2006:84). Nevertheless Rampolokeng himself vehemently condemns the association of Marechera with his work: 'I actually find the comparison abhorrend [sic] and I detest it in the strongest terms'. Thus: 'I believe that I am my own person and I really don't want to have to forever abide in anybody's shadow' (in Brückner 1996:263). Indeed, his combative rhyming style carries its own idiosyncrasies, since South Africa's apartheid regime had a unique historical impact on people's lives and consequently on the poet's writings as well.

Yet, if there might be the need to put him into some box, Rampolokeng prefers to see himself as a 'major experimenter'. He says his attempt is to break language open and get to its core in order to get to his own depths, to open himself up, to examine himself, to see his inner conflicts and contradictions and set them against those of society. Consequently he is trying to come to terms with his own insanity for 'having been brought up in a country that is in the grip of a national psychosis, a basically hysterical country' (in Brückner 1996:263). Gaylard also argues that both Dambudzo Marechera and Lesego Rampolokeng constitute part of 'the mongrel polyglot of writers of the new transcultural international order who choose to write in English'; and what seems to categorise them is 'their evasion of categories', for '[t]he dislocated writers often attempt to exult in the multiplicity and complexity of their gypsy identities' (1993:80). As a matter of fact, English has become itself a mongrel language that restores its vitality by taking on new vocabulary, terms and idioms. Travelling across the world as a global language, it licentiously ransacks other languages, amasses variants, and delights in newly coined words. It is the language of creative writers, free traders, pirates, business people, hackers, innovative entrepreneurs, poets, madmen and experimentators such as Rampolokeng.

Another interesting aspect of his work—and quite probably the thing in his poetic creation that most angers audiences, especially South African audiences—is his rejection of a romantic representation of the newly democratic South Africa as a 'rainbow nation'. Rampolokeng's stance is prone to make fun of and satirise this sham of change in the country as well as those who 'celebrate our new age cobwebs in stagnant eyes' (1993:26). Ashraf Jamal once observed Rampolokeng's consciousness of the transitional period in which he lives, and his perception of this phase as a betrayal of the 'fight for freedom'; therefore, Jamal concludes, he 'has hurled himself into the gaps that others would close and, therein, forged a poetry that uncovers the lies and the hypocrisy that shape South Africa's cultural imaginary' (2003:17). His efforts to discredit deceptions and lies spread by dishonest politicians knows no boundaries: 'now life trembles on the back of bank-notes what stank/in the past is the present's perfume order is destruction/anarchy holy government the law an institution swaying on/pillars of abstraction an acute condition of putrefaction' (1999:22).

In another poem entitled 'genetic slave rant', a derisively storytelling account of South Africa's 'desert rain bowed history', the poet conveys his disappointment, heartsickness and scatological humour so as to show how vicarious power trissles and back-stabbing relations propel the colonial past into the newly democratic present. In the short haul after the end of apartheid, political degeneracy and social crisis have sunk the country into gloom and anxiety about its

future. To some extent, a pervasive distrust of government, political parties and institutions has replaced the halo of liberation's first days, and for Rampolokeng that is certainly not a sign of the pleasant-sounding 'rainbow nation' so envisaged and celebrated on Nelson Mandela's inauguration day. So the poem goes:

genetic slave rant

..... *of a desert with local history*

in the beginning
before the missionary positioning -
bible'd world's europeeing
into the glorified/dissed harmony of our abode
locked memory in selection/select mode
utility pressed to unity virility wrung out in the
tent
we were bent & boiled for a rear-entry-caper
before we swung from the skyscraper

And it ends:

the apple of african unification
fallen out of history's golden tree in rottenness
pierced with poison darts
blue ice'd virginity's hue... the colour of farts
& since our teeth never chew on vindication
Putridity fills our huge stomach'd hearts
fraternity makes us rise sun-wise
to price/prize/prize kinship out of the slavship's arse

(Rampolokeng 1998:60-7)

If the long-awaited social justice has not come with the shift from authoritarian, racist rule to multicultural democracy, the poet insists that his intention is to 'knock & lock-down phoney miracle politic-crony-oracles' (2003:5), whereas those who are dissidents of the 'new dream' seem to be welcome. In the poem 'Welcome to the New Consciousness', the poet enrols a body of factional groups competing with divergent interests in the new democratic mood:

Welcome to the new consciousness
we utilise everyone

some fertilise the soil
some are food for lies & lice
some's only toil is to BE pigsties
some sit in the power tower

some shit in a flower shower
some cower from hate's gleam in the street
while some meet the NEW DREAM with a scream

(Rampolokeng 1993:33)

Commenting on the poem, Berman points out that it is 'Rampolokeng's highly sardonic interpretation of unifying notions of tolerance and democracy promulgated by official government discourse' (1998:55). She further adds that the speaking voice apparently appears in the second line, 'we utilise everyone', albeit that

The "we" does not denote a commonality between the speaking subject and the other groups referred to throughout the poem, neither does it incorporate the speaker. Rather, it hints at a secluded site of power, insidiously controlling social freedoms whilst appearing to usher in the democratic ideals of the current political period. The notion of a "new consciousness", implies Rampolokeng, is a propagandist invention of the powers that be whose apparent embracing of these ideals ultimately serves their own interests.

(Berman 1998:55)

The South African 'miracle' discourse and 'rainbow nation' rhetoric have been widely explored by politicians, tourist agencies and propaganda organisations at home and abroad. That may be one of the reasons Rampolokeng's poetic concerns attack abruptly the visionary perspective of a South African nation far removed from the necessity of asking for justice—which is equivalent to a utopian vision of a country with so many socio-economic disparities. His poetry usually addresses the political mainstream and the conventionalisms of South African society. The poet's resource in subverting this situation is to lay open the rapacious desire for wealth and exploitation under the disguise of the 'miracle' propaganda promoted under the ruling African National Congress (ANC). In this sense, Rampolokeng's poetry works like rumours, whispers, guesses, gossips and jokes as a strategy aimed to spread depreciation and decentre the rhetoric of 'miracle' and 'rainbowism'. Indeed, among international human-rights investigators, postapartheid South Africa—once regarded as Mandela's shining beacon of democracy and multiculturalism—is seen as something of an outcast anew for its alignment with nasty, autocratic regimes across the world.

Not surprisingly, another key target of Rampolokeng's criticisms is the political and psychological slave mentality in which South African people live today. He despises African nationalists who grasp at power, and at the same time do not possess any power whatsoever. For him all these people are a pack of sell-outs who have become conformists and who are prone to

condemn the jackboot tactics of Shaka's despotic regime. The influence of the Zulu king and his tyranny is poetically depicted as still continuing to cast a long shadow over South African history, and the poem seems to hold him more as a usurper than a uniter. A ludicrous descent from the exalted or lofty to the commonplace, the poem anticlimaxes its 'homage' in the closing lines with a sequence of obscene metaphors intended to desecralise the image of the high and mighty ruler. It could also be read as a profane prayer in which the present, and even the future, mirrors the face of past mistakes in historical transitions. Thus, the cyclical movements of despotic rulers seem to be endless.

uh shaka
 your glory vomits rats onto royal thrones
 proclaims cockroaches kings of life's jungle
 legislates the squelch of jackboots sanctions
 of transitions
 from miscarried presents
 to futures aborted drowned in past amnesia, fluids
 ah shaka your buttocks flash in the star
 where the horny phalluses of your eruges descend
 sharper than blades in the back of history

(Rampolokeng 1993:24)

As a matter of fact, not much has changed except that now such politicians control their own properties and coordinate shameful 'diplomatic relations' between the great majority of poor people and the minority of economic power holders. Nonetheless, 'younger generation of Africans does not want to bind itself to old folk ways and tales' (Viet-Wild 1995:5), and the corrosive description in Rampolokeng's verses of the reality of political life, usually implying a lack of moral principle, is certainly an important motivation for these youths.

humanimation

...
 dollar-glam sight bought facemint black skies in audio light
 utilised lower-axial souls to belief in lakes in apical laminae
 flood the nambe million aerosolised enamel beards of
 pogram diagram unrefined lights upon the glory mustard
 flesh stuck anomaly for amoralised pyre back-winded
 any instituted miss-gives (voluptal) unstriped neurons
 cross-referenced credit money-mimicise unasthma
 corpse-deposit fixed humanis lebovased earnings (twisted)
 shopping lists back on black fists nimon history
 hands dappled off unte allegianu pledges
 melanin-pumped hair points in astration location
 electroate testides fried eggs at break fast
 washed down hot seasonal mic alienist

α-αugh *radation identification*

(Rampokoheng 2004:44)

intellectual prophylaxis starter kit

...
future's shimmer on today's bioslump lips: ultraglastic neuter result
death/ earth-planet rips out wiggle-toyote: calls up jiggle ball
toy wollyquidar unmade pedlar's dream...

(Rampokoheng 2001:45)

the monkey's abandoned the tree
& and found the savagery of bigotry
in applause for its lost dignity
the banana is phallic
watch the boborn Eck the microphone
to amplify the lie
of barbaric history's suddenly found nobility

(Rampokoheng 1993:30)

when man's rulers are perjurers
flashing trickery like conjurers
questions flood in fiery catechism
harmonised distortions catalyse a catachysm
the end product is anarchy
as man seizes his monarchy
the rulers resort to foxy plots & ploys
as man searches and destroys
in order to build afresh
away from the ruins of the crash

(Rampokoheng 1993:31)

the soul was crash-randed to be sold
dollar billed & pounded to a kill-to-d
until pain slashed thru to the vein of red-gold
& from the future into the past
the serpent crawls where the scrolls unfold
the stories of fake glories told
made up laid stock market floored out monger-stale cold
in intricate slime schemes written white on oil
in rhyme-scars upon fallen stars

(Rampokoheng 1999:77)

All these excerpts give examples of the Sowetan poet's satirical, witty language in use when he inveighs against African rulers who corrupt themselves by aping their former masters. Their reversal of all morals and their betrayal of the goals of struggle for a life in freedom in equity of the black people of Africa', according to Flora Veit-Wild's arguments, 'are the main targets of his [Rampolokeng's] scorn' (2006:87). Elsewhere, she writes: 'African writers have made it clear that the nationalistic discourse of African identity which had a progressive function during the colonial era has become not only outdated, but extremely dangerous by being used by the black elites to justify their autocratic rule' (1997:1). Thus while lavish spending, corruption and debasement are the tune to which African rulers adjust their governments, the act of rhyming subversion and satire in Rampolokeng's poetry will go on being so dramatic in itself that it will be no wonder if it keeps voicing the incriminating words of millions of oppressed and dispossessed which speak out against the legacy of tyrants, in South Africa and globally, who abuse the rights of citizens in order to usurp and hold on to power.

Last but not least, the resonances of Rampolokeng's criticism of African middle-class conformity, consumerism and corruption are amplified when we read Fanon's perspective of middle-class intellectual alienation. As the Martinican author expresses it in *Black skin, white masks*:

Intellectual alienation is a creation of middle-class society. What I call middle-class society is any society that becomes rigidified in predetermined forms, forbidding all evolution, all gains, all progress, all discovery. I call middle-class a closed society in which life has no taste, in which the air is tainted, in which ideas and men are corrupt. And I think that a man who takes a stand against this death is in a sense a revolutionary.

(Fanon 1986:224-5)

A third aspect of Rampolokeng's work that is worth being looked at is the tools he employs to better convey his sentiment of language and literatures as weapons of political resistance. He couples a strong political outlook with the desire to experiment with lyrical structures. For him the literary power of the word-sound has a combative function as a subversive weapon 'to tear the heart of the gun-tower apart':

where i'm going in to the death zone, singing my own praises through the storm of this time: screaming rhyme-missile powered ahead of time, turning this pen to a grenade the page is a battleground & the stage explodes ... guerrilla's at the microphone! WORDSOUND has power in rapid fire action OR slow & hard aimed to tear the heart of the gun-tower apart, i'm going into the death zone.

(Rampolokeng 1999:91)

Some of these 'subversive weapons' have been already introduced so far, as in the way the 'word-bomber', as he calls himself in 'rap 31' (1990:53), desacralises authorities by inverting hierarchies through parody, laughter and carnivalisation. Or when he overtly defies them in lines such as 'i open my mind's tap/& acid words corrode repression's ear-flap/unleashed like a bomber's missile' (1993:1). In poems such as 'to gil scott heron', for instance, we may not only feel a sting of protest against commodification of counterculture, middle-class conformity, consumerism, corruption and intellectual alienation, but also the usual rewriting of and wordplay with the English language so as to pursue his poetic rebellion.

The US poet, musician and performer Gil Scott-Heron—one of Rampolokeng's bigger poetic influences and best known for his work as a spoken-word artist in the sixties and seventies—was affiliated to black militant activism in the United States, and one of his most widely known song-poems is 'The Revolution Will Not Be Televised', whose verses are memorable for their many cultural and political allusions to the era of political struggles for equal rights in the United States. This celebrated poem reflects upon the incapacity of the media to keep tuned in to the black activism taking place on the streets, due to television's interests, alienation and commercialism. In some lines of the poem, Scott-Heron proclaims: 'The revolution will not be brought to you by Xerox/In four parts without commercial interruption' (2008:[Online]).

Rampolokeng's poem uses a technique of contrast to contradict Gil Scott-Heron's soothsaying. It is a miscellany of homage to Heron and other black 'warriors' (such as The Last Poets, James Brown, Jungle Brothers, Public Enemy among others), a condemnation of 'the degeneration of garvey's children & the spawn of fanon', and a disappointment with the mediocrity of hip-hop culture and black music that no longer count as an art of protest and resistance. Thus, if the 'revolution' was once a symbol of independence and counterculture, now it is co-opted by big business and mingled with the media's demand for frivolous entertainment.

to gil scott heron

(the revolutionary's newa pseudo-psychopath on the compact-disked turnpath)

...
 relics of the FUNKADOLIC ground on the FAMILY
 STONEd
 HEDRIX EXPERIENCE had GEORGE CLINTON for
 president
 in the street's parliament
 no relation to the white louse saxophony man

but the one on the JAMI'S BROWN SEX MACHINE
salaam aleikum MALCOLM Xed the CLAN
into BOO-YAA TRIBE of SHABAZZ

...
but now scott heron the industry's mutant children
perform
a systematic life devaluation – coward style
they defile then revile the warrior profile
& the revolution's pantomime is broadcast
in an audio-visual bomb-blast

gil scott heron – the revolution is on television

switch off that shit

(Rampolokeng 1999:51-2)

From this excerpt only it is possible to distinguish two major strategies of resistance in the poet's verses. The first is the way he gives a both critical and sardonic answer to the question: How could this black (de)generation be strained and ruined in the freshness of youth by the nonsensical production of media and television? If in the beginning black artists had something to say, if they were on the margins of the capitalist system, now that they started gaining status it seems that they have been consequently absorbed by media and vulgar commercialism, and their spectacle turned into rubbish broadcasted 'in an audio-visual bomb-blast'. Now that 'the revolution is on television' and commercial success generally equals lack of artistic quality and engagement, the poet's suggestion is none other than to 'switch off that shit'. For the one who has once tasted a serious entertainment has no longer relish for commercialist spectacle, especially when it is made up of a poorly mediocre nature.

Secondly, Rampolokeng uses witty wordplay and the breaking of Standard English as a tool to satirise the status of important characters on the political and artistic scene (as in the line 'the white louse saxophony man'). Joanna Wright points out that Rampolokeng's words are 'creolised' in the sense that they speak in a 'hybrid language' shaped at the intersection of many cultures and aesthetic sensibilities. The creolization of language is a feature of much postcolonial cultural production... The appropriation and alteration of standard codes of English in this manner is part of a strategy of resistance on the part of the colonial subject' (2004:94). As usually he does not use the word 'and', and replaces it with the ampersand. He puts whole words in capital letters many times along the poem as a way to break the poetic rhythm or emphasise an image or idea ('relies of the FUNKADELIC ground on the FAMILY/STONEd/HEDRIX EXPERIENCE').

Thus Kristeva's argument (1986:36) that there is no equivalence, but rather, identity between challenging official linguistic codes and challenging official law applies perfectly in this case.

No surprises then that some of Rampolokeng's spectators become bad-tempered and power holders become uneasy. Perhaps an even stronger reason is that Rampolokeng's work stirs up a passion of anger and disgust that resounds far beyond his milieu, because extreme poverty contrasting with opulent wealth, unremitting violence, elites and (mis)governments' negligence is found all over the world. So other verses emphasise: 'once again scott-heron the revolution is in quarantine. revolutionaries act/out a part on the television screen. i'm going into the death zone' (Rampolokeng 1999:91). Or still perhaps because, as Beate-Ursula Endriss says, the poet is

Well-acquainted with the violence in the South African townships...throughout the world he presents his lyrics relating to the degradation of human dignity and exposes its latest forms of perversion. By simply attributing them with temporary significance these incursions gain even crasser contours.

(Endriss 2003:[Online])

As such, Rampolokeng's comments on the relationship of the readers and listeners to his poetry are expressed as follow:

People like things that are beautiful. I don't write about beautiful things. When you see how teenagers attack a man who sells milk and hack off his arms to slurp yoghurt from the open wounds, that's nothing beautiful. How can people like it when I write about things like that? The Nobel Prize winner for literature, Nadine Gordimer, wanted to drag me off to her personal analyst, she reckoned I was sick. Is it me who's sick, or the things I write about?

(in Endriss 2003:[Online])

Likewise as Fanon acutely observes:

All forms of exploitation are identical because all of them are applied against the same "object": man. When one tries to examine the structure of this or that form of exploitation from an abstract point of view, one simply turns one's back on the major, basic problem, which is that of restoring man to his proper place.

(Fanon 1986:88)

In his textual experiments, Rampolokeng is not only aware of his own experience as a Sowetan poet, but he also feels the link between his existential condition and a sort of critical consciousness that embeds him in the knowledge, compartment and social bonds of his

community at home and abroad. Hence, his focus is directed to different strategies to subvert the normativity of the English language in order to depict his experience of witnessing different types of physical and metaphorical sickness in society. Accordingly, the chosen experience of not writing about 'beautiful things' transforms his subjectivity as a writer in a space open to multiple hybrid perspectives, turning the fragmentation and experimentation of his writing into a source of chaotic denouncement. A close examination of the hybrid language in his postapartheid poetry will therefore show us that the creolised English in use is a form of exploring his hybrid multilingual and multicultural country and its postcolonial and postapartheid experience. The motivation behind this radical poetisation seems to be a subtle willingness to believe that throughout the representation of human degradation and perversion by means of hybridised discourse and creolisation, a linguistic innovation may be an influence on socio-political transformation. This crossing of language borders and this rewriting of the English language are thus ways to look at the structure of exploitation from a practical point of view, and to establish a real contact with the oppressed in their proper places. As a wordsmith, the poet is aware that textual discourse is power discourse, and so he expects that a change in the language should also mean a change in the context, or at least the tactic of spreading poetic chaos should come in aid of building a new order.

Along with the creolisation of language, Rampolokeng's poetry also makes every possible effort to iconoclastically subvert traditional, canonical conceptualisations of what is poetry. The sound of his poems wafts a dense chord effect. What he writes about is solidly grounded in a sense of sordid, hard reality. It is not hard to grasp how his using of scatological imagery brings up depictions of shabby life and foul dishonesty. The stack of images comes in a faster tempo and it cannot help transmitting an overflowing of earth-bound pressures. And even though a considerable part of his poems resonates in a violent, firing, foetid, infected, creolised language, the collection is useful for the reader to make sense of a whole wretched existence going on. For all that, there is in his poetry a close connection between rational politics and a clamour for lyrical urges. Even in Rampolokeng's crudest verses it is possible to recognise a reflexive effort to bring subjective mental images into concrete objects intended to strike the readers' senses.

In this regard, Rampolokeng's poetry resonates with Amiri Baraka's 'Black Art'²⁴ anew when it voices a fervent hostility against feeble images (suggesting for instance bucolic or idyllic life) and leisurely meditations that endlessly connect disengaged life's private predicaments to

²⁴ Poems are bullshit unless they are/teeth or trees or lemons piled/on a step. Or black ladies dying/of men leaving nickel hearts/beating them down. Fuck poems/and they are useful, wd they shoot/come at you, love what you are,/breathe like wrestlers, or shudder/strangely after pissing. We want live/words of the hip world live flesh &/coursing blood (Baraka 1991:219-220).

abstract symbols—concerning this it is worth noticing the contrastive model for a poem suggested by Archibald MacLeish in his 'Ars Poetica'.²⁵ Thus the Sowetan poet certainly requires a more attentive look because his pugnacious spirit added to his poetic performances over reggae and dubs inflame the passions of both mind and bowels. Various tools and techniques, such as pornographic innuendoes, symbolically and physically violent references, nauseating images, and the construction of eschatological and surrealist tropes, are used to convey the (outrageous) message to the reader, or listener.

BAVINO-NOTES

...
 for finger-flicking you can have these fists
gitch ape by the nape nuzus masturbate
in relation slave-to-master hate
 my toes in yr nose in the anus if you need to smell the rose
 switch my veins for yr varicose *bilateral resemble fissures*
cut up in pieces you're tongue-kissing block at toilets...
see you after the resurrection flush...
for masturbating in the stench
dung-beetles & piglets scour in the sewer
 death...

(Rampolokeng 2004:133)

In another poem, 'from Into the Death Zone', he links his verses to the writings on the country's toilet walls to symbolise it as an instrument of the social degradation he is immersed in:

it takes shit to kick my art. & the smell of blocked sewer systems. my
 rhythm was created in the toilets of the nation it stinks of the rot of my
 society. immunising themselves against death in feeding on human flesh.

(Rampolokeng 1999:90)

Another of Rampolokeng's methods of insubordination is the reversion of hegemonic discourse against the oppressors themselves by planning textual conspiracies and putting forward his postcolonial arts of resistance. As previously discussed, everyday practices of domination and resistance usually govern relations between dominators and subordinates. This is reflected in the oppressors' configuration of discourse by emphasising the former's hegemony and the latter's

²⁵ 'A poem should be palpable and mute/As a globed fruit./Dumb/As old medallions to the thumb./Silent as the sleeve-worn stone/Of casement ledges where the moss has grown—/A poem should be wordless/As the flight of birds' (MacLeish 1952:40-1).

subordination. James Scott considers that 'hidden transcripts' are the basis for dominated people's resistance and a latent menace to oppressors (1994:136-201). Rampolokeng's poetic strategy of learning and discoursing on the rules of the official power game should not be read as a passive reaction though, but as an active reaction of denouncing a situation of domination and abuse. This step is attained by revealing the dominators' overwhelming power. The poet transforms hegemonic discourse into something that disrupts and decentres what such discourse was meant to be by tactically mocking and distorting it with a reversal speech.

This is sometimes achieved by making up joke poems, but without losing sight of a strategic, formal and direct subversion. The practice of resistance, in such cases, apparently guards itself against the need or willingness to negotiate with power, for 'when one man seeks another's domination/he becomes an abomination/vile as the devil's corruption/impure of mind as an abortion' (1990:6). Therefore, Rampolokeng looks at Western (neo)colonialism and imperialism as an abomination and a hellish project. And all the apparatuses brought about by the colonialists—the implementation of clerical organisms, as well as law and civil institutions, followed by the imposition of moral parameters, censorship, church dogmas and views regarding good, evil, equality, freedom, et cetera—are transformed into weapons of reversal with which to counterattack. So the Sowetan bard employs a ruse that inverts the situation of power relations by spreading malicious poetic gossip and rumours about colonialist articles of faith.

A poem such as 'rap 36', for instance, is something of a joke-poem in which the biblical account of the creation of the world is deliberately misconstrued to give birth not to Eve but to Margaret Thatcher. And she is depicted not as a result of divine agency but as a symbol of terror, destruction and arrogance; in all, a monstrosity worse than the devil. The very devil itself appears to play her husband's role:

from the rib of adam
fell what can be called madam
she leads the world by the nose
its blood running through her hose
to water seed-beds of starvation
she grows & glows on deprivation
she puts the serpent to shame
but he gets all the blame
in hell she finds comfort
with the devil her slave-consort
when she speaks in a loving tone
the devils rushes to atone

(Rampolokeng 1990:60-1)

And by the same token all the hellish and evil catholic myths are turned against Western imperialism, when the poet insists that the liaison between Thatcher and the devil means both the wreck of human hope and a prorogation of the brutal conquest of the British:

she started as satan's project
now his programme of action is her product
she hates to be called woman
since she's above a demon
to her human life is a game
at which there's no trick she can't name
on death she speaks with authority
for that's what gave her notoriety
let them eat dope
she says when the world cries for hope
conquest is her fetish
in the tradition of the british
she's of the bone of her ancestors
marauding hordes were her mentors
she's hooked on megalomania
takes humanity for a hernia
when humanity flies over the head of thatcher
it breaks down with a puncture

(Rampolokeng 1990:60-1)

And since the utopian socialist dream is gone, the capitalist system is portrayed as an insatiable diabolical creature. The devil of short-sighted greed and nuclear waste is powerful enough to keep its ongoing intention of debasing and impoverishing the South:

socialism's said to fail – we attach to capital's tail
smell of hell when that tail is raised
a taste of nuclear waste
radioactivity does not sate a health-thirst
it pumps full of eternal rest – in the mouth
the perennial tale of the south

(Rampolokeng 1999:104)

Catholicism, 'hypochristians', and 'wine-drunken catholics/taking a tumble on the bible/casting a coy look at the prayer-book' (1993:34), whatever their origins or social ranks, are usually one of the poet's frequent, even obsessive targets. 'Like Marechera', Veit-Wild argues, 'Rampolokeng sees his own religious education as an act of violence, against which his is striking back with the armoury of his verse' (2006:83). Indeed, the poet makes it clear that his enforced Christian upbringing was merely another crime perpetrated against him: 'It was actually in the

church where I came across the most obscene images about bloodletting, about rape, about bestialities, about almost everything under the sun' (in Brückner 1996:269). And as we can infer from his remarks below, his desecration is also a rational rejection of the authoritarian and racist role catholic institutions have played in the (post)colonial world:

Catholicism wants to make people sterile and clean. Bodily functions, the whole of sexuality, are associated with shame. The Virgin Mary is this totally untouched figure. Not to mention the halo above the head of the tiny, oh so sweet, child: complete purity. When we look at the role religion plays in oppression throughout the world...even apartheid was vindicated using the Bible. The colour of my skin —which I consider beautiful —is associated with excrement. I have to ask myself where that comes from. The answer lies in the Catholic Church.

(in Endriss 2003:[Online])

The same can be surmised from his verses in 'rap 14', in which he regards with contempt both Catholicism and colonialism: 'by a sword-sharp religion said to convert/when it was a weapon to subvert/the rules of justice/wielded in the mind by colonialists/i go off at a tangent/to escape this smell so pungent' (1990:23-4). And also in 'rap 24' he inveighs against the role of domination played by religion, as his plot to conspire against hegemonic power by using reversal tactics of associating Christian intervention with degrading capitalism:

tapeworms unto the third world
a catastrophe of the christian herald
exploitation on crusade
disguised as international monetary aid
poverty turning countries into nuclear waste dumping grounds
pig-feed proffered by oiled capitalist hands
death become a figure life a number
the third world turned into a death chamber
constructed by multi-national architects of ill
destroyers of god's will

(Rampolokeng 1990:38)

Furthermore, an insistent application of antagonisms sometimes constitutes a model in Rampolokeng's poetry. In such cases it may suggest that 'hybridity' or 'interstitial perspective' only exists ephemerally, or as contingent practices. Thus, it may persuade us to conceptualise 'resistance' in this case as a hybridising occurrence that nonetheless rejects the necessity of negotiating and compromising. We can notice in some of his poems that the persona recognises the dualistic characteristic of his responses to subordination. Indeed, he attempts actively to

employ his own constitution as an oppositional subject in the context of globalised domination in his struggle to keep himself as self versus 'themselves'. This is an effort to mingle himself with a particular dualistic alignment of self/other as a strategy of resistance, but without rejecting ample limits to the self/persona. This practice of dualistic opposition—or resistant, conflictive stance/stanza—is employed many times as a mimicking composition so as to mock the dominant discourse and achieve a space outside the limitations of the subaltern's metaphysical silence. However, it should be read much more as the analysis of power relations through the antagonism of struggles (Foucault 1982:210) and strategic opposition, rather than the binarist and dichotomist perspective implied in colonial discourse. Let us recur again to 'rap 31':

they say i'm kinky
when i'm only inky
i raise an objection
& get a rejection
from them of the hard rule
that rule like a mad bull
saying i've a mental infection
should get a lead injection
but they came sailing in a ship
to make me bleat like a sheep
now they drive up in a van
to silence me with a ban

(Kampolokeng 1990:53)

The same argument applies to 'rap 40':

i tell you my friend
i refuse to be meek
they call me a freak
i refuse to be a fool
they call me a fool
when to my people my words are palatable
detractors call me a vegetable
when on my soil their words bear no fruit
they call me barren-minded brute
i become silent
they deem me potentially violent
say i'm like bile
foul-faced & vile
i smile
they run from me a mile

(Kampolokeng 1990:66-7)

About the tension involved in such poems, Oliphant says that it sets out the colonised people's struggle against domination. It also engages with the 'compulsion to expose the moral unacceptability of oppression and the need for change articulated in terms understandable by the oppressor' (Oliphant 1990:iv). But it does not stop there. As the poet does not know limits to his self-persona, he also plays with the oppressor's voice, mimicking the dominant discourse, forging another strategy of subversion by apparently receiving a missive sent by the themselves-persona:

letter

dear lesego
if you want us to give you an ear
tell us something we want to hear
make the deed supercede the motive
our applause will be explosive
dance action more than dense thought
is what is more often bought
....
strive to entertain
stop trying to enlighten
we've heard enough of '76
make the poetry and stop the politics

(Rampolokeng 1990:2)

In short, Rampolokeng's poetry may appear quite miserable and discouraging sometimes. 'There is certainly a gloomy and depressive side in him, and his raving is a way to get to terms with the madness that is not only in the world but also in himself' (Veit-Wild 2006:87). In fairness, however, the poet makes it very clear that his intention is not to spread negative perspectives; so among all these painful lines not all is bleak and there may be space for love and healing too: 'my love lives where salt in wounds pushes out diseases/to spiritual injuries that stare from skinless faces' (1999:67). And even though the present condition gives him more than enough reason to be a 'rude boy', he cherishes his own hopes, even posthumous ones as expressed in 'Rap Ranting':

can't wait till i'm mister man the late
to celebrate the bird the bee the tree
in the imagery of poetry
but the menagerie of bigotry
racial harlotry in grey all round bullshit...
meanwhile the stench hits my nostrils with a smile
& i'm moved to rude boy murderous style

(Rampolokeng 1999:75)

Elsewhere he has also remarked that love for humankind is meant to be his primary driving force: 'It is not class or race but love of man that drags me along these thorny paths, actually, that drags my tongue along these grounds of broken glass' (in Brückner 1996:268). Thus, besides his scathing criticisms on those in power who represent exploitation and moral corruption, he refuses to give up hope and would rather fight for a better future—'i'm of a nation in the forge/struggling to emerge/from a marathon hammering/into a time bright & glittering' (1990:22). In addition, as the 'rapmaster supreme' puts it into words:

I see every single poem of mine as arising out of love. If I write about the hatred of an evil system I am hand in hand with actually saying that I love the direct opposite of it. If I set out to smash a particular bad or—in my own eyes—a particular negative system be it of government or of mere human relations, I am at the same time putting forward the necessity for the positive to be set in its place.

(in Brückner 1996:262)

Or:

I've never celebrated nor embraced negativity in my life. Every single thing I have tried to do or written has come out of a need to actually eradicate or wipe out whatever it is that seeks to destroy the soul of other people

(Rampolokeng 2005: quoted from the blurb)

These are thus the struggle and resistance that are continued in Rampolokeng's poetry. All in all, his stan[za]ce relates to that of a political, a revolutionary and a militant poet, since his work is intertwined with socio-political issues and the struggle against oppression. But labelling his work, as aforesaid, is an unwelcome and uneasy task. If one is looking for solutions, one will probably get frustrated with Rampolokeng's verses, above all those people who support or look for the South African postapartheid 'miracle' as a hope for a change in the country's social injustices. On the other hand, he comes with witty, mordant verses in a rapid-fire poetic speech that voices sarcastic observations, gripping one's heed and forcing one to think 'i'll put beautiful poems on hold/& make a rap to make you understand/overstand everywherestand' (1993:1). There is in them both deconstruction and denouncement of the abuses perpetrated by past and

present hegemonic power. Rampolokeng's verses symbolises the even worse error of embarking in ideologies, in salvation systems, always contesting, but never getting recipes at hand.

The next chapter aims to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion and provide a perspective for this study. For this reason, we will recapitulate the main points of the present debate and track briefly a comparative analysis of the works of Linton Kwesi Johnson and Lesego Rampolokeng, underlining similarities in their textual strategies of resistance.

University of Cape Town

The post-imperial writers of the Third World therefore bear their past within them—as scars of humiliating wounds, as instigation for different practices, as potentially revised visions of the past tending towards a post-colonial future, as urgently reinterpretable and redeployable experiences, in which the formerly silent native speaks and acts on territory reclaimed as part of a general movement of resistance, from the colonist.

Edward Said *Culture and Imperialism*

A selection of poems by Linton Kwesi Johnson and Lesego Rampolokeng has been analysed in the present study under the scope of postcolonial critique by emphasising and debating the theories of domination and resistance. The way both poets employ their poetry to portray the tense relation of hegemonic power to those who are subject to state violence makes their literary works a privileged source for the application of postcolonial poetics. The underlying debate also tracks the key role of postcolonial literature and theory as a privileged niche for a conceptual application of the arts of resistance and reconstruction. In this context, the emergence of current third-world literature and poetry as a form of writ[h]ing against the colonial discourse is a constant moving practice from the margins to the centre, and many authors link this phenomenon to the commitment to political activism and emancipating praxis.

This research has thus made an effort to approach the problematic of domination and resistance by relying on three main goals discussed through one chapter on theoretical concepts and two others dealing with postcolonial poetics. The first one presented a critical introduction of the studies on colonial discourse and strategies of resistance in a threefold task organised into sections. The first task was dedicated to introducing and analysing the colonial discourse as well as querying its binarist tendencies. The objectives of this section were to examine and establish connections between the emergence of colonial rhetoric and the practices of othering and orientalism.

Grounding the theoretical underpinnings for this study on Edward Said and Tzvetan Todorov, we have seen that the debate on domination and resistance is in most cases engulfed in the dialectic of self/other. Colonial discourse has forged such division in many ways based on a construction of the other as different and inferior in relation to the dominant self. With the advent of postcolonial studies, however, this sort of binarism and polarisation has been increasingly embedded in a broader and more complex field of debate that aims at crossing borders and unknotting essentialisms. In short, the institution of hierarchical positions between colonisers and colonised, so as to define westerners as superior and the rest as inferior is part of an old-fashioned colonial mindset of control. We have thus seen that after affirming this Manichaeism of coloniser as superior, centre, subject, and colonised as marginal, inferior, object, domination becomes complete when the colonial subject's values, culture and practices are disavowed and illegitimatised under the dominator's eyes.

The second section intended to bring up a critical discussion of the pitfalls of anticolonialist struggle. The aim here was to afford a view of the 1960s and 1970s liberation movements as classic examples of practical postcolonial strategies of resistance. By analysing the consequences of such anticolonial practices, we briefly went through the influences of colonialist dualism on resistance, the failures of liberation movements in setting up pro-democratic regimes shortly after seizing power, and the pioneering experience of the anticolonial struggle to launch the basis of a contemporary postcolonial project. Overall, the discussion relied on the contributions of liberation struggles in Africa and Latin America, as well as on the liberation theories proposed by Frantz Fanon and Michel Foucault.

Finally, the third section tried to look at recent contributions to develop the concept of resistance beyond a confrontational attitude. The pursuit of a notion of resistance as a strategy of rereading and reconstruction according to a multidisciplinary and multifocal critical perspective represents a theoretical aspect of the contemporary decolonising experience and multicultural practice. Based on cultural and intellectual anticolonial activism, the *postcolonial arts of resistance* are intended to transcend the binaries of hegemonic discourse so as to articulate and approach the multiple concerns of a globalised, cross-cultural era. Such an attempt is related to the dynamic and multidisciplinary nature of the field of postcolonial studies, whose place of continuous debate, divergences and self-interrogations is fostered by the diverse disciplinary and worldview contributions that shape it. This practice must be assessed as normal and also recommendable, since it sharpens the critical aspect of the investigation and prevents it from being converted into

dogma. This section relied mainly on the concepts of hybridism and weapons of the weak developed, respectively, by Homi Bhabha and James Scott.

In a nutshell, the general goal of this first chapter was an attempt to demonstrate the points of departure and the genealogical connections that exist in the political-theoretical tradition of colonialism, anticolonialism and the contemporary practice of postcolonialism. The latter is treated as a generic term for a variety of critical and rereading tactics that encompass postcolonial arts and literature, and postcolonial theory and criticism. Besides the value of providing the conceptual underpinnings for this study, this critical introduction is also intended, above all, to show how colonial discourse is still pervasive to the present day, and to emphasise the increasing significance of postcolonial criticism as a niche of resistance to and rewriting the hegemonic rhetoric.

Recapitulating, anticolonialism was especially characterised by opposition and absolute resistance to colonial conditions, which frequently presented a dichotomist form (coloniser/colonised, civilised/uncivilised...) as we have seen in the works of Todorov, Said and Fanon. Notwithstanding this, due to reasons related to continuous historical, political and cultural changes in both ex-metropolis and postcolonial nations, anticolonialism deserves serious reconsideration with regard to tactics, theories and methods. That methodological reevaluation has led eventually to a focus of anticolonial practice under a new perspective. Thus the analytical tools of anticolonialism and resistance have been reformulated, especially to deal with contemporary forms of colonial discourse—which has been enfeebled by the diffusion of centres of power (Foucault) and new strategies of resistance (Bhabha, Scott). In consequence of these continuous changes and reformulations, postcolonialism emerges as a new forum for resistance, reconstruction and cultural criticism. The paradigmatic contribution of this new assembly for a critical and cultural analysis consists, therefore, in proposing new visions to come closer to and comprehend the vast complexity of contemporary postcolonial conditions, which are impossible to be fairly looked at, gauged and scrutinised with the rudiments of dichotomist oppositions.

Hence, this new perspective entails emphasising the necessity of being vigilant to the interconnections of histories and identities, hybridity and the dynamic construction of subjectivities, as well as other key issues such as gender, 'race', ethnicity, class, development, technology, information, globalisation...; issues that tend to disappear under the simplistic emphasis of 'revolution' and obsolete anticolonial resistance. Closely related to this new approach is the importance of analysing all kinds of political and cultural discourses within the material conditions that make them possible. The basic idea here is to lay bare and redefine continuities

between determined patterns of old-fashioned colonial representations and discourses along with the material practice of neocolonial power and imperialism.

Based on human (and social) sciences and reformulations of anticolonial activism, contemporary postcolonialism affords a sort of *reconstructive resistance* that is essentially a political, artistic and critical project. By its very nature such a project has an interdisciplinary, radical, transnational and hybrid focus. Its pivotal ideal is to critically rethink past and present Western domination (especially from the perspective of those who have been suffering its hard effects) as well as (re)define its social and cultural impacts in the present world. This is the reason why the new strategies of resistance are forever scrutinising past events and ongoing socio-political distresses. The objective is to foresee and come near to new analytical methods and liberating praxis. These are especially welcome in engendering new constructive forms of interaction and cultural transformation.

After situating the genesis and the trajectory of colonial discourse and strategies of anticolonial resistance on that account, the following goal in the next chapter was to conduct a critical analysis of the poetry of Linton Kwesi Johnson, considering its links to the postcolonial formulations of a revisionist, anticolonialist and resistant practice. In truth, LKJ's work puts forward strategies of resistance that resonate a solid critical focus aimed at questioning and decentring Western political and cultural authority and its pretentious moral superiority that has been used to justify a great deal of colonialist interventions and the present-day unequal South-North, East-West power relations. Closely related to that analysis there was an effort to approach new forms of radical cultural criticism, the liberating praxis intended to discredit homogeneous nationalist ideologies, and the promotion of hybrid forms of interaction and cultural transformation.

Being part of a West Indian diasporic movement to the British Isles, LKJ's main concern is the forms with which to reread the migrants' reality and channel their miseries and hopes through his poetic voice. For this reason the poet is well aware of the socio-cultural processes intrinsically related to the formation of Jamaican Creole as part of the English language. In many ways this affirmation and valorisation of Jamaican patois serves to frame the key presentation of his literary work. His own readings and studies of anticolonial writers and activists from the 19th and 20th centuries have influenced him to take a stance to radically read, criticise and expose social problems by means of the aesthetic tools of poetry.

The philosophical and literary works of Frantz Fanon, Jean-Paul Sartre, Aimé Césaire, W.E.B. Du Bois, René Depestre, Langston Hughes and other militant writers from the diaspora

and from the 1960s and 1970s African liberation movements had a great impact on LKJ's writings. There is close relation amongst the vision of a recovery of lost ancestry discussed by Senghor (1994), the educative reconstruction of forms of exploitation found in Fanon (1982) and Césaire (1972, 1995), and the claiming voices that are uttered in LKJ's sound-poems. Thus, for instance, LKJ has been overtly condemning of the incapacity of the British dominant class to face the cultural presence and influence of West Indian and other diasporans as part of the nation. As he explains in some interviews, the development of a migrant conscience as part of the familial, educational, structural and cultural formation of Britain was something inevitable, since the various immigrants were there to stay. As a product of an intense and broad participation in politically-oriented cultural manifestations, this poet fits into a postcolonial, diasporic scenario of journalistic, performative and poetic production.

Emerging as a writer in a historical moment of great political and artistic effusion in London, LKJ cannot help linking the artistic endeavour to a political urgency of calling for political awareness and collective action to denounce and deconstruct the cruelty of stigma, police brutality and inferiority complex. Therefore his poetry develops several themes in which prevails a representation of public spaces and temporal vagueness: LKJ wants to talk about everyday communal problems which political powers and the mainstream media prefer to turn a blind eye to. Hence, the strategies of resistance he employs have socio-political implications, since his poetic conceptions depict the public gatherings of migrants and the working class plagued by unemployment, racism, state violence, neglect and other pestilences.

At the same time, there is a poetic light as a guide in his project of recovering dignity in all that refers to migrants, minorities and the oppressed in Britain and elsewhere; this is an effort of retaking the lost, the disfigured, the deniable, and transforming them into a fountain of pleasure, pride and richness. Or, as a last resort, the poetic intention is to get rid of whichever negative value can exist to stigmatise the immigrant and the working class (for instance, the recurring association of the third-world immigrant with laziness, theft, or terrorism). So the poet creates a reversal discourse to hegemonic power by supporting social movements, deconstructing essentialist discourses against common people, paying homage to some of them through reggae-poems, fostering a different, hybrid identity and criticising divisiveness and factional fighting amongst the rebels, or comrades, or counterparts. To such a poetic voice, being part of a diasporic experience implies certain conditions, especially being discriminated against, and that cannot be forgotten, one of the reasons LKJ's poetry encompasses art, politics and performance as a tactic to subvert hegemonic discourses and denounce inhuman conditions.

The debate on postcolonial arts of resistance was carried on in the ensuing chapter with a point-of-departure short account of South African history and literature to track the origins, life, literary influences and work of the Sowetan poet Lesego Rampolokeng. The discussion was developed to show how the country's socio-political conditions are constantly used as a background for his poetic discourses, and how the poet launches a visceral, venomous attack on the ongoing effects of colonisation and state-sponsored segregation in present-day South Africa. Being an outstanding postapartheid poet since the 1990s, the main targets of Rampolokeng's writings are South Africa's social, political and racist problems, as well as corruption, injustices and despotic governments across the world.

By and large, what exasperates some people about Rampolokeng's work is his outspoken hostility towards the delusiveness and sentimentalism of the newly-democratic ideology of 'rainbow nation'—a starry-eyed image exploited by South African politicians, tourist agencies and media advertisements. By rejecting and mocking the rainbowism, some may even be wondering if the Sowetan poet has given up his sense of belonging and nationality and rediscovered his inner self by resorting to a scathing attack on his own country. In reality, part of Rampolokeng's political purposes is an urgency to express to his fellow citizens and leaders the concern of demanding a real democracy, a real independence and a fair state. His refusal of labels and connection to specific groups and positions seems to be a political strategy as a mode to create a subjective, independent space in his poetry where he can voice all these problems and charge them. African nationalism, autocratic regimes, political corruption and oppression, in South Africa and abroad, are the scope of his belligerent and scatological tone. Perhaps by ranting at the establishment and unveiling the façade of the 'miracle' as a disguise for self-indulgence, mistreatment and exploitation, the poet's methods of addressing such issues are neither diplomatic nor pacifying; yet the best bet is that Rampolokeng's underlying instincts stay broadly pro-love and humankind, as he claims.

At first glance Rampolokeng's strategy of deconstruction is a departure from conventional textual structures and rhymes. He uses all sorts of scatological images by joining together depictions of shabby characters and gross deceptions. All this piling up of chaotic images comes intermingled with a potent sound effect of internal and external rhymes. Notwithstanding this, his latest poems present an even more complex time and a greater sense of eagerness. We have seen that a bunch of 'rap' poems comprise a great part of Rampolokeng's first poetry book entitled *Horns for Hondo*. In that and subsequent releases, the poet focuses on themes of (neo)colonialism, racial alterity, the everlasting conflict between oppressor and oppressed and so

on. In the meantime he slots his writing into a historical perspective to address problems in South African society, and seems to find it hard to resist taunting the imperialists and autocratic rulers of this world.

Although his work has not yet received a deserved critical gaze, an in-depth analysis of Rampolokeng's poems will certainly show that the historical facts of colonisation and apartheid in the particularly South African context justify his warrior-like attitude in writing. And one of his basic strategies of counterattack is to prompt the marginalised other of (neo)colonial discourse to steal the limelight from the dominant, hegemonic authority; whereas references to hegemonic power, domination and exploitation are turned into a focus on poetic subversion and parody. This strategy represents an effort on the lyricist's side to distort dominant speeches by means of mimicking and reversing the hegemonic discourse, rewriting, punning and creolising the English language, as well as depicting social debasement through obscene, violent and iconoclastic imagery.

The selected poems heretofore looked at can be inserted into a category of contemporary postcolonial production that does not disguise its contempt towards hegemonic power's injustices, violence and tyranny inflicted on oppressed communities. Both political commitment and social engagement are conspicuously manifest in the works of Linton Kwesi Johnson and Lesego Rampolokeng. In particular, the arts of resistance, the focus of this analysis, are present in the writings of these poets, and they usually employ tactics of hybridism, creolisation, subversive imagery and the disruptive weapon of insubordination as leitmotifs. Further heed was given to some specific polarised groupings that both poets utilise to ground most of their poetic discourse: state violence/public demonstration, police/youths, rulers/powerless, political oppression/social movements and so forth. I introduced these contrastive, antagonistic elements as abstractly as possible because the way the poets design the movement of such components (and we can also call them two positions, institutions, corporations, beings, concepts...) is not fixed at all. Instead, both poets present a full dynamic and plural perspective of such images in the sense of what one and another may represent in each poem. There is not necessarily an equivalent analogy between these strategic opposite components and the previous dichotomist binaries we have seen, such as good/bad, developed/primitive, civilised/uncivilised, et cetera. The things that are presented through such contrastive images are the unremitting association between the cultural life of the oppressed people and the forms of socio-historic injustices they struggle with. What remains is eventually a division between oppressors/oppressed, a division based on individual and collective imbalances, a classic division of a power struggle. This is, after

all, a mere strategy of poetic analysis by means of which it is possible to draw a convergent line between the ideological commitment and literary militancy particular to both poets, and the diverse developments and images produced by such a mechanism of antagonism.

Theirs is merely a common poetic art but of course supported by a strong consciousness of fighting for justice, and searching an insertion for the sidelined cultures of those who are voiceless. For both poets the art of writing poetry is a form of upsetting the socio-economic and cultural balances; it is also a way of publicly keeping a distance from classist visions of poetic writing and literature. By studying the topics that are developed in LKJ's and Rampolokeng's poetry we can reflect on the interstitial relation between aesthetics and politics, as well as on the role of literature in the construction of a national imagery. The poetic formulas found in the representation of both poets as a way of aligning extremes—the dominator and the dominated, the oppressors and the weak—are, to a certain extent, a direct, simple and clear sign of a struggling writing mood. The motivation is the fuel for unveiling inconsistencies and reversing perpetrated injustices. And the act of describing them through poetry by a tactic of subversion is already a form of confrontation, a way to recover pride and dignity for those who are regarded as socio-economically defeated or subjugated.

The ordinary meaning of silence bears no more than an impossibility of concrete expression, an omission; it has to do with sensations. But the silence of the weak reflects the inferno of centuries of concealment, oblivion and humiliation under tyrannical oppression. Pain, suffering and misery turn silence into an endless scream, capable of being heard only by those who want to listen to it. By perceiving, rewriting and revaluating those existences scrunched up in agony, LKJ and Rampolokeng confirm their poetic craving for redressing inequalities. They want to listen to them. They want to join them. They want to bring back the immediate, culturally vital memories of those pariahs who are trapped under the dominant foot of neglect and contempt. This partially explains why their poetic personae usually appear as first-person narrators or as observers in individual contemplations or just describing scenarios of the mundane aberrations they stare at. What the readers are confronted with are characters in continuous development, searching for human dignity because they have not had the opportunity of self-expression, of self-affirmation, of being. The image is sometimes confused for it is somewhat internal; other times it is not, it is straightforward, there is much anger against the world for the constant rejection and injustice in it. But at last all those voices surrounded by coils of razor wire, all those silenced, imprisoned feelings are allowed liberty through the rebellious and sheer outrageous

writings of Linton Kwesi Johnson and Lesego Rampolokeng. They are not only writers, they are withers.

5.1 Similarities in the Textual Resistance of Linton Kwesi Johnson and Lesego Rampolokeng

Despite the conceptual heterogeneity, aesthetic flexibility and postcolonial political-cultural loci of each poet, the works of LKJ and Rampolokeng present a couple of similarities that are worth being summarised in a few coherent points. Their oeuvres commonly intertwine aesthetics and politics, and they represent two postcolonial voices of possible responses to the current historical moment in which issues such as global imperialism, financial capitalism, huge economic gaps and poverty, terrorism, social liberty, among others, are pulling nations apart. There are some synthetic notes regarding the literary intentions that both poets share in their literary political outlook: shifting marginality and periphery to the centre, strong political commitment, experimentation with spoken rhythm, exploration of the musicality of a hybrid language, et cetera. I suggest some generic ideas that could be useful as criteria with which to couple these poets in a comparative study. Nonetheless, such ideas should be regarded as 'inclinations' or 'tendencies' in both Rampolokeng's and LKJ's poetry, and do not represent a deeper and more comprehensive assessment of all the qualities present in their oeuvre, in particular, and in postcolonial literatures, in general; even though we would not be so wrong if we regard such tendencies as a 'neonaturalism' promoting a differing socio-political literary outlook. But well beyond the 'neonaturalist' label or any other classification, perhaps LKJ and Rampolokeng are permanent, timeless poets merely because of how unremitting is the uneasiness to find out a principle of justice when all other principles seem to be absent or lost. Or even because the thematics of the literary text intermingled with the fiction-reality of life itself are full of lengthy detours and leisurely trips down blind alleys. Whether the poets' innovation marks a watershed in the emergence of a new aestheticism or not, still an attempt to systematise the findings is necessary, as follow.

1. In their poetry the witnessing aspect is reconstructed through a new aesthetic aspect that is mingled with political commitment, and sometimes can be considered filthy, colloquial and downright rude; but always engaged and not necessarily losing its literary and aesthetic values.
2. Both LKJ and Rampolokeng are trying to open up the semantic and aesthetic possibilities of their 'oralitures' by embracing a multitude of literary experimentations and a gamut of socio-political interests, and refusing any traditional, canonical conceptualisation of arts and text-based literature.
3. The authors are more concerned with 'presenting' a reality rather than 'representing' it. The poetic narrative is centred on political and moral convictions that serve to poetically criticise the mailed fist that agents of power use to promote socio-political-economic degradation at the expense of individuals, communities and nations, as well as to summon the downtrodden masses to rally and fight back at them. As a result, the poets 'present' a reality as a historical and cultural aftermath of hierarchical and backward-looking (neo)colonial exploitation. Their mental standpoint relies on modern principles of equity and freedom. And their underlying subject not only the material concerns of capitalist, political and military domination, but also the hegemonic rhetoric that implies epistemic and symbolic violence.
4. The verses seem to question to what extent Western culture and knowledge have been organically part of colonialist practices and their aftermaths. In a sense, the poems lay bare the complicity of a great deal of cultural, aesthetic, literary and intellectual productions to legitimate colonialism, slavery and exploitation exerted by Western countries upon other nations and cultures.
5. The authors, therefore, refuse to keep their distance from what they are talking about or (re)presenting. They prompt their queries, reflections and insights to defy the dominant Western humanist position that regards culture as an autonomous sphere that transcends issues of political and institutional affiliations. The poets reveal that

certain cultural forms mediate power relations as effectively and violently as the declared forms of oppression and domination.

6. They oscillate regularly between a 'critical' and an 'identical' attitude. They are likely to show, for instance, the wrongdoings and disadvantages of internecine riots among the oppressed group, and at the same time both poets strongly disagree with the prejudice and violence perpetrated by the controlling apparatus of the hegemonic power. The oppressed group is praised and condemned at the same time.
7. The authors appear to the non-familiar audience as a sort of informer or people's spokesperson, yet they are saluted as artists. At times the artists look at themselves as informers voicing the clamour of the people; other times the people have their own voice through the speaking voice of the poet-informer; and there are even times when the opinions of the oppressors are mimicked as a way of reproach. This situation is responsible for the variations in tone and speech we find in poems such as LKJ's 'Want fi Goh Rave' and Rampolokeng's 'letter'.
8. Inasmuch as the critique concerns the '(re)presented reality' and not the means by which this has been done, each poem becomes expressive and complex independently of the intentions, self-consciousness and degree of control possessed by the authors.
9. Even though the authors' source material is to a large extent a determined literary culture, their writings and aesthetic references also include cinema, television, music, internet, and the like. Despite some 'inadequacies' of vocabulary and construction, some poems, as for instance 'Five Nights of Bleeding', could be read as a little cinema screenplay.
10. It is a literature especially aimed to cause emotional impact on the reader. Rather than bourgeois, sentimentalist novels that usually pour out tears and compassion, what is important now is the use of similar artistic language to reinforce ideas of blame, fear, repulsion and laughter. A provocative invitation to knowingness, rebellion and criticism is made by way of a crude, violent, scatological and oral aesthetic.

11. Also addressing an audience supposedly aloof from the depicted reality, the artist-informer-denunciators need to show off their position of 'wisdom' in the field. Hence, the search for and employment of a doctrinal 'subjective language' which, intended to challenge the readers' comprehension, at times seems almost callous, even hostile, in its experimentation. Such characteristics, however, may carry a built-in risk of being critically misjudged by those critics whose highbrow discourse always expects the 'petit literature' to project a victimised voice in its 'style'.
12. Both poets assume an antimonolithic stance as personae when they depict poetically a society composed of different strata and cultural traditions, or when they give voice to grassroots political movements in which ethnic or cultural differences are reflected as anti-imperialist subjects trying to uplift their own world views. Consequently, the colonial discourse strategy of othering is turned upside down and those who used to be colonial subjects are now brought to power positions where their differences are represented positively—namely for the reason of being part of the working class, or ethnic minorities, or (illegal) immigrants, or women, or savages, or uneducated, for not possessing 'Western characteristics'. The binarist ideology of colonial rhetoric is thus subverted, carnivalised and displaced by being inserted into hybrid social contexts of power struggle, where the othering manipulations become untenable.
13. It is also worthwhile noting that their verses depict the figures and processes of the *resistance fighter* or the *resistance movement* as simultaneously violent and non-violent. At once the power state usually acts by employing repression and violence, imposing its values and obliging the weak to accept a homogenised norm and culture. Later, the dominated groups try to modify this situation by means of non-violent protest such as organised manifestos and demonstrations. And even, at times, they battle their way through mimicry, parody and sly civility. That is to say, they feign accepting the imposed values by aping them, but in fact subvert these values and mingle them with their own methods and conceptions. That is the reason why, for instance, the poets end up adopting the colonialist language but changing it by inserting into it the words, phrases, accents and style of their own language. At the same time this hybrid new language is employed to describe and denounce the problems inflicted by imperialist, dominant interventions. The struggle between power holders and the powerless comes to a diametrical head inasmuch as the former seeks violence and the

latter seeks subversion. Yet the effect of each means is liable to questioning. While the former slaughters and frightens, the latter queries and looks forward to transforming. Who is, between the two subjects in the contest, the civilised? The power holder who kills or the people's poet who transforms?

14. The so-called civility among Western dominant groups is, all in all, a façade. Both poets unveil the mask that hides the brutal violence which has permeated the imperialist process and which rather than civilising the colonial subjects, has massacred them in order to obtain profits and land. In *Things fall apart* (1986), Chinua Achebe writes the story of supposedly superior colonisers who seek to gain commercial benefits in the native land of the Ibo. Those 'civilised' colonialists bring disaster, of course, in the shape of evangelising christians who utterly disrupt Ibo culture. The chasm between colonialists and natives engenders an escalating series of quarrels and conflicts that lead to the inevitable dramatic finale.
15. The verification is none other than the Western hegemonic power representing as yet a symbol of imposition and violence. The dominant image of the civilised and developed Western works within a process that contradicts such an image—i.e. a destructive and interventionist process that has been put into practice from the former colonial time to the present-day South-North, East-West relations. The Western imperialists destroy and exploit what they come across in the colonies/third-world countries, from the flora to the fauna, from the minerals to the people. In South America, forests and wild life are still being devastated in the name of commercial profits. In the Caribbean, the local population has been almost entirely exterminated. In great parts of the formerly-colonised world, thus, besides the devastation of forests and animals, several ethnic groups, cultures and languages have been forever lost in consequence of massacre and slavery. Some local languages and dialects are endangered and expected to disappear soon in consequence of the imposition of dominant languages and technologies. The Western imperialists, who, in theory, are supposed to bring civility, contradict their own (colonial) discourse with violent actions and the imposition of culture, belief, language, ideology and so forth, on the former colonial subjects.

5.2 Perspectives

Before the large scope of postcolonial theory and the diverse aspects of postcolonial literature, this research has made an effort to show that the postcolonial can be not only a token of a chronological moment but also a critical querying of history and the aftermaths of colonialism and unequal power relations. In this productive tension of critical and chronological dimensions, postcolonial literature and criticism have lent their sagacity and acumen to the debate on a corpus of postcolonial/postapartheid poems. By situating the genesis and route of the postcolonial project in the past and present practices of anticolonial resistance, the genealogical approach proposed here offers an alternative historical narrative for the diverse political and intellectual expressions of previously marginalised voices. Thus, such an effort is in line with a historical landmark in which postcolonial critiques have been developing and acquiring importance as a new field of research and creation. Likewise, as Laura Chrisman has commented, black diasporans are gaining position as a global vanguard, and thus moving from the countercultural margins into the centre of modernity.

It is pertinent to stress, however, that the postcolonial project as a niche of resistance and reconstruction is not, by any means, a 'new' academic practice that has merely arisen to approach metropolitan concerns and to accept without opposition or question the worldly interests of Western hegemonic cultural institutions. The analysis of both poets has demonstrated that postcolonial literature and poetry is not a mere 'textual' practice that is isolated from material reality and everyday concerns of unequal power relations. Neither does it lack political commitment with issues of present-time imperialist and autocratic exploitation. Hence, it is patent that the postcolonial project is in essence a critical practice aimed at addressing new critical and practical perspectives that deal with the current social, political and economic unequal relations between rich and poor nations, which to a great extent go back to the colonial era.

In other different fictional and poetic works that focus on colonial and postcolonial themes, the form in which such works relate to the historical events can also be analysed, as well as the way they transform reality into fiction and the sort of conflicts such relations between history and fiction may generate. This happens inasmuch as coincidences appear or not between reality and fictional work, or a transposition of historical facts into the literary work intended to

analyse the influence of ideology on history. In this context, there is still a lot to be investigated in relation to the topic of domination and resistance, as well as other constituent aspects of postcolonial theory. This is part of the reason why this field of investigation is being increasingly studied and oriented to analyse literary works composed in and from the former colonised countries. This dissertation has aimed then to make a contribution for those scholars whose topics of discussion are concerned with these literatures.

It is also important to recognise that the merit of the poetic works presented here is their political commitment to socio-political problems, without losing their link to the special aesthetic value that poetry will always hold: its journey into the musicality of a language spoken in the realm of dreams, remembrance and magic (self-)consciousness. And the poet, as Foucault proclaims, is the one who rediscovers the buried kinships between things, and beneath the established signs, and in spite of them, the poet hears another, deeper, discourse, which recalls the time when words glittered in the universal resemblance of things. This idea bears deep implications for postcolonial literatures considered as an object of intervention situated within politics. Postcolonial theory and the poetics of resistance, subversion and transformation should always rediscover the mutual imbrications of power and knowledge, state and society, law and politics, local and global, and the deeper discourse that interconnect all these elements. As long as postcolonialism, as argues David Spurr, is both an intellectual project and a transcultural condition in search for alternatives to the discourses of the colonial era, postcolonial poetry comprises a boost to the capacity for resistance, revaluation and redress.

Indeed, third-world postcolonial practices and social movements show that this phenomenon is already taking place. For instance, some leaders of social movements and state entities in Latin America and Africa are stepping into power positions and showing their concerns with the environment, women's rights, and are constantly working to dispel the strict lines between the hegemonic power and the objects of its interventions. Most frequently, indeed, social movements and states maintain complex and overlapping relations. Such complexity shows that a theory of resistance as a strategy of subversion and transformation should deal with the state as a plural terrain, fragmented with controversies, rather than a monolith.

The call for a theory of resistance that approaches a necessity for understanding the action of postcolonial literature and social movements should not be misconstrued as a call to destroy international social order. On the contrary, the institutions of hegemonic power provide an important space for the action of social movements, which thus expand the political space available to their transformative policies. As for intellectual activism, the more it brings forward a

capacity for committing its academic production to social movements and the development of a sensibility of concerned activism, motivated by the highest cosmopolitan ideals, the more chance of achieving a fairer society. The masses in action stand as a social reality in contemporary society, and postcolonial intellectuals cannot help taking part in it.

A new approach to strategies of resistance for and in the Third World has to be committed, literally and literally, to social movements as well as attentive to the lapses of hegemonic power. Bearing this purpose in mind it is possible to potentially contribute to a new understanding of not only doctrines and ideas, but also the very ethical goal of the postcolonial discipline. Thus I tried to demonstrate here some of the theoretical tools that can be useful as strategies of resistance in postcolonial literature and criticism. I have also outlined some considerations that may be helpful in advancing an articulation of resistance theory and postcolonial poetics.

For a long time, almost during all of its existence, text-based poetry and literature production were excessively elitist, European-Western oriented, masculine centred, leisured, patrician and imbedded in imperialist rhetoric. Also for a long time, protest and resistance against tyranny in the colonial and postcolonial world were bloodily silenced, a reflection of many historical facts of domination that have hindered a social equilibrium built on the principle of equity. The reciprocal aid between postcolonialism and social movements can now offer an opportunity for a fundamental change in the way postcolonial nations are seen and treated, as well as a source of inspiration for those who restlessly fight for justice and fair-minded judgement. It is a project that accompanies the creation of a new and more equitable world order. The poetics of both Linton Kwesi Johnson and Lesego Rampolokeng certainly help illuminate the future for a free and open battle of wits as a strategy to simply keep the flame of resistance to power abuse burning, with the ultimate goal of redressing past injustices and laying (neo)colonialist myths to rest.

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