

# Towards Marxist Stylistics: Incorporating Elements of Critical Discourse Analysis into Althusserian Marxist Criticism in the Interpretation of Selected Zimbabwean Fiction



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Professor Kay McCormick

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A slightly modified definition of the term ‘Marxism’ (presented between pages 7 and 10 of this thesis) was previously included in a Master of Applied Social Work research report (exploring the impacts of Waitangi Settlement packages on ‘ordinary’ New Zealand Maori), which I submitted to Massey University in 2011.

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## **Abstract**

The thesis title is: ‘Towards Marxist Stylistics: Incorporating Elements of Critical Discourse Analysis into Althusserian Marxist Criticism in the Interpretation of Selected Zimbabwean Fiction.’

The thesis – which locates itself at the interface between linguistic and literary studies – explores the possibility of developing a ‘Marxist-stylistic’ method of text interpretation, which primarily proceeds from Althusserian Marxist Criticism, but which also incorporates salient elements of Critical Discourse Analysis. In construction of the method, the thesis first investigates the need for Althusserian Marxist criticism to be mediated, and more specifically, the areas in which this mediation is required. The thesis then crosses over to the field of Critical Discourse Analysis where it identifies relevant theoretical and methodological resources that are capable of mediating the ‘gaps’ identified in Althusserian Marxist criticism. The construction of the Marxist stylistic method is then effected through the transfer of germane theoretical and methodological resources from Critical Discourse Analysis to Althusserian Marxist criticism. The distinctive properties of the emergent Marxist-stylistic method are delineated before the method is practically applied to the interpretation of at least four fictional texts – all written and set in Zimbabwe. The key outcome of the thesis is that a distinctive method of text interpretation, which meaningfully separates itself from Althusserian Marxist criticism, on the one hand, and Critical Discourse Analysis, on the other, emerges. The thesis concludes with a reflection on the application of the method and makes some suggestions for further research and development in the area herein labelled as ‘Marxist stylistics.’

Mapfumo Clement Chihota

June 2014

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## 1.0 Chapter One: Introduction

### 1.1 *Scope of the Thesis*

This thesis draws Althusserian Marxist criticism (henceforth, AMC) into conversations with various versions of Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth, CDA). The purpose of the conversations is, firstly, to critique AMC from a standpoint partly located within the field of CDA, in order to highlight some of the limitations that have inhibited its scope and effectiveness. Secondly, it is to identify specific elements of CDA, which could be incorporated into AMC to mediate the identified weaknesses. The ultimate purpose of the conversations is to develop a ‘hybridised’ method of text interpretation, which is primarily based on AMC, but which also incorporates salient elements of CDA. The label that I tentatively use to designate this ‘hybridised’ method of text interpretation is: ‘*Marxist stylistics*’. I not only argue that the development of a Marxist stylistic method is *necessary*, given the lacunae that have stultified the scope and potential of AMC. I also argue that the development of a *distinctive* ‘hybrid’, which clearly separates itself from AMC on the one hand, and from (collective as well as individual versions of) CDA on the other, is *possible*. To demonstrate the latter point, I punctuate the construction of the projected Marxist stylistic method with highlights of its distinctive features. Finally, I test out the unique strengths (and possible weaknesses) of the method by applying it to the interpretation of a limited sample of Zimbabwean fiction.

### 1.2 *Underpinning Assumptions*

The thesis that it is *necessary* and also *possible* to develop a *distinctive* Marxist stylistic method rests on three main assumptions. The first and foremost assumption is that *AMC needs to be mediated*. This assumption is partly validated by the mixed meta-critical commentary which AMC has attracted. On one hand, AMC has been celebrated as a ‘revolutionary’ and ‘innovative’ version of Marxist literary criticism that has transcended ‘theoretical leftism<sup>1</sup>’ and thereby extended the scope of Marxist criticism beyond the narrow and prescriptive limits of both determinism and reflectionism (Forgacs 1982, Jackson 1994, Haslett 2000, Resch 1992, Feltham 2008). On the other hand (and in spite of this conspicuous potential), AMC has been vituperated for working with contradictions

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<sup>1</sup>Callinicos (1982:56) defined theoretical leftism as, “...the denial of any efficacy to the superstructures...,” or – in other words – as the imposition of the socioeconomic base as the *sole* determinant of all other levels of the social formation (ibid.).

and ambiguities that have threatened its very viability (Bennett 1979, 1990; Poster 1974, Giddens 1979, Resch 1992, *inter alia*). These contradictions and ambiguities have been identified in several of its dimensions. To illustrate, AMC has been criticised for:

- (a) Vacillating between idealist and materialist premises in its definition of social practices (Bennett 1979).
- (b) Espousing a ‘structural superdeterminism’ (Giddens 1979) which confers limitless potency upon social structures, while overlooking (and effectively diminishing) the effectivity of human agency (Giddens 1979, Poster 1974).
- (c) Working with an insufficient grasp of discourse theory, as attested by its ‘under-theorisation’ of the link between discourses and ideologies, or relationship between literary and non-literary discourses (Bennett 1990, Jackson 1994).
- (d) Failing to deliver on its promise to closely engage with the linguistic and narrative structures of texts (Forgacs 1982) – putatively, because it lacks the discourse analytical tools required to do so effectively.
- (e) The unnecessary split between its ‘production-’ and ‘reception-oriented’ versions (Resch 1992).

In short<sup>2</sup>, it may be safe to proceed on the preliminary assumption that AMC is fraught with contradictions and ambiguities, which warrant the ‘mediatory interventions’ proposed in this thesis.

The second key assumption of the thesis is that *CDA possesses salient theoretical and methodological resources, which could effectively mediate the weak points of AMC*, as already outlined. As shall be seen (in Chapters Four and Five of the thesis), CDA – as a field – possesses a rich array of conceptual and methodological resources, which could effectively mediate many of the problems highlighted in AMC. To illustrate, CDA consistently defines social practices with reference to ‘materialist’ premises (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999; van Dijk 2009; Wodak and Meyer 2009)<sup>3</sup> – a theoretical stance which AMC could usefully emulate. CDA also perceives a dialectical relationship between social structures and human agency (Wodak and Meyer 2009; Fairclough 2003) – a position which AMC could adopt to address its problem of ‘structuralist

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<sup>2</sup> The weak points of AMC are fully examined in Chapter Three of this thesis.

<sup>3</sup> A theme which is elaborated in Section 4.3.2 of this thesis.

superdeterminism'. Perhaps most significantly, CDA applies discourse theory to illuminate both the link between discourses and ideologies and the relationship between literary and non-literary discourses (Fowler 1996, Toolan 1988). Furthermore, CDA employs a rich array of discourse analytical tools<sup>4</sup> (Fairclough 2009, Wodak 2006, Simpson 1993), some of which AMC could borrow to intensify its engagement with the linguistic and narrative structures of texts. Finally, CDA integrates studies of text production with studies of text reception<sup>5</sup> (Fairclough 1989, 2009; van Dijk 1995) – thus pre-empting any spurious division between these two pathways to text analysis. In short, it may also be safe to proceed on the second key assumption of this thesis, which is that CDA possesses rich conceptual and analytical resources, which could effectively mediate many of the problems identified in AMC.

The final key assumption of this thesis – which is forward-looking – is that *it is possible to construct a distinctive Marxist stylistic method, which clearly separates itself from AMC on the one hand, and from (individual as well as collective versions of) CDA on the other*. This final key assumption shall sustain the following set of projections: The Marxist stylistic method envisaged in this thesis shall modify, extend and *transform* AMC in a *stylistic* direction. It shall incorporate conceptual and discourse analytical tools from CDA, thereby asserting its distinctiveness from AMC. At the same time, the (projected) Marxist stylistic method shall *preserve* certain Marxist core-values, thus distinguishing itself from the political orientation(s) associated with CDA. It shall emphasise socioeconomic and class issues in its critique of literary texts, and additionally, deploy some of the exegetic strategies applied in Marxist criticism. On those bases, the Marxist stylistic method shall purposely seek to distinguish itself from both AMC and from (individual as well as collective versions of) CDA – a theme that shall be the main focus of Chapter Five of the thesis<sup>6</sup>.

### ***1.3 Aims of the Thesis***

Against this background, the main aims of this thesis could be articulated as follows: The thesis develops a distinctive Marxist stylistic method (of text interpretation), which is

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<sup>4</sup>Drawn (*inter alia*) from: structural linguistics, text linguistics and systemic functional linguistics (Fairclough 1989).

<sup>5</sup>These two terms are discussed more fully in section 3.2 of Chapter Three.

<sup>6</sup>Chapter Five shall spell out the distinctive properties of the Marxist Stylistic method.

primarily based on AMC, but which also incorporates salient theoretical and methodological elements appropriated from the field of CDA. More specifically, the thesis identifies gaps or weaknesses which have inhibited the scope and potential of AMC. It then mediates those weaknesses by harnessing relevant conceptual and analytical resources drawn from the field of CDA. In addition, the thesis highlights the distinctive features of the (emergent) Marxist stylistic method. Finally, it tests out the efficacies (and possible limitations) of the method by applying it to the interpretation of a limited sample of Zimbabwean fiction.

#### ***1.4 Objectives of the Thesis***

The main objectives of the thesis could be spelt out as follows:

- (a) To critique AMC from a standpoint partly located within the field of CDA, in order to identify some of the weak points that have limited its scope and potential.
- (b) To mediate these weak points by harnessing relevant theoretical and methodological resources extracted from the field of CDA.
- (c) To highlight the unique features of the Marxist stylistic method and to underscore its distinctiveness from both AMC and from (the various versions of) CDA.
- (d) To apply the Marxist stylistic method to the interpretation of a limited sample of Zimbabwean fiction.
- (e) To evaluate the strengths and possible limitations of the Marxist stylistic method.
- (f) To suggest possible ‘permutations’ to the Marxist stylistic method.
- (g) To chart possible directions for further research in the field herein labelled as ‘Marxist stylistics’.

#### ***1.5 Research Questions***

To maintain a clear focus on these aims and objectives, the thesis shall pose and seek to address the following research questions:

- (a) What particular strengths (if any) and weaknesses warrant the mediation of AMC into the proposed Marxist stylistic method?
- (b) What elements of CDA (both theoretical and methodological) could effectively mediate the ‘gaps’ identified in AMC?
- (c) What epistemological effects arise from the critique of AMC through a lens that is partly informed by CDA?

- (d) What are the distinctive features of the Marxist stylistic method?
- (e) What safeguards need to be put in place to preserve the essential Marxist character of the Marxist stylistic method?
- (f) What strengths or weaknesses can be discerned in the Marxist stylistic method?
- (g) What other versions (or variants) of Marxist stylistics could be conceived?
- (h) What directions could future studies in ‘Marxist stylistics’ take?

## **1.6 Rationale**

This section briefly examines the rationale behind three important choices, which I needed to make during the conceptual stages of this thesis. Firstly, out of the numerous versions of Marxist criticism that have made their mark on the long history of the tradition (Mulhern 1992), I selected AMC as the version to be ‘upgraded’ into the (proposed) Marxist stylistic method. The key question which needed to be addressed at this stage was: *Why AMC in particular (and not Lukacsian or Zhdanovian versions of Marxist criticism, for example)?* The second important choice which I needed to make was between engaging AMC in conversations with *various* versions of CDA, or engaging it in a one-to-one dialogue with a *single* version of CDA. The question this time was: *Why draw AMC into conversations with multiple versions of CDA? Why not engage it in a one-to-one dialogue with a single variant of CDA?* Finally, I also needed to decide on the kind of texts on which I would apply the Marxist stylistic method. As already indicated, I chose to apply the method on Zimbabwean fiction. The question arising in this instance was: *Why Zimbabwean fiction in particular and not (for example,) Russian fiction, or – for that matter – Russian poetry or Russian non-fiction?*

The choice of AMC (above all other versions of Marxist literary criticism), was partly motivated by its prominent status within that domain<sup>7</sup> (Dawes 1991, Callari and Ruccio 1996). As Dawes (1991:1) once remarked, “...Althusser’s work has largely remained intact – and in fact could be seen as exercising a hegemonic role within Marxism – in spite of the criticisms directed at it...” Another reason for choosing AMC was that it has *already* made significant ‘gestures’ in the stylistic direction (Jackson 1994, Forgacs

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<sup>7</sup>The key strengths of AMC (vis-à-vis its determinist and reflectionist precursors) shall be discussed in more detail in section 3.2.3 of the thesis.

1982). AMC's central tenet – that literature employs the *linguistic and narrative structures of texts* as its 'means of production' in rendering ideologies more perceptible (Forgacs 1982) – predisposes it to *further* mediations in the stylistic direction. As Jackson (1994) has observed, AMC – more than any other version of Marxist criticism – recognizes (and has posed interesting questions regarding) the intimate link between discourses and ideologies.

The decision to work with various versions of CDA (rather than a single version) was mainly driven by a perception that AMC's weak points were too wide-ranging to be fully (or adequately) redressed by resources drawn from a single source. Thus, it appeared more productive to move eclectically (and uninhibitedly) within and across the field of CDA, 'culling' any useful mediatory resources, and using these to address the gaps identified AMC. Restricting myself to a single version of CDA thus promised to impoverish (rather than enrich) the Marxist stylistic method projected in this study.

Finally, I decided to apply the Marxist stylistic method on a limited sample of Zimbabwean fiction for the following reasons. Firstly, I considered that the Marxist stylistic method would be *primarily* based on AMC (although it would also incorporate salient elements of CDA). It therefore appeared reasonable to apply the method on the same *fictional* genre which AMC has traditionally worked with. Such maintenance of the general area of application would, hopefully, facilitate easier comparison between the Marxist stylistic method and its *main* 'antecedent'. The choice of *Zimbabwean* fiction, in particular, was motivated by a long-standing personal interest in novels and short stories produced in Zimbabwe<sup>8</sup>.

### ***1.7 Definition of Key Terms.***

I now proceed to define two broad terms that have begged the question so far in this introduction. These are the terms 'Marxism' and 'stylistics', which constitute the 'double-barreled' label of the method under construction in this thesis<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> I engaged with Zimbabwean fiction while studying for my undergraduate degree at the University of Zimbabwe. I have also modestly contributed to this genre by publishing several short stories written in English.

<sup>9</sup> Other more specific terms, such as 'AMC' and 'CDA' shall be discussed in Chapters Three and Four (respectively).

### 1.7.1 Marxism

In this thesis, I shall follow Callinicos (1982) and Haslett (2000)<sup>10</sup> in distancing myself from the notion of a monolithic Marxism, specifically associated with ‘founder figures’ such as Marx and Engels, or declared as ‘correct’ or ‘scientific’ by later interpreters such as Kautsky and Plekhanov (in the 1930s) or Althusser in the 1960s. I shall take the view that ‘Marxism’ is itself a text which has been subjected to many interpretations, rather than a code (Haslett, 2000:2). Tensions between followers of the early, ‘left-Hegelian’ Marx and followers of the later ‘more scientific and more mature’ Marx have been noted (Lifshitz 1973, Morawski 1974, Feltham 2008). Additional tensions have been noted between followers of the ‘Moscow line’ and followers of the ‘Chinese line’ (Laing 1978). A telling symptom of the contestation pervading the field of Marxism is the sheer range of disciplines with which Marxist social theory has been made to collaborate: Psychoanalysis (Benjamin 1979); Genetic Structuralism (Goldmann 1976); Semiotics (Kristeva: 1976), and so on.

In view of the wide range of interpretations and applications to which Marxist social theory has been subjected, it becomes necessary to impose some kind of order on the term ‘Marxism’ itself. One way in which this has been done has been to note configurable trends, patterns or movements in the development of Marxism (Callinicos 1982, Mulhern 1992). Callinicos (1982) identifies three broad positions in the interpretation of Marxism. He describes the first of these movements as ‘evolutionist Marxism’. Evolutionist Marxism is associated with Marxism’s Second International of 1934, and with such figures as Kautsky, Plekhanov and Zhdanov. It ignores the early, left-Hegelian writings of Marx, and appropriates his later writings, which it describes as ‘scientific Marxism’ or as ‘dialectical materialism’. Dialectical materialism emphasises the cause-effect relationship between developments in the socio-economic base and manifestations at the level of the superstructures:

As a result, history was seen as the record of man’s unfolding productive powers and social revolutions as phenomena brought ineluctably into being by the requirements of technological progress. (Callinicos 1982:51).

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<sup>10</sup> Both Callinicos (1982) and Haslett (2000) refrain from capitalising the adjective ‘Marxist’ or the noun ‘Marxism’ to signal their questioning stance towards the notion of a monolithic ‘Marxism’.

Callinicos (ibid) contrasts evolutionist Marxism with the ‘Hegelian’ or ‘humanist’ Marxism(s) popularised by Lukacs, Gramsci and Korsch in the early 1930s and later adopted as the model unifying most versions of what Anderson (1976) has generically labelled as ‘Western Marxism’. This version conceives a mediated relationship between the base and the superstructures. Human consciousness is invoked as the ‘filter’ through which conditions within the base express themselves at the level of the superstructures. Thus, an ‘essence-and-phenomenon’ nexus is theorised between the two levels, where the base constitutes the ‘essence’ against which observable phenomena (specifically forms of individual or class consciousness) are explained. The invocation of human consciousness as the medium through which the base expresses itself at the level of the superstructures represents a significant departure from determinist accounts, which occlude human consciousness or, for that matter, conscious human agency (Jackson 1994).

However, as Benton (1984) observed, determinist and humanist Marxisms ultimately share some important similarities. Both apotheosise the base as all-powerful: the determinists perceive it as the direct cause of all developments manifesting within the superstructures while the humanists view it as the ‘essence’ (or the ‘meta-narrative’) explaining all forms of consciousness. Benton (1984:18) thus binds the two interpretations of Marxism together, since they both perceive history as a teleological movement towards pre-determined goals:

Whereas... [humanist Marxism] represents the historical process as a journey of the human subject through self-alienation to final self-consciousness and self-emancipation,... [evolutionist Marxism] repeats this teleological structure, only with the ever advancing forces of production in the place of the human subject. History is still an evolutionary succession of phases, in which original inner potentialities are successively realised through historical time.

Callinicos (1982) contrasts determinist and humanist Marxisms with the ‘structuralist Marxism’ advanced by Althusser and his followers in the 1960s and 1970s. Althusserian Marxism radically departs from its determinist and humanist antecedents by reformulating the nexus between the base and the superstructures. In Althusser’s theorisation, the base only determines the superstructures *in the last instance*, since the latter enjoy their own relative degree of autonomy (Althusser 1969, 1990). As Callinicos (1982) once noted, this revised representation of the base-superstructure relationship is

more cognisant of the social whole, since it dilutes the overriding powers of the base and grants the superstructures their own effectivity. As Callinicos (1982:52) put it:

Neither Lukacs' "Hegelian" Marxism, nor the evolutionist Marxism of the Second International (and Stalin) offers an adequate account of the nature of the social whole. Althusser's significance lies in his realisation of this fact. For reasons of his own, he wished to accord "relative autonomy" to the superstructure; in seeking to construct a version of Marxism which avoided both the cause/effect and essence/phenomenon model (sic) he both drew on, and contributed to the 'revolution of language' (Callinicos 1982:52).

Althusserian Marxism also radically departs from its determinist and humanist antecedents by rejecting all notions of history as a teleological sequence of developments.

As Benton (1984:18) explains, Althusser conceives history as a process:

...without a subject. No social form has its necessary transcendence inscribed in its origins. The direction of historical change is open and contingent. Revolution is a precarious achievement, and even when achieved, its advance may be impeded, halted or reversed....

Mulhern (1992:2-3) concurs with Callinicos (1982) in identifying at least three broad movements in Marxism. Needless to mention that this is done with a noticeable amount of caution:

In reconstructing the history of Marxist criticism, three phases of initiative and elaboration can be distinguished but it is misleading to imagine these as 'stages' in an upward movement, or even as separable periods in a less triumphalist sequence. All the familiar schemes of history occur here: development and decline, continuation but also break and recombination, supersession but also stasis and return. With such cautions kept in view, it is possible to mark a classical or scientific phase, initiated by Marx and Engels, continuing strongly throughout the late nineteenth century and into the first half of the twentieth; a self-styled critical phase originating in the 1920s, maturing and diversifying over the next three decades and establishing a 'norm' of heterodoxy by the 1960s; and then a phase at first pledged to a classicism announced in the 1960s and vigorously propagated into the succeeding decade, but rapidly and variously redefined under such spacious headings as 'materialism' and 'anti-humanism' in a process that continues today.

The first phase identified by Mulhern coincides with what Callinicos (above) describes as 'evolutionism'; the second with the rise of the tradition of Western Marxism (to which Lukacs, Gramsci and Korsch belonged), and the third with the position of Althusser and his followers, which is remarkable for its 'anti-humanism' and its 'materialism of the superstructures' (Bennett 1979).

Efforts to stabilise the meaning of the term 'Marxism' have taken a second form. This has been the attempt to isolate the core-principles, or the core values, which bind the

various ‘Marxisms’ together. Mulhern (1992:2) has located these core-values in Engels’ (1886) summary of what Marxism basically stands for:

- (i) a general theory of modes of production the forms of their development, crisis and transformation and their structuring role in human history; and specifically
- (ii) a theory of the capitalist mode of production, its fundamental classes and their antagonisms, and of the organic relationship between working class struggles against capital and the historical probability of socialism.  
(Engels 1886 quoted in Mulhern 1992:1)

From this basic core of values, it is clear that Marxism primarily investigates *economic* modes of production, and how they *structure* human history. The specific ways in which modes of production shape human history are contested, as the evolutionists posit a direct cause-effect nexus; the left-Hegelians (or humanists) perceive an essence-phenomenon relationship and the Althusserians theorise an ‘indirect’ relationship (in which the base only determines the superstructures in the last instance). However, the bottom line is that all Marxisms theorise some kind of a dialectical link between economic structures and all other levels of the social formation. Two important aspects of this focus relate to how social classes emerge out of relations of production, and how – almost inevitably – they engage in social struggles. Mulhern (1992:1) identifies these principles as the ‘*minima*’ of Marxist social theory and politics. They constitute:

...the real ‘foundation’ upon which the specifically cultural constructions of Marxist thought have been raised. They are the minima of a Marxist identity, the core elements that make it meaningful to affirm a continuing tradition at all.

This thesis shall follow Mulhern (ibid) in recognising as ‘Marxist’ all versions of Marxism which conceive a dialectical relationship between modes of production and the other levels of the social whole, and which prioritise class struggle and perceive it as a necessary ‘off-shoot’ of contradictory relations of production.

### **1.7.2 Stylistics**

The term ‘stylistics’ has been traditionally used to designate the application of linguistic tools (or methods) to the analysis of literary texts (Bally: 1951; Leech 1969; Leech and Short 1981). Weber (1996) has drawn attention to how approaches to stylistics often shift in tandem with transformations within the linguistics curriculum. To illustrate, the ‘structural stylistics’ promoted by Jakobson in the 1960s reflected the renewed focus on grammatical analysis occasioned by Chomsky’s (1959, 1965) ‘discovery’ of

Transformational Generative Grammar<sup>11</sup>. More significant shifts in the scope of stylistics were to follow Hymes' (1971) proposal of the 'communicative competence' model in linguistics studies<sup>12</sup>. More specifically, Halliday's (1973) investigation of the interpersonal, ideational and textual (*inter alia*) functions of language, directly led to the inauguration of functional stylistics (Fowler 1979). By the same token, the uptake of discourse analysis within linguistic studies resulted in the increasing application of discourse analytical methods in stylistics. Highlighting this development, Coulthard (1977:179) remarked:

Like all other branches of applied linguistics, stylistics depends on the tools provided by theoretical linguistics; as the techniques of discourse analysis have become more sophisticated, so there has been a growing exploitation in stylistics.

In this thesis, I shall follow the tradition of designating the application of linguistic tools and methods to literary criticism as *stylistics*. It is worth noting that Fowler (1981; 1996) has used the term *Critical Stylistics* to label the application of CDA in literary criticism. Fowler (1996) has gone further to argue that the analytical tools and methods used in critical stylistics need not significantly differ from those ordinarily applied in CDA. After all, literature *is* discourse, and as such, amenable to the same analytical methods as are applied on other (i.e. non-literary) discourses. Reinforcing this position, Widdowson (1996:143) has observed that while literary forms may be unique (*vis-à-vis* 'ordinary' or non-literary forms), their analysis need not be reified into an end in itself:

No purpose can be served in attempting to distinguish form from meaning. What we shall be concerned with, therefore, is not the exemplification of constituent structures but the interpretation of complete textual units, that is to say, with messages as units of meaning.

Against this background, the label 'Marxist stylistics' – as used in this thesis – shall denote the application of an essentially Marxist approach which is, however, mediated by the application of linguistic (i.e. CDA) tools, theories and methods in its critique of literary (i.e. fictional) texts.

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<sup>11</sup> Thus, in a posthumous publication, Jakobson (1985:42) characterised stylistics as having to do with descriptions of, "...the selection, distribution and interrelation of diverse morphological classes and syntactic constructions..." within a given literary text.

<sup>12</sup> A theoretical turn from 'micro-' to 'macro-linguistics,' which systematically took into account the psychological and contextual prerequisites for appropriate language use (Widdowson 1996).

### ***1.8 Value of the Research and Contribution to Knowledge***

The main value of this thesis is that it constructs a ‘hybridised’ method of text interpretation, which is located at the interface between a Marxist approach and stylistic (specifically, CDA) approaches. This cross-disciplinary method is expected to provide a fresh heuristic for ‘politicised’ engagements with fictional texts. The thesis also affords the critique of AMC from a standpoint that is partly informed by CDA. Such a lens shall, hopefully, illuminate gaps in AMC which previous critiques (conducted using different lenses) might have overlooked. Finally, the thesis juxtaposes CDA with an essentially Marxist approach. This juxtaposition invites a re-examination of CDA from a position which is *further left* of its own, thus – potentially – raising interesting questions about CDA’s *own* ‘leftist credentials’.

### ***1.9 Delimitations***

In its construction of the Marxist stylistic method, the thesis purposively focuses on a specific version of Marxist criticism (i.e. AMC). This restricted focus is partly an acknowledgement of the diversity and contestation noted earlier within the field of Marxism. The thesis also restricts its application of the (projected) Marxist stylistic method to a limited sample of Zimbabwean fiction comprising of only two novels and two short stories. This limited application reflects the largely *theoretical* focus of the thesis, since much of the available time (and space) shall be dedicated to motivating for; identifying appropriate ‘building materials’ for and constructing the Marxist stylistic method. Thus, far from seeking to extensively engage with Zimbabwean fiction, the thesis shall – through the application – aim to demonstrate *how* the Marxist stylistic method might be ‘put to work’.

### ***1.10 Structure of the Thesis:***

The next chapter shall survey aspects of Althusserian Marxism, particularly those that have had a strong bearing on the theoretical and methodological positions assumed by AMC. The same theoretical survey shall also illuminate some of the key ‘building blocks’ for the Marxist stylistic method, given its predominant derivation from AMC.

Chapter Three shall focus on AMC with a view to isolating its strong and weak points. Highlighting the strong points of AMC will partly serve to justify why it was selected (above other versions of Marxist criticism) as the version ‘upgraded’ into the Marxist stylistics method. More importantly, however, identifying the weak points of AMC shall clarify the gaps to be addressed by the ‘mediatory resources’ drawn (in the next chapter) from the field of CDA.

Chapter Four shall provide an overview of the field of CDA before identifying the specific resources which CDA could transfer to AMC – to mediate the latter’s weaknesses. Towards the end of the chapter, CDA’s own ‘limitations’ – when viewed from the Marxist perspective – shall also be briefly considered.

Chapter Five shall synthesise the lineaments of the (emerging) Marxist stylistic method. It shall also consider some of the challenges likely to attend the ‘operationalisation’ of the method before presenting the texts to be critiqued in the next (i.e. ‘application’) chapter.

Chapter Six shall apply the Marxist stylistic method to the interpretation of two novels and two short stories – all set in Zimbabwe. The application shall seek to demonstrate the efficacies (and possible limitations) of the Marxist stylist method. It shall also endeavor to showcase the unique properties of the method.

Chapter Seven shall conclude the thesis with a reflection on the application and a discussion of the strengths (and possible weaknesses) of the Marxist stylistic method. It shall also suggest possible ‘permutations’ of the method before considering possible directions for further research within the field labelled within this thesis as ‘Marxist stylistics’.

## 2.0 Chapter Two: Aspects of Althusserian Marxism

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter surveys aspects of Althusserian Marxism, particularly those that have had a strong bearing on the theoretical and methodological positions assumed by AMC. The survey fulfils four main functions. Firstly, it furnishes part of the theoretical background that shall inform the critique of AMC (which is conducted in Chapter Three). Secondly, it delineates the key theoretical underpinnings of the (envisaged) Marxist stylistic method – given the latter’s *predominant* derivation from AMC. Thirdly, the survey also illuminates those aspects of CDA that have borrowed from Althusserian social theory<sup>13</sup>. Finally, there is a sense in which to explore the ‘theoretical viscera’ of AMC is – in itself – to begin highlighting one of its most potent characteristics. This has been its capacity to dialogue across theoretical and methodological positions, both within and beyond the domain of Marxist criticism (Feltham 2008, Resch 1992). Within the field of Marxist criticism, AMC has mapped its theoretical and methodological positions relative to those of its determinist and reflectionist precursors (Benton 1984, Resch 1992, Haslett 2000). Beyond the Marxist field, AMC has engaged (*inter alia*) with: structuralism, post-structuralism and post-Marxism (Resch 1992, Feltham 2008). Celebrating these manifold engagements, Resch (1992:33) has observed that AMC rejects “...reductionist concepts of causality...” – as espoused by its determinist and reflectionist precursors – while simultaneously refuting postmodernist “...refusal[s] to recognise society as both structured and determined”. In Resch’s (1992:35) assessment, therefore, AMC possesses the unique capacity to maintain, “...seemingly contradictory positions in productive tension.”

The review of Althusserian Marxism shall focus on the following themes, all of which have featured at various moments of Althusser’s ‘Return to Marx’ oeuvre<sup>14</sup>:

- (a) Althusser’s theorisation of the structure and internal dynamics of social formations (i.e. his depiction of social formations as ‘decentred’ and as

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<sup>13</sup> Fairclough (1989), for example, explicitly acknowledges his indebtedness to Althusserian social theory for conceptual terms such as ‘social practice’.

<sup>14</sup> Althusser’s “Return to Marx” oeuvre comprises of essays written between the early and late 1960s, and compiled in two volumes: *For Marx* (1969) and *Reading Capital* (1970).

constituted by networks of ‘semi-autonomous’ and ‘material’ *practices*); his seminal caveat that social practices are only determined by economic forces ‘*in the last instance*’; and his key concepts of ‘overdetermination’ and ‘structural causality’.

- (b) Althusser’s theorisation of ideology and human subjectivity (i.e. his construal of ideology as a material and internally structured practice; the view that ideologies assign human agents to specific positions within processes of production and the radical decentring of social subjects).
- (c) Althusser’s treatment of historical time (i.e. his notion that each instance of the social formation has its own peculiar time and history; the notion of multiple modes of production; and Althusser’s anti-teleological stance as expressed through his anti-evolutionism and anti-humanism).
- (d) Elements of Althusserian epistemology (i.e. his concept of ‘the problematic’; his anti-empiricist and anti-positivist stances and his decisive demarcation between ‘objects of knowledge’ and ‘real objects’).

## ***2.2 Althusser’s Theorisation of the Structure and the Internal Dynamics of Social Formations***

In a perceptive summary of Althusser’s theorisation of the structure and internal dynamics of social formations, Selden (1985:39) once observed that:

Unlike a living organism, this structure [the social formation] has no governing principle, no originating seed, no overall unity....The various elements (or levels) within the social formation are not treated as reflections of one essential level (the economic level for Marxists): the levels possess a ‘relative autonomy’, and are ultimately determined by the economic level only ‘in the last instance’. The social formation is a structure in which the various levels exist in complex relations of inner contradiction and mutual conflict. This structure of contradictions may be dominated at any given stage by one or other of the levels, but which level it is to be is itself determined ultimately by the economic level, though not directly.

The following subsections unpack and also elaborate this ‘dense’ synopsis. First to be considered shall be the view that social formations are ‘decentred’ – principally because they comprise of diverse elements, each of which enjoys its own relative degree of autonomy.

### 2.2.1 Althusser's decentring of social formations

Selden (1985:39) draws attention to the fact that the Althusserian term, 'social formation', is *already* theoretically loaded:

Althusser avoids terms such as 'social system' or 'order' because they suggest a structure with a centre which determines the form of all its emanations. Instead, he talks of the 'social formation', which he regards as a 'decentred' structure.

The description of social formations as 'decentred' immediately begs two complimentary questions. Firstly, what (or who) has been 'expelled' from the centre of these structures? And secondly, who (or what) originally placed this 'essence-at-the-centre' in that central position, to begin with? According to Althusser (1969), what has uncritically been placed at the centre of social formations – in Marxist social theory – is the so-called socioeconomic base. Withal, the 'culprits' guilty of this misreading of Marx's original writings, are Althusser's determinist and reflectionist precursors. Thus, Althusser (1969) 'lumps' these two camps together (effectively downplaying their own divergences) with the homogenising accusation that they both exhibit the error of 'expressive totality'. As Callinicos (1982:59) explains, the error of expressive totality is the mistaken view that, "...all the different aspects of the social formation are mere reflections of some basic principle, some core, some centre [that is, the economy] which informs the whole." In their perpetuation of this error, the determinists<sup>15</sup> regard conditions within the base as the direct determinants (or cause) of everything manifesting at the level of the superstructures. The reflectionists<sup>16</sup> equally apotheosise the base by treating it as the 'essence' shaping all forms of human consciousness, as manifest in the laws, political systems and ideologies of specific societies. In other words, the reflectionists conceive a three-step nexus, where contradictions within the base are mediated via human consciousness into specific manifestations within the superstructures. Both the determinists and the reflectionists therefore regard the superstructures as mere 'epiphenomena' (or effects) of 'more real' contradictions occurring within the socioeconomic base. Althusser (1969) blames the error of expressive totality for stultifying Marxist social theory by promoting both 'vulgar Marxism' and 'theoretical leftism'. As Callinicos (1982:61) explains:

Althusser assert[s] that his two foes, 'economism' and 'humanism' – are variants of the same theoretical structure. The economism of Stalin asserts that

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<sup>15</sup> Also sometimes labelled as the 'Stalinists' or the 'evolutionists'. Their version of Marxism is also sometimes described as 'economism' (Callinicos 1982).

<sup>16</sup> Alternatively called the 'left-Hegelians' or the 'humanists' (Callinicos 1982).

both relations of production and the superstructure are passive effects of the development of the productive forces; the humanism of the early Lukacs treats the different aspects of the social whole as mediated reflections of the basic contradiction at its heart: in each case, what is involved is an expressive totality in which all the different elements constituting the [social] whole are reducible to a simple principle. This move enables Althusser to bracket the two main strands in Marxist philosophy – the evolutionist (Plekhanov, Kautsky, Stalin) and the Hegelian (Lukacs, Gramsci, Korsch) as exemplars of the same error. Both roads lead to the same danger, - ‘theoretical leftism’ [or] the denial of any efficacy to the superstructures.

To recall Selden (1985:39) Althusser addresses the error of expressive totality by firmly refusing to treat “...the various elements... [of the social formation] as reflections of one essential level (the economic level for Marxists...)” Althusser’s decentring of social formations thus consists, on the one hand, of an ‘expulsion’ of the socioeconomic base from its dominant (or central) position as the sole determinant (or the essence) explaining everything manifesting within the superstructures; and on the other, of a decisive elevation of the (former) superstructures to *material practices in their own right* (Feltham 2008, Callinicos 1982, Resch 1992). The next subsection looks, more closely, at how Althusser elevates the former superstructures to ‘material practices’ in their own right. It also considers Althusser’s characterisation of social formations as loose coalescences of *multiple* and *semi-autonomous* practices.

### **2.2.2 The social formation as constituted by networks of semi-autonomous practices**

Althusser and Balibar (1970:207) describe the social formation as, “...a totality of *instances* articulated on the basis of a determinate mode of production” (my italics). The ‘instances’ mentioned here include both corporeal and non-corporeal spheres of human activity, for example: the economic; the political and the ideological instances. The common property shared by all instances of the social formation is that they are all “...distinct structural levels of social relations and practices, each possessing a functional unity and [each] composed of more specific structures” (Resch 1992:36). The notion of *practice* is central to every instance of the social formation (Levine, 2003, Feltham, 2008).

Indeed, Althusser and Balibar (1970:58) delineate each instance (or level) of the social formation as “...the site... [of a] distinct practice.” In fact, Althusser (1969:167) uses the singular term ‘practice’ to denote the total repertoire of instances within the social formation, and the plural term ‘practices’ to denote the individual instances themselves:

“Social practice, the complex unity of the practices in a determinate society, contains a large number of distinct practices”. Althusser (1969:166) then defines individual practices (i.e. ‘instances’ or ‘levels’<sup>17</sup>) of the social formation, thus:

By practice in general I shall mean any process of *transformation* of a determinate given raw material into a determinate *product*, a transformation effected by a determinate human labour, using determinate means (of production). In any practice thus conceived, the determinant moment (or element) is neither the raw material nor the product, but practice in a narrow sense: the moment of the *labour of transformation* itself, which sets to work, in a specific structure, men, means and a technical method of utilising the means. (My italics).

This definition identifies the “...the moment of the labour of transformation itself...” (Ibid.) as the defining moment of a practice. Thus, practices are both human-centred and ‘transitive.’ Within each of them, human agents transform specific ‘raw materials’ into specific products. As Resch (1992:37) suggests (with specific reference to the three key practices – economic, political and ideological – which Althusser deems to be indispensable to *every* social formation):

Economic practice refers to the transformation of nature into socially useful products, political practice to the reproduction and administration of collective social relations and their institutional forms, and ideological practice to the constitution of social subjects and their consciousness.

Althusser (1969:166) also insists that individual practices are inscribed within “...specific social structure[s]”. Two important points need to be emphasised here. The first is that every practice is *rule-bound*, since it is governed by its own *internal* protocols. The second is that every practice is inserted into an institutional matrix or ‘apparatus’. Integrating these two points (and also showing the connection between them), Resch (1992:36) has noted that, “...social structures [or institutions] are realised, reproduced and transformed through rule-bound and yet open-ended practices.”

As already suggested, Althusser anticipates that every practice will engage human agents in “...particular social relations.<sup>18</sup>” Explaining the link between social (i.e. human) relations and institutional structures, Resch (1992:36) further notes that, “Social relations are concrete actualisations or empirical manifestations of social [i.e. institutional] structures...” As shall be seen later, the subordination of human relations to institutional

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<sup>17</sup> Althusser (1969) often uses the terms ‘instance’, ‘level’, and ‘practice’ (in the singular) interchangeably.

<sup>18</sup> A point later affirmed by Chouliaraki and Fairclough<sup>18</sup> (1999:37) when they observe that, “Any practice is a practice of production – *people in particular social relations* applying technologies to materials” (my italics).

structures, which is flagged here, is one of the bases of Althusser's (rather controversial) precept: that social subjects are mere 'bearers' of social structures, implying that they lack their own free will or volition (Selden 1985, Williams 2001).

Resch (1992) has posed the interesting question of precisely how many practices Althusser envisages within the typical social formation. Althusser (1969:167) himself is rather reticent on this issue, since he merely remarks that, "Social practice, the complex unity of the practices in a determinate society, contains *a large number of practices*" (my italics). Justifying Althusser's vagueness on this point, Resch (1992: 36-37) suggests that different kinds of social formations will contain varying numbers of practices:

In principle, the number of instances is open rather than closed, and the specification of distinct practices is a heuristic rather than an axiomatic process. Initially, Althusser specifies three instances, economic, political and ideological, as designating practices necessary to the concept of the social formation in so far as they refer to functions without which human social existence cannot be conceived....Of course, Althusser and others have offered extended treatments of other types of practice – theoretical, aesthetic and so on – they have greater or lesser predominance depending on the particular type of society we are talking about.

Resch (1992) has also cautioned against the temptation to conflate 'practices' with the institutional apparatuses in which they occur. As he notes, it is possible for one institutional apparatus to function as the site of two or more distinct practices<sup>19</sup>:

While each function is material in that it exists in and through concrete material apparatuses, any concrete apparatus may combine a variety of functions and thus have effectivity in more than one instance (Resch 1992:38)

By including non-corporeal spheres of human productivity (such as the ideological and the political) among *practices*, Althusser effectively deconstructs the base-superstructure dichotomy, which was central to determinist and reflectionist formulations (Bennett 1990, Jackson 1994, Feltham 2008, Levine 2003). Althusser not only expels the base from its central position as the determinant of all the other levels (or instances) of the social formation. He also radically dilutes its potency by elevating all other levels of the social formation to material practices in their own right, thereby reducing the base to just 'one more practice' among many others. The next subsection discusses how Althusser characterises relationships among practices.

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<sup>19</sup> One could think of the medieval church as an institution simultaneously containing religious, juridical and political practices.

### 2.2.3 Relationships among practices: The ‘structure in dominance’, the concept of ‘overdetermination’, and the principles of ‘determination in the last instance’ and ‘structural causality’.

Althusser (1969) stresses that his identification of *multiple* (and semi-autonomous) practices within the social formation does not amount to a collapse into ‘underdeterminism’ (or into some kind of ‘free-floating pluralism’). Rallying to Althusser’s defense on this point, Callinicos (1976:41) has observed that:

The criticism that...Althusser...has reduced Marxism to a theory of factors... is inept. The complexity of the social totality possesses a structure – *a structure in dominance*....That the totality is structured is as essential to its nature as that it is complex.

As already noted, the complexity of Althusser’s social formations arises from the fact that *each* practice within the social formation possesses its own internal laws (or protocols), its own institutional apparatus, and hence, its own relative degree of autonomy. Althusser however insists that the ‘macrocosm’ (i.e. the coalescence of all practices within the social formation) is organised into a *hierarchy*, which he calls the ‘structure in dominance’. According to Althusser, practices within every social formation ‘impinge upon’ (or ‘contaminate’) each other – the force of those lateral impingements depending on the *effectivity* of the impinging practice. Thus, every social formation has some practices which impinge ‘more tellingly’ on their peers than do others. The end result is a structured hierarchy – called the structure in dominance – in which one practice emerges as the most dominant (or most forceful):

The concept of a social formation implies an internal hierarchy, a precise and specifiable pattern of interrelationship between the elements within the whole. Social formations are always ‘structures in dominance’ because there is always a hierarchy of effectivity and always one element which plays a dominant role (Resch 1992:53).

Althusser (1969:179) insists that the structure in dominance is intrinsic to every social formation. Thus, “...while one element can displace another to assume the dominant role, such variations occur within a structure which is *invariant to the extent that it always has a dominant element*” (my italics). And further, “[d]omination is not just an indifferent fact; it is a fact *essential* to the complexity itself. That is why complexity implies domination as one of its essentials: it is inscribed in its structure” (Althusser 1969:201).

Three questions immediately arise. The first is: how are practices able to ‘infect’ the *internal* characteristics of adjacent practices – as implied by the notion that they organise themselves into the structure in dominance? And secondly, how consistent is this notion (i.e. that practices laterally impinge on each other) with Althusser’s simultaneous claim – that individual practices are relatively autonomous (or constrained by their own *internal* protocols)? Finally, what force (or what mechanism) decides the relative rankings of practices within the structure in dominance?

In their answer to the first two questions, Althusser (1969) and Althusser and Balibar (1970) invoke the principle of ‘overdetermination’, which they borrow from Freudian psychoanalysis. According to Freud (1900), dream thoughts are formed from multiple sources, which include superficial memories of recent life (called ‘the residue of the day’) and deeply repressed traumas and unconscious wishes (described as ‘the potent thoughts’). Thus, although dreams are discrete as individual events and, while they are internally structured (i.e. often possessing sequences or ‘plots’) they are – nonetheless – infused with (or *overdetermined* by) multiple external influences (i.e. the residue of the day and the potent thoughts). Althusser and Balibar (1969) appropriate this concept to explain how individual practices (which possess their own internal structures) are simultaneously ‘infected’ by adjacent practices. Practices thus absorb external impingements from other practices, albeit, without losing their individual identities. It also needs to be stressed that these lateral impingements are *not* unidirectional, since practices often impact back upon the practices impinging on them (to greater or lesser degrees – depending on relative rankings within the structure in dominance).

This leads to the third question, which is: what force or mechanism decides the relative rankings of practices within the structure in dominance? Althusser’s (1969:255) answer to this question is unequivocal. The ranking of each practice within the structure in dominance is decided by the prevailing *economic mode of production*:

The economy determines for the non-economic elements their respective degrees of autonomy/dependence in relation to itself and to one another, thus *their differential degrees of specific effectivity*. It can determine itself as dominant or not dominant at any particular time, and in the latter case it determines which of the elements is to be dominant (my italics).

The theoretical positions sketched out above ultimately lead to Althusser’s seminal proposition: that the economy determines all the other instances of the social formation

*in the last instance*<sup>20</sup>. According to this principle, the economy neither directly causes what manifests within the superstructures (i.e. determinism) nor expressly shapes them via forms of human consciousness (i.e. reflectionism). Rather, ‘determination in the last instance’ occurs through two complementary processes. Firstly (as already suggested), the prevailing *mode of production*<sup>21</sup> determines the autonomy and effectivity of a specific practice, and hence, its ranking within the structure in dominance. The following scenario serves to illustrate this connection. A relatively advanced mode of production may *permit* the juridical instance to develop its own (separate) infrastructure (e.g. a parliamentary legislature; courts of law; a constabulary and a penitentiary system) as well as its own *very specific* institutional codes. In this case, the juridical instance attains a high degree of autonomy (vis-à-vis the political or the economic instances, for example). This relatively high degree of autonomy potentially translates into a heightened capacity (for the juridical instance) to *resist* external impingements and; at the same time, to impact ‘more tellingly’ on other practices. This combination (of a higher capacity to resist external impingements and to impinge more forcefully on adjacent practices) gives the juridical instance its ascendancy within the structure in dominance. Thus, a connection could be postulated between the capacity *allowed* to the juridical instance (by the prevailing mode of production) to resist and to effect lateral impingements (or overdeterminations), and the relative ranking of the juridical instance within the structure in dominance. The following (opposite) scenario exemplifies how a less developed mode of production could actually *prevent* the juridical instance from attaining a high ranking within the structure in dominance. In such a setting, the political leader (e.g. a tribal chief) may fulfil multiple roles: acting as sole legislator, chief justice, commander-in-chief of the constabulary and principal warden of the penitentiary services. In such conditions, it is conceivable that the juridical instance could be *denied* both a high level of autonomy and a high capacity to overdetermine adjacent practices. The tribal chief may promulgate laws which promote his own political survival, in which case, the juridical instance becomes heavily overdetermined by the political instance (and thereby occupies a lower ranking within the structure in dominance). Althusser (1969) thus views the prevailing economic mode of production as either permitting or denying the ascendancy of certain

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<sup>20</sup> To recall Selden (1985:39) “this structure of contradictions may be dominated at any given stage by one or other of the levels but which level it is to be is itself determined ultimately by the economic level, though not directly.”

<sup>21</sup> Underscored to distinguish it from the economic *instance*.

practices within the structure in dominance. It needs to be noted, however, that the mode of production does not *select* which practice is to dominate (or be dominated) within the structure in dominance. Rather, its effect is to merely *create* or *exclude* certain possibilities for specific practices:

Determination in the last instance by the economy means that its primacy establishes certain limits to the autonomy of the political and ideological functions. The economy does not select particular political or ideological institutions; it excludes those institutions incompatible with the existing forces or relations of production (Resch 1992: 53-54).

Jameson (1981) has drawn attention to a second way in which economic modes of production determine individual social practices ‘in the last instance’. Following Althusser and Balibar (1970), Jameson (ibid.) makes a prior (and fundamental) demarcation between the economic *instance* of the social formation and the mode of production. While the former term narrowly denotes the socioeconomic base (as defined by forces and relations of production in spheres such as trade, agriculture, or industry), the latter term refers to the *aggregate* of all instances within the social formation (i.e. it is the concatenation of economic, ideological, political, juridical, aesthetic etc. practices)<sup>22</sup>. Building on this distinction, Jameson (1981) then argues that ‘determination in the last instance’ is inherently *reflexive*, since it implies that the aggregate of *all* instances within the social formation acts to rank its *own* parts into the structure in dominance. As Jameson (1981:35) explains:

[O]ne striking and fundamental difference between Althusser’s conception of ‘levels’ and that of traditional Marxism [is that] where the latter either conceived, or in the absence of rigorous conceptualisation perpetuated the impression, of the ‘ultimately determining instance’ or mode of production *as the narrowly economic* – that is, as one level within the social system which, however, ‘determines’ the others – the Althusserian concept of mode of production identifies this concept with *the structure as a whole*.

The idea of *the structure as a whole* (Jameson 1981:35) acting upon its individual parts, and ultimately, acting *upon itself*, underscores the implausibility or unlikelihood of any

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<sup>22</sup> As Resch (1992:39) clarifies:

By the term *mode of production*, Althusser and Balibar mean not only the forces and relations of production but also their social conditions of existence and the reproduction of those social conditions. Thus the concept of a mode of production refers not simply to the economic instance, the forces and relations of production proper, but also to the level of the social formation itself, insofar as other non-economic instances are essential to the reproduction of the forces and relations of production. While the term mode of production is less comprehensive than the term social formation, it is more comprehensive than the economic instance alone.

singular part (or instance) of the social formation directly determining any other instance. The model of causality suggested here – which Althusser and Balibar (1970) designate as *structural causality* – is much more complex. Prior to explicating form of causality, Althusser and Balibar (1970:168) ask:

By means of what concepts, or what set of concepts, is it possible to think the determination of the elements of a structure, and the structural relations between these elements, and all the effects of these relations, by *the effectivity of that structure [as a whole]*? And a fortiori, by means of what concept or what set of concepts is it possible to think the determination of a subordinate structure; in other words, how is it possible to define the concept of *structural causality*? (My italics).

According to Althusser and Balibar (1970), structural causality is a reflexive mode of causality since the entire mode of production constrains (or determines) its own parts, and ultimately, *itself*. In application, this model of causality deprives the analyst of any single (or ostensible) instance of the social formation to focus on as the origin, cause or ‘central essence’ determining the whole<sup>23</sup>. Instead, the analyst is compelled to think always in terms of the *entire* structure. This is the additional sense in which Althusser’s social formations lack both a centre and a ‘cause’:

If therefore one wishes to characterise Althusser’s Marxism as a structuralism, one must complete the characterisation with the proviso that it is a structuralism for which only *one* structure exists: namely, the mode of production itself, or the synchronic system of social relations as a whole. This is the sense in which this “structure” is an absent cause, since it is nowhere empirically present as an element, it is not a part of the whole or one of the levels, but rather the entire system of *relationships* among the levels. (Jameson 1981:36)<sup>24</sup>.

Balibar (1970) adds another layer of complexity to the model of structural causality by raising the possibility that *multiple* modes of production may co-exist within one social formation. Tsarist Russia easily comes to mind as a social formation in which

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<sup>23</sup> Recall Selden’s (1985:39) statement that, “Unlike a living organism, this structure has no governing principle, no original seed, no overall unity.”

<sup>24</sup> Elucidating the same concept, Resch (1992: 54) has observed that:

Althusser’s position is a realist one: structural forces or laws are at work in social formations, but unlike the natural sciences, historical science can never isolate them from each other. The phrase “the last instance never comes” recognises what Althusser calls the “ever pre-giveness” of social structures. This means a social formation is “always already there as the co-presence of all its elements, their specific effectivities, and the relations of domination and subordination that obtain between them. The primacy of the economy is always already there in the historical conditions of existence of the present conjuncture, yet the primacy of the economic function is exerted only in the parallelogram of forces within which the economic itself is articulated.

industrial and pre-industrial modes of production existed side by side (Callinicos 1982, Feltham 2008). Thus Resch (1992:39) places some emphasis on the distinction that: "...the term *mode of production* is less comprehensive than the term *social formation*"<sup>25</sup>, since the latter can contain more than one occurrence of the former.

Structural causality, as theorised by Althusser and Balibar (1970), could be compared to two other models, which it both criticises and supersedes. One is the model of transitive causality<sup>26</sup> – a linear kind of causality, "...which can think only in terms of an endless chain of cause and effect (X happened because of Y, Y because of Z and so on to infinity" - Resch 1992:54). The second is expressive causality, which – as discussed earlier – is associated with determinism and reflectionism. This model, "...reduces the effectivity of the elements to reflections of an essence (X, Y, and Z are all really manifestations of A, the single, independent, and omnipresent variable" - *ibid.*).

Chapter Three of this thesis shall consider how AMC has utilised (or underutilised) the theoretical resources discussed in this section. For now, three more aspects of Althusserian Marxism need to be explored. These are: Althusser's theorisation of ideology and human subjectivity; his anti-teleological stance in historiography and his guiding principles within the realm of epistemology.

### ***2.3 Althusser's Theorisation of Ideology and Human Subjectivity***

Althusser's theorisations of ideology and human subjectivity are particularly pertinent to AMC since its 'production-oriented' version<sup>27</sup> identifies ideologies as both the 'raw materials' and 'end products' of literary practices, while the 'reception-oriented version'<sup>28</sup> perceives literature as working to interpellate middle class readers into assuming 'superior' social subjectivities<sup>29</sup>. In both cases, theories of ideology and social subjectivity are central to the main preoccupations of AMC.

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<sup>25</sup> As shall be seen in section 2.2.1.3, below, the notion of multiple and co-existent modes of production has important implications for Althusser's theorisation of historical time.

<sup>26</sup> Which Jameson (1981) later dubs the 'billiard ball model.'

<sup>27</sup> I.e. the original version of AMC – as shall be clarified in the next chapter.

<sup>28</sup> The subsequent version of AMC which emerged in 1974.

<sup>29</sup> These positions shall be discussed in the next chapter.

In line with his precept that that social practices are internally structured; and simultaneously, wont to impinge upon adjacent practices, Althusser (1969:231) defines ‘an ideology’ as a “...system (with *its own* logic and rigor) of representations (images, myths, ideas or concepts, depending on the case) endowed with a historical existence and *a role within a given society* (my italics).” Althusser (ibid.) also establishes a broad demarcation between ‘theoretical’ and ‘lived’ (or ‘practical’) ideologies. As Callinicos (1976:62) explains, “We do learn that there are two kinds of ideologies – theoretical and practical ideologies. The latter immediately inhabit men’s everyday practice, the former are part of the process of theoretical practice.” Lived ideologies, in other words, are the commonsensical truths (or ‘obviousnesses’) which shape ‘everyday’ assumptions. As Eagleton (1986:16) once put it, they are “...the invisible colour of everyday life [and] less an articulated structure than a boundless medium.” Theoretical ideologies, on the other hand, occur in the realm of theoretical practices. Alluding to this category of ideologies, Hindess and Hirst (1975:3) have observed:

In so far as certain facts are presented as ‘given’ in the real or as ‘given’ by history, they must fall below the level of theoretical determination: they cannot be the product of an explicit theoretical practice....[Such] empiricism...therefore ensures that these ‘facts’ are ideological constructs and that their theories are, at best, sophisticated theoretical ideology.

This subsection shall specifically focus on lived ideologies; and on how Althusser implicates them in the moulding of social subjectivities (theoretical ideologies shall be examined in subsection 2.2.1.1.4, below, which looks at elements of Althusserian epistemology).

According to Althusser (1969), the function of practical ideologies is to secure the conditions necessary for the *reproduction* of the social formation. Poulantzas (1975) has provided a detailed account of how this happens. According to Poulantzas, the capitalist mode of production possesses ‘self-reproducing’ mechanisms. For example, every cycle of exchange between capital and labour appropriates value from the latter and transfers it to the former in the form of profit. Each cycle thus entrenches the social power of capital over labour, while simultaneously perpetuating the dependency of labour on capital. The recurrence and stabilisation of cycles of exchange creates relatively permanent places or positions (within processes of production) that need to be occupied by human agents (for example, wage-labourers, middle managers, capitalist-owners etc.). As Poulantzas explains, an effective mechanism is needed to distribute human agents into the various

slots available to them in processes of production. This is where practical ideologies come into play. The role of these ideologies is to *induce* human individuals to accept (as if by their own ‘free will’) and fit into the various (and often dissimilar) roles established by processes of production, and to sustain such patterns of distribution through succeeding generations (e.g. working-class children later becoming working class adults). As Bennett (1979:115) has observed:

...agents of production must be induced to ‘live’ their exploitation and oppression in such a way that they *do not* experience or represent to themselves their position as, precisely, one in which they are exploited and oppressed. (My italics).

This leads to Althusser’s (1969:153) first major thesis on ideology, which is that: “Ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence.” Expatiating this thesis, Althusser (1969:233-234) observes:

In ideology men do indeed express, not the relation between them and their conditions of existence, but *the way* they live the relation between them and their real conditions of existence. In ideology the real relation is inevitably invested in the imaginary relation, a relation that expresses a will (conservative, conformist, reformist or revolutionary), a hope or nostalgia, rather than describing a reality.

The opposition between the ‘real’ and the ‘imaginary’, which Althusser stresses, is another borrowing from psychoanalysis. The psychoanalyst, Lacan (1936) defined the social imaginary as the complex of beliefs, values, institutions, laws, symbols and so on which are shared by a specific social group. The social imaginary is a historical construct rather than a ‘true’ reflection of the group’s conditions of living. Although it evokes connotations of illusion, the social imaginary is by no means inconsequential. It is the system of meanings which underpins social structure and organisation. In his adaptation of the concept, Althusser (1969) postulates that ideologies induce human subjects to misrecognise their *real* conditions of existence. Instead of clearly recognising that they exist in exploitative relations of production, social subjects tend to construct myths about their roles (or ‘purposes’) in the world. Such myths eventually ‘gel’ into organised systems of belief, which come to be regarded as commonsensical. Ideology is effective on both the exploited and the exploiters alike. Highlighting how exploiters also misrecognise their real roles in processes of production, Bennett (1979:117) remarks that:

The effect of classical forms of bourgeois humanism...is such that the bourgeois ‘lives’...not on the basis of a ‘knowledge’ of his objective class position in the relationships of production. His perception of his place in the social world is, rather, mediated through an entirely ‘imaginary’ construction of his own role, and that of his class, in a historical process which is represented as having a logic, a sense and a direction as a series of developmental

sequences through which Man's essential nature is progressively realised. The bourgeois thus 'lives' or represents to himself his relationship to the conditions of his existence not as an exploiting capitalist but as an instrument of History.

Regarding the internal structuring of lived ideologies, Althusser (1969) proposes that all practical ideologies have an Absolute Subject at their centre. The Absolute Subject (written in title case) is a central social construct around which social subjects build their notion(s) of reality, purpose or direction in life. Bennett (1979:116) explains the crucial role played by Absolute Subjects in the construction of lived ideologies, thus:

The structure of 'ideology' as such is 'subject centred'. It contains at its centre the concept of a Unique or Absolute Subject, capable of serving as the guarantor of His own meaningfulness – the concept of God in...theology, for example, or Man in bourgeois philosophical humanism. The Unique or Absolute Subject 'recruits' or 'hails' or 'interpellates' concrete individuals into concrete subjects...[T]he concept of such an Absolute subject acts as the focal point of identification whereby individuals are organised into subsidiary 'subjects': that is, into socially formed subjects of consciousness who regard themselves as having an identity, a role to play within a process – theological or historical – which has a sense, direction and meaning conferred on it by the Absolute Subject. Ideology may thus be said to consist of those myths through which individuals are reconciled to their given social positions by falsely representing to them those positions and relationships between them as if they formed a part of some inherently significant, intrinsically coherent plan or process.

In Althusser's (1969:168) own terms:

[A]ll ideology is centred...[T]he Absolute Subject occupies the unique place of the Centre, and interpellates around it the infinity of individuals into subjects in a double-mirror connection such that it *subjects* the subjects to the Subject, in which each subject can contemplate its own image (present or future) the guarantee that this really concerns them and Him....

The Absolute Subject thus serves as the ultimate reference point bestowing 'meaningfulness' and 'purpose' to the lives social subjects. The Absolute Subject has a unifying effect since it recruits (or interpellates) disparate social subjects (e.g. the exploited worker alongside the capitalist exploiter – both sharing the same ideological 'deep-structure')<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> Illustrating this with reference to relations of production in Ancient Egypt, Jackson (1992) has suggested that the Central Figure of the 'Pharaoh-God' condensed within itself the deepest ontologies, beliefs and aspirations of Egyptian society. Thus, ordinary citizens yielding parts of their harvest to the Pharaoh-God may actually have felt a sense of fulfilment (since this ritual bestowed added meaningfulness to their processes of production). However, the Pharaoh *himself*, would also be interpellated by the same Central Figure. He might perceive himself, conduct affairs, speak and generally behave *as befitting* this Absolute Subject (in which case the Pharaoh as a social subject would be interpellated by the Pharaoh-God as an Absolute Subject).

As explained by Jackson (1994:90), the Althusserian term, ‘interpellation’ means “...roughly [to be] called upon”. Human individuals are ‘called upon’ to act in certain ways (or to assume certain subjectivities) by ideology – the deepest reference point in this process being the Absolute Subject. Significantly, the main vehicle used to interpellate human individuals, is *language*. As Pecheux (1982) has argued, society is segmented into multiple *discursive formations*<sup>31</sup>, each of which uses language in its own unique way, and therefore, each of which shares a particular *discourse*<sup>32</sup>. Explaining the link between discourse(s) and interpellation, Jackson (1994:90) has observed that, “[d]iscourses are the semiological practices which, among other things, call the self into being as a choosing, experiencing, individual subject.” Itemising the stages through which interpellation occurs, and underscoring the important function of discourse(s) in that process, Jackson (1994:91-92) has further stated that:

The...human organism becomes a human individual (a) by being talked *about* as an individual, (b) by being talked *to* as an individual (c) by recognising (misrecognising - Lacan) himself by imaginary identification as *that* individual (d) thenceforth, by acting, thinking and feeling as that individual.... The great attraction of this theory is in the range of things it purports to explain. It explains how the animal becomes a person – because discourse calls him to be one. It explains how the female animal becomes a ‘gendered subject’ because discourse calls her to be one. It explains how ideology is incorporated into the most private and fundamental parts of the self. The ideology was in the discourse that called up those parts of the self.

While Jackson may be correct to underscore the crucial role of discourse(s) in processes of interpellation, care should be taken not to conflate ‘discourse(s)’ with ideology. As Pecheux (1982) has cautioned, discourses are not ideology *per se*. Rather, they are merely one mode (among several others) through which ideologies are transmitted<sup>33</sup>.

Althusser’s (1969:155) second thesis on ideology is that: “Ideology has a material existence”. This thesis could be understood in two senses. The first is that ideological beliefs are actually enacted through practical activities and rituals. In that sense, ideologies are, “...embodied in particular social practices” (Callinicos 1976:74). A second way in which this thesis could be understood is that ideologies are products of

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<sup>31</sup>I.e. communities of people sharing similar ‘world views’ and similar *ways of using language* (Pecheux 1982).

<sup>32</sup>Discourses have been described as particular ways of using language within particular ‘sectors’ of social life (Gee 1990). Alternatively, discourses have been described as any ‘occurrences’ of language in *concrete* communicative contexts (Halliday and Hasan 1977 - see subsection 4.3.4 of chapter four for an extended discussion of the term).

<sup>33</sup>As shall be seen in chapter four, other semiological systems (e.g. photographs, paintings, forms of dress, music etc.) also transmit ideologies (Fairclough 1989).

(‘material’) ideological state apparatuses (henceforth ISA - *ibid.*). Affirming both interpretations, Althusser (1969:158) remarked that:

Where only a single subject...is concerned, the existence of the ideas of his belief is material in that *his ideas are his material actions inserted into material practices governed by material rituals which are themselves defined by the material ideological apparatus from which derives the ideas of that subject.* (Original emphasis).

Althusser borrows the notion of ISA from Gramsci (1929-1935)<sup>34</sup>. Gramsci theorised that the political power of the ruling classes depended not only on their control of repressive state apparatuses (or RSA – e.g. the police, the army and the prison services). More crucially, it depended on their control of ISA (e.g. universities, churches, the media, trade unions, political parties, etc.). As Laing (1978:91) has explained, ISA serve to facilitate:

...the reproduction of the ensemble of habits, moralities, opinions which ensure[d] that the work-force (and those responsible for re-producing them in the family or school)...[were] maintained in their position of subordination to the dominant class.

Althusser (1969) avoids dichotomising between RSA and ISA and suggests, instead, that the two kinds of apparatuses share significant overlaps, although the former *predominantly* applies repression, while the latter functions “...massively and predominantly” by ideology (Althusser 1969:141)<sup>35</sup>. Althusser also notes that while RSA tend to be unified under a centralised command structure, ISA tend to be much more dispersed and disparate. They are, “...multiple, distinct, ‘relatively autonomous’ and capable of providing an objective field to contradictions which express... the effects of the clashes between capitalist class struggle and the proletarian struggle” (*ibid.*). At the same time, however, ISA display a certain degree of concurrence, expressed “...usually in contradictory forms *by the ruling ideology*, the ideology of the ruling class”, which enjoys the status of the *hegemonic* ideology within the social formation (Althusser 1969:142 – my italics).

Althusser’s depiction of ideologies as material practices in their own right is consistent with what Bennett (1979) once described as the ‘materialism of the superstructure’:

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<sup>34</sup> Gramsci’s *Prison Notebooks* were first translated into French in 1953.

<sup>35</sup> It is conceivable that RSA (such the police, army or prison services) might employ ideological tactics (e.g. prisons ‘re-educating’ their inmates or the police and the army portraying themselves as ‘people’s forces’ etc.). Similarly, ISA such as schools might – in certain societies – apply repressive means of control (e.g. the use of corporal punishment, etc.).

In referring to ideology as a 'practice' in this sense, Althusser thus proposes what might be described as a 'materialism of the superstructure'. Ideology [like all the other elements of the superstructure] is construed not as the pale, ethereal reflection of society's material base but as a practical activity which has its own, equally material means and relations of production and its own, equally material products. As a relatively autonomous level of the social formation, ideology is thus the product of quite specific determinations which are not reducible to economic relationships. Furthermore, as a material force, ideology wields a power all of its own in relation to the other levels of social practice. (Bennett 1979:111-112)

In a sense, Althusser overturns the classical Marxian precept that, "It is not men's consciousness that determines their being, but on the contrary, their social being which determines their consciousness" (Marx 1962:67). Alluding to this reversal, Bennett (1979:114) observes that:

Far from being a mere reflex of a consciousness which is determined by class position, ideology is viewed as an autonomous level of production with its own product: namely, the consciousness of human subjects. *The work that ideology effects is that of transforming individuals into concrete social beings of determinate forms of consciousness.* (My italics).

The final question which shall be considered in this subsection pertains to the sort of human subject 'produced' by ideology. Althusser (1969) portrays social subjects as 'decentred' since they are mere 'bearers' of social structures (Selden 1985, Resch 1992, Williams 2001). In that regard, the term 'subject' is apt since it connotes the *subjection* of human individuals to systems of thought which supersede their own volition. In other words, no 'subject' can be his or her own 'Subject' (in the sense of the Absolute Subject). As Althusser (1973b:94) stresses:

To be dialectical materialist, Marxist philosophy must break with the idealist category of the [human] "Subject" as Origin, Essence, and cause, *responsible* in its *interiority* for all the determinations of the external 'Object', whose internal 'Subject' it is called.

In what has been described as his 'theoretical *anti-humanism*', Althusser (1970:180) dismisses the very possibility that social subjects can possess a 'free will' (or 'consciousness'), or that they can be 'makers' of their own history:

The structure of the relations of production determines the *places* and the *functions* occupied by the agents of production, who are never anything more than the occupants of these places, in so far as they are the 'supports' of these functions. The true 'subjects' (in the sense of the constitutive subjects of the process) are not ... 'concrete individuals,'[or] 'real men' – but *the definition and distribution of these places and functions. The true 'subjects' are these definers and distributors: the relations of production* (and political and ideological social relations). But since these are relations, they cannot be thought within the category *subject*. (Original emphases).

Althusser's theoretical anti-humanism has often been construed as a form of structuralism (Laing 1978, Benton 1984, Williams 2001) and, in some instances, been closely associated with postmodernist tendencies to decentre social subjects (Heartfield: 2002, Williams 2001). Resch (1992) has rejected such interpretations and argued that Althusser's decentring of social subjects (and his insertion of social structures in the place vacated by human consciousness) patently coheres with the *Structuralist* Marxism which he has promoted. This debate shall be revisited in the next two chapters of this thesis.

#### **2.4 Althusser's Theorisation of Historical Time**

Althusser's (1969) theoretical anti-humanism and anti-evolutionism jointly translate into yet another thesis, which is that *history is a process without a subject*. As highlighted in the previous section, Althusser rules out the very possibility that social subjects possess either the free will or the consciousness to shape their own history. In fact, Althusser argues that the ideological state is *inescapable* for all social subjects, since ideology is the glue which binds societies together:

Every human, that is to say social individual, cannot be an agent of practice unless he takes *the form of a subject*. The 'subject form' is in fact the form that the historical existence of every individual, every agent of social practices, takes: for the relations of production and reproduction necessarily involve, as the *integrating* element, what Lenin called '*ideological social relations*', which in order to function, impose on every individual-agent the form of a *subject* (Althusser 1973b:93). (Original emphasis).

Reduced to mere bearers (rather than creative manipulators) of social structures, human agents are thus denied an *active* role in the making of history. As Callinicos (1976:70) once noted:

[T]he concept of history as a process without a subject and the [anti-humanist] theory of ideology find their connection in the idea that ideology is the way in which men and women are formed in order to participate in a process *of which they are not the makers*, and that ideology performs this function by giving them the illusion that history was made for them (my italics).

At the same time (and, as discussed earlier in subsection 2.2.1), Althusser's 'anti-evolutionism' expels economic forces (i.e. the socioeconomic base) from the central and determining role vis-à-vis all other levels of the social formation. This decentring entails that base ceases to control (or determine) the direction or pace of historical developments within the social formation. Instead, each instance (or level) of the social formation is

endowed with its *own* ‘historical time’ and ‘historical trajectory’. As Althusser (1970:99) himself put it:

It is no longer possible to think of the process of the development of the different levels of the whole *in the same historical time*. Each of these ‘levels’ does not have the same type of historical existence. On the contrary, we have to assign to each level a *peculiar time*, relatively autonomous and hence relatively independent, even in its dependence, of the ‘times’ of the other levels (sic – original emphasis).

And further,

Each of these peculiar histories is punctuated with peculiar rhythms and can only be known on condition that we have defined the concept of its historical temporality and its punctuations (continuous development, revolutions, breaks etc. (Althusser 1970:100).

Althusser’s ultimate point is that the *relative autonomy* of the various instances of the social formation *extends* to their historical temporality. Thus, while the Russian revolution of 1917 altered the forces and relations of production *within the economic instance*, this ‘modernisation’ was not automatically realised in the political or juridical instances, since Stalin virtually presided over an oligarchy (Callinicos 1982). The possibility that *multiple* modes of production may co-exist within the same social formation<sup>36</sup>, further complicates matters, since it becomes impossible to pinpoint the *particular* mode of production deciding the direction (or pace) of history for the *entire* social formation.

Althusser thus rejects both humanist-inspired and evolutionist-inspired *teleologies*. The former installs ‘conscious’ human subjects at the centre of historical processes. The latter accords that role to ‘autonomous’ forces operating from within the socioeconomic base<sup>37</sup>. In both cases, history is represented as the gradual march towards the moment of ‘revolutionary crisis’ – with either increasingly ‘conscious’ masses in the vanguard, or increasingly untenable contradictions within the base propelling that movement. Benton (1984:18) has thus suggested that there is an essential similarity between humanist and evolutionist teleologies:

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<sup>36</sup> As discussed in sub-section 2.2.1.1.3 above

<sup>37</sup> A notable proponent of evolutionist teleology is Kautsky (in Colletti 1968:18) who declared that: “Capitalist society has failed; its dissolution is only a question of time; irresistible economic development leads with natural necessity to the bankruptcy of the capitalist mode of production. The erection of a new form of society in place of the existing one is no longer merely desirable. It has become something inevitable.”

Whereas... [humanist teleology] represents the historical process as a journey of the human subject through self-alienation to final self-consciousness and self-emancipation,...[evolutionist teleology] repeats this...structure, only with the ever advancing forces of production in the place of the human subject. History is still an evolutionary succession of phases, in which original inner potentialities are successively realised through historical time.

After dismissing both humanist- and evolutionist-inspired teleologies, Althusser depicts history as a 'process without a subject'. Althusser's stance vis-à-vis history has been lucidly summarised by Selden (1985:39) who (as highlighted earlier) wrote:

Unlike a living organism, this structure [the social formation] has no governing principle, no originating seed, no overall unity. The implications of this view are arresting. The various elements (or levels) within the social formation are not treated as reflections of one essential level (the economic level for Marxists): the levels possess a 'relative autonomy'....

Althusser's understanding of historical processes has been described by Resch (1992) as 'scientific' since it compels historians to focus steadfastly on the workings (and the effects) of *multiple social structures*, rather than human agents or any singular contradiction or essence. Althusserian historiography also promises to be appropriate to the analysis of post-Fordist social formations, which are almost always complex, since they incorporate multiple modes of production.

## 2.5 *Some Epistemological Issues*

Another interesting offshoot of Althusser's (1969) 'materialism of the superstructures' is his designation of theoretical work as a fully-fledged practice in its own right. Althusser perceives theoretical labour as not only intensive, but as also transforming specific raw materials into specific products. Althusser (1969) labels the three main components of theoretical practices as Generalities I, II, and III. As explained by Callinicos (1982:69):

Generalities I, [is] the raw material of the practice, provided by the pre-existing theoretical discourses from which the discourse in question starts; Generalities II, [is] the set of questions, often unstated and only implicit, which provide the discourse in question with its internal unity – what he calls the *problematic*; Generalities III, [is] the end-product, the new theories produced by the action of Generalities II on Generalities I. Theoretical practice, then, involve a process of transformation in which the decisive role is played by the theoretical means of production – the discourse's problematic (sic).

The conceptual framework summarised by Callinicos (above) becomes clearer when applied to a brief analysis of Althusser's own 'theoretical labour.' Althusser (1969:184) described his 'Return to Marx' oeuvre as a 'double intervention' meant to demarcate between the 'true' (or 'scientific') aspects of Marx's original writings, and the 'theoretical

ideologies' which compromised the integrity of Marx's work; and to separate this true (or 'scientific') Marxism from those elements of 'theoretical ideology' persisting within it:

The object of the first intervention is to draw a line of demarcation between Marxist theory and the forms of philosophical (and political) subjectivism which have compromised or threatened it: above all, empiricism and its variants, classical and modern: pragmatism, voluntarism, historicism etc. The object of the second intervention is to draw a line of demarcation between the true theoretical bases of the Marxist science of history and Marxist philosophy on the one hand, and on the other, the pre-Marxist idealist notions on which depend contemporary interpretations of Marxism as a 'philosophy of man' or a 'Humanism'....Behind the details of the arguments, textual analyses and theoretical discussions, these two interventions reveal a major opposition: the opposition that separates science from ideology...

In subjecting Marx's original writings to an intensive critique, Althusser treated those writings as 'Generalities I' (or as his theoretical 'raw materials') – the pre-existing theoretical discourses which he subjected to intensive interrogation. The body of implicit and explicit questions which Althusser posed in his re-reading of Marx constituted his Generalities II or his *problematic*. Finally, the supposedly 'true' or 'scientific' Marxism which Althusser arrived at, after engaging in this theoretical labour, constituted his Generalities III – that is, the 'end-product' of his work. Althusser's working hypothesis was that Marx's theoretical discourse was riddled with certain 'impurities' (or what he called 'epistemological obstacles'), which compromised its 'scientificity'. According to Althusser, most of these epistemological obstacles inhered in Marx's earlier writings,<sup>38</sup> which were left-Hegelian (or humanist), since they depicted "...man as a self-creating being arising out of the dialectic between his labour and the natural world..." (Callinicos 1976:31). Althusser described Marx's (1848) publication of *Capital* as an 'epistemological break', or as the moment when Marx finally transcended the theoretical ideologies which had compromised his earlier writings. Highlighting the important role played by Generalities II (or the *problematic*) in this 're-reading' of Marx, Althusser and Balibar (1970:14) commented that:

We read *Capital* as philosophers...(We posed it the question of its *relation to its object*, hence both the question of its specificity of its *object*, and the specificity of its *relation* to that object, i.e. the question of the nature and type of discourse set to work to handle this object, the question of scientific discourse....)

The problematic has been defined as the "...underlying [conceptual] structure which renders possible the raising of certain questions in a particular form, while ruling out the

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<sup>38</sup> For example, in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* written between 1834 and 1844)

raising of others” (Callinicos 1976:35). Althusser and Balibar (1970:25-26) allude to the problematic, thus:

This introduces us to a fact peculiar to the very existence of science: it can only pose problems on the terrain and within the horizon of a definite theoretical structure, its problematic, and hence the absolute determination of *the forms in which all problems must be posed* at any given moment of the science.

This opens the way to a determination of the *visible* as visible, and conjointly of the invisible as invisible, and of the organic link binding the invisible to the visible. Any object or problem situated on the terrain and within the horizon, i.e. in the definite structured field of the theoretical problematic of a given theoretical discipline, is visible.

It is important to note that Althusser’s epistemology incorporates certain elements of conventionalism<sup>39</sup>. This is the view that knowledge *is constructed* within the operational conventions of particular disciplines (Benton 1984). Conventionalism thus accepts that different modes of enquiry (or different problematics) will generate *different* kinds of knowledge. Sharply opposed to conventionalist epistemology are empiricist and positivist models of knowledge, which (respectively) assume that new knowledge is gained from the direct (and, supposedly, ‘objective’) observation of ‘reality’, and that knowledge develops incrementally, building upon previously established platforms. In conventionalism, knowledge tends to increase in ‘fits and starts’ (as suggested by the notion of the epistemological break) since shifts in underlying problematics may generate entirely new forms of knowledge. Additionally, a distinction is maintained between *objects of knowledge* and *real objects*. Since problematics work upon pre-existing discourses to generate new knowledge in processes which occur *purely in thought*, there *need not* be any one-to-one correspondence between this *mentally* generated knowledge and what is empirically observable in the ‘real world’. In other words, the guarantor of ‘scientificity’ in theoretical work is not the degree to which constructed knowledge matches things in reality. Rather, the ‘true’ guarantor of ‘scientificity’ lies in the rigorousness of the problematic applied by the investigator (Benton 1984).

Finally, Althusser (1969) emphasises that problematics are often implicit rather than explicit. This is why problematics often need to be *inferred* from the questioning methods and investigative trajectory assumed by a specific researcher. Althusser described this

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<sup>39</sup> As Benton (1984) explains, Althusser’s PhD supervisor, Gaston Bachelard was a prominent conventionalist.

inference of the problematic (from questioning methods and the trajectory of investigation) as ‘*symptomatic reading*<sup>40</sup>’. As Callinicos (1976:35-36) has explained:

The problematic of a theory is...not reducible to the [conscious] beliefs of the author of the theory; it is extractable by means of a *symptomatic reading*. It is called symptomatic because the problematic of a theory is complex and contradictory, involving dislocations between the different levels. These contradictions are reflected on the text’s surface as *symptoms* of a complex [underlying] structure, in gaps, lapses, silences, absences, which are determined by the way in which contradictory levels of the theory are articulated upon each other.

Symptomatic reading thus, “divulges the undivulged event in the text that it reads, and in the same movement, relates it to a *different text*, present as a necessary absence of the first” (Althusser and Balibar’s 1970:28). Symptomatic readings therefore identify the ‘cues’ pointing to an analyst’s theoretical direction. Theoreticians reading the works of earlier theoreticians may impose different problematics on those works, resulting in the generation of new bodies of knowledge.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

The concepts discussed in this chapter barely scratch the surface of Althusser’s ‘Return to Marx Oeuvre’. However, they provide a rough map of the key theoretical underpinnings of AMC, which shall inform the critique AMC (conducted in the next chapter). The same concepts shall also explicitly (or implicitly) frame the envisaged Marxist stylistic method.

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<sup>40</sup>Another concept which Althusser borrows from Lacanian psychoanalysis. Interestingly, even literary texts - supposedly bearing ‘lived ideologies’ - are also often subjected to ‘symptomatic readings’ in AMC – as shall be seen in the next chapter.

## 3.0 Chapter Three: The Unrealised Potential of Althusserian Marxist Criticism

### 3.1 Introduction

After the necessary detour into Althusserian Marxism in the previous chapter, we now hark back to our original thematic thread, which – as indicated in the introductory chapter – unravels into three main strands of enquiry: the hypotheses that: (a) AMC *needs* to be mediated; (b) CDA possesses *salient* theoretical and methodological resources that can effect this mediation and (c) a *distinctive* Marxist stylistic method emerges from the incorporation of germane CDA elements into AMC. This chapter particularly focuses on the first of these three main hypotheses<sup>41</sup>. It critiques AMC primarily to affirm its need for mediation, but even more vitally, *to isolate the specific areas in which this mediation is required*. However, the *strong* points of the method are also explored; and this, for two reasons. As already suggested (in Chapter One), highlighting AMC’s strong points partly justifies why it was selected (above other versions of Marxist criticism) as the main ‘progenitor’ of the Marxist stylistic method. Furthermore, establishing AMC’s strong points serves to anticipate some of the features which it shall ‘bequeath’ to the Marxist stylistic method<sup>42</sup>.

The chapter is organised into two main sections, as follows. The first section provides a brief background on the emergence of both production- and reception-oriented versions of AMC before highlighting the strong points of the method. The second section focuses on the weak points of the method. It considers criticisms which have been leveled against AMC (by various commentators) and some of the paucities which emerge when the method is reviewed from a standpoint that is partly informed by CDA.

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<sup>41</sup> The other two hypotheses are dealt with between chapters four and six.

<sup>42</sup> Given the latter’s predominant derivation from AMC.

## 3.2 *The Revolutionising Impetus of AMC*

### 3.2.1 The emergence of AMC

AMC emerged between the early- and mid-1960s in the form of exploratory essays in which Louis Althusser “...sketched out the implications of his position for the way in which art and literature should be viewed<sup>43</sup>” (Bennett 1979:120). Right from its inception, AMC diverged from the reductionism and theoretical leftism of its determinist and reflectionist precursors (Forgacs 1982, Haslett 2000, Levine 2003). For, while the latter had reduced literature to the mere epiphenomenon (or ‘mirror’) of socioeconomic forces, AMC elevated it to a semi-autonomous and material *practice* in its own right (Bennett 1979, Forgacs 1982, Resch 1992). In line with Althusser’s (1969) precept that *all* social practices transformed specific raw materials into specific products, AMC theorised that literature specifically ‘worked upon’ ideologies and transformed them into ‘more perceptible’ forms (Eagleton 1986, Laing 1978). Explaining how literature fulfilled this key function, Eagleton (1986:16) observed:

In entering literature,...ideology finds itself subjected to a *formalisation*, which it cannot tolerate. This formalisation exposes those limits, slips, and incoherences of ideology which are normally concealed in everyday life; and it is for this reason that, once worked upon by the literary text, ideology begins to come apart at the seams. It is the very *coherence* of textual forms which produces the *incoherence* of the ideological content (original emphases).

Put in other words, literature compels lived ideologies to fit into coherent narratives, which readers begin to *analyse*. Thus, literature destabilises the habitual invisibility of those ideologies<sup>44</sup>. To illustrate, the ideology which naturalises class inequalities might elude ‘easy detection’ in everyday life. However, such an ideology begins to ‘shout out its presence’ in a narrative which depicts two inseparable friends having to attend different schools because they ‘belong’ to different social classes. As Macherey (1978) once put it, literature ‘stages’ ideologies (or forces them to act out their incoherencies), thus rendering them more visible.

A number of questions arise from AMC’s central precept – that literature produces more perceptible ideologies. Firstly, does literature complement the work already accomplished

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<sup>43</sup> Althusser’s early ‘forays’ into literary criticism include, ‘The Piccolo Teatro: Bertolazzi and Brecht’ (1962); ‘A Letter on Art’ (1966) and ‘Cremonini, Painter of the Abstract,’ (1966).

<sup>44</sup> As highlighted in the previous chapter, Althusser (1969) portrays lived ideologies as typically diffuse and amorphous. They are, “...the invisible colour of everyday life...[and] less an articulated structure than a boundless medium” (Eagleton 1986:16).

by scientific (or theoretical) practices, since the latter also expose the ideologies ‘secreted’ within theoretical discourses? Addressing this question, Eagleton (1986) stresses that ‘science’ specifically exposes theoretical ideologies, whereas literature illuminates practical (or lived) ideologies. Moreover, while science provides an *explicit* knowledge of the ideologies which it illumines, literature often makes the reader feel (or ‘sense’) the presence of lived ideologies. As Althusser (1971:203-204) puts it:

I do not rank art among the ideologies, although art does have a quite particular and specific relationship with ideology....Art (I mean authentic art, not works of an average or mediocre level) does not give us a *knowledge* in the *strict sense*, it therefore does not replace knowledge (in the modern sense: scientific knowledge), but what it gives us does nevertheless maintains a certain specific relationship with knowledge. This relationship is not one of identity but of difference. Let me explain. I believe that the peculiarity of art is to “make us see”, “make us perceive”, “make us feel” something that *alludes* to reality....What art makes us *see* is the ideology from which it is born, in which it bathes, from which it detaches itself as art, and to which it *alludes*....”

Literature’s capacity to make the reader sense the presence of lived ideologies has prompted some commentators to treat it as ‘quasi-scientific’ (Bennett 1979, Forgacs 1982). Bennett (1979:121) suggests that literature “...hovers [midway] between ‘science’ as such and ‘ideology’ as such...,” while Forgacs (1982:182) observes that:

...fiction seems to stand between ideology and theory as a kind of halfway house. It would appear not to share the illusory nature of ideology because...it is precisely the production of ideology by fiction which sets it at a distance from itself and reveals the gaps in it. At the same time, fiction does not partake of theory working to criticise ideology, since it only serves to hollow the ideology, to create the gaps and silences in the text, and it needs the intervention of the theorist to explain the presence of these silences.

Notwithstanding the criticisms that it has attracted<sup>45</sup>, AMC’s ‘halfway house’ formulation clearly resonates with Althusser’s (1969) key precept – that social practices are discrete and also wont to impinge upon adjacent practices. In this case, literature, science and ideology are represented as a *series* of discrete practices. Literature and science work to expose (different kinds of) ideologies, while ideologies – in turn – tinct (or infuse themselves into) the former practices. As a conceptual stance, the halfway house formulation refutes determinist and reflectionist tendencies to lump the superstructures into one amorphous (or poorly differentiated) ‘whole’ which is then sharply opposed to (and supposedly solely determined by) the socioeconomic base (Bennett 1979, Levine 2003).

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<sup>45</sup>Which shall be discussed in section 3.3 of this chapter.

It is also worth noting that AMC's explanation of what uniquely distinguishes literary practices, translates into a materialist aesthetics<sup>46</sup>. Articulating AMC's active preoccupation with aesthetic questions, Althusser (1971:225-226) remarks:

...to answer most of the questions posed for us by the existence and specific nature of art, we are forced to produce an adequate (scientific) *knowledge* of the processes which produce the 'aesthetic effect'....

As already implied, AMC differentiates Literature<sup>47</sup> from both (so-called) 'ordinary language' as well as from literary "...works of an average or mediocre level..." (Althusser 1971:203). What gives Literature its distinctive status (or its aesthetic value) is, precisely, its unique capacity to alert us to the presence of lived ideologies (Althusser 1971). AMC's specification of the *mode* in which literature signals the presence of lives ideologies, underwrites classical Greek notions of '*aisthesis*', which means, "...pertaining to *sense* perception..." (Regan 1992:5 – my italics). To recall, literature makes us 'see', 'perceive' and '*feel*' the presence of ideologies (Althusser 1971).

Resch (1992) has described the 'original' version of AMC (summarised above), as *production-oriented*, most probably, in recognition of its main premise that literature *produces* more perceptible ideologies, and possibly too, in acknowledgement of Macherey's (1966 *trans* 1978) seminal work on this version, which was entitled: *A Theory of Literary Production*.

AMC's production-oriented version reached the peak of its influence between the mid-1960s and early 1970s (Williams 2001). By 1974, the method was in crisis (*ibid.*). Several Althusserian critics (*including* the former stalwart of the method – Macherey himself) were starting to question AMC's preoccupation with Literature's *intrinsic* properties. According to these critics, AMC contradicted its own materialist premises by investing Literature with a universal (or unchanging) *essence* (i.e. its unfailing capacity to produce more perceptible ideologies). Put more baldly, AMC's dabbling in aesthetic questions (which sought to establish the intrinsic properties possessed by *all* instances of 'real' Literature') represented a collapse into idealism. Articulating this criticism, Bennett (1979:104-105) has observed:

The...[materialist premises from which AMC set out] require... one to focus on the *differences* between forms of writing, explaining these with reference to

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<sup>46</sup> The term used by Regan (1992) to denote Marxist aesthetics.

<sup>47</sup> Spelt here with a capital 'L' to underscore its distinctiveness from other discourses (Resch 1992).

the differing, historically specific material and ideological constraints which have regulated their production. The...[aesthetic trajectory] by contrast, is concerned with the *similarities* between forms of writing. By abstracting particular texts from the historically specific circumstances of their production, it is argued that these can be grouped together as 'literature' precisely because they share some formal essence, some uniquely distinguishing set of characteristics which marks them off from other, 'non-literary' forms of writing.

This formal essence, however it may be defined, does not figure merely as the principle of classification which justifies the 'literary/non-literary' distinction posited. It is also endowed with explanatory power as part of an idealist theory of causation. It is what *makes* the text concerned 'literary'. Far from being moulded by the circumstances of its production, the so-called literary work is said to break free from these so as to partake of some universal, unchanging, ever-present formal essence.

Questions such as these actuated a retreat from aesthetics within the AMC camp, which gained impetus after an alternative version of AMC – rejecting the notion that Literature primarily produced more perceptible ideologies – emerged in 1974. Resch (1992) has described the latter version of AMC as *reception-oriented* for reasons that are clarified in the next subsection.

### 3.2.2 The emergence of the reception-oriented version of AMC

In what could be described as a parallel movement, Renée Balibar (1974), and a 'reformed'<sup>48</sup> Macherey (1974<sup>49</sup>, 1977) promoted an alternative version of AMC, which focused almost exclusively on the *interpellative*<sup>50</sup> effects of literature. Proceeding from the same basic premises as its predecessor, but demurring against what it perceived as the encroachment of bourgeois aesthetics into the earlier model, the (then) 'new-fangled' version of AMC shifted attention from how literature *produced* more perceptible ideologies, to how literature *reproduced* class-differentiated ideological subjectivities in middle class children as opposed to their working class counterparts within the French schooling system (Macherey and Etienne Balibar 1974). After noting sharp discrepancies between the simplified literature taught in primary schools and the much more advanced literature taught at secondary level; and after also taking into account the limited access of working class children to secondary education, Macherey and E. Balibar (1974)

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<sup>48</sup> It is ironical that the former 'stalwart' of the production-oriented version – Macherey – was to become one of its most vociferous opponents. In a radical 'about-turn', Macherey (1977:3) was to declare that, "...Literature' with a capital 'L' does not exist..."

<sup>49</sup> Macherey's 1974 paper was co-written with Etienne Balibar.

<sup>50</sup> To recall the discussion in section 2.3 of the previous chapter, intepellation refers to the 'hailing' (or 'recruitment') of ideological subjects.

concluded that literature functioned mainly as an interpellative apparatus, which inculcated bourgeois values as well as advanced linguistic competencies in its secondary school (or middle class) consumers, thus priming them for future bourgeois roles in processes of production. In that sense, literature functioned as an Ideological State Apparatus (or ISA) inserted into the broader educational ISA, whose specific function was to reproduce (or ‘replenish’ – at the ideological level) the bourgeois fraction of French society (Macherey and E. Balibar 1974). As Resch (1992:297) explains:

Because the education of the dominated classes does not result in mastery of the linguistic code, it imposes an *effect of submission* on all individuals educated at primary level (...the future exploited classes). As a corollary, education for the privileged minority, founded on active mastery of language, produces a class-based *effect of dominance*. Apprenticeship in the “advanced” language not only opposes that in the “basic” language but also encompasses and surpasses it, bestowing on its enrollees a qualitatively superior mastery of the language power over those excluded from such mastery.

As its name suggests, this version of AMC was mainly concerned with how literature was *received* by readers, or more specifically, with the effects wrought by literature on readers. While, at first sight, this version of AMC appears to be radically different from the production-oriented model, the two versions actually share several similarities, particularly, at the theoretical level. Both regard literature as a semi-autonomous and material practice which possesses its own effectivity, and both are focused on the *interfaces* between literary and ideological practices (Resch 1992). While the production-oriented version views literature as *producing* more perceptible ideologies, the reception-oriented version views literature as *reproducing* class-differentiated ideological subjectivities. Moreover, both versions perceive lived ideologies in ‘cloak and dagger’ terms as ordinarily surreptitious, or as only perceptible after some *unmasking* (Resch 1992). Thus, the production-oriented version invests Literature with the unique capacity to ‘unveil’ lived ideologies. The reception-oriented model, on the other hand, denies Literature this ‘unmasking power’ and invests it in the critic, who recognises the contradictions at the heart of the French schooling system (Resch 1992). Explaining how active unmasking is also central to the latter version, Resch (1992:296) observes:

...[T]he homogeneity of the bourgeois school was (is) a façade concealing the existence of antagonistic academic practices...primary education and secondary education, which, respectively, produce/reproduce the relations of domination and exploitation within the social formation....As the division in schooling, which reproduces the division of society into social classes is veiled by the assertion of a pseudo-egalitarian national community, so a linguistic division emerges between different practices of the same national languages....

Another similarity between the two versions of AMC is their shared interest in closely analysing the linguistic and narrative structures of literary texts, albeit for different reasons. The production-oriented version:

...assigns an important place to the language of the literary text. For it is fictional language and a number of specifically literary resources which bring about the production or transformation of ideologies (Forgacs 1982: 182-183).

The reception-oriented version also values close analysis in order to clarify and underscore the differentiated communicative resources accessible to primary as opposed to secondary pupils. Thus, in their description of the pioneering work of R. Balibar (1974) in developing this version, Macherey and E. Balibar (1974) applaud her application of close linguistic analysis:

In a study of 'modern' French literary texts,...Renee Balibar refers to the production of 'imaginary French' (*français fictive*).... [This is not] simply a case of language being produced in fiction (with its own usages, syntax and vocabulary), characters in a narrative making an imaginary discourse in an imaginary language. Instead, it is a case of expressions which always diverge in one or more salient details from those used in practice outside the literary discourse, even when both are grammatically correct. These are linguistic 'compromise formations'.... (Balibar and Macherey 1974 in Mulhern 1992:47).

In short, the two versions of AMC share numerous overlaps – a point which is stressed by Resch (1992:261) when he describes the rift between them as both “...pernicious and unwarranted”<sup>51</sup>.

In spite of the rift between its production- and reception-oriented versions, AMC emerged to become an influential approach to Marxist criticism (Williams 2001, Feltham 2008, Dawes 1991). The next section considers the *strong* points of AMC (vis-à-vis its determinist and reflectionist precursors). First, it examines how AMC's ‘materialism of the superstructure[s]’ (Bennett 1979:111) significantly extended the scope and effectiveness of Marxist literary criticism.

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<sup>51</sup>An assessment also made by Eagleton (1986) who argues that literary studies should focus equally on ‘production’ and ‘reproduction’.

### 3.3 *The Strong Points of AMC*

#### 3.3.1 AMC's 'materialism of the superstructures' (including Literature)

As already highlighted, both production- and reception-oriented versions of AMC elevate the former superstructures (including literature) to fully-fledged practices in their own right (Resch 1992, Bennett 1979, Levine 2003). This theoretical position has the effect of radically attenuating the determinative powers formerly invested in the socioeconomic base<sup>52</sup>, which loses its double distinction as both the *only* material sphere of human activity, and as the single-handed determinant of all the other levels (Resch 1992, Haslett 2000, Levine 2003). Althusser's (1969) identification of the economic *mode of production*<sup>53</sup> (rather than the base as a singular instance) as the entity which organises all social practices into the structure in dominance, effectively relegates the base into just one other level amongst many others (Resch 1992, Jameson 1981, Feltham 2008). Thus, the famous Althusserian caveat – 'determination in the last instance' – does not recover any vestigial (or ultimate) determinative powers for the base. Rather, it underscores the inclusion (and subordination) of the base *within* the much broader network of practices constituting the mode of production (Jameson 1981, Feltham 2008).

Ultimately, the denial of any special (or distinctive) status for the base could be seen as an 'in-house'<sup>54</sup> deconstruction of the base-superstructure dichotomy. One positive effect of this deconstruction is that it effectively forestalls (or *weakens*) postmodernist assaults on the Marxist core-value of 'economic necessitarianism' (Resch 1992, Feltham 2008). For, while the postmodernists would sooner tear down *both* the base-superstructure dichotomy and the principle of economic determinism associated with it, AMC executes a 'selective demolition,' which targets just the (much maligned) base-superstructure dichotomy, but preserves the principle of determinism – which is salvaged through caveats such as *overdetermination* and *determination in the last instance* (Haslett 2000, Levine 2003, Feltham 2008). In fact, AMC demonstrates (*per contra* determinist and reflectionist positions) that it is possible to think determinism without thereby endorsing the base-superstructure dichotomy. In that regard, AMC appears to rehabilitate (and give

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<sup>52</sup> By determinist and reflectionist critics.

<sup>53</sup> That is, the aggregate of *all* practices within the social formation (as discussed in section 2.2.3 of the previous chapter).

<sup>54</sup> That is, a deconstruction wrought from *within* the Marxist camp.

a new meaning to) the Marxist principle of determinism, albeit, while apparently ‘colluding’ with the postmodernists in rejecting the base-superstructure framework (Resch 1992, Feltham 2008).

Additionally, AMC’s treatment of literature as a semi-autonomous and material practice in its own right serves to simultaneously focus and diversify the scope of Marxist literary criticism (Benton 1984, Levine 2003). Theorising literature as a practice in its own right has fostered systematic enquiry into: (a) the specific ‘raw materials’ supposedly transformed (or ‘worked upon’) by literature, (b) the means of production applied during this transformation and (c) the end-products yielded by literary practices. The identification of ideologies (and ideological subjectivities) as both the raw-materials and end products of literary practices, has focused attention on the interfaces between literary and ideological practices (Resch 1992). At the same time, the importance given to the linguistic and narrative structures of texts (i.e. as the specific means of production employed by literary practices) introduces some scope for *stylistic analysis* within a Marxist approach to literary criticism (Forgacs 1982, Levine 2003).

### **3.3.2 AMC’s theorisation of historical knowledge and its construal of the relationship between history and literature**

In spite of contrary adjudications (which shall be considered in the next section), AMC’s definition of historical knowledge, and its explanation of the relationship between literature and history, constitutes one of its most important innovations (Forgacs 1982, Resch 1992). In the first place (and, in spite of its deconstruction of the base/superstructure dichotomy), AMC *emulates* its determinist and reflectionist precursors in maintaining a history-literature binary in which the former category functions as the ultimate reference point for the latter (Selden 1985, Forgacs 1982). It is mainly on the basis of this coincidence that, in a later work, Bennett (1990:42) ‘lumps’ AMC with its determinist and reflectionist ‘ilk’ when he observes that:

It matters little...whether the terms proposed... [for the relationship between history and literature] are those of reflection theory or whether, as in Althusserian formulations literary texts are regarded as subjecting history to a distinctive semiotic transformation via the intermediate category of ideology. In both cases, the political effects and value of texts are assessed on the basis of the position accorded them in relation to the independently known [category of] history which is assigned the status of their ultimate referent.

In its maintenance of the history-literature binary, however, AMC invokes terms of reference which radically differ from those of its determinist and reflectionist precursors (Resch 1992, Williams 2001). For, whereas the latter tended to organise the history-literature binary along the same ‘fault-lines’ as those traditionally separating the base from the superstructures, AMC ‘scrambles up’ this correspondence and, instead, demarcates between history and literature on the basis of the fault-line separating ‘science’ from ‘the ideologies’ (Resch 1992, Williams 2001). This point needs closer examination.

The determinists and the reflectionists often use the term ‘history’ to denote chronologically dynamic conditions *within the base*, while literature, for them, exists in the conceptual space reserved for the superstructures. Thus Bennett (1990:41) has remarked that “...the terms of that [base-superstructure] opposition are transposed to another couplet: literature and history, where the latter stands in the place of the base and the former figures as a specific ideological superstructure.” However, by equating conditions within the base with pre-given (or ‘*objective*’) reality, the determinists and reflectionists risk the pitfalls of *empiricism*, which presupposes that ‘facts’ are given to direct observation. Marxist empiricists frequently hold up these ‘pre-given facts’ as the bottom ground (or the ‘concrete reality’) against which they then appraise the vicissitudes and uncertainties of the superstructures (including the lifeworlds depicted in literature). Selden (1984:43) is clearly operating within this epistemology when he remarks that:

From the point of view of a Marxist criticism, there is no pleasure in the prospect of never hitting bottom; as a theory of history, Marxism discovers its ultimate footing beneath the level of the textual in the socioeconomic.

The problem with empiricism – as Hindess and Hirst (1975: 2-3) have noted – is that it over-simplifies the knowledge-making processes central to historiography:

Empiricism represents knowledge as constructed out of ‘given’ elements, the elements of experience, the ‘facts’ of history, etc. Unfortunately for these positions, facts are never ‘given’ to knowledge. They are always the product of definite practices, theoretical or ideological, conducted under real conditions. To pretend otherwise, to represent certain elements of knowledge as given in the real, is to denigrate the central role of scientific practice, of experimentation and of explicit theoretical construction and argument, in the production of scientific knowledge. Facts are never *given*; they are always produced.

Postmodernist detractors of Marxism have been particularly dismissive of this kind of epistemology. In their view, *all* narratives (including so-called ‘grand’ or ‘meta-narratives’) are susceptible to the effects of ideology. Thus, there can be no value-free (or

‘objective’) accounts of history. Articulating these criticisms, Bennett (1990:19) has observed:

The view that ideological practices should be conceived as actively organising social relations in their own right – a view suggested by the increased emphasis placed on their autonomous properties and effects – has thus called into question the contention that economic and social relations can be posited as existing independently of *representational* or *discursive* forms as well as the assumption that the former might be invoked as the determining ground of the latter (my italics).

Negotiating a third way between postmodernist and determinist/ reflectionist positions, AMC appears to collude with the former in denouncing empiricist historiography, only – pro the latter – to insist on maintaining a history-literature binary; this time, predicated on the opposition between ‘science’ and ‘the ideologies’ (Resch 1992, Haslett 2000). As highlighted in the previous chapter<sup>55</sup>, AMC attributes the production of scientific knowledge to the actions of Generalities II (i.e. the investigator’s *problematic*) on Generalities I (i.e. pre-existing theoretical discourses). Approached in this way, historical truth is an *object of knowledge* (i.e. a product of *mental* operations) rather than a passive mirror of empirical (or pre-given) ‘reality’. In addition, the guarantor of ‘historical truth’ has shifted from empirical sources (e.g. documented ‘facts’) to the rigorousness of the enquirer’s knowledge-making processes. As Althusser (1969) stressed, AMC privileges the ‘concrete-in-thought’ over the ‘concretely-real’. AMC’s stance is interesting in that, what initially appears to be a demotion of historical knowledge from its privileged status as ‘sacrosanct fact’, actually turns out to be its promotion to the rarefied zone of ‘the sciences’ (Callinicos 1982). This radical shift in the criteria used to prioritise ‘history’ over other (‘non-scientific’) discourses (e.g. literature) is clearly discernible when Hindess and Hirst (1975:3-4) remark that:

The empiricism of the academic social sciences and of much Marxist scholarship has serious theoretical effects. In so far as certain facts are represented as ‘given’ in the real or as ‘given’ by history they must fall *below* the level of theoretical determination: they cannot be the product of an explicit theoretical [or scientific] practice. (My italics).

AMC thus neutralises part of the censure reserved for empiricist historiography by maintaining a history-literature binary which actually assigns *both* categories to the cognitive realm, albeit, with the proviso that history retains preeminence (over literature) since it is product of ‘more rigorous scientific practices’, while literature (as discussed

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<sup>55</sup>In section 2.4.

earlier) falls somewhere between the realms of ‘science’ and ‘the ideologies’ (Resch 1992). As shall be seen (in section 3.4.2 below) however, what AMC really wins here is a minor ‘epistemological skirmish’ against both the postmodernists and the determinists/reflectionists<sup>56</sup>.

### 3.3.3 Methodological strong points

AMC’s reformulation of the relationship between history and literature (in terms of the science-ideology binary rather than the base-superstructure dichotomy) *precludes* it from applying ‘socialist realist’ or ‘critical realist’<sup>57</sup> methodologies – as (respectively) practiced by the determinists and the reflectionists (Forgacs 1982, Eagleton 1986, Bennett 1990). Briefly, socialist realism demanded that ‘good’ (or ‘aesthetically pleasing’) literature needed to *accurately* depict ‘historical reality’<sup>58</sup>, since such accuracy advanced the revolutionary edification of the masses (Laing 1978)<sup>59</sup>. Critical realism, on the other hand, heightened the bar on what constituted ‘good literature’ by demanding – over and above the accurate depiction of ‘historical truth’ – evidence that writers displayed a *critical awareness* of how of those ‘historical facts’ shaped (or were likely to shape) revolutionary processes (Lukacs 1950). Alluding to this quality, Selden (1985:29) observed:

[The critical realist novel] *must* reveal the underlying pattern of contradictions in a social order...[and] conduct the reader ‘towards a more concrete insight into ‘reality’ which transcends a merely common-sense apprehension of things (my italics).

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<sup>56</sup> Apparently, AMC’s approach to historiography has been denigrated by both postmodernist and Marxist detractors.

<sup>57</sup> The term ‘critical realism’ – as used in the domain of Marxist criticism by Lukacs (1923) – carries a different meaning from that assigned to it within the domain of philosophy/epistemology by Bhaskar (1989).

<sup>58</sup> Understood as the teleological evolution (or transformation through time) of forces and relations of production within the socioeconomic base (Callinicos 1982).

<sup>59</sup> As Zhdanov (1950:15) once insisted at the 1934 Union of Soviet Writers’ Conference:

It means in the first place you *must* know life in order to depict it truthfully in artistic creations, to depict it neither ‘scholastically’ nor lifelessly, not simply as ‘objective reality’ but rather as reality in its revolutionary development. The truthfulness and historical exactitude of the artistic image *must* be linked with the task of ideological transformation, of the education of the working people in the spirit of socialism. This method in fiction is what we call the method of *socialist realism* (Zhdanov (1950:15 - my italics).

Socialist and critical realist methodologies had a number of shortcomings. Firstly, they came across as *too prescriptive* in their demand that ‘good literature’ accurately depict ‘historical reality’ – a demand which becomes even more problematic when its *empiricist* assumptions are taken into account (Forgacs 1982, Bennett 1979). The additional presupposition – also implicit to ‘realist’ methodologies – that literature *can* accurately mirror ‘historical reality,’ has also been questioned by Macherey and Balibar (1974:37), who have asked:

If thought reflects an existent reality how accurate is its reflection? Or better, under what conditions (i.e. historical conditions whereby the dialectic between ‘absolute truth’ and ‘relative truth’ intervenes) can it provide an accurate reflection?... What form does reflection take?

As if these problems were not enough, socialist and critical realist methodologies have also been ridiculed for often producing ‘moribund’ commentaries which mechanistically attempt to match particular textual effects to particular determining conditions within the base (Bellin 1997, Haslett 2000, Laing 1978). Bellin (1997:2) has decried the *tautology* inherent in such ‘cause-effect’ analyses, thus:

The possibilities of these forms of causality [i.e. determinist and reflectionist] for cultural or literary interpretation are limited... if we assume either one to be the fundamental mechanism by which the historical or economic base underlies the cultural superstructure. For to interpret a text in either of these models of society would be simply to find its direct cause (in the mechanical model) or its hidden essence (in the expressive) – *an unsurprising revelation, since the critic presumably knew this “answer” before she began.* (My italics).

Haslett (2000) and Laing (1978) have denounced the sheer tenuousness of certain ‘realist’ commentaries<sup>60</sup>, while Bennett (1990:41) has voiced the suspicion that such commentaries serve as ‘psychological crutches’ meant to reassure the critic that his/her interpretations will be perceived as ‘objective’:

In being conceived as a set of real (i.e. extra-discursive) developmental tendencies of which literary texts are regarded as the mediated expressions, history here safeguards the critic’s interpretations from the charge of subjective arbitrariness in supplying them with an objective foundation.

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<sup>60</sup> Haslett (2000:18) cites part of the commentary by Caudwell (1946:90), which reads: “Byron is an aristocrat – one who is conscious of the break-up of his class as a force, and the necessity to go over to the bourgeoisie. Hence his mixture of cynicism and romanticism.” Laing (1978:18) quotes from the ‘socialist realist’ critic, Chernychevsky, who once notoriously ‘analysed’ part of a love story by Turgenev, as follows: “The liberals shirked the democratic tasks arising from the liberation of the serfs in the same cowardly fashion and with the same ‘high-minded’ excuses as Turgenev’s hero, who shamefully ran away from his tryst....”

AMC avoids these difficulties, firstly, by denying the very possibility that literature *can* accurately mirror historical truth (Eagleton 1986, Forgacs 1982, Levine 2003), and secondly, by rejecting the very *need* for ‘empirical objectivity’ in critical commentaries. As indicated earlier, far from perceiving literary texts as repositories of ‘historical truth,’ AMC actually perceives them as quintessential vectors (and ‘transformers’) of ideology. As Eagleton (1986:16) once observed, “...the contradictions within the [literary] text are the product of the ideologically determined *absence* of...a reflection of real contradictions” (my italics). AMC’s position reverses the prescriptivism endemic to socialist and critical realist approaches, since it views even the most ‘ideologically laden’ texts as *worthy* of systematic analysis. In Forgacs’ (1982:182) words:

[AMC] is not an evaluative...[i.e. prescriptive approach] but a descriptive one. Macherey does not ask, like Lukacs, whether a particular work is good (correct, accurately realistic) but what it is like. He frees Marxist literary theory from evaluation because he does not see literary works as containing a *knowledge* of reality which the critic can judge as being either correct or not. He sees them rather as [ideological] productions or workings of things in reality, and knowledge in his approach is something the *critic* brings to bear on them.

Forgacs’s last point needs to be separately amplified. While AMC dispenses with prescriptivism (i.e. by releasing literary texts from the *obligation* to be ‘historically accurate’), this does not imply that the critic now dispenses with historical knowledge. The critic *still* needs to appraise the ideologies present within the text against a certain benchmark of ‘historical truth.’ In this case, it is the critic who “...brings [historical knowledge] to bear...” upon the text (ibid.), rather than the (more prescriptive) requirement that the text itself should accurately mirror ‘historical truth’ (Forgacs 1982, Resch 1992). The relationship which AMC envisages between the text and the critic may be compared to that between a confused (or psychotic) patient and a psychoanalyst (Macherey 1978). The text does not ‘fully know’ itself. Nevertheless, it ‘talks’. The critic does not expect it to talk ‘perfect sense’ all the time. Rather, s/he is as interested in its mumblings, incoherencies and silences, as s/he is in its more articulate moments. The critic thus conducts what could be described as a symptomatic reading – one which takes account of both what the text says, and *cannot (or refuses)* to say (ibid.). As Eagleton (1976:43) suggested, the task before the AMC critic is to “...show the text as it cannot know itself, to manifest those conditions of its making (inscribed in its very letter) about which it is necessarily silent.”

Ultimately, AMC also frees the critic from the need to be ‘empirically objective’ (Macherey 1978). Denying that texts contain any latent (or ‘objective’) meanings, which it is the critic’s duty to ‘coax out’ as accurately as possible (Bennett 1979)<sup>61</sup>, AMC recognises that the critic partly *creates* the texts which s/he critiques (ibid.). When interrogating a text from a specific standpoint (or applying a certain *problematic* on it), the critic is able to reveal things about text which the texts itself is not empirically stating (ibid.). Macherey (1978) has described this anti-empiricist stance towards interpretation as *La Critique Comme Savoir*. Explaining this approach, Bennett (1979:137) has observed that:

The literary text has no single or uniquely privileged meaning, no single or uniquely privileged effect that can be abstracted from the ways in which criticism itself works upon and mediates the reception of the text. In this sense, literature is not something to be studied; it is an area to be occupied. The question is not *what literature’s political effects are but what they might be made to be* – not in a forever and once-and-for-all sense but in a dynamic and changing way – by the operations of Marxist criticism (my italics).

Haslett (2000) has described AMC’s open acknowledgement that critics imbue texts with ‘personal’ meanings as refreshingly disarming (unlike empiricist/ objectivist approaches, which claim to operate with a spurious neutrality).

### **3.4 The Weak Points of AMC**

This section examines the weak points of AMC, as highlighted by various commentators and as discernible when the method is scrutinised from a perspective that is partly informed by CDA. As if to give it a dose of its own medicine<sup>62</sup>, particular attention shall be given to the contradictions, silences, equivocations and apologia of AMC. The first contradiction which shall be highlighted pertains to AMC’s equivocation between idealist and materialist premises in its definition of social practices (including literature).

#### **3.4.1 AMC’s idealisation of literature and other social practices**

The three social practices which AMC extensively deals with are: literary, ideological and theoretical (or scientific) practices (Bennett 1979, Williams 2001). As discussed in the previous section, AMC construes a tripartite nexus in which literature hovers *midway*

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<sup>61</sup> A stance which (as shall be seen in subsection 3.3.2, below) borders on ‘postmodernist idealism’.

<sup>62</sup> Or to subject it to a symptomatic reading.

between the other two (Bennett 1979, Forgacs 1982). AMC's halfway house formulation, however, comes at a cost. Firstly, it could be seen as a pointer to AMC's own ideological pre-histories<sup>63</sup>, particularly, to the method's tacit accommodation of *Structuralist* influences (Bennett 1979). Structuralist methodologies tend to isolate individual elements, prior to inserting them into structured nexuses. In this case, AMC isolates "... 'science' *as such* and 'literature' *as such* and 'ideology *as such* (Bennett 1979:112 – my italics), before inserting them into their three-point nexus (ibid.). An effect of this factorialism is that each of these practices is 'purified' (or '*idealised*'), since it is defined largely with reference to its own *intrinsic* properties, which set it apart from the others. As Bennett (1979:119) has noted, 'science' is depicted as "... a pre-formed essence which is not at all determined by the process of that science's making." Literature is portrayed as "... the manifestation of some universal, unchanging, always 'already there' ideal..." (Bennett 1979:105). And 'ideology', "... in itself has no history. [Rather],... there is present in all particular, historically determined ideologies an unchanging structure which is said to typify 'ideology' as such" (Bennett 1979:115). In AMC's hands, therefore, 'science', literature and 'ideology' assume the appearance of:

... *eternal* and *unchanging* forms of cognition... Particular sciences, particular literary texts and particular ideological forms turn out to be not the result of materially conditioned practices so much as the mere manifestations of invariant structures (Bennett 1979:112 – my italics).

What AMC sacrifices at the altar of structuralist factorialism is Althusser's (1969) principle of overdetermination, which envisages that *all* social practices 'contaminate' (and become 'contaminated') by adjacent practices. This principle would anticipate that scientific practices, for example, would bear the impress of (concurrent) ideological, political and economic (etc.) practices. The same *historical* determination would apply as much to literary and ideological practices.

AMC's 'halfway house' nexus also has the unfortunate effect of *quarantining* its three key elements from free (or unrestricted) interaction with *wider* social practices (e.g. the political or the economic instances – Bennett 1979). Literature, for example, is so 'ensconced' between the 'sciences' and the 'ideologies' that it almost becomes insulated from contact with wider social practices (ibid.). The very installation of literature between

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<sup>63</sup> Or as an 'epistemological obstacle' exhibited by AMC as a consequence of the structuralist influences with underlie Althusser's philosophy (Callinicos 1982, Bennett 1979).

‘science’ and ‘the ideologies’ (i.e. as a midway’ category) is itself highly suspect (Ranciere 1976, Bennett 1979). As Ranciere (1976) has pointed out, the demarcation between ‘science’ and ‘the ideologies’ is, at best, speculative and, at worst, quite arbitrary. Supporting this argument, Bennett (1979:139) has observed that, “...any system of ideas, including the so-called ‘sciences’, may appear as ideological or non-ideological according to the vantage point from which it is viewed.” And, once the line between ‘science’ and ‘the ideologies’ is rendered fuzzy, so too becomes the intermediate category – literature:

The effect of calling these categories into question is thus to question the validity of the concept of ‘literature’ if this is taken to be a distinct form of cognition. Lacking any anchorage in a fixed epistemological distinction between science and ideology, it simply collapses as a category (Bennett 1979: 139-140).

The inconsistencies highlighted here point to a fracture between AMC’s materialist and idealist trajectories. Bennett (1979:119) has expressed concern that AMC often appears to ‘forget’ the “...*materialist* premises from which Althusser set...out” (my italics). Thus AMC’s theoretical positions are confused by what appears to be a tension between materialist and idealistic (specifically, structuralist) premises – particularly in its conceptualisation of social practices.

### 3.4.2 Epistemological problems

In the previous section, it was also suggested that AMC forestalls postmodernist charges of empiricism by denying history its privileged status as ‘sacrosanct *fact*,’ only to reclaim the pre-eminence of history over literature by elevating the former category to the status of a ‘scientific practice’ (Resch 1992, Haslett 2000, Williams 2001). As discussed, AMC rejects the correspondence – sustained in determinist and reflectionist historiography – between the history-literature binary and the base-superstructure dichotomy (Bennett 1990). Instead, AMC reconstitutes the history-literature binary on the basis of the fault line which separates ‘science’ from ‘the ideologies’<sup>64</sup> (Resch 1992). However – as also already suggested – what AMC really wins (after all this polemical manoeuvring) are just minor ‘epistemological skirmishes’ against *both* Marxist and postmodernist detractors.

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<sup>64</sup>With ‘history’ (the equivalent of ‘science’) taking epistemological precedence over ‘literature’ (an intermediate or ‘quasi-scientific’ category).

Attacking Althusser's notion of 'historical science' from a Marxist viewpoint, Poster (1974) has charged that Althusser appears to vacillate between anti-humanist and anthropocentric orientations. On one hand, Althusser (1969) wishes to expunge all forms of personal (or human) interest<sup>65</sup> from the processes of 'historical science'. As Althusser (1969:141) himself clarifies, "...it is a peculiarity of every ideological conception...that it is governed by interests beyond the necessity of knowledge alone"<sup>66</sup>. Further cementing his strong anti-humanist stance, Althusser (1969) also characterises history as 'a process without a subject'. According to this argument, social subjects are mere 'bearers' of social structures and therefore play no significant role in the making of history. In Althusser's view, therefore, historians should focus on relationships amongst semi-autonomous social *structures*, rather than on the 'dramas' or 'aspirations' of proletarians (or other social constituencies). Althusser thus sets out to eliminate both human interest and human-centred *teleology* from what he perceives to be the 'correct protocols' of historiography (Poster 1974). However, (and in spite of his radical anti-humanism), Althusser is also quintessentially humanist when he declares that historical knowledge is produced purely 'within realm of thought' (i.e. by *human agents* – *ibid.*). For Althusser, the guarantor of historical truth does not in any external (or extra-discursive) sources. Rather, it inheres in the care (or rigour) with which the investigator formulates his/her problematic (Callinicos 1982). The extreme anthropocentrism (or *humanism*) of this position is clear when Althusser (1969) goes on to assert that 'objects of knowledge' (i.e. 'historical truths' constructed within the human mind) take epistemological precedence over any real objects (i.e. any external-to-thought objects or 'realities' – Callinicos 1982, William S. Lewis 2005).

This leads to another criticism – also from the Marxist camp – which has been unwaveringly aimed at Althusser. The proposition that 'objects of knowledge' take precedence over any 'real objects' sharply undercuts the Marxian axiom that, "It is not the consciousness of men which determines their social being, but on the contrary, their social being which determines their consciousness" (Marx 1962:67). Highlighting the centrality of this precept to Marxist historiography, Sole (1991:205) has observed that:

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<sup>65</sup> That is, interests based on such factors as the historian's class, gender, race, age, religion, etc.

<sup>66</sup> Here, Althusser takes a swipe at humanist historians (such as Lukacs 1950) who argued that history should be written from the proletarian perspective, since *only* that class can 'grasp totality'. Althusser's invective is also aimed at the determinists, who hold that, "...theory merely reflect[s] the class position of the thinker..." (Poster 1974:395).

[I]n history of a 'realist' nature (such as Marxism) there is a commitment to the belief that knowledge is the knowledge of objects or processes that *exist independently of thought*. Both 'realist' literature and 'realist' history are concerned with the relationship of individuals and social groups to a real world which, while not knowable outside of the historian's or the writer's organising perceptions, nevertheless, exists *independently* of them (my italics).

Althusser's (seemingly) flagrant violation of this foundational principle of Marxist historiography, has attracted widespread criticism. As William S. Lewis (2005:170) has noted:

An oft repeated critique of Althusser's philosophy of [historical] science is that, because science is defined only by criteria internal to itself and consists only of concepts, the knowledge that it produces has no external checks. A science is what the scientists who practice it say it is. That which it calls "true" is merely that which meets the criteria for truth established by that science's problematic.

Tellingly, AMC has often 'shifted footing' between projecting history as a product of mental signification(s); and simultaneously, as a reference to extra-discursive reality. Bennett (1990:43-44) discerns this uncomfortable shifting of position in the work of Eagleton:

While supplying the ultimate terminus of the relay of significations from ideology to literature and back again, history, as it figures here, is conceived as the effect of that process of signification. Yet...Eagleton wants history to function not merely as literature's signified, but as its ultimate source and referent too....When he speaks of history as literature's signified, he clearly has in mind a set of meanings which – for such is the nature of signifieds – are internal to and the product of processes of signification. Yet when he speaks of history as literature's source and referent, he draws upon another meaning of the term in which history figures as an extra-discursive origin of discourse. If this jumbling is undone – a jumbling which is the consequence of Eagleton's trying to operate in both the space of discourse theory and that of classical Marxism at the same time – the incoherence of the position is manifest.

Some Marxist commentators have also taken exception to Althusser's claim that human interest is irrelevant to the protocols of 'correct' historiography. Mandel (1971), for example, has questioned Althusser's thesis, that Marx only achieved his epistemological break *after* jettisoning humanist themes (such as alienation) from his discourse. Mandel's 're-reading' of Marx demonstrates that the humanist theme of alienation actually persists far into Marx's (so-called) more mature works<sup>67</sup> – a finding corroborated by Poster (1974:400) who has remarked:

[T]his absolute rejection of certain [Marxian] texts seems more tendentious than realistic. It would certainly be more accurate to say the young Marx complemented his early dialectic of alienation with a later structuralist

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<sup>67</sup>Such as the *Grundrisse* (1857-1858) and *Capital Volume 1* (1867).

analysis, without being able to resolve the differences between the two methodologies. Allowing for opposite tendencies in the texts to emerge without forcing a false unity on them is actually more in keeping with structuralist principles of interpretation than Althusser's dogmatic bifurcation.

Poster's other concern is that Althusser's extreme anti-humanism undermines *political* praxis. Assuming (as Althusser does) that social subjects are mere 'bearers of social structures' and that they exist in a 'permanent fog of ideology,' all forms of 'anti-capitalist' struggle would be inherently futile. As Poster (1974:405) puts it:

In Althusser's concept of history..., social change came about regardless of the deliberate action of human groups. And so cosmic fatalism crept into his anti-humanism: all action was futile both because structures moved autonomously and because praxis was always inspired by ideological interests which distorted it.

Althusser's Marxist detractors have also pointed out the irony that Althusser himself appears to be *personally* interested in a 'scientific Marxism' that transcends local politics. As Poster (1974:405) has remarked, "[e]ven Althusser was caught up in the ontological web of *being human* and his discourse projected an "interest" inherent in all discourse, one that was not purely scientific" (my italics).

Marxist evaluations of Althusser's 'science of history' have thus tended to be quite antagonistic (Williams 2001). In the view of many Marxist thinkers, Althusser not only flouts some of the 'core values' of Marxist historiography. More damningly, he often appears – somewhat fleetingly – to hobnob with structuralist and poststructuralist thinkers. The latter insinuation is made by Callinicos (1982:169), who writes:

The conception of language shared by figures as diverse as Levi-Strauss, Lacan, Derrida, Deleuze, Althusser, Bathes and Kristeva, is that of an autonomous process that is unhinged from reality (the 'floating' of the signifier, the 'sliding' of the signified under the signifier, the absence of any 'transcendental signified' prior to discourse) and which organises and at the same time cracks open the subject, reducing it to the status of a subordinate agency of this process, rather than the autonomous source of meaning<sup>68</sup>.

Lending credence to the perception that Althusser shares some common ground with postmodernist philosophers, parts of Jenkins' (1996) introduction to *The Postmodern History Reader* sound like reiterations of Althusser's positions. Jenkins (1996:2), for

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<sup>68</sup> This association is also affirmed outside of the Marxist camp by Callari and Ruccio (1996:4), who write, "...[W]hen we look back on Althusser's work, we begin to see a Marxism emerging that is very different from classical Marxism, that does not easily fit within the straightjacket of modernism, and that is interlaced with postmodern insights."

example, dismisses, "...empiricist, objectivist and documentarist..." modes of historiography. Jenkins (1996:5) is also strongly averse to humanist teleologies. As he puts it:

...[B]oth bourgeois and proletarian versions of the modernist project – their obvious class differences notwithstanding – articulate... as key elements in their respective ideologies a shared view of the past/history as a movement with an immanent direction, a past/history which [i]s held to be going somewhere, differing only in its selection of "its" ultimate destination. For the bourgeoisie, this [i]s a harmonious capitalism; for the proletariat, global communism.

In addition, Jenkins (1996:20) endorses a *constructivist* approach to historiography with the declaration: "...we [the postmodernists] can interpret the past/history '*any way we like*' ...." (My italics). However, it is precisely at this juncture, that significant divergences begin to open up between Althusser and the postmodernists. To clarify these divergences, it is necessary to look beyond the realm of epistemology into the domain of *axiology*.

Distinguishing between the two branches of philosophy, Axtell (2006) has observed that while epistemology predominantly investigates the nature of knowledge (particularly, the processes used to access and validate knowledge), axiology has to do with human values, belief systems and temperaments. Linking the two, Axtell (2006:14) asserts that epistemological positions are almost always shaped by 'axiological proclivities'. As he puts it:

...temperament is...what "loads the evidence" for a particular thinker, leading them to present certain theoretical hypotheses as living or dead. We will interpret temperament broadly...as, including intellectual attitudes that might be schooled into us by imitation and partisanship, the circumpressure of our caste and set.

Postmodernists *believe* – in the wake of Dachau and Hiroshima (Hasan 1967) – that 'the enlightenment' project<sup>69</sup> has failed. As Jenkins (1996:3-4) explains:

[T]he condition of postmodernity and the postmodern theoretical expressions concomitant with it are due to the overall failure of that experiment in social living we can term "modernity". That is, the general failure...of the attempt from the eighteenth century in Europe, to bring about through the application of reason, science and technology, a level of social and political wellbeing within social formations....

Disillusioned by the so-called 'civilising missions' of Western societies and governments (*both* capitalist and socialist), postmodernists generally disparage what they label as

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<sup>69</sup>Or the so-called 'civilising mission' of Western societies and governments (Cullenberg, Amariglio and Ruccio 2000).

‘Eurocentric’, ‘universalistic’ and ‘phallogocentric’ discourses and certainties (Cullenberg, Amariglio and Ruccio 2000). As Jenkins (1996:4) further notes:

[Postmodern] theorists have undertaken detailed critiques of the foundations of...modernity. These critiques...conclude that there are not (and nor, have there ever been) any “real foundations” of the kind normally considered to have underwritten the experiment of the modern. We must accept that we live and have always lived amidst social formations that have no legitimating ontological, epistemological methodological or ethical grounds for *beliefs* and *actions*...(my italics).

The postmodernists thus articulate an alternative value system, which – as spelt out by Lyotard (1984) – includes:

- A mistrust of modern science and technology (which are increasingly seen as instruments of barbarism and destruction, for example, the nuclear bomb, pollution, biological warfare etc.)
- A suspicion of so called ‘grand-’ (or ‘meta-’) narratives
- The ‘relativist’ view that both knowledge and ethics should be context- and time-specific
- The radical dismissal of ‘universal’ morality, ethics, politics (etc.) and a preference for ‘localised’ values and ‘micro-politics’
- An acceptance of radical discontinuities in the ways in which groups or individuals experience their ‘social realities’
- A conviction that power is dispersed rather than concentrated on particular sites, institutions, or individuals.

In line with this value system, postmodernists reject what Jenkins (1996) has labelled as ‘History’ (with a capital ‘H’). This kind of History attempts to fit historical accounts into *pre-existing* frames; for example, the grand narrative of capitalism’s growth and consolidation; or alternatively, the competing grand narrative of the proletarian advance towards universal emancipation – in other words, pre-formulated, “...schemas of historical development usually construed as appropriately progressive” (Jenkins 1996:5). Postmodernist historians equally reject what Jenkins (ibid.) calls ‘history’ (spelt with a lower-case ‘h’). This mode of historiography claims a spurious neutrality and purports to research history ‘for its own sake’ (i.e. ‘objectively’). It also frequently weaves in documentary and archival evidence – as if to project a posture of rigorousness. In their dismissal of this kind of history, the postmodernists ask: “...in whose interest is [this]

particularistic history... masquerading as...universal?" (ibid.). Thus there is – in postmodernism – an abiding interest in *whose* ‘reality’ (or *whose* ‘truth’) is represented in ‘history’. Thus Lorenz (1994:313-314) argues that:

[F]actual statements and their truth vary with their frames of description...If one realises [that] what “reality” looks like always depends on a frame of description – and therefore a perspective – it comes as no surprise that “reality” cannot be used as an argument in favour of, or even for, the “necessity” of, a particular perspective. [For] this presupposes a direct fit between reality and a specific linguistic framework – a presupposition linked up with naïve realism and discarded with empiricism in epistemology. It is rather, the other way round: it is the historian who tries to determine what the past “really” looks like...it is the historian, not the past, which does the dictating in history.

As was clarified in the foregoing discussion, Althusser’s historiography is driven by the contrary *belief* that a ‘scientific truth’ (albeit, a truth established within the realm of thought) can be established. In postmodernist eyes, therefore, Althusser is a typical modernist since he purveys the meta-narratives that ‘rigorous scientific protocols’ can establish ‘historical truth’ and that ‘autonomous social structures ultimately shape human history’.

The postmodernists thus look askance at Althusser’s notion of ‘historical science’. They rule out the possibility that *any* historical meta-narrative can be value-free (or free of the effects of ideology). As Derrida (1967) stressed, every *signified* bears traces of the *signifiers* used to denote it. In Bennett’s (1987:66) elaboration:

...[there is] no language which can claim an absolute or transcendental validity for its ways of “fixing” other languages, discourses or texts as objects within itself or which can efface the traces of writing or language....

In accordance with this line of thinking, history is merely:

...the product of a series of narrative and rhetorical devices. An effect of discourse itself, it is unable to function as an extra-discursive source of anything else. Historical explanation thus turns out to be a way of telling stories without any particularly convincing means, where such stories differ, of deciding between them” (Bennett 1990:52).

Postmodernists also reject the notion that social formations are “...‘sutured’ and self-defined totalit[ies]” (Laclau and Mouffe 1985:111) or even that, they are intelligible ‘objects of knowledge’ (ibid.). This radical view is driven by beliefs that social relations are always partly *discursive* since they are enacted, regularised and negotiated *within the realm of language*. Given the diacritical character of discourse, social relations are therefore in a permanent state of flux (ibid.). It therefore becomes difficult to see how social formations can be approached as fixed (or stabilised) *objects of knowledge*, as

Althusser purports. Instead, social formations are ‘more correctly’ visualised as patchworks of dispersed *differences* which are ceaselessly mobile, contingent and provisional. According to Laclau and Mouffe (1985), such a ‘melange’ resists theorisation as a ‘sutured totality’ possessing parts which obey a central principle (e.g. ‘the principle of determination in the last instance by economic modes of production’).

Finally, the postmodernists also dismiss the emphasis placed on *truth* in Althusser’s formulations. Such emphasis, they argue, is misplaced since it rarely translates into political capital. Within the realm of politics (argue the postmodernists), truthfulness *per se* does not pay any dividends, since there are always competing truths (and no objective means of adjudicating between different truth claims). As Hindess and Hirst (1977:8) have observed, “...discourse is interminable... [and] the forms of closure...promised in epistemological criteria of validity do not work”. Instead what counts in politics is calculation, “...the *calculation* of effect, of the possibilities and results of political action” (ibid.). Adding an interesting nuance to the same basic argument, White (1982) has suggested that what counts much more than the ‘truthfulness’ of historical discourses is their ‘sticking power’ – in other words – their capacity to resonate with the political aspirations (and interests) of *particular* constituencies.

It is in this light that Jenkins’ (1996:20) pronouncement, that “...we [the postmodernists] write history ‘any way we like,’” must be interpreted. Postmodernist historiography sets out to *demystify* history so that it openly reveals its ‘allegiances’ and ‘biases’. As Jenkins (1996:20) further explains:

Such demystification can...“free up” historians to tell many equally legitimate stories from various view points, with umpteen voices, emplotments and types of synthesis. It is in that sense that we can interpret the past “any way we like”. And it is this conclusion which signals to many (normal) historians the end of their kind of history.

It is therefore appears that while Althusser and the postmodernists share certain commonalities in respect of their approaches to historiography, their axiological foundations (and hence, epistemological orientations) are radically different. It is thus quite ironical that Althusser has often been assigned (by his Marxist detractors) to the postmodernist camp (Callinicos 1982, Resch 1992). Ultimately, Althusser’s epistemological debacle is that he seems to inhabit the ‘no-man’s-land’ between Marxist and postmodernist positions (with both sides disowning his approach to historiography).

Sprinkler (1994) and Tom Lewis (1999) have suggested that Althusser's epistemology could be rescued through recourse to Bhaskar's (1989) notion of *critical realism*. As shall be seen (in Chapter Four) certain proponents of CDA (particularly, Fairclough 2003) have already taken this step, which AMC could also take in order to address its epistemological problems.

### 3.4.3 Misreadings of Lacan? Problems with AMC's construal of ideology and social subjectivity

It was noted (in the previous subsection) that Althusser's epistemological problems partly derive from his theorisation(s) of ideology and social subjectivity (Poster 1974, Callinicos 1982). As then suggested, Althusser's controversial claim that history is a process without a subject, is a consequence of his prior subordination of social subjects to impersonal social structures<sup>70</sup>. According to Callinicos (1982), Althusser's radical anti-humanism partly stems from a (deliberate?) 'misreading' of Lacan.

Briefly, Lacan (1936) postulated a *temporary* phase in human development (called the 'imaginary' or 'mirror phase'), during which infants imagine themselves to be the holistic, autonomous and self-sufficient beings reflected back by mirrors. What these infants misrecognise, at this stage, is the reality<sup>71</sup> that they are essentially 'decentred' (or 'fragmented') beings who need an external Reference Point (or 'Absolute Subject') to acquire a sense of 'completeness' (or 'purpose in life'). Althusser adapted this basic Lacanian framework to theorise the internal constitution of 'lived ideologies'<sup>72</sup>. As Callinicos (1982:65) explains:

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<sup>70</sup> Illustrating this subordination (with reference to the 'structural self-sufficiency' of money) Poster (1974:400-401) has observed that:

[t]he "ahumanity" of [Althusser's social] structures defied bourgeois common sense in which, for example, an individual pursued money and laboured to make and spend it. If we look at the structure as a whole to define its rules of operation, *money actually used man to maintain itself*. Human intentions, in this case self-interest, were present but structurally of secondary importance....Althusser's objectivist concept of men as bearers of structures...rendered the structures intelligible but deemphasized the role of men in changing them. As a total theory of society, structural Marxism would have to be able to account for history without resorting to human agents (my italics).

<sup>71</sup>A reality that would only 'sink in' when these infants entered the 'symbolic order' via the Oedipus complex (Callinicos 1982).

<sup>72</sup> Interestingly, Althusser also applied Lacan's framework (of recognition /misrecognition) to his definition of *theoretical* ideologies. Althusser (1970) depicted theoretical ideologies as typically '*self-*

[T]he individual is led to believe that he or she is in control of circumstances, that reality exists *for* him or her, rather than grasping the truth, which is that every individual is merely a support of the relations of production. In this sense, by engendering the illusion in individuals of autonomy and self-sufficiency, by constituting individuals as subjects, ideology secures their subjection to the prevailing relations of production.

In Callinicos's view, Althusser's 'distortion' of Lacanian psychology begins at the point where he portrays the ideological state (of 'misrecognition') as *permanent* rather than *transient*. For example, Althusser (1969:232) maintains that, "...historical materialism cannot conceive that even a communist society could *ever do without ideology*"; and further, that "[h]uman societies secrete ideology as the very element and atmosphere *indispensable* to their historical respiration and life" (ibid. - my italics). Callinicos (1982:66) then observes that:

Whereas for Lacan the imaginary is one moment in the constitution of the subject as a self-conscious member of a social, language-using community, (and a moment which must be superseded if the perils of psychosis are to be avoided), for Althusser ideology provides the [permanent] mechanism through which the individual is soldered to the social whole.

Althusser's (deliberate?) 'misreading' of Lacan (i.e. his rendering of ideology a *permanent* state of existence) effectively denies his social subjects the self-consciousness and volition needed for effective *political* action. As Benton (1984:147) has lamented, Althusser's theorisation, "...leaves no room for structural change as a result of class struggle" – since his social subjects are trapped in a permanent fog of ideology. Thus, Giddens (1979:52) has described Althusser's social subjects as "...structural dopes of...[a] stunning mediocrity." Querying the same theoretical position, Poster (1974) has asked how certain individuals transcend the universal 'ideological stupor' envisioned by Althusser to achieve so-called epistemological breaks within the realm of 'science'<sup>73</sup>. Althusser's own explanation of this 'contradiction' – as represented by Poster 1974:398) – is far from convincing:

[E]scape from ideology into science is best seen as provisory, as a temporary procedure for the constitution of the scientific subject, valid for limited kinds of study. In the end, the scientific subject must erase his own bracketing, must rebridge his own epistemological *coupure*, and must return from withdrawal into the full daylight of his subjectivity....

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*recognising* since the researcher merely 'arrives' at 'answers' which his/her questions *already* anticipated. As Althusser (1970:52) put it: "...the formulation of a *problem* is merely the theoretical expression of the conditions which allow a solution already produced outside of the process of knowledge...to recognise itself in an artificial problem manufactured to serve it both as a theoretical mirror and as practical justification".

<sup>73</sup>As Althusser (1969) simultaneously claims.

Althusser's incoherence(s) apropos ideology and social subjectivity have been cast into sharper relief following the revisionist work of Žižek (1989, 2004). Firstly, Žižek (1989) demonstrates that Lacan's notion of misrecognition *need not* entail 'near-unconsciousness' on the part of social subjects. Neither – for Žižek – is it valid to postulate a science-ideology dichotomy nor, for that matter, a second dichotomy between 'lived' and 'theoretical' ideologies. Advancing his theses through a series of 'polemical reversals'<sup>74</sup>, Žižek (1989) initially argues that social subjects are '*cynically aware*' of the 'ideological interpellations' wrought by ISAs. They are cognisant, for example, of the half-truths (and the utopias) 'sold' by political parties. Nevertheless, they still 'go along' with those half-truths, telling themselves that they are only exercising their 'freedom' to choose their political leaders – imperfect, though, those leaders may be. This attitude of maintaining a critical distance from ideological interpellations, and of construing this critical distance as 'proof' that one is '*not fooled*', but nevertheless, of conforming to or 'going along with' the ideology, is what Žižek (1989) describes as *ideological disidentification*. Žižek, however, swiftly cautions that ideological disidentification – with all its connotations of critical self-awareness and 'freedom of choice' – does *not* amount to freedom from ideology. Rather, the cynical acceptance of prevailing ideologies, is itself, proof of successful interpellation. What is secured, in this case, is a *voluntary consent* reminiscent of Gramsci's notion of *hegemony*.

In his elaboration of the mechanisms which secure this voluntary (and often *cynical*) consent, Žižek (1989) speculates that social subjects feel a compulsion to pay allegiance to powerful ISAs, since the latter seem to be somehow 'privy' to their most secret *inherent transgressions* – things such as: violence, sex, death and defecation. Institutional bodies (e.g. governments) *proscribe* but also *permit* controlled expressions of these inherent transgressions through cultural (or national) activities such as sports, films, wars and advertisements<sup>75</sup>. Žižek (1989) invokes the Lacanian term *jouissance*<sup>76</sup> to label this secret, forbidden and yet centrally controlled/sanctioned 'enjoyment', and identifies it as one of

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<sup>74</sup>A Žizekian argumentative technique where premises are contradicted only for those 'contradictions' to be refuted in turn (Sharpe 2006).

<sup>75</sup> Sporting activities (such as rugby) can be quite 'violent'. Films often depict 'sexual encounters.' Wars 'allow' (or justify) 'systematic killing', and advertisements sometimes 'hint' at bodily functions such as defecation.

<sup>76</sup> Commenting on this Lacanian concept, Sharpe (2006:5) has written: "As opposed to what we talk of in English as "pleasure",... *jouissance* is an alwayssexualised alwaystransgressive (sic)enjoyment, at the limits of what subjects can experience or talk about in public."

mechanisms fostering ‘complicity’ with governing institutions. Shared rallying symbols such as national flags, anthems and expressions such as ‘The People’ (in socialist societies) or ‘Our way of life’ (in capitalist societies) also intensify this collective guilt/pleasure. They serve as ‘*master signifiers*’ whose exact meanings elude easy interpretation. Zizek (1989) thus compares them to Kant’s *sublime objects* – ‘Great’ (or ‘Transcendental’) ‘Truths’ which are ‘too subtle’ (or ‘too complicated’) to express in ‘simple language’, but whose meanings seem to be ‘understood’ by governing institutions. Master signifiers thus underscore the perceptual limitations of ‘ordinary’ social subjects while simultaneously intensifying the ‘mystical’ power (and authority) of governing bodies.

Zizek thus challenges (and disrupts) many of the mutual exclusions central to Althusser’s theorisations of ideology and social subjectivity. Zizek shows that to be interpellated need not entail near-unconsciousness on the part of social subjects. At the same time, to be conscious – even cynically so – need not entail freedom from ideology. Instead, Zizek argues (after the philosopher, Hegel) that there are successive layers to consciousness, some of which may very well be ‘infused’ with ideologies. Perhaps most significantly, Zizek ‘debunks’ Althusser’s rigid binaries: between ‘science as such and the ideologies as such’; and between (so-called) ‘lived ideologies’ and (so-called) ‘theoretical ideologies’. Rejecting the former binary, and dismissing it as *itself* a product of ideology, Zizek (2004:64) writes:

...the very notion of an access to reality unbiased by any discursive devices or conjunctions with power is ideological. The ‘zero’ level of ideology consists in (mis)-perceiving [or misrecognising] a discursive formation as an extra-discursive fact....[Moreover,] one cannot draw a clear line of separation between descriptive and argumentative levels of language; there is no neutral descriptive content; every description (designation) is already a moment of some argumentative scheme....

Zizek’s dismissal of the opposition between ‘lived’ and ‘theoretical’ ideologies is based on the logic that if social subjects possess a certain degree of self-awareness (even as they undergo ideological interpellation), the implication is that ‘lived ideologies’ involve *conscious* thinking, calculation and decision-making – just like (so-called) ‘theoretical ideologies’. In other words, the opposition between ‘lived’ and ‘theoretical’ ideologies appears to be more ‘contrived’ than based on any ‘authentic’ distinction between them.

To sum up, Žižek shows that it is possible to conceptualise ideology and social subjectivity in more complex ways which acknowledge the abiding consciousness of human subjects, and which surpass Althusser's rigid dichotomies.

#### **3.4.4 'Partial gestures': AMC's failure to engage with discourse theory, and further, its failure to fulfil its promise to 'closely engage' with the linguistic and narrative structures of texts**

Thompson (1984:2) has persuasively argued that it is imperative for theorisations of ideology to work hand in hand with theories of discourse:

If the theory of ideology has been marked since its origins by controversy and dispute, it is only in recent years that this theory has been enriched and elaborated through a reflection on *language*. For increasingly, it has been realized that 'ideas' do not drift through social life like clouds in a summer sky, occasionally divulging their contents with a clap of thunder and flash of light. Rather, ideas circulate in the social world as utterances, as expressions, as words which are spoken or inscribed. Hence to study ideology is in some part and in some way to study language in the social world. It is to study the ways in which language is used in everyday social life, from the most mundane encounter between friends and family members to the most privileged forums of political debate. It is to study the ways in which the multifarious uses of language intersect with power, nourishing it, sustaining it, enacting it.

It appears that AMC has been hard-pressed to answer several questions – all seeking clarification of the relationship(s) between language (including literature) and ideology. Resch (1992:262), for example, has demanded a clearer explanation of what Althusser (1971) means by his 'famous' statement that literature makes us 'see, perceive and feel' the ideologies embedded within it:

Unfortunately, Althusser's terminology is vague, and terms such as *seeing*, *perceiving*, *knowing* and *alludes* raise questions which must be answered before his argument can be assessed. Restricting myself to the specific example of literature, I will attempt to develop Althusser's insights in a more rigorous fashion. Perhaps the proper place to begin is with the problem of discourse itself.

Resch then embarks on a mini-treatise of Pecheux's (1982) theory of discursive formations. Briefly, Pecheux (1982) rejects the notion that social subjects create the words or expressions which they utter. Instead, Pecheux argues that particular ways of using language (which he calls 'discursive formations') actually recruit (or 'interpellate') social subjects. Defining this term Pecheux (1982:111) writes:

I shall call a *discursive formation* that which in a given ideological formation, i.e. from a given position in a given conjuncture determined by the state of the class struggle, determines *what can and should be said*....I shall say that individuals are 'interpellated' as speaking subjects (as subjects of *their*

discourse) by the discursive formations which represent ‘in language’ the ideological formations that correspond to them.

In Pecheux’s view, therefore, social subjects often *misrecognise* the ‘reality’ that *they* have been ‘recruited’ to particular discursive formations. Pecheux stresses that every discursive formation is constrained and underpinned by a specific ‘*ideological formation*’. Thus, “[w]ords and expressions...change their meaning according to the positions held by those who use them, which signifies that they find their meaning by reference to those positions...” (Pecheux 1982:111). Harnessing Bakhtinian notions, Pecheux also argues that various discursive formations compete with each other for ascendancy. In other words, there is ‘dialogical struggle’ amongst the various discursive formations which occur in given social formations.

Pecheux’s notion of discursive formations serves to theorise the link between ideologies and discourses. However, it is a broad concept, which fails to address many finer questions. Thus Resch (1992:265) proceeds to ask:

If ordinary discourse, the basic everyday form of ideological discourse, operates in the manner we have just discussed, *how does it differ* from literary and scientific discourses? (My italics).

In an attempt to address this more probing question, Resch adopts Eagleton’s (1986) proposal that literary discourses be designated as a second tier (or level) of discourse *above* (so-called) ‘ordinary language’. According to this view, the ideologies present in ordinary language are re-worked (or re-processed) into the ideologies manifest in literature. Thus, Eagleton (1986) describes literary ideologies as ‘*ideologies to the second power*’.

The problem with Eagleton’s proposal, however, is that it (inadvertently?) conjures up base-superstructure metaphors. Literary discourses are said to reflect (rather like passive superstructures) the ideologies occurring in ‘ordinary discourses’. It is almost as if literary discourses have been ‘*quarantined*’ from *direct* interaction with ideological (and wider social<sup>77</sup>) practices. These wider social practices – apparently – only impinge upon ‘ordinary discourses’, which in turn *refract* those impingements ‘upwards’ to a second tier of discourse which is identified as literature (Bennett 1990). The ultimate effect of this theorisation is to uproot (or quarantine) literature from the network which it

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<sup>77</sup>Such as the political or the economic instances.

is supposed to share with wider social practices; and to tuck it behind (or above) ordinary discourse as an ethereal (or idealised) ‘second tier’.

The quandaries highlighted above point to the need for AMC to engage much more systematically with discourse theory – as advocated by Thompson (1984). In the absence of such systematic engagement, not only are too many questions left unanswered<sup>78</sup>. More inauspiciously, theorists begin to trade accusations (and counter accusations) amongst themselves, as is apparent when a frustrated Bennett (1990:44) discharges the following ‘broadside,’ which is aimed at Eagleton (1986):

This position is nonsensical....If this jumbling is undone, a jumbling which is the consequence of Eagleton’s trying to operate in both the space of discourse theory and that of classical Marxism at the same time, the incoherence of the position is manifest.

An additional paucity, which becomes glaring when AMC is reviewed from a standpoint that is partly informed by CDA, is that AMC fails to consummate its promise to systematically engage with the linguistic and narrative structures of texts – putatively because it lacks the discourse analytical tools required to do so effectively. AMC’s production-oriented version, for example, expresses ambitions to closely engage with the discursive ‘means of production’ applied by literature to render ideologies ‘more perceptible’ (Forgacs 1982). However, the promised engagement appears to be largely limited to descriptions of basic story lines. Conspicuously lacking in this *modus operandi* is systematic analysis of (for example): the lexico-grammatical, semantic and pragmatic features of texts. AMC’s reception-oriented version, on the other hand, has tended to focus on the lexico-grammatical structures unique to ‘high literature’ (Macherey and E. Balibar, 1974). Absent from this analytical scheme are engagements with the supra-sentential features of texts (such as cohesion and coherence patterns; voice, register, genres etc.). As shall become clearer in the next chapter (where the analytical tools deployed in CDA are discussed), AMC’s engagement with textual structures has tended to be rudimentary, at best. In short, AMC appears to have ‘reneged’ on its promise to systematically engage with the linguistic and narrative structures of texts, apparently because it lacks the discourse analytical resources needed to do so effectively.

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<sup>78</sup> More questions could be asked. For example, AMC does not explain the exact ‘mechanisms’ through which ideologies ‘embed’ themselves into discourses.

### 3.4.5 The unnecessary split between AMC's production and reception-oriented versions

Finally, it is also unfortunate that AMC has needed to split into (so-called) production- and reception-oriented versions. Lamenting this bifurcation, Resch (1992:261) characterises it as both "...pernicious and unwarranted". More succinctly:

Macherey poses a false antithesis between them [i.e. the two versions of AMC]: either literature is an objectively distinct discourse (and thus exists in a theoretically distinct relationship to the real by way of its ideological origins and its mode of production), or it is a historically relative discourse that functions to interpellate subjects (and thus exists exclusively as a function of the ideological apparatuses that determine its reception - Resch (1992:291):

As highlighted earlier, the rift in AMC followed perceptions that the production-oriented version had yielded to the lure of aesthetic questions (and thus collapsed into idealism – Bennett 1979, Resch 1992). However, as Resch (1992) has argued, the radical swing to the reception-oriented model was, in fact, an *overreaction*. Firstly, it did not necessarily follow that a focus on the interpellative effects of literature *precluded* an interest in how texts produced (or 'revealed') ideologies. Rather, the two trajectories of enquiry might have easily *complemented* each other (Resch 1992, Eagleton 1976, Bennett 1979). As Bennett (1979:134-135) remarked, "...it is only consumption which completes the process of production."<sup>79</sup> Secondly, it is also not entirely clear that the reception-oriented version successfully exorcised what it perceived as the ghost of bourgeois aesthetics, when it dismissed (or disassociated itself from) the production-oriented version. In fact, the concern with aesthetics appears to have crept back into the reception-oriented version through its central proposition that literature (and *only* literature) possessed the interpellative power to reproduce class-differentiated social subjectivities. This proposition invested literature with a universal inner-*essence* – supposedly lacking in other discourses – which (when held to be an exclusive property of 'high literature') begins to sound like its 'aesthetic property'. Thus, even though the reception-oriented version carefully avoided the term 'aesthetics' in its recalculation of the key functions of literature, there remained a strong thrust (in this reconceptualisation) towards isolating the universal essence of 'Literature'.

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<sup>79</sup> An argument which has also been articulated by Eagleton (1976, 1986), albeit, without being practically or fully implemented.

The next chapter shall consider how CDA has effectively *integrated* production- and reception-oriented analyses of texts (Fairclough 1989, van Dijk 1995). As shall be suggested, integrating these trajectories of enquiry could actually enrich (rather than impoverish) the scope and the efficacy of AMC.

### **3.5 *Instead of a Conclusion: A Summary of the Weak Points of AMC***

The main concern of this chapter was to identify the weak points of AMC in order to establish clear ‘mediatory targets’ for the conceptual and analytical resources that shall be garnered from the field of CDA (i.e. in the next chapter). In lieu of a conclusion, this chapter shall end by spelling out AMC’s five broad areas of weakness, as follows:

- (a) AMC’s idealistic construal of literature (and other social practices) which contradicts Althusser’s original materialist premises, particularly, his principles of ‘overdetermination’ and ‘determination in the last instance’. Further, AMC’s formulation of a schematic nexus in which literature sits ‘midway’ between science and the ideologies – in clear violation of the principle of overdetermination which envisages that *all* social practices freely impinge upon each other (to degrees pre-determined by their relative rankings within the structure in dominance).
- (b) AMC’s controversial notion of ‘historical science’, which not only assumes a sacrosanct science-ideology dichotomy, but which also combines a ‘postmodernist-like’ *constructivism* with a ‘modernist-like’ *epistemic absolutism*<sup>80</sup>. As a consequence, AMC’s marooning in the no-man’s-land between postmodernist and modernist epistemological positions.
- (c) AMC’s depiction of ideologies as *permanent* and *existential* states of being. More specifically, its denial of both self-awareness and agency in social subjects (and hence its nullification of the rationale for political praxis – Callinicos 1982, Poster 1974, Resch 1992). Additionally, AMC’s need to rethink its dichotomies e.g. between ‘science’ and ‘the ideologies’ and between ‘lived’ and ‘theoretical’ ideologies.

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<sup>80</sup> The term used by Bhaskar (1989) to denote Althusser’s assertion of an ‘unassailable’ and ‘transcendental’ historical ‘truth’ supposedly produced as a result of the rigorous application of ‘scientific’ protocols.

- (d) AMC's failure to systematically engage with discourse theory in order to fully illuminate the relationship(s) between ideology, social subjectivity and discourse. Further, AMC's lack of the conceptual and analytical tools needed to systematically engage with the linguistic and narrative structures of texts. .
- (e) Finally, the unnecessary split between AMC's production- and reception-oriented versions.

## 4.0 Chapter Four: The Possible Contributions and the Limitations of Critical Discourse Analysis

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter crosses over to the field of CDA in order to identify salient conceptual and analytical resources, which could effectively mediate the weak points of AMC – as delineated in the previous chapter<sup>81</sup>. Preparatory to this main task, however, the chapter establishes a background for CDA, which covers, *inter alia*: its historical emergence, its key theoretical and political influences and its main methodological variants. The transfer of germane resources from CDA to AMC then follows; taking an eclectic form<sup>82</sup>, and ‘pausing’ (where necessary) to consider how these resources fit into the gaps highlighted in AMC. Finally (and, in spite of having projected it as a rich source of salient tools and concepts), CDA’s *own limitations* are considered; particularly, as viewed from the Marxist perspective. Demonstrating how CDA falls short of Marxist expectations substantiates one of the key presuppositions of this thesis. This is the understanding that *CDA precludes* itself from serving as a possible ‘surrogate’ for AMC<sup>83</sup>.

### 4.2 Background on CDA

#### 4.2.1 Mapping the scope of CDA

Generally, CDA “...‘demystify[ies]’ discourses by deciphering [the] ideologies” embedded within them (Wodak 2006:4). Driving this agenda are perceptions that discourses enact, transmit, and reproduce ideologies in ways which are often invisible to ‘ordinary’ members of society (ibid.). It is precisely this invisibility of the ideological effects of discourses, which makes them powerful vectors of dominant ideologies, and which implicates them in the perpetuation of unequal social structures and relations. Thus, Fairclough (2009: 163-164) defines CDA as a mode of discourse analysis which,

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<sup>81</sup> This chapter addresses the second main hypothesis of this thesis, which (to recall) is that, *CDA possesses salient theoretical and methodological resources, which could effectively mediate the weak points of AMC*.

<sup>82</sup> That is, the resources transferred to AMC shall be sourced from any (or all) appropriate variants of CDA.

<sup>83</sup> An assumption that pre-empts ‘quick-fix solutions’ to AMC’s problems (such as merely replacing it with an ‘appropriate’ variant of CDA) and which, therefore, necessitates the transfer of CDA resources into an *essentially* Marxist approach.

...seeks to explain dialectical relations between semiosis<sup>84</sup> and other social elements to clarify how semiosis figures in the establishment, reproduction, and change of unequal power relations (domination, marginalisation, exclusion of some people by others) and in ideological processes, and how in general terms it bears upon human ‘wellbeing’. These relations require analysis because there are no societies whose logic and dynamic, including how semiosis figures within them, are fully transparent to all: the forms in which they appear to people are often partial and in part, misleading.

Conceptually, CDA – via the mediating category of ideologies – installs semiosis/discourses and social structures/relations in a dialectical relationship (Wodak and Meyer 2009, Fairclough 1995, 2009). On one hand, ‘ideology-bearing’ discourses ‘naturalise’ prevailing social structures and relations. On the other hand, discourses are themselves shaped in both their content and their structure by existing social relations and structures. As Fairclough (1995:36) argues, CDA analyses spoken, written or visual texts<sup>85</sup>, “...with an eye to their determination by, and their effects on, social structures.” An important implication of this focus on the mutually contingent relationship between discourses and social structures is that CDA becomes highly pertinent to social research<sup>86</sup>, while social theory becomes a crucial resource for CDA. Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999:6) have thus described CDA as ‘*exotopic*<sup>87</sup>’ in the sense that, “...it brings critical social science and linguistics together within a single theoretical and analytical framework, setting up a dialogue between them.”

As already indicated, a prominent theme in CDA is the exercise of (and struggle for) power *in* and *over* discourse (Wodak and Meyer 2009; Fairclough 1989, 2003, 2009; Pennycook 2001). Power relations manifest *in* discourse through such patterns as: *who* tends to ask the questions, interrupt the conversation, or change the topic<sup>88</sup>? The effects

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<sup>84</sup>Understood to include various modes of communicative signs/behaviour e.g. verbal or written texts, visual images, body language, etc.(Fairclough 2009).

<sup>85</sup>Including multimodal texts integrating spoken, written and visual features (Kress and van Leeuwen 1990).

<sup>86</sup> As Fairclough (1999:vii) observes, “Social questions are...in part questions about discourse – for instance, the question of power in social class, gender and race relations is partly a question of discourse. And careful analysis of texts (e.g. newspaper articles or advertisements) and interactions (e.g. conversations or interviews) therefore has a part to play in social analysis.”

<sup>87</sup> That is, as transgressing the ‘normative’ boundaries of the linguistics curriculum.

<sup>88</sup> Fairclough (1989:44), for example, highlighted ‘asymmetrical talk’ between trainee medical students and their professor, in which the latter:

- Frequently interrupted student contributions and controlled conversational turns with interjections such as, “Off you go”.
- Framed the entire conversation by describing what was going on.
- Specified what sorts of contributions he expected from students, and
- Evaluated student contributions with remarks such as, “Very good, that’s right,” etc.

of power in discourse also manifest through its actual *content*; for example, through *whose* knowledge, ideas or worldviews are represented as ‘true’ or ‘commonsensical’ (Fairclough 2009). Pennycook (2001:80-81) has thus identified two broad trajectories in CDA:

The first has to do with ways in which unequal power relations between participants in conversations are reproduced.....This sort of analysis of how power may determine who gets to speak, about what, and for how long has...been a major focus of work on [for example] language and gender. The second focus is on the content rather than the structure of texts, and has to do with ways in which ideologies are (re)produced through discourses.... [And t]he goal of critical discourse analysis is to denaturalise ideologies that have become naturalized.

Endorsing Bakhtinian notions, CDA also conceives discourse as itself having a stake in power struggles (Wodak and Meyer 2009). Various social constituencies ‘jostle’ each other to standardise (or canonise) particular dialects or accents. As Fairclough (1989:43) has pointed out, there is earnest social struggle *over* “...the differentiation of dialects into ‘standard’ and ‘non-standard’; the conventions [or genres] associated with particular discourse type[s]...and constraints on access to discourses within an order of discourse.”

CDA thus takes an active interest in *politics* as attested by its focus on the nexus between discourses, social structures/relations, and power (Wodak and Meyer 2009; Kress 1996; Blommaert and Bulcean 2000). CDA “...advocates social commitment and interventionism in research” (Blommaert and Bulcean 2000:447). It aims not only to raise *awareness* of the ideologies present within discourse. More ambitiously, it seeks to undermine and (ultimately) *dismantle* oppressive social structures and relations. Kress (1996:15) thus articulates the ‘political manifesto’ of CDA, as follows:

Critical studies of language, Critical Linguistics (CL) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) have from the beginning had a political project: broadly speaking that of altering inequitable distributions of economic, cultural and political goods in contemporary societies. The intention has been to bring a system of excessive inequalities of power into crisis by uncovering its workings and its effects through the analysis of potent cultural objects – texts – and thereby to help in achieving a more equitable social order. The issue has been one of transformation, unsettling the existing social order, and transforming its elements into an arrangement less harmful to some, and perhaps more beneficial to all members of society.

Part of CDA's political strategy is to hold up a vision of how things *might be* (Pennycook 2001). Thus, CDA disseminates its own 'utopian vision'<sup>89</sup>, thereby demonstrating that it does "...*more* than just criticise things, [and *more* than just project a] bleak and pessimistic vision of social relations" (Pennycook 2001:8).

A caveat that has often accompanied attempts to pin down the exact scope or lineaments of CDA, is that this is a wide field that is, "...more akin to a *repertoire* of political...[and] epistemic stances...[than] a formalized corpus of analytic and methodological techniques..." (Luke2002:97 - my italics). As Wodak (2006:2) has observed:

[S]tudies in CDA are multifarious, derived from quite different theoretical backgrounds, and oriented towards different data and methodologies. Researchers in CDA also rely on a variety of grammatical approaches. The definitions of the terms "discourse", "critical", "ideology", "power" and so on are also manifold....[Moreover, t]his programme or set of principles has changed over the years....

#### 4.2.2 Changes over the years: from Critical Linguistics to CDA

Historical surveys often trace the origins of CDA to the advent of Critical Linguistics (or CL): a 'politically interested' mode of text analysis, which emerged at the University of East Anglia in the late 1970s (Titscher et al 2000; Wodak and Meyer 2009; Fowler 1996, Birch 1998). CL derived its noteworthy qualifier – the adjective 'critical' – from Frankfurt School 'critical science'<sup>90</sup>, one of whose tenets held that "...a critical science...[needs] to be self-reflective – that is to say, it must reflect the interests on which it is based...[and in addition,] take account of the historical contexts of interactions" (Titscher et. al 2000:144). As interpreted by the CL practitioners at East Anglia, the critical stance meant, firstly, that they needed to *openly* declare their left-wing political orientation(s), and secondly, that they needed to engage with social theory to fully illuminate the contexts in which discourse(s) operated (Billig 2003; Hart 2006; Wodak and Meyer 2009).

Further sharpening their analytical teeth, the CL practitioners at East Anglia (Kress and Hodge 1979 and Fowler et al 1979) also invoked Halliday's (1973, 1978) systemic functional and social semiotic linguistics (often designated by the acronym SFL). In brief, SFL posited that language performed various 'meta-functions', of which the *ideational*, the *interpersonal* and the *textual*, were key. The ideational function of language referred

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<sup>89</sup> Or what Pennycook (2001) describes as its 'preferred futures'.

<sup>90</sup> Particularly, the work of Jurgen Habermas.

to its role in representing experience, and in making sense of the world (e.g. categorising people, objects, events, processes, etc. and in construing their interrelationships). The interpersonal function denoted language's capacity to serve as a means of 'acting upon' the world, for example, appraising (i.e. evaluating or judging people, objects or events) and enacting power relationships (.e.g. use of the modal system to signal commands, for example: "Answer the phone," or a polite request, for example: "Could you please answer the phone?") Finally, the textual function had to do with the logical connections set up within texts (i.e. the relationships of coherence and cohesion), and with choices of genres (which linked texts to their contexts of occurrence).

For Fowler et al (1979) and Kress and Hodge (1979), it was a short and logical step to proceed from describing *how* various metafunctions of language were realised in particular texts, to asking *why* (within certain contextual and *political* dynamics of interaction) they were realised in those ways. Retracing this movement from *description* to *explanation/interpretation* (albeit, with particular reference to the ideational function), Fowler (1996:200) observed that:

Language structure, in its ideational function, is constitutive of a speaker's experience of reality. And of a community's experience. This is what the 'social semiotic' means. Although, undoubtedly, some of the meanings encoded in language are natural reflecting the kind of organism we are (e.g. basic colour, shape and direction terms...) most meanings are social; the dominant preoccupations, theories and ideologies of a community are coded in its language, so that the semantic structure is a map of the community's knowledge and its organisation.

In other words, SFL demonstrated that discourses were *already* (or, *inevitably*) infused with ideologies. Systems of linguistic categorisation (for example, erstwhile references to black children as 'picaninnies' – a category that was lacking for white children; or the reference to female virgins as 'maidens' – a category conspicuously absent for males) revealed ideological proclivities (through language's ideational function). So did personal appraisals (e.g. '...*thrifty* economic policies...' as opposed to '...*draconian* economic policies...' – the interpersonal function) and cohesive devices (e.g. using '*in spite of*' rather than '*because of*', in a commentary linking certain political decisions to certain consequences – the textual function).

Equipped with resources from both SFL and Frankfurt School critical science, CL evolved into an 'instrumental linguistics' (Fowler 1996) that illuminated ideological and

power relations as manifest in texts while also analysing the structures of those texts.

Fowler (1996:3) described the broad agendas of CL, thus:

The proponents of the linguistic [CL] model occupy a variety of socialist positions, and are concerned to use linguistic analysis to expose misrepresentation and discrimination in a variety of modes of public discourse: they offer critical readings of newspapers, political propaganda, official documents, regulations, formal genres such as the interview, and so on.

Ten years after Fowler et al (1979) and Kress and Hodge (1979) published their seminal works in CL, a new wave of ‘revisionists’ – all advocating extensions to the scope of CL, and all describing their interventions as *CDA* – was to emerge. In her memoirs, Wodak (2007:3) has captured the beginnings of this ‘new movement’, as follows:

In 1989, I published an edited volume “Language, Power and Ideology” – coincidentally at the same time as van Dijk and Fairclough also started publishing similar critical research.... We met in 1991 at a meeting organised by Teun van Dijk in Amsterdam, often viewed as “the formal and institutionalised beginning of CDA”.

As already suggested, CDA saw itself as extending and elaborating the scope of CL. To this end, CDA, firstly, clarified as well as accentuated the dynamic of *power/power relations* in discourse (Iedema 2005). Whereas CL had construed power relations in neo-Marxian<sup>91</sup> and Bernsteinian<sup>92</sup> terms as relatively ‘fixed’, and discourses as generally mirroring these ‘stable’ social structures, CDA adopted the Foucauldian<sup>93</sup> notion of power, which construes it as always provisional, fluid and contested. According to this view, “...speakers and writers...[are] implicated in...power structures and practices ...[since] their own ways of speaking and writing help structure particular social arrangements” (Iedema 2005:7). A second epistemic shift distinguishing CDA from CL, is that the former pays more attention to the dynamics of interpretation (or reception) than the latter. Thus, while CL tended to assume that its own readers would generally ‘concur’ with its interpretations of texts<sup>94</sup>, CDA has been much more cautious in this regard. As Fairclough (1995b) has stressed, CDA accommodates dissenting interpretations as anticipated by its notion of ‘*diverse* interpretive practices’. Finally, CDA also demonstrates a stronger interest in engaging with the supra-sentential structures of texts; that is, with discourse-level structures (such as genres, speech acts and coherence), than did CL, which usually focused on sentence (or clause level) structures (Fairclough 1995).

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<sup>91</sup>A reference to the Frankfurt School.

<sup>92</sup>A reference Bernstein (1971, 1973).

<sup>93</sup>A reference to Foucault (1977, 1978).

<sup>94</sup>A tendency which Boyd-Barrett (1994:31) has described as “...attributing particular ‘readings’ to readers.”

Notwithstanding these modifications, it remains a moot point whether CDA represents *that much* of a radical break with CL. Instead of conceiving CDA as the ‘replacement’ for CL, many commentators see continuities between the two, with CDA however serving as the ‘umbrella category’ which now *includes* CL:

The terms Critical Linguistics (CL) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) are often used interchangeably. In fact, recently, the term CDA seems to have been preferred and is being used to denote the theory formerly denoted as CL. Thus I will continue to use CDA exclusively in this paper (Wodak 2006:1).

Meanwhile, some critics have questioned the ‘youthfulness<sup>95</sup>’ implied for CDA by claims that it only ‘recently emerged’ as an elaboration of CL (i.e. during the early 1990s). Blommaert (2005) has been particularly vociferous on this issue. According to Blommaert, the label ‘critical’ (as attached to both CL and CDA) is misleading because it excludes earlier studies which systematically investigated co-variations between language and socio-cultural factors (such as class, gender, race, *power* and so forth). Stalwarts of this research – according to Blommaert – include ‘early’ sociolinguists and anthropologists such as Sapir (1924); Labov (1966) and Hymes (1968). Singling out Fairclough (1992a) for criticism on this score, Blommaert (2005:24) writes:

Fairclough (1992a...) surveys a variety of discourse-analytical approaches, qualified as ‘non-critical’, in contrast with his own critical approach. Such boundary-shaping practices are worded in such resolute terms that they result in suggestive divisions within discourse analysis – ‘critical’ versus ‘non-critical’ – that are hard to sustain in reality....

Responding to Blommaert’s critique, Hart and Lukes (2007:ix) have argued that CDA, in fact, fits into a broader paradigm which they label as, “...critically-oriented discourse analysis across disciplines.” This field, “...*which of course will include CDA*” (ibid. - my italics) would also accommodate not only the sociolinguistic and anthropological approaches vaunted by Blommaert, but every other ‘critical’ approach going “...as far back as the Aristotelian study of rhetoric” (ibid.). Interestingly, this is the same point which Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999:6) make when they observe that, “CDA belongs to a tradition of language critique which can be traced back to classical antiquity.” Having noted this, however, they still insist that:

What is distinctive about CDA within this tradition...*is that it brings critical social science and linguistics (specifically, Systemic Functional Linguistics...) together within a single theoretical and analytical framework, setting up a dialogue between them*” ( My italics).

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<sup>95</sup>Titscher et al (2000:145), for example, describe CDA as “...a young science[,]...the majority of...[whose] references...date from the 1990s.”

The next subsection discusses some of the theoretical and political influences which undergird CDA.

### 4.2.3 Theoretical and political influences

Titscher et al. (2000:144) have summed up CDA's main political and theoretical influences as follows:

The theoretical framework – even when this is not explicitly stated – is derived from Louis Althusser's theories of ideology, Mikhail Bakhtin's genre theory, the philosophical traditions of Antonio Gramsci and the Frankfurt school. Michel Foucault has also been a major influence on some exponents, including Norman Fairclough. In addition, Fairclough's CDA is related to Michael Halliday's systemic functional linguistics (Fairclough 1992a, Halliday 1978), whereas Ruth Wodak and Teun van Dijk have been more influenced by cognitive models of text planning.

The influences mentioned by Titscher et al. (ibid.) can be organised into Marxist (including neo-Marxist); postmodernist and linguistic categories.

#### 4.2.3.1 Marxist and neo-Marxist influences: Althusser, Gramsci, the Bakhtinians and the Frankfurt School

CDA coincides with Marxism in presupposing enduring conflict of interest and social struggle between the various fractions of the social formation (Kress 1996, Pennycook 2001). In championing the interests of the oppressed, and in seeking to foment social change by *raising awareness* of the ideologies which buttress social inequality, CDA emulates Marxist politics, particularly, the 'consciousness-raising' strategies of *humanist* Marxists, such as Lukacs or Jameson (Fairclough 2009, Blommaert and Bulcean 2000).

Additionally, CDA has borrowed many of its conceptual and analytical resources from Marxism (Blommaert and Bulcean 2000). For example, CDA adapts Althusser's (1969, 1971) notions of 'practice' and 'overdetermination' to construe discourse as, "... an element of social practices, which constitutes other elements as well as being shaped by them" (Fairclough 1999:vii). CDA's location of particular discourses within particular institutional matrices (e.g. schools, government bureaucracies, media houses etc.) is also reminiscent of Althusser's (1971) notion of ISAs, each of which produces a distinctive discourse while purveying a 'circumscribable' facet of the dominant ideology. Moreover,

CDA has harnessed other Althusserian concepts such as ‘interpellation’ and ‘reproduction’ (Fairclough 1989)<sup>96</sup>.

From Gramsci (1971), CDA borrows the concept of hegemony, which holds that ruling classes exercise moral and intellectual *leadership* (rather than just ‘brute force’) to maintain their control of society. Central to the concept of hegemony is the conundrum that oppressed social groups appear to ‘endorse’ their own subjugation. As Sim (1995:176) has explained:

[T]he concept is used to suggest a society in which, despite oppression and exploitation, there is a high degree of consensus and social stability; a society in which subordinate groups and classes appear *actively* to support and subscribe to values, ideals, objectives, cultural and political meanings, which bind them to and incorporate them into prevailing structures of power.

Gramsci ascribes the apparent complicity of oppressed social groups with forces or processes ‘engineering’ their own subjugation to the effectivity of dominant (or ‘ruling class’) ideologies. As Stalker (1996:66) has remarked:

[Hegemonic] control occurs in such a way that...oppression becomes commonsense and natural. Hegemony is buried deep inside ourselves and it is hard to extricate ourselves from its force. It guides our experiences and our understanding of those experiences in ways that are difficult to pinpoint. Although hegemony and socialisation appear to be similar, the emphasis has shifted from an explanation at the micro, individual level to one at the macro societal and economic level.

For CDA practitioners, the notion of hegemony not only underscores the effectivity of dominant discourses and ideologies. It also calls attention to both the need for ‘consciousness-raising’ and effective ‘counter-discourses’ (Fairclough 2009).

Directly (as well as through mediating theorists such as Pecheux and Kristeva), CDA has also borrowed some of its concepts from the Bakhtinian Marxists. The Bakhtin school<sup>97</sup> advanced the revolutionary<sup>98</sup> view that linguistic signs *were themselves* ‘sites’ of ideological struggle. Volosinov (1973:21) argued that linguistic signs “...are conditioned above all by the social organisation of the participants involved and also by the immediate conditions of their interaction”. In other words, denotations of linguistic expressions

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<sup>96</sup> Fairclough (1989:42) acknowledges his direct indebtedness to Althusser (1971) “[o]n the concepts of ‘practice’, ‘reproduction’ and ‘subject’.”

<sup>97</sup> Whose oeuvre emerged in the late 1920s

<sup>98</sup> This view contrasted with de Saussure’s (1916) theories of signification. De Saussure had argued that linguistic signs (words and expressions) – being arbitrary symbols – only carried meaning (or became ‘intelligible’) because members of society ‘agreed’ on (and ‘standardised’) their meanings, suggesting that society shared some kind of ‘linguistic *consensus*’.

partly depended on *who* used them and on *what* social constituency the user belonged to. Depicting language as a site in which various social groups struggled to ‘standardise’ particular accents or significations, Bakhtin (1987:276) argued that:

The word, directed toward its object, enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgments and accents, weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group: and all this may crucially shape discourse, may complicate its expression and influence its entire stylistic profile.

Pecheux (1982:188) later built on these ideas to theorise the existence of competing ‘discursive formations’, each of which struggles to assert its own primacy:

[Meaning] does not exist anywhere except in the metaphorical relationships...which happen to be more or less provisionally located in a given discursive formation: words expressions and propositions get their meanings from the discursive formation to which they belong.

Kristeva’s (1986) notion of ‘intertextuality’ similarly finds its origins in Bakhtinian theories of language. Intertextuality refers to how texts always *react* to prior (or contemporary) texts; sometimes ‘mimicking’ them, and sometimes undermining or seeking to supplant them. Thus Fairclough (2003:17) has remarked that this notion conveys, “...how texts draw upon, incorporate, recontextualize, and dialogue with other texts.”

CDA has also harnessed the neo-Marxist ideals of the Frankfurt School (particularly, the work of Jurgen Habermas). As highlighted earlier, CDA embraces the notion of ‘criticalness,’ understood as the open declaration of one’s political affiliations or orientation. Moreover, CDA emulates the Frankfurt School’s emphasis of the, “...cultural rather than merely economic dimensions...” of social struggle (Titscher et al 2000:145). In addition, CDA takes up Habermas’s (1969) agenda of seeking to undermine the ‘*instrumental rationality*’<sup>99</sup> of state and corporate bureaucracies (Blommaert 2005). Embracing this agenda, Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) argue that the current era of ‘Late Modernity’ has been pervaded by ‘instrumental discourses’ which seem to be progressively ‘colonising’ both private and public lifeworlds. They therefore suggest that

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<sup>99</sup> Defining the Habermasian notion of ‘instrumental rationality’, O’Regan (2001:155) has written: “Instrumental rationality refers to the systems and systematising tendencies of the state, the institutions of the state and of commercial capitalist organisations and businesses in the economy. It is a technocratic and mechanistic consciousness which delineates and determines the conventions by which work is done in society and in doing so, stifles any reflective approach to the activities of individuals and the problems of society, preferring instead to approach these as technical issues with (predictable) technical explanations and/or solutions.”

CDA should serve in ways comparable to Habermas's 'public spheres' by fostering (or promoting) alternative (and empowering) discourses.

#### 4.2.3.2 Postmodernist influences: Laclau and Mouffe, Foucault, and Bourdieu

Demonstrating its readiness to work with a wide mosaic of social theory, CDA has also tapped into post-Marxist and poststructuralist social theory. For example, CDA applies the poststructuralist ideas of Laclau and Mouffe (1985)<sup>100</sup> to unravel the internal constitution of social practices. Laclau and Mouffe theorise that individual social practices are themselves 'concatenations' of diverse elements of the social (e.g., rules and codes of conduct, ways of dressing, ways of using language, etc.) which they designate as *moments*<sup>101</sup>. By disaggregating social practices into their constituent moments, Laclau and Mouffe afford two forms of flexibility (which are lacking in Althusser's construal of practices). Firstly, they give more scope to 'social constructivism', since different thinkers may include (or exclude) certain 'moments' in *their* construals of particular practices. And secondly, it becomes possible to designate a body of social activities *either* as a practice, or as a moment within a larger practice, depending on the analytical 'scale' applied by the analyst. To illustrate, CDA views discourses *both* as fully-fledged practices (since they collate multiple moments such as genres, dictions, technologies, etc.) and (or alternatively), as moments within larger practices (since they combine with other elements of the social to constitute 'broader' practices). Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999:21) allude to this flexibility (in the designation of discourses), thus:

[T]he discourse moment of any practice is a shifting articulation of symbolic/discursive resources (such as genres, discourses, voices) which themselves come to be articulated into relative permanencies as moments of (the moment of) discourse....

Laclau and Mouffe's ideas thus afford a means to 'zoom in' or 'zoom out' particular social activities, treating them either as 'standalone macrocosms' (i.e. practices) or as 'microcosms' (i.e. moments which combine with other moments to constitute larger practices). The disaggregation of discourses into their constituent moments also supports the notion of 'hybridisation', where elements originating from diverse discourses may be 'spliced' together, bringing forth 'hybridised texts' (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999).

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<sup>100</sup>i.e. after their shift from Marxist to post-Marxist positions which occurred in the 1980s.

<sup>101</sup> Here, Laclau and Mouffe adapt the ideas of the 'revisionist' Althusserian Marxist, Nicos Poulantzas (1975), who defined class relations as 'a complexly interwoven' ensemble of economic, ideological and political relations.

From Foucault (1971, 1972, 1978), CDA appropriates the view that discourses are “...form[s] of power that circulate... in the social field and can attach to strategies of domination as well as...resistance” (Diamond and Quinby 1988:185). Foucault accentuates Althusser’s ‘decentring’ of social subjects by proposing that social subjects are “...not imbued with a consciousness or [a] personality; rather,...[they] are ‘empty entit[ies]’, the intersection point of a number of discourses.” (Mesthrie 2000:323). The shift from Althusser is subtle, and yet critical. In Foucault’s view, discourses (albeit, ‘*ideology bearing*’ discourses) have supplanted ideologies as the ‘structure’ which constitutes social subjectivity. As Wetherell (1987:109) observed:

In this tradition, people become fixed in position through the range of linguistic practices available to them to make sense. The use of a particular discourse which contains a particular organisation of the self not only allows one to warrant or justify one’s actions....it also maintains power relations and patterns of domination and subordination. In constructing the self in one way, other constructions are excluded, hence to use a common phrase used in this tradition, the creation of one kind of self or subjectivity in discourse also creates a particular kind of subjection.

Foucault’s ideas have helped to cement the connection between language, *knowledge* and power. As Weedon (1987:108) explains, Foucault perceives discourses as:

[W]ays of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges....Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the ‘nature’ of the body, [and the] unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern.

Introducing the metaphor of the ‘archive’ to elaborate (as well as politicise) the relationship between knowledge and power, Foucault (1972) argued that ‘subjugated knowledge’ often inhabits out-of-view sites, such as prisons or mental hospitals. For that reason, it needs to be ‘excavated’ back into view. In Foucault’s theorisation, such knowledge represents ‘counter-memory’ (or ‘counter-discourses’) that have been denied a place in the ‘sanctioned history of ideas’.

The main insight which CDA garners from Foucault is that marginalised discourses can potentially serve as platforms of resistance or bases from which to challenge hegemonic discourses. Furthermore, Foucault’s notion of discourse provides a spatial understanding which allows for unlimited *proliferation* in the frontiers of social struggle. For, in Foucault’s conceptualisation, clashes (or contestations) over ‘truth’ (or ‘knowledge’)

occur almost everywhere (e.g. between the genders, classes, races, religions, age groups, etc.). As Diamond and Quinby (1988:185) once noted, "...if relations of power are dispersed and fragmented throughout the social field, so [too] must resistance to power be." Jackson (1994:195) has summarised the significance of Foucault (vis-à-vis Althusser) in critical social science, thus:

There is sense in which the work of Foucault is a necessary supplement to that of a wholly abstract Marxist theorist like Althusser. Althusser offers a broad theory of the institutional production of ideology, to provide an understanding of the world of lived experience in which we seem to live. But the theory operates with gigantic abstract categories which provide little insight into the detailed processes of ideological production. Foucault offers a detailed analysis at the micro-level of the way in which power relationships are transformed into apparent truths about the world. He has no abstract general theory of society. If those two can be put together, they provide a composite theory that is incomparably stronger than either separately.

The final postmodernist social theorist whose views shall be highlighted here, is Pierre Bourdieu (1984, 1991). Bourdieu depicts power as distributed into multiple sectors or 'fields'. Each field operates according to its own internal logic (or 'game rules'), and is controlled by powerful stakeholders who intricately understand those rules. New entrants to a field (for example, first year students entering a university) enter from the peripheries. To make progress within the field (i.e. to make sense of, and eventually master the game rules), such learners need to draw both from their current experiences and from their prior *habitus*<sup>102</sup>. Since the habitus brought to a field by new entrants differ, depending on the backgrounds of those entrants, rates of progress in mastering the game rules for each particular field tend to differ (with some progressing rapidly, even as others straggle behind and continue to languish in the peripheries).

Bourdieu's sociology is reflexive in the sense that each field has its own *internal* logic. In his system, there are various '*species*' of power. Each flourishes within a particular field, and power within a field is equated with control of (or access to) *valued* forms of 'being' (for example, certain forms of knowledge or knowing; ways of behaving; ways of listening, speaking, reading and writing; ways of thinking and feeling, etc.). Access to (or control of) such modes of being confers *symbolic power* upon certain privileged individuals. Symbolic domination thus "...refers to the process whereby the ruling class

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<sup>102</sup> That is, the 'prior resources' or 'system of habits' (Mesthrie 2000:345) or as Eagleton (1996:156) puts it, their 'set of durable dispositions'.

is able to impose its norms as the sole legitimate competence on the formal linguistic [and cultural] markets (education, the bureaucracy, ‘high society’[etc.] – Mesthrie 2000:344).

Bourdieu’s ideas have enriched theorisations of discourse. Gee (1990: ix), for example, directly borrows from Bourdieu’s notion of habitus when he defines discourses as:

...ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing that are accepted as instantiations of particular roles by specific groups of people.

Defined as such, discourses are not limited to just ways of using language. They encompass competencies, orientations and ‘ways of being’ that define power in specific sectors of social life. Secondly, Bourdieu challenges Marxist perceptions that power is measured in economic terms, and that, once ‘empowered’ in that way, an individual can become dominant in virtually *all* social spaces. Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic power explains why extremely rich members of the bourgeoisie may still feel ‘out of their depth’ in the presence of ‘royalty’, or why some black millionaires may still be ‘looked down upon’ by working class whites. Finally, Bourdieu’s ideas allow social spaces to be carved up into specific fields, and power to be defined in highly specific contexts.

#### 4.2.3.3 Linguistic influences: SFL and cognitive models of text planning

Even though much of the social theory discussed above directly illuminates the socio-political (and ideological) effects of *discourse*, that – on its own – does not suffice to include such theory under the rubric of *linguistics* (Fairclough 1989, Hart and Lukes 2007). Making this evaluation, Fairclough (1989:12-13) has observed:

The influential work of Michel Foucault...has ascribed a central role to discourse in the development of specifically modern forms of power. And...the equally influential work of Jurgen Habermas...highlights the way in which our currently distorted communication nevertheless foreshadows communication without such constraints. The main limitation of these contributions from the perspective of CLS [or critical *language* study] is that they remain theoretical – they are not operationalised in the analysis of *particular instances of discourse* (my italics)

Concurring with Fairclough on this point, Hart and Lukes (2007: ix-x) observe that:

[T]he work of Habermas and Foucault has provided important social theory for CDA...[However,] it was with the inception of *Critical Linguistics*,...which later became subsumed by CDA, that critical discourse analysis developed a linguistic approach where the focus of attention shifted from the Foucauldian sense of discourse as “the general domain of all statements” (1972:80) to the concrete linguistic sense of *discourse* as statements occurring in given contexts; and ii) linguistic theory came to be applied in analysing concrete examples of discourse.

CDA's strong linguistic identity thus inheres, firstly, in its application of *linguistic* categories (i.e. concepts, descriptive tools, etc.) to the analysis of texts; and secondly, in its recourse to linguistic theory when elaborating the mechanisms whereby ideologies embed themselves within texts. With reference to the first point, CDA invokes *structural linguistics* to describe the lexical, syntactic, semantic and supra-sentential elements of texts (Wodak 2006, Fairclough 2009). Furthermore, CDA also partly borrows its definition of the term 'discourse' from structural linguistics:

In structural linguistics, 'discourse' denotes continuous speech beyond the level of the sentence. 'Discourse analysis' of this sort (e.g. Brown and Yule 1983) involves a grammatical approach to the topic, examining linguistic relations across sentences in connected speech....A second meaning of 'discourse' concerns what might be called 'conversational management'. In describing rules for turn-taking and similar interactive phenomena, this type of discourse analysis is more person-oriented than the structural approach (Mesthrie 2000:323).

Secondly, CDA invokes both SFL and cognitive linguistics (i.e. theories developed in linguistic studies) to explain the mechanisms whereby ideologies 'implant' themselves into texts. To recall, Halliday's (1957, 1961, 1973, 1978) SFL postulates three main meta-functions of language, which are:

- acting upon the world (the *interpersonal* function)
- reflecting the world and making sense of it (the *experiential* [or ideational] function)
- making connections within the text and to the context (the *textual* function)

(Collerson 1994:155).

A notable characteristic of SFL is that it relies on *close linguistic analysis* to unpack textual ideologies. To illustrate, a communicator's *appraisal* of other people, objects, processes, events etc. (i.e. the interpersonal function) often manifests as lexical choices (or *attitude markers*) such as, 'That's the *weirdest* statement I've heard.' Similarly, power relations between interlocutors are signalled by choices within the *modal system* (e.g. 'Shall we stand up?' as opposed to 'Stand up!'). In a similar vein, the conceptual frames which people apply to make sense of the world (the ideational function) also often occur as lexical choices. Thus, the English word 'witchdoctor' (to refer of the *inyanga* in Zulu) evokes associations with superstition and quackery which are absent in the unqualified term, 'doctor' (to refer to a practitioner of 'modern medicine'). Finally, ideologically salient connections between texts and contexts, or between units of meaning (or semantic

propositions) within texts (the textual function) also manifest as linguistic forms (e.g. genres, coherence relations and cohesive devices). Written genres, for example, tend to be more lexically dense, more integrated, and more likely to use nominalisations, than spoken texts (Baynham 1995). In other words, features of genre are realised as *linguistic* forms (or structures), and unpacking these structures (while conducting SFL) calls for familiarity with structural linguistics.

Cognitive linguistics also relies on linguistic analytical resources since it is virtually a specialisation on the ideational function of language (Hart and Lukes 2007). Cognitive linguistics unpacks the conceptual frames present in language. Thus, "...it is characterised by an emphasis on explicating the intimate interrelationship between language and other cognitive faculties" (van Hoek 1999:134). Topics that have been investigated in cognitive linguistics include categorisations in language (such as metonymy, metaphor, prototypicality, and polysemy – Lakoff 1987; Musolff 2007). Analyses of polysemous associations, for example, might ask if there is a semantic link between a dangerous animal 'prowling' and a police car '*prowling*' in a particular neighbourhood. Prototypicality looks at the cultural origins of signification. Thus, the word 'bus' may evoke the image of a red 'double-decker' for a Londoner, whereas the same linguistic sign might evoke the picture of a beige 'Golden Arrow' bus, for a Capetonian. In his study of metaphors, Musolff (2007) asks why most European languages associate governing institutions with body parts. "Aspects of this metaphorical mapping have been lexicalised as set phrases (*body politic, head of government, etc.*) that are still in use today" (Musolff 2007:1). In short, cognitive linguistics investigates the socio-cultural (and *ideological*) origins of semantic frames and categories.

In spite of its strong linguistic connection, CDA has often *resisted* becoming completely engulfed by (so-called) 'mainstream linguistics'. Thus Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) insist that CDA is 'exotropic', while Fowler (1996:1) describes it as an 'instrumental linguistics': "...the study of language for understanding *something else*" (my italics). Finally, Fairclough (1989) has also pointed out that while mainstream linguistics tends to prioritise *description* (of linguistic structures) over *explanation* and *interpretation*, CDA tends to prioritise all three levels of engagement. As Fairclough (1989:8) puts it:

Sociolinguistics is strong on 'what?' questions (what are the facts of [linguistic] variation?) but weak on 'why?' and 'how?' questions (why are the

facts as they are; how – in terms of the development of social relationships and power – was the existing sociolinguistic order brought into being?; how is it sustained?; and how might it be changed to the advantage of those who are dominated by it?)

#### 4.2.4 Directions in CDA

This final part of the survey on CDA spotlights four important directions that have emerged within the discipline. Each of these directions shall be represented when CDA resources are transferred to AMC (later on in this chapter). These four broad directions shall be labelled as: ‘SFL-based’, ‘Sociocognitive’, ‘Multilingual’, and ‘Critical Stylistic’.

##### 4.2.4.1 SFL-based approaches: Fairclough, Martin and Rose, and Janks

These approaches predominantly apply SFL to unpack the ideologies embedded within texts. **Fairclough** (1989, 1992, 1995b, 2003, 2009 *inter alia*) – a prominent figure in CDA – belongs to this orientation. Particular attention shall be given to Fairclough’s proposal of a ‘three-stage’ framework for systematically analysing texts, and to his clarification of the epistemological/ontological presuppositions of CDA.

Fairclough’s (1989, 1992) ‘three-stage’ framework for systematically analysing texts begins with **description** of ‘interesting’ linguistic features occurring at the ‘surface’ of the text; followed by **interpretation** of the discursive practices surrounding the text’s *production* and *reception*; and finally, **explanation** of the *socio-historical* conditions constraining the (aforementioned) discursive practices. SFL is usually invoked at the descriptive level, to unravel (for example):

- *representations* of ‘fact’ or ‘reality’ (i.e. the ideational function),
- the *relations* and *identities* constructed for participants (i.e. the interpersonal function), and,
- patterns of cohesion and coherence occurring within the text (i.e. the textual function).

As Fairclough (1995b:198) explains, description “...provides [linguistic] evidence which can be used in *intertextual* analysis...” at the second (interpretive) level. Fairclough’s second (interpretive) level focuses on the **production** and **consumption** of texts. Kristeva’s (1985) notion of *intertextuality* is often applied to show how texts contain, “...snatches of other texts, which may be explicitly demarcated or merged in, and which the

text may assimilate, contradict, ironically echo, and so forth" (Fairclough 1992:84). Fairclough (ibid.) makes a distinction between *manifest* and *constitutive* intertextuality. The former refers to *overt* borrowings from other texts (or other 'orders of discourse'), which are explicitly signalled (e.g. through the use of quotation marks). The latter denotes the more subtle (or unacknowledged) assimilation of styles, generic features or discourse conventions from other texts (or other orders of discourse), which often results in the hybridisation of texts<sup>103</sup>. The third level (of explanation) in Fairclough's model deals with the wider socioeconomic, political and cultural factors constraining text production and consumption<sup>104</sup>.

While commending the rigorousness of this three-stage analytical framework, Fairclough (1995b:62), nevertheless, concedes that it is not always necessary to engage texts at *all* three levels of analysis, since focus on one or two of the levels may suffice, "...to understand...particular [communicative] event[s]."

Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999)<sup>105</sup> and Fairclough (2003, 2009) have given much consideration to the epistemological (and ontological) presuppositions of CDA. Fairclough (2003:14), for example, observes that:

The position I take is a realist one, based on realist ontology: both concrete social events and abstract social structures, as well as the rather less abstract 'social practices'...are a part of reality. We can make a distinction between the 'potential' and the 'actual' – what is possible because of the nature of social structures and practices, as opposed to what actually happens. Both need to be distinguished from the 'empirical', what we know about reality (these distinctions are a reformulation of those in **Bhaskar** 1979... (original emphasis).

The epistemological stance articulated here is an adaptation of Bhaskar's (1979, 1989) notion of *critical* or *philosophical realism*. Critical realism rejects anthropocentric views of reality, which confuse human-mediated (or discursive) 'knowledge' with the

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<sup>103</sup> Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) describe university brochures and prospectuses as increasingly 'hybridised' due to their assimilation of rhetorical, generic and stylistic features from commercial discourses.

<sup>104</sup> Fairclough (1995b:36), for example, investigates, "...the economics and politics of...mass media: the nature of the market which the mass media are operating within, and their relationship to the state...." Examples of the sorts of questions posed at this level of analysis may include:

- Who owns (or predominantly sponsors) the channel used to produce a particular text?
- Who has the most access to that text?
- In what ways does the text perpetuate unequal social relations?
- How do readers/audiences 'receive' (or interpret) the text?

<sup>105</sup> With Chouliaraki.

‘transcendental reality’ that exists *regardless* of human cognition. As Bhaskar (1989:12) argues, “...the ultimate objects of scientific enquiry exist and act (for the most part) *quite independently* of scientists and their activity” (my italics). Thus the force of gravity will still act (with dire consequences!) upon the sceptic who steps out of a seventh floor window because s/he doubts its existence. The claims of critical realism are therefore, “...ontological rather than epistemological....In a formulation similar to existentialism, realism insists that being has precedence over any possible knowledge of being” (Connelly 2000:2).

As indicated by Fairclough (2003), critical realism makes careful distinctions between the *real*, the *actual* and the *empirical*. Connelly (2000:2) has explained these distinctions (with reference to laboratory experiments), thus:

...what is real cannot be inferred from our empirical observations of actual regularities. The experiment...arranges circumstances in such a way that an attempt is made to close down reality so that reality is observed; this, however, only allows a distorted glimpse of reality, through the empirical observation of what happens (the actual) rather than the real.

As such be seen later, the stance of critical realism could effectively mediate some of the epistemological woes noted earlier<sup>106</sup> in AMC. Fairclough’s significance partly lies in his recognition of the critical importance of clarifying the epistemological bases of conducting CDA.

Fairclough (2009) has more recently begun to label his version of CDA as the ‘Dialectical-Relation Approach’ (DRA). This label underscores the invocation of grand theory to explain social conflict, and the emphasis placed on dialectical (or mutually contingent) relationship between semiosis/discourses and social structures/relations. Commenting on the dialectical thrust of the DRA, Meyer and Wodak (2009:27) have observed that, “...every social structure has a semiotic element. Productive activity, the means of production, social relations, social identities, cultural values, consciousness and semiosis are dialectically related elements of social practice.”

**Martin and Rose** (2003) have richly elaborated the application of SFL and sharpened its capacity to unpick textual politics and ideologies. Martin and Rose often downplay the

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<sup>106</sup>In chapter three.

‘critical’ element of their approach, preferring to label themselves as ‘positive discourse analysts’<sup>107</sup>. Their orientation is predominantly towards, “...discourse semantics rather than social context or analysis” (Martin and Rose 2003: i). Thus, they advocate a ‘text-to-context’ approach which ensures that, “...the social [is] constructed through texts...” rather than vice-versa, and which invites “...social theorists to reconsider social activity as meaning [which] we negotiate through texts” (Martin and Rose 2003:1). Due to their prioritisation of ‘what texts *actually say*’ (rather than what communicative contexts suggest *about* texts), Martin and Rose have tended to emphasise the *descriptive* level of text analysis.

Martin and Rose (2003:6) distinguish five ‘discourse systems’ – each amenable to SFL analysis – as follows:

<b>Discourse system</b>	<b>Brief description</b>	<b>Metafunction</b>
<b>IDEATION</b>	Representing experience	Ideational
<b>CONJUNCTION</b>	Connecting events	Ideational
<b>IDENTIFICATION</b>	Tracking people and things	Textual
<b>PERIODICITY</b>	The rhythm of discourse	Textual
<b>APPRAISAL</b>	Negotiating attitudes	Interpersonal

Figure 1: Discourse systems and the metafunctions of language (adapted from Martin and Rose 2003:6).

Briefly:

- **Ideation** has to do with the *content* of texts. It identifies what kinds of activities are undertaken, and how ‘participants’ (both human and non-human) are described and classified.
- **Conjunction** pertains to the *interconnections* between concepts or activities within texts: their (logical or temporal) sequencing, reformulation, explanation, causal relationships etc.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>107</sup> Their chosen label has been questioned by Wodak (2007:31) who points out that it understates the scope of their work while also seeming to imply that there is something ‘negative’ about the adjective ‘critical’.

<sup>108</sup> It needs to be noted here that while Halliday (1978) would have categorised conjunction – as an aspect of text cohesion – under the textual function, Martin and Rose actually assign it to the ideational function, perhaps, to emphasise its ‘sense-making’ function.

- **Identification** keeps track of people or things once they are introduced into the text. It focuses on the means used to ‘refer back’ to people (or things) after their initial introduction.
- **Periodicity** deals with the ‘rhythms’ of discourse. It focuses on the devices used to *consolidate* or ‘anticipate’ information. It looks at what sort of information is placed in the *theme* (or ‘sentence/phrase-initial’) position as opposed to the *rheme* (i.e. ‘sentence/phrase-last’) position<sup>109</sup>.
- **Appraisal** (which shall be applied more extensively in the application chapter) looks at how attitudes (or evaluations) are negotiated within texts. Martin and Rose distinguish three types of appraisal (i.e. *judgements*, *affect* and *appreciations*). Judgements are evaluations of the *personal* and *moral* attributes of *people* (e.g. ‘He is a smart guy’ – personal, or ‘He is a cruel man - moral). Affect has to do with evaluations of *emotion*, and it can either be *positive* (e.g. ‘We were in love’), or *negative* (e.g. ‘I felt devastated by the news’). Appreciation denotes evaluations of *things*. It can also be either *positive* (e.g. ‘a beautiful relationship’) or *negative* (e.g. ‘my unsuccessful marriage’). All appraisals (judgements, affect or appreciations) can be *amplified* through *intensifiers* (i.e. ‘toned up’ or ‘toned down’ - e.g. ‘We were madly in love’ as opposed to, ‘We were somewhat in love’). And finally, appraisals are also attributed to specific *sources*, with some appraisals having ‘direct’ sources (i.e. emanating from ‘immediate’ speakers/writers), and others being *projected* (i.e. *reported* by the immediate speakers e.g. a news item announcing: “Voters in Limpopo *said* they were angry with their MP after *he described them* as lazy”. In this example, the news reader *projects* the ‘self-assessed’ emotion of the voters, who in turn project the personal judgement of them made by their MP).

Martin and Rose have richly elaborated the *descriptive* tools available to SFL analysis, some of which shall be harnessed when the Marxist stylistic method is ‘operationalised’ in Chapter Six.

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<sup>109</sup> Usually, ‘given’ information is placed in the theme position whereas ‘new’ information is placed in the rheme. The deliberate violation of this ordering often serves to ‘mark’ (or draw ‘special attention to’) the ‘misplaced’ information e.g. whereas, ‘Mary won the prize’ is ‘unmarked’ (since Mary is probably already known to the reader), ‘The prize was won by Mary’ becomes ‘marked’ (since the ‘new’ information about Mary is placed in the ‘sentence-initial’ position).

**Janks** (2001, 2005a, 2005b *inter alia*) has prominently applied (and elaborated) CDA within (and beyond) the South African context. Her work has encompassed (*inter alia*): critical language awareness, power relations and their effects on literacy, and critical perspectives on race and diversity. Janks (2005b:101-102) provides the following (abridged) rubric for the lexical and grammatical *description* of texts in SFL analysis:

Linguistic feature	Explanation
Transitivity	Processes in verbs: are they verbs of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>doing</i>: material process</li> <li>• <i>being or having</i>: relational processes</li> <li>• <i>thinking/feeling/perceiving</i>: mental</li> <li>• <i>saying</i>: verbal processes</li> <li>• <i>physiological</i>: behavioural processes</li> </ul>
Voice	Active and passive voice constructs participants as <i>doers</i> or as <i>done-to</i> 's. Passive voice allows for the deletion of the agent.
Nominalisation	A process is turned into a thing or an event without participants or tense or modality. Central mechanism for reification.
Quoted speech Direct speech (DS) Indirect speech (IS) Free indirect speech (FIS). This is a mixture of direct and indirect speech features.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who is quoted in DS/IS/FIS?</li> <li>• Who is quoted first/last/most?</li> <li>• Who is not quoted?</li> <li>• Has someone been misquoted or quoted out of context?</li> <li>• What reporting verb was chosen?</li> </ul>
Modality	Degrees of uncertainty Logical possibility/probability Social authority Modality created by modals (may, might, could will), adverbs (possibly, certainly, hopefully) intonation, tag questions.

Figure 2: Rubric for text description. (Adapted from Janks 2005b:101-102).

Like Martin and Rose, Janks (2005b) has provided tools which can be applied to the detailed *description* of texts (some of which shall be exploited in Chapter Six of this thesis).

SFL-based approaches, as highlighted in this subsection, have maintained a thread of continuity with earlier CL approaches (which also applied Halliday's SFL framework). At the same time, these approaches share significant interfaces with cognitive linguistic and multilingual approaches, as shall be shown presently.

#### 4.2.4.2 Cognitive Linguistic Approaches: van Dijk and Wodak

Cognitive linguistic approaches are virtually a 'specialisation' on the ideational metafunction of language (Hart and Lukes 2007). Their focus is predominantly on the **cognitive frames** and **event models** present in texts (van Dijk 1988, Wodak 1989).

**Van Dijk** (1988, 1995, 2009) has investigated the *cognitive frames*, *stereotypes* and *prototypes* prevalent in news *production* and *reception*. According to van Dijk:

- News bulletins are *schematically* structured into a summary (i.e. headline and lead paragraph); story (i.e. situation, episode and background); and, consequences (i.e. 'wrapping up' comments and conclusions). These sections are ordered according to relevance, and they constitute a cognitive frame which aids interpretation (van Dijk 1988). What readers memorise best (i.e. what they often 're-tell' or 're-count' afterwards) is the summary.
- Social groups share, "...system[s] of mental representations..." (van Dijk (1995:18). These representations consist of *cognitive frames* through which phenomena (or experiences) are categorised and linked/associated into 'coherent patterns'. Cognitive frames help to construct *event models* which constrain how individuals, "...act, speak, or write..." in particular *types* of situations (van Dijk 1995:2). Event models are stored in people's long term and episodic memories (ibid.).
- Ideologies are "...the overall, abstract mental systems that organise...socially shared attitudes" (van Dijk 1995:2). In other words, both cognitive frames and event models are ideologically invested. Cognitive frames and event models are also "...often articulated along 'Us versus Them' dimensions,...[where members] of one group ...tend to present themselves or their own group in positive terms, and other groups in negative terms" (van Dijk 1995:22).
- There is a strong link between media activities and prejudicial models. Van Dijk (1991), for example, demonstrates a correspondence between the frequency with

which news topics (such as racism) are covered, and the frequency with which those topics begin to feature in ‘street talk’.

Van Dijk (2009) has more recently labelled his version of CDA as the Sociocognitive approach (SCA). A key premise of van Dijk’s approach – as described by Meyer and Wodak (2009:25), is that: “Social actors involved in discourse do not only use their individual experiences and strategies, they rely upon collective frames and perceptions, i.e. *social representations*.”

**Wodak** (1989, 1990, 2006a, 2006b, 2007, *inter alia*) has complemented but also extended the work of van Dijk by introducing a **diachronic** (or historical) dimension to the analysis of cognitive frames and event models. As Wodak (2006b:184) has explained:

Van Dijk suggested a socio-cognitive model which attempted to explain the production and reproduction of stereotypes and prejudices, due to a whole complex range of cognitive processes, most importantly, the storage of individual experiences as *event models in episodic and long term memory*. This influential approach could very well be integrated with my own research in this field, which focused more on intertextual knowledge and experience, thus including and elaborating a detailed historical dimension and a triangulatory methodology...On top of explaining why certain events, experiences, utterances, and so forth were perceived and reproduced in specific and prejudiced ways, I was and am concerned to date to explain how such meanings become widely accessible and why and how they are tied to specific ideologies in certain periods of time in specific socio-political contexts. (Original emphasis).

Important features of Wodak’s ‘discourse-historical’ method include:

- The perception that discourses are, “...always historical, that is, connected synchronically and diachronically with other communicative events which are happening at the same time or which have happened before” (Wodak and Ludwig 1999:12).
- The systematic integration of “...all available background information in the analysis and interpretation of the many layers of a written or spoken text” (Wodak 2006a:15).
- The identification and exposure of the codes and allusions contained in ‘prejudiced talk’ (Wodak 2006a).
- The definition of frames “...as areas of experience, and schemas as structured patterns of experience and knowledge” (Wodak 2006b:183).

Sociocognitive and discourse historical approaches – as outlined in this subsection – thus investigate the cognitive frames/event models that occur (or become naturalised) in the discourse(s) of particular social groups. The latter approach also examines the historical contexts in which specific cognitive frames and event models are established. Rooted in SFL, these approaches pay particular attention to the ideational metafunction of language and seek to illuminate dialectical relationship(s) between discourses and ideologies.

#### 4.2.4.3 Blommaert's Multilingual Approach

**Blommaert** occupies an interesting position in CDA since he often seems to ‘stalk’ *around* (instead of *within*) the field, like one policing its boundaries. As indicated earlier, Blommaert is uncomfortable with the label ‘critical’ (as attached to CDA), since it excludes certain, ‘important’ (but antedating) studies in sociolinguistics and anthropology. Blommaert (2005, 2007) also attacks the **monolingual** assumptions of most versions of CDA. In Blommaert’s view, the advent of globalisation has made **multilingualism** (and multiculturalism) the *norm* rather than the *exception*. And, since “...non-nativeness in language usage...” has widely proliferated, the “...discourse analytical toolkit needs to be complemented with some seriously useful sociolinguistic tools” which can handle this phenomenon (Blommaert 2007:116).

Blommaert’s (2005, 2007) means of addressing this ‘gap’ has been to moot the concepts: ‘**orders of indexicality**’ and ‘**polycentricity**’. The notion of ‘orders of indexicality’ proceeds from the idea of ‘**normativity in semiosis**’. Ways of using language (i.e. particular accents, registers, dialects etc.) *normatively* index specific social personae, roles and statuses. Thus “...one speaks *as* a man, lawyer, middle-aged European, asylum seeker and so forth” (Blommaert 2007:117). The normative indexicalities of language, however, differ from one part of the world to another. Thus, what indexes ‘middle-class’ ways of using English in London, for example, might be radically different from what indexes ‘middle-class’ ways of using English in Lagos or in Nairobi (Blommaert 2007). This leads to the important notion that *different* orders of indexicality obtain in different parts of the (so-called) ‘global village’.

Within every order of indexicality, “...some forms of semiosis are systemically perceived as valuable, others less valuable, and some not taken into account at all,” (Blommaert 2007:117). Such stratification calls for socio-economic and political analysis. There are “...rules of access and regulations as to [the] circulation” of accents and varieties of language (ibid.). Thus “...systemic patterns of indexicality are also systemic patterns of authority, of control and evaluation, and hence of inclusion and exclusion *by real or perceived others*” (Blommaert 2007:117 – original emphasis). Blommaert then proceeds to juxtapose different orders of indexicality. Immigrants from African countries seeking political asylum in Europe are often perceived as ‘liars’ since their personal narratives (as ‘recounted’ on application forms) seem ‘repetitive’, ‘incoherent’ and ‘evasive’ to European readers. Blommaert (2007:118) concludes that:

...orders of indexicality is a sensitising concept that should point a finger to (index!) important aspects of power and inequality in the field of semiosis. If forms of semiosis are socially and culturally valued, these valuation processes should display traces of power and authority, of struggles in which there are winners as well as losers, in which, in general, [or in the world-wide context of ‘the global village’,] the group of winners is smaller than the group of losers.

Blommaert’s accompanying concept of *polycentricity* explores shifts of style/identity *within* a particular order of indexicality. Each time a language user changes his/her accent (or style of using language), he/she is orienting towards a different ‘authoritative **centre**’, that is, towards:

...what Bakhtin called a ‘superaddressee’: [i.e.] complexes of norms and perceived appropriateness criteria, in effect the larger social and cultural body of authority into which we insert immediate practices vis-à-vis our immediate addressees (Blommaert 2007:118).

Rejecting Bourdieu’s notion of habitus, “...with its suggestion of incorporated automatism” (ibid.), Blommaert (2007:118) argues that,

...very often, such authorities [i.e. ‘superaddressees’] have names, faces...[and] a reality of their own. They can be individuals (teachers, parents, role models, the coolest guy in class), collectives (peer groups, subcultural groups, group images such as ‘punk’, ‘gothic’, etc.), abstract entities (the church, the nation-state, the middle class, consumer culture..., freedom, democracy), and so on. The point is: we often project the presence of an evaluating authority through our interactions with immediate addressees, we behave *with reference to* such an evaluative authority, and I suggest we call such an authority a centre.”

Centres have ‘authority’ over ‘clusters’ of semiotic features such as styles (of speaking/writing); thematic domains and roles/identities/relationships. The fact that individuals shift styles/topics/roles/identities (depending on context and sometimes

during single communicative events) underscores their **polycentricity**. Language users ‘**shift footing**’ (or shift orientation) as demanded by the exigencies of communication (Blommaert gives the example of shifts of footing in styles/topics/identities/roles which often occur during ‘breaks’ in conference proceedings).

Blommaert’s multilingual approach overlaps with the third (or explanatory) level of Fairclough’s three-stage model in that it primarily focuses on the socio-cultural (and historical) factors constraining the *production* and *reception* of texts. It is also a ‘context-to-text’ approach which contrasts quite sharply with Martin and Rose’s ‘text-to-context’ model, or with Fairclough or Janks’s dialectical (i.e. ‘to and fro’) model.

#### 4.2.4.4 Critical stylistics: Fowler, Toolan, Simpson, Black, Mellor and Paterson

**Fowler** (1981, 1996) has used the term ‘**critical stylistics**’ to designate the application of CL (or CDA) to *literary criticism*. In addition to promoting this useful label, Fowler (1996:199) has also suggested that the same discourse-analytical ‘toolkit’ applied on (so-called) ‘ordinary discourses’ (e.g. newspaper articles) works just as effectively on literary texts:

[T]here is an assumption about language which is widespread in stylistics. This is the belief that there is a distinct difference between poetic and literary language on the one hand and ordinary language on the other...[These views] are not empirically legitimate and they are a serious obstacle to a linguistic criticism which attempts to allow literature the communicative fullness that is a common property of language.

Fowler’s position is that literature *is* language, and as such, just as amenable to discourse analytical tools (such as SFL) as any other kinds of discourses.

Presaging Fowler’s argument, **Toolan** (1988: xiii) defined narratives in a manner which deconstructed the dichotomy between literary and non-literary discourses:

[N]arratives are everywhere. Or, potentially so. Everything we do, from making breakfast to making the bed to making love (and notice how those – in any order – make a multi-episode narrative) can be seen cast and recounted as a narrative – a narrative with a beginning, middle and end, characters, setting, drama (difficulties or conflicts resolved), suspense, enigma, ‘human interest’, and a moral. (The moral of the story of my making breakfast this morning could be summarised as ‘Don’t clean the toaster while cooking porridge’).

Other highlights of Toolan’s work include:

- Making a distinction (after Propp 1968) between the **fabula** (or basic story-line) and the **sjuzhet** (i.e. linguistic realisation<sup>110</sup>) of the narrative.
- Theorising time, focalisation and characterisation in narratives.
- Distinguishing between ‘**direct**’, ‘**indirect**’ and ‘**free indirect discourse**’ in narratives.
- Interpreting narratives as *political action* (i.e. as sites/depictions of power struggles between the classes, genders, races etc. Unpicking the ideologies and prejudices embedded within narratives, etc.).

Acknowledging the value of SFL in his approach, Toolan (1988:245) remarks that, “...using Hallidayan analysis to specify the choices of process and participant...we can ask with whom lies the power, ...to do, to cause, and to affect” within a narrative.”

**Simpson** (1993) supports the application of CL in literary criticism and investigates (among other key issues):

- **Point of view** in narrative fiction (i.e. speech and thought presentation, modality, transpositions and transitions, etc.).
- **Transitivity** in language (i.e. how experiences are grammatically encoded).
- **Pragmatics** and ‘meaning-making’ in narratives (including the use of **implicature** and its effects/consequences).

**Black** (2006) has used the term ‘**pragmatic stylistics**’ to denote approaches which focus on (and politicise) the ‘**implicature**’ communicated within texts. These approaches use Grice's (1975) **conversational maxims** to unpack how texts communicate ‘**indirect speech acts**’ such as *sarcasm*, *irony* or *satire*. Pragmatic stylistics is interested in the textual, interpersonal and ideational dimensions of texts. It illuminates the textual structures which create implicature; the interpersonal relations *necessitating* the use of indirect speech acts and the views of ‘reality’ underpinning (or motivating) those ‘strategies’ of communication.

**Mellor and Paterson** (2004) underscore the value of ‘*critical engagement*’ with literary texts. Critical engagement, in their view, involves making explicit the ‘positionality’ of

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<sup>110</sup> For example, the forms/linguistic devices used to ‘colour’ the narrative.

readers. As Mellor and Paterson (2004:5) argue, the ‘Leavisite’ tradition (of practical criticism) which once dominated literary criticism needs to be superseded by critical approaches which compel readers to critically reflect on the *bases* of their interpretations:

Students were taught [by the Leavisite tradition] to feel that they were finding a meaning ‘in’ the text while bringing to the reading their own personal experience, an approach...[that made] the reading *process* curiously invisible. [This] produced readers who were unaware of the ways in which they operated to construct meanings and who were unable to ‘read’ not only the terms of their own interpretations but those of others as well. Such practices, far from being inclusive...disenfranchised those students whose experiences and values were not the ‘dominant’ ones.

The reception-oriented approach advocated by Mellor and Patterson envisages:

...the construction of divergent readings, the values they support...or affirm and the grounds on which any particular reading might be defended or challenged. It appear[s] to us that English...[has been] constructing readers able to produce rich, full and insightful interpretations of any text – but unable to recognise the partiality of their own and others’ readings (ibid.).

In other words, readers need to be critically conscious of the moral, cultural, political and ‘gender-based’ values that *they* bring to literary interpretation. This requirement places emphasis on how texts are received or interpreted by different readers. At the same time, readers need to be aware of how texts ‘position’ (or ‘interpellate’) them. This latter requirement draws attention to text production, or to the semiotic strategies used by writers to ‘position’ (or construct ‘subject positions’) for their readers.

#### **4.2.5 Summary: the main features and principles of CDA**

The main features and principles of CDA – as discussed so far in this chapter – could be summarised as follows:

- CDA is highly heterogeneous (Wodak 2006; Meyer and Wodak 2009). Different proponents work with different strands of discourse (and social) theory. They also apply diverse discourse analytical tools in their analysis of texts.
- In spite the wide heterogeneity noted in CDA, the various versions of the practice may be ‘marshalled’ into broad categories or orientations. In this chapter, the various versions of CDA were organised into: SFL-based, cognitive linguistic, multilingual and critical stylistic approaches.
- Three other broad patterns are also discernable in CDA. There are ‘text-to-context’ approaches (such as that of Martin and Rose 2004); ‘context-to-text’ approaches (such as that of Blommaert 2005, 2007) and ‘dialectical’ (or ‘to-and-

fro') approaches (such as the approaches promoted by Fairclough 1989 or Janks 2005).

- The 'political interestedness' of CDA generally takes the form of an interest in the power relations and power struggles *in* or *over* discourse(s) (Titscher et al 2000).
- CDA is often 'exotropic' in the sense that it integrates linguistic methods with critical social science together within 'a single theoretical and analytical framework' (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999, Fairclough 2009).
- CDA has evolved into a semi-autonomous discipline in its own right. It no longer fits comfortably into the 'Linguistics' or 'Applied Linguistics' rubrics (Fowler 1996).
- Halliday's (1957, 1961, 1974, 1985) SFL underpins most approaches to CDA (including cognitive approaches, which are a specialisation on the *ideational* metafunction of language). SFL has also been widely applied in critical stylistics (Toolan 1988, Simpson 1993).
- CDA has been applied to a wide variety of text types including: media texts, conversations, visual images, fictional texts etc.
- Finally, CDA integrates studies of text production with studies of text reception/consumption (Fairclough 1989, 1995b; van Dijk 1988).

### ***4.3 Transferring Theoretical and Methodological Resources from CDA to AMC***

This section initiates the transfer of germane conceptual and analytical resources from CDA to AMC. Given the heterogeneity of CDA (which was hopefully demonstrated in the previous section), this process shall – of necessity – proceed both selectively and eclectically.

To recall, five main areas of weakness were identified in AMC in the previous chapter. The first was a tension between materialist and idealist premises in AMC's construal of social practices (including literature). Apart from imbuing practices with permanent (or idealistic) 'inner essences', it was shown that AMC even postulates a schematic nexus in

which literature sits midway between ‘science’ and ‘the ideologies’ – much against Althusser’s *original* principle of overdetermination (Bennett 1979, Resch 1992).

The second problem related to AMC’s stance towards historiography. It was noted that AMC appears to hover between extreme constructivism (i.e. *epistemic relativism*) and equally extreme (if not spurious) ‘scientificity’ (i.e. *epistemic absolutism*). It was then suggested that AMC needed to rethink its epistemology. A possible way forward (which has been adopted in CDA – cf. Fairclough 2003) would be to harness Bhaskar’s (1989) notion of ‘critical realism’.

Thirdly, AMC was criticised for its depiction of ideologies as *permanent* (or *existential*) states of being. Such a stance, as argued earlier, nullifies the *rationale* for political praxis it presupposes that social subjects are *irredeemably* ideological (Poster 1974). It was proposed that AMC could adopt the *dialectical* perspective, which perceives social subjects as ‘conscious’ and able to shape (but as also shaped by) social structures. It was further suggested that AMC needed to reconsider its rigid dichotomies between ‘science as such’ and the ‘ideologies as such,’ and between ‘lived’ and ‘theoretical ideologies’ – as has been argued by Zizek (1989) and as is widely practiced in CDA.

Fourthly, serious paucities were highlighted in how AMC applies discourse theory. As pointed out, AMC needs to clarify (*inter alia*): (a) the connection between discourse(s) and ideologies, and (b) the relationship between literary and non-literary discourses. Furthermore, it was suggested that AMC needs to appropriate discourse analytical tools in order to fulfil its ambitions to systematically engage with the linguistic and narrative structures of texts (Forgacs 1982).

Finally, it was also noted that AMC has maintained an unnecessary division between its ‘production’ and ‘reception-oriented’ versions (Resch 1992). It was then suggested that the two trajectories of enquiry could be integrated as they actually complement (if not, ‘enrich’) one another – as is the general norm in the field of CDA.

### 4.3.1 On the ‘materiality’ of practices (including literature)

In what could be described as a twist of irony, CDA enlists elements of *postmodern* social theory to strip the ‘idealistic frills’ off Althusser’s conceptualisation of social practices. Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999:21), for example, state that, “...the concept of articulation, which we take from Laclau and Mouffe (1985) is helpful in describing the bringing together of elements of the social as *moments* of a practice...” (my italics). At stake, here, is a *materialist* theorisation of the *internal* constitution of social practices – a theorisation which will supersede Althusser’s “...gigantic [and] abstract categories....” (Jackson 1994:195). Chouliaraki and Fairclough (ibid.) further observe that:

Articulation implies the view of elements of the social as first, in shifting relationships with each other, though capable of being stabilised into more or less relative permanencies as they are articulated together as moments within practices; and second, transformed in the process of being brought into new combinations with each other. The concept of articulation can also be extended down into the internal structure of each particular moment to specify the particular, local form it takes in a particular practice.

What is unfolding here could be seen as a paradigm shift: from theorising the internal constitution of practices with reference to *abstract* or *universal* properties (*a’ la* Althusser), to explaining it in terms of the *material elements* which ‘coalesce’ to form the practice. To illustrate, Althusser (1969) endows theoretical practices with the universal inner structure (or ‘essence’) where ‘Generalities II’ (the theorist’s problematic) acts upon Generalities I (pre-existing discourses) to yield Generalities III (i.e. ‘new knowledge’). Rejecting this *idealisation* of theoretical practices, Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999:29) have stressed that:

It is important to grasp the specificity of theory which sets it apart from other practices, but without falling into the common trap of ‘forgetting’ that theory is itself a practice which, like other practices, is caught up within networks of relations with economic, political and cultural practices which determine its *internal* constitution and can have ideological effects within it (my italics).

By stressing the *overdetermined* nature of theoretical practices, Chouliaraki and Fairclough uphold a materialist definition<sup>111</sup> which makes *no* mention of any universal (or ‘permanent’) *essences* supposedly occurring at their ‘core’. Clinching their materialist definition of practices, Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999:23-24) further note that:

Each practice is located within a network of practices which determine ‘from the outside’ its internal properties.... Practices are shiftingly articulated together to constitute networks of which they themselves become moments in ways which transform them. Here articulation refers to the relationship of ‘overdetermination’ (Althusser 1969, Althusser and Balibar 1970) between practices within such a network, not only in the sense that each practice is

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<sup>111</sup>Reminiscent of Althusser’s ‘*original*’ premises (Bennett 1979).

simultaneously determined by others without being reducible to any of them, but crucially also in the sense that each practice can simultaneously articulate together with many others from multiple social positions and with diverse effects.

As was previously noted<sup>112</sup>, CDA's 'take' on social practices gives the concept a felicitous plasticity. CDA recognises that individual practices can be *incorporated* into larger practices as moments *within* those practices. Thus analysts can 'zoom in' or 'zoom out' on practices, magnifying them into 'macro' entities (which contain their own constitutive moments), or shrinking them into microcosms (i.e. building blocks which combine with other elements to form 'larger' entities). This kind of flexibility has fed into theorisations of *discourse*, which CDA treats both a practice in its own right, and as a moment feeding into larger practices. As Fairclough (2003:24) has remarked, "[l]anguage...is an element of the social at *all* levels" (my italics). The 'centrality' of discourse as a 'moment' which feeds into almost all other practices, is well-recognised in CDA. As Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999:28) note, "Poststructuralist theory, and especially the theory of Foucault...has firmly established the category of 'discourse' in humanities and social sciences."

CDA's designation of discourses as practices in their own right entails that they are constituted by their own *socially produced* moments (e.g. styles, genres, dictions, technologies etc.). However, certain articulations of these moments create new 'hybrids', (or 'new' discourses), as has been noted by Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999). Literature 'fits' into this descriptive schema as a particular configuration of 'discoursal moments'. Literature overdetermines (and is overdetermined by) adjacent social practices (e.g. the political, the economic, the juridical etc.) within *open* networks. At the same time, it articulates with other moments (e.g. styles of dress; modes of entertainment; types of work) to constitute larger cultural practices (e.g. 'Western', 'postcolonial', Rastafarian etc. subcultures). These possibilities are a reversal of Althusser's tendency to imbue literature with a universal (and 'homogenising') 'inner essence', or to confine it to a 'closed' tripartite network in which it 'eternally' sits 'midway' between 'science' and 'the ideologies'.

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<sup>112</sup> In section 4.3.2.3

This theme shall be revisited in subsection 4.3.4, below, where AMC's paucities in the area of discourse theory are considered. For now, suffice it to note that CDA 'recovers' the *materialist* impetus in Althusser's (original) definition of social practices. As already noted, it is somewhat ironical that CDA recruits elements of postmodernist social theory (such as the work of Laclau and Mouffe or the work of Foucault) to achieve this 'recovery'.

#### **4.3.2 Harnessing Bhaskar's critical realism to mediate Althusser's epistemological problems**

In subsection 4.2.4.1 (above), it was noted that Fairclough (2003) acknowledges how Bhasker's (1979, 1989) critical (or philosophical) realism has shaped his epistemological stance. As already discussed, critical realism asserts the existence of a transcendental reality which obtains *in spite of* (or regardless of) human presence or cognition. Furthermore, critical realism makes careful distinctions between the real, the actual and the empirical. In laboratory experiments, for example:

...what is *real* cannot be inferred from our *empirical* observations of *actual* regularities [since experiments] ...close down reality so that [an artificial] reality is observed; this, however, only allows a distorted glimpse of reality, through the empirical observation of what happens (the actual) rather than the real (Connelly 2000:2 – my italics).

Critical realism thus views the real as so complex that it cannot be grasped in its entirety just from observing the actual or the empirical. Bhaskar (1978) thus stresses the *transfactual* character of knowledge of the real. In his view, knowledge of the real is always provisional, since new concepts and theories (all purporting to approximate closer and closer to the real) constantly supersede older systems of knowledge. Bhaskar (1979) also argues that the social world is *as real* as the natural world. Thus, descriptions of social events (or actions) are almost always underpinned by ontological assumptions. 'Cashing a cheque', for example, assumes the existence of a banking system. 'Pleading guilty' – to give another example – presupposes the existence of a functioning juridical system. Bhaskar thus criticises what he calls the 'methodological individualism' of research, which pretends to be creative (or 'personal') when, in fact, it is heavily dependent on ontological categories and presuppositions.

Radically modifying Althusser's epistemology, Bhaskar (1989) proposes a *dialectical* relationship between real objects (which belong to the *intransitive/extra discursive/ontological* dimension) and 'objects of knowledge' (which belong to the *transitive/discursive/epistemological*) dimension. According to Bhaskar, objects of knowledge are *constrained* in their initial premises (and subsequent development) by generative mechanisms located within the real objects. As Bhaskar (1989:25) explains, "...it is the nature of [real] objects that determines their cognitive possibilities for us". At the same time, Bhaskar also warns against the over-reification of social phenomena. Explaining this stance, Connelly (2000:2) notes that, "...we must not treat social facts as having an existence independent of our consciousness of them." Bhaskar insists that this is not a collapse back into idealism (or 'pure constructivism'). Rather, it is merely a reminder that whatever is given to the observer as 'empirical knowledge' does *not* represent the entirety of the real. Rather, empirical observation can only produce a provisional account, an understanding of the actual, which should not be conflated with the real. Summarising many of these points, Bhaskar (1989:23-24) describes critical realism as:

...explicitly assert[ing] the non-identity of the objects of the transitive and intransitive dimensions, of thought and being. And it relegates the notion of a correspondence between them to the status of an *adequating practice* (in which cognitive matter is worked into a matching representation of a non-cognitive object)...[Critical realism] entails acceptance of (i) the principle of *epistemic relativism*, which states that all beliefs are socially produced, so that knowledge is transient, and neither truth-values nor criteria of rationality exist outside historical time. But it entails rejection of (ii) *judgemental relativism*, which maintains that all beliefs are equally valid, in the sense that there can be no rational grounds for preferring one to the other. It thus stands opposed to epistemic absolutism and epistemic irrationalism alike. Relativists have wrongly inferred (ii) from (i), while anti-relativists have wrongly taken the unacceptability of (ii) as a *reductio* of (i).

Critical realism might dovetail with (and address the epistemological problems in) AMC as follows. Firstly, critical realism would affirm Althusser's distinction between 'real objects' and 'objects of knowledge' and also endorse his anti-empiricist stance – since it rejects the conflation of empirically-given knowledge with knowledge of the real. Secondly (and more importantly), critical realism would demand that AMC acknowledges its *epistemic relativism*. As discussed in the previous chapter, Althusser denies this very possibility; arguing, instead, that his theoretical work attains to the status of a 'scientific practice'<sup>113</sup>. However, it is precisely this assertion of a spurious

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<sup>113</sup>A description which evokes connotations of 'epistemological infallibility'.

‘scientificity’, which renders Althusser an *epistemic absolutist*. By strongly affirming the inevitability of epistemic relativism, critical realism recognises the complexity (and the elusiveness) of the real. Nevertheless, it continues to hold up the ‘transcendental real’ as the *true* object of historiography. In that sense, epistemic relativism – as understood in critical realism – does *not* signal a collapse into *judgmental relativism* (i.e. the position that *any* account of the real ‘will do’). Rather, epistemic relativism is just an acknowledgement that the real is: (a) complex and (b) likely to be perceived in different ways (or *from different angles*) by different observers. As an illustration, one could think of several blind people standing around an elephant and feeling different parts of its body (i.e. from their different positions). These ‘observers’ would most likely give different accounts of what this creature ‘looks like’. However, these different accounts would in no way suggest that the elephant is non-existent nor render it a mere construct of the observers’ imaginations. Rather, as critical realism insists, the different accounts would merely reflect the complexity of the elephant and the different *positionalities* of the observers. Moreover, all of the accounts (in spite of their differences) would be shaped (or constrained) in some way by the real object (i.e. the elephant would have a *generative* effect on each of the descriptions).

Critical realism would thus dismiss Althusser’s over-emphasis of ‘objects of knowledge,’ which comes at the cost of denying the transcendental existence of ‘real objects.’ In Bhaskar’s (1989:5) view, such an epistemology actually undermines the very basis for social struggle:

In so far as irrealism discounts the possibility of identifying ‘social structures’ as anything more than the effects of discourses, and in so far as it refuses to assign a causal primacy to some of these structures over others, to those precise degrees does it weaken the basis on which human beings can move collectively [to change their social circumstances].

In short, the stance of critical realism would – if adopted by AMC – allow it to continue:

- (a) Maintaining the distinction between ‘objects of knowledge’ and ‘real objects’,
- and,
- (b) Rejecting empiricist accounts of knowledge.

However, the same philosophical position would compel AMC to:

- (a) Acknowledge the epistemic relativism (or fallibility) of *its own work* within the realm of theory,

- (b) Ascribe this relativism not only to the complexity of the real but also to the political/ideological position(s) which AMC occupies,
- (c) Insist on the transcendental reality of its objects of investigation (e.g. historical events) and acknowledge that this ‘reality’ has a generative (or shaping) effect on historiography,
- (d) Treat this transcendental reality (e.g. unequal relations of production) as the *concrete* rationale for its involvement in social struggle.

AMC’s adoption of critical realism – as already applied in CDA – would enable it to address many of the epistemological problems that have stultified its scope and potential.

### 4.3.3 Reconciling social structures and human agency

As already suggested, AMC espouses a ‘structuralist superdeterminism’ which eliminates human agency while giving limitless efficacy to social structures. The need to reconcile social structures and human agency has preoccupied CDA practitioners, including Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999:21-22), who have observed that:

The word ‘subject’ is ambiguous in a way which is helpful in the present context. A practice can be understood as social action, what is done in a particular time and place, and what has hardened into a relative permanency – a practice in the sense of a habitual way of acting. This ambiguity is helpful in that it points to the intermediate positioning of practices between structures and events, structure and agency - practices have partly the character of both. *We take a dialectical view of practice, rejecting both a determinism which puts all emphasis on stabilised structures (which Althusser has been accused of...) and a voluntarism which puts all emphasis on concrete activity (which Laclau and Mouffe have been accused of... - my italics).*

As a theoretical stance, the dialectical synthesising of social structures and human agency preferred by Chouliaraki and Fairclough (above), resists either of two extremes – which are explained by Buzan, Johns and Little (1993:1-2), thus:

At one extreme, it is assumed that human beings are seen to be free agents with the power to maintain or transform the social systems in which they operate. At the other extreme, it is assumed that human beings are caught in the grip of social structures they did not create and over which they have no control.

Several other theorists have attempted to mediate between structures and agency<sup>114</sup>. Archer (1988:x) has observed that, “...it is part and parcel of [our] daily experience to feel both free and enchained, capable of shaping our own future and yet confronted by towering, seemingly impersonal constraints.” Giddens (1979:52) has remarked that

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<sup>114</sup> These include Archer (1985, 1988), Giddens (1979) and Wendt (1987).

denying human agents a role in shaping social processes is tantamount to reducing them to, "...cultural dopes" of a "stunning mediocrity". In a bid to mediate between structures and agency, Giddens (1979) characterises human agents as knowledgeable, reflexive and aware of the social structures bearing upon them. At the same time, he acknowledges the impact(s) of autonomous social structures upon human actions. Thus, when people obey red traffic lights, they are conforming to an externally imposed structure but also *calculating* the horrendous consequences of ignoring this rule. It is also true, however, that certain structures perpetuate themselves almost independently of human decision-making. "When people walk across a field, they may unintentionally create a path [which] others subsequently follow and in so doing, *reproduce* the path" (Buzan et al 1993:3 – my italics). Underscoring the notion that structures and agency often reinforce each other, Wendt (1987:359) has observed that, "...social structures are only instantiated by the practices of agents". In other words, structures only become *constraints* through the involvement of human agents. Summing up these views, Fairclough (2003:22) states that, "...social agents are not 'free' agents, they are socially constrained, but nor are their actions totally socially determined. Agents have their own causal powers which are not reducible to the causal powers of structures and practices".

The dialectical view of the relationship between structures and agency (as adopted in CDA), moderates Althusser's extreme anti-humanism. It bestows human agents with the consciousness and volition necessary to participate in *political* action. As Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999:37-37) explain:

Networks of practices and particular practices within networks constitute particular relations which can be conceptualised in terms of the concept of hegemony – as struggles for closure which can never totally succeed, and which give rise to resistance. Focusing on social life as practices is a way of mediating between abstract structures and concrete events, combining the perspectives of structure and agency.

Finally, the dialectical perspective also negates Althusser's rigid dichotomies: between 'lived' and 'theoretical' ideologies; and between 'science as such' and 'ideology' as such'. As Zizek (1989, 2004) has demonstrated, logical assumptions and calculations underpin (or motivate) even (so-called) 'lived ideologies'. In other words, once it is accepted that people possess *perennial* forms of consciousness, it no longer makes sense to theorise a dual existence in which social subjects 'morph' between states

of near-unconsciousness<sup>115</sup> and states of ‘scientific prescience<sup>116</sup>’. By the same logic, the science/ideology dichotomy becomes significantly weakened since it is no longer underpinned by the postulation of alternate states of ‘consciousness/unconsciousness’.

AMC could thus resolve problems in its conceptualisation(s) of human agency by deemphasising Althusser’s demarcations between ‘lived’ and ‘theoretical’ ideologies and also between ‘science as such’ and ‘ideology as such’ (cf. Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999).

#### 4.3.4 Appropriating discourse theory and discourse analytical tools

As already seen, AMC mystifies literature by construing it as an adjunct (or ‘second-tier’) to so-called ‘ordinary discourses’. AMC also fails to give adequate explanations of the relationship between discourses and ideologies. Addressing these questions, CDA firstly provides rigorous definitions of the term ‘discourse’, which illuminate how literature might fit into that broad paradigm (Wodak 2006). Secondly, CDA also explicates precisely *how it is* that ideologies embed themselves within texts.

Regarding the first issue, CDA has attached at least three distinct meanings to the term ‘discourse’. Firstly, the term is used to refer to “...the semiotic elements of social practices” (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999:38). Conceived in this broad and abstract fashion, the category ‘discourse’ includes,

..language (written and spoken and in combination with other semiotics,...[e.g.] with music in singing), nonverbal communication (facial expressions, body movements, gestures etc.) and visual images (...[e.g.], photographs, film” - *ibid.*).

Thus, ‘discourse’ (as used in this first broad sense) includes virtually *all* modes of semiosis (or communicating) – *which would include literature*. Secondly, the term ‘discourse’ is also sometimes used as a ‘countable noun’ to designate *particular linguistic representations of particular areas of social life* (e.g. the discourse(s) of medicine, of feminism, colonialism, post colonialism etc.). This second usage carries connotations of ‘ways of thinking, feeling or being’. As Gee (1990:xix) once put it, discourses are,

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<sup>115</sup>The state in which ‘lived ideologies’ allegedly ‘flourish’.

<sup>116</sup>An ‘alternative state’ in which *both* ‘epistemological breaks’ and ‘theoretical ideologies’ supposedly occur.

“...ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing that are accepted as particular instantiations of particular roles by particular groups of people.” The third meaning of discourse is heavily influenced by structural linguistics. In this final sense, discourse refers to any spoken or written ‘utterance’ which is produced in *a concrete communicative context* (Halliday and Hasan 1977). Usually, utterances occurring in concrete communicative contexts extend beyond single (or isolated) sentences. In other words, they typically occur as *texts* (ibid.).

An important precept of CDA is that discourse(s)<sup>117</sup> play(s) an important role in social organisation. As van Dijk (2003:354) has observed:

Language use, discourse, verbal interaction, and communication belong to the micro- level of the social order. Power, dominance, and inequality between social groups are typically terms that belong to the macro level. This means that CDA has to theoretically bridge the well-known gap between micro and macro approaches.

As discussed earlier, CDA construes discourses as moments, which articulate with other moments to constitute ‘larger’ social practices. At the same time, however, CDA also views discourses as *themselves* fully-fledged social practices, which internalise moments such as styles, dictions and genres. As Fairclough and Wodak (1997:258) explain:

CDA sees discourse – language use in speech and writing – as a form of ‘social practice’. Describing discourse as a social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institutions(s), and social structure(s) which frame it: The discursive event is shaped by them, but it also shapes them. That is, discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned – it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people, and groups of people. It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it. Since discourse is so socially consequential, it gives rise to important issues of power. Discursive practices may have major ideological effects – that is, they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between (for instance) social classes, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through ways in which they represent things and position people.

The implications of the views outlined here – for literature – are quite interesting. Firstly, it is clear that literature – be it spoken, recited or written – *is* a form of *semiosis*, and as such, an instantiation of discourse (Halliday 1978). Secondly, literary discourses, as ways of representing life in specific ways; and as ways of thinking, behaving and ‘being’, occupy a slot within the repertoire of social discourses. Finally, literary texts

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<sup>117</sup>In all three senses of the term.

(spoken, recited or written) address ‘real’ audiences. They are produced and consumed in concrete communicative contexts (Fowler 1996). Literature – like any other type of discourse – is also constitutive of wider social practices, since it articulates with various other moments to define specific practices (e.g. Rastafarian, religious or postmodernist sub-cultures). At the same time, literature is *itself* a practice which internalises certain moments (styles, genres, etc.) and which is also overdetermined by adjacent social practices (e.g. the political or the ideological instances). In short, literature *is* a type of discourse. As Fowler (1996:198) has stressed:

...literature *is* language, to be theorised just like any other discourse....[T]he meanings, themes [and] larger structures of a text, ‘literary’ or not, are uniquely constructed by the text in its interaction with social and other contexts.... We want to show that a novel or a poem is a complexly structured text, that its structural form, by social semiotic processes constitutes a representation of a world characterised by activities and states and values; that this text is a communicative interaction between its producers and consumers within relevant social and institutional contexts. Now these characteristics of the novel or poem are no more than what functional linguistics is looking for in studying say, conversations or letters or official documents.

It seems then, that CDA re-inserts literature into the wider network of social practices – both as a ‘moment’ within other practices, and as a fully-fledged practice (or a ‘discourse’) in its own right. In so doing, CDA deconstructs (and renders obsolete) the literature/’ordinary’ language dichotomy. CDA also dismantles AMC’s ‘halfway-house’ formulation, where literature sits eternally ensconced between ‘science’ and ‘the ideologies’. At the same time, CDA *does not deny the distinctiveness* (or the aesthetic value) of literature. Rather, the notion of ‘discourses’<sup>118</sup> (which envisages a wide repertoire of distinctive ways of deploying language) and the more specific notion of *genre* (which defines text-types as *forms of ‘action’* – Fairclough 2003), make it possible to continue affirming the unique (or distinctive) properties of literature. To illustrate, literary discourses internalise stylistic (and generic) moments that are often absent from legal discourses. The notion that literary genres perform specific types of ‘work’ (e.g. entertaining, instructing, showcasing the beauty or aesthetics of language, etc.), supports literature’s claim to a distinctive identity. Perhaps most importantly, CDA recognises the parity (or equivalence of status) between literary and non-literary discourses, since the former also occupy a slot within networks of social practices (Fowler 1996).

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<sup>118</sup>In plural.

To proceed to the second question, CDA has also illuminated precisely how it is that ideologies insert themselves into discourses (including literature). As discussed earlier, SFL (which underpins most versions of CDA) holds that:

...texts simultaneously represent aspects of the world (the physical world, the social world, the mental world); enact social relations between participants in social events (the attitudes, desires and values of participants); and coherently and cohesively connect parts of texts together with their situational contexts (Fairclough 2003:27).

Each of the meta-functions of language highlighted above (i.e. ideational, interpersonal and textual) is ideologically invested. Representations of reality inevitably carry ideological force. So do the appraisals (or evaluations) which are communicated through language. And so too, do the logical connections established between the semantic propositions within texts (or between texts and their contexts of use). As established earlier, certain versions of CDA rely on cognitive linguistic tools to unpack the ideologically invested mental frames and event models present within texts (Wodak 2006). In short, CDA not only clarifies the status of literature as a discourse (and a practice) in its own right. It also explicates the mechanisms whereby ideologies ‘embed’ themselves within texts.

Finally, there is no doubt that CDA is replete with the discourse analytical tools needed to systematically engage with the linguistic and narrative structures of texts (Toolan 1992, Simpson 1993). As pointed out in the previous chapter, AMC has tended to focus on analysing the basic story line (or *fabula*) of texts to the neglect of the linguistic and narrative structures used to ‘give body’ to that basic story line (i.e. the *sjuzhet*). The resources for close textual analysis available in CDA are copious. They include lexicogrammatical tools (from structural linguistics); text-analytical tools (e.g. cohesion and coherence – from text linguistics); speech act analysis tools (from pragmatics); narrative structure tools (from narrative linguistics) etc. (Fairclough 1989, Toolan 1992).

#### **4.3.5 Integrating studies of text production with studies of text reception**

AMC could also usefully emulate CDA’s tendency to *integrate* studies of text production with studies of text reception. As already established, CDA views discourses as, “...complex communicative event[s] that...embod[y] a social context, featuring participants (and their properties) as well as production and reception processes” (van

Dijk 1988:2). Van Dijk's own approach looks at both text production (e.g. the socio-economic and ideological practices which leave their 'traces' on news production processes) and text reception (e.g. the cognitive frames and event models which constrain news comprehension, memorisation and reproduction).

Fairclough (1989) is similarly integrative in his approach. He advances the notion of 'members resources' (or MR) which he defines as follows:

The formal properties of a text can be regarded...on the one hand as *traces* of the productive process, and on the other hand as *cues* in the process of interpretation. It is an important property of productive and interpretive processes that they involve an interplay between properties of texts and a considerable range of what I referred to...as 'members' resources' (MR) which people have in their heads and draw upon when they produce or interpret texts – including their knowledge of language, representations of the natural and social worlds they inhabit, values, beliefs, assumptions, and so on (Fairclough 1989:24).

MR (which are reminiscent of van Dijk's cognitive frames and event models) are inscribed, "...in people's heads,...[but they are also] social in the sense that they have social origins – they are socially generated, and their nature is dependent on social relations and struggles...." (ibid.).

The sort of integration (of production and reception studies) practised in CDA could very well be emulated by AMC (rather than be merely 'advocated' by proponents such as Eagleton 1976, 1986 or Resch 1992). Such an integrative approach would close the artificial split between AMC's production and reception-oriented versions, and (hopefully) bring about a more 'comprehensive' approach, which would simultaneously deal with the two trajectories of enquiry.

#### ***4.4 The Limitations of CDA (when Reviewed from a Marxist Perspective)***

Notwithstanding the richness of its conceptual and analytical resources, CDA has received its own fair share of criticisms, some of which have questioned its methodologies; and some, its coherence or compactness as a field (c.f. Manjarres 2011). Stubbs (1997), for example, has questioned CDA's 'representativeness'. In Stubbs's view, CDA often analyses small linguistic corpora, then over-generalises its findings by making fundamental claims about particular discourses. Schegloff (1998) has charged

that CDA tends to ‘impute’ meanings on texts, instead of objectively recovering what the texts *themselves* say. Adding an interesting nuance to this criticism, Widdowson (1995:169) has remarked that, “In the first place, it [CDA] is prejudiced on the basis of some ideological commitment, and then it selects for analysis such texts as will support the preferred interpretation.” Widdowson (1995:158) has also censured the vagueness surrounding usages of such terms as ‘discourse’ in CDA: “...discourse is something everyone is talking about but without knowing with any certainty what it is: in vogue and vague”. Koteyko (2006:5) disapproves of the heterogeneity of CDA’s methodologies: “There is no typical way of collecting data in CDA. Some authors do not even mention data collection methods and others rely strongly on traditions based outside sociolinguistic field” (sic.). Billig (2008) has asked whether – following its establishment as an academic discipline – CDA has not begun to function like a ‘power-projecting tool’ for the so-called educated elite, which excludes outsiders and mystifies its exact functions and intentions.

CDA practitioners have vigorously contested many of these charges, often underscoring – in the process – some of the fundamental principles of CDA (as highlighted in the foregoing sections). Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999:7), for example, have responded to the charge of ‘biasness’ in CDA commentaries by stressing that:

...all analysis brings the analysts’ theoretical preoccupations – and categories to bear on the discourse....the analyst’s theoretical preoccupations determine not only what data is selected for analysis but also how it is perceived...What we are contesting is the idea that a formal analysis which excludes the theoretical preoccupations of the analyst is possible.

Wodak (2006:2) has defended CDA against the charge that it lacks internal coherence, and that it is vague in its usage(s) of many key terms and concepts:

It is necessary to stress that CDA has never been and has never attempted to be or to provide one single or specific theory. Neither is one specific methodology characteristic of research in CDA....

Most significantly (for the purposes of this discussion), some Marxist critics have questioned the leftist credentials of CDA. Unlike the earlier-mentioned criticisms, which have tended to focus on the ‘minutiae’ of doing CDA, Marxist critiques have tended to target more fundamental issues, such as: (a) how CDA theorises human emancipation, and (b) how it strategically positions itself vis-à-vis capitalism *as an entire system*.

A perception which appears to be gaining traction in Marxist circles is that – *in spite of its Marxist roots* – the ‘new-fangled’ field of *cultural studies* (which encompasses CDA, feminist, postcolonial and poststructuralist modes of critique), ultimately professes a ‘discursive idealism<sup>119</sup>’. As Jackson (1994:209) has complained, “[a]ll the achievements of the cultural left in the last twenty years have been left-Hegelian revolutions in the head. The left has achieved total victory in cultural studies.”

Intriguingly, the ‘cultural studies movement’ actually has a strong Marxist lineage (Jackson 1994, Haslett 2000). Its roots can be traced to Frankfurt School Marxism which prioritised the study of cultural objects and relations – perhaps, as a corrective to determinist and reflectionist tendencies to focus too narrowly on economic structures and relations. Other Marxist figures who have made an impression on the field of cultural studies include Althusser (1969), who stressed the semi-autonomy of the cultural aspects of social life, and Williams (1977), who coined the term ‘cultural materialism’ and distinguished between dominant, emergent and residual cultural forms.

However, the uptake of cultural materialism in poststructuralist philosophy (cf. Foucault 1972, 1977), and later, in the broader field of cultural studies, has loosened the concept from its Marxist moorings (Jackson 1994). Poststructuralism, for example, rejects the necessity of any ultimate determination of cultural practices by socioeconomic forces (ibid.). Instead, this ‘new-fangled’ movement:

...keeps the old-fashioned radical thrust of Marxism, and broadens it from class issues to racial and feminist ones, but it drops the science and the economist theory, and its radical values are therefore not grounded in any general theory of human history, as those of Marxism were. Its interests are superstructural; its value theory is relativistic; it fits fairly happily with purely formalistic types of intellectual radicalism...it concentrates on cultural rather than economic struggle and sees artistic culture [and language] essentially as a site – perhaps the main site for political contests.... (Jackson 1994:244).

For Marxists, poststructuralist renunciations of economic determinism (including, *even*, ‘determination in the last instance’), herald a ‘political disaster’ in which power relations/struggles are theorised without systematic reference to their “...economic taproots” (Resch1992:3). As Haslett (2000:4) laments:

One of the saddest ironies is the disappearance of class as an issue from contemporary commentaries. Social class continues to be relevant to the structures of advanced capitalism and yet it has been eclipsed as a category

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<sup>119</sup> The rather derogatory term used by Jackson (1994:201).

from all but marxist<sup>120</sup> theories....[M]arxism has contributed greatly to these approaches since it has always been concerned with the difference of social class, but despite this antecedent, many of these theories have countered marxism's legacy in such a way that class itself is in danger of being forgotten.

Also alarming, for many Marxist commentators, is the *historical timing* of the 'new' cultural studies movement. As Haslett (2000:3) has further pointed out, "...marxism as an allegiance is now more necessary than ever, at a time when capitalism's triumph is global, and no alternative economic systems seem possible." More poignantly,

There is a grim irony in the fact that while class begins to be seen as an 'outmoded' category for current cultural analysis, simultaneously we have witnessed considerable growth in the numbers of working poor, unemployed and homeless people, and in slave labour, insecure and part-time labour. The international structure of capitalism has escalated and has put most 'developing' countries into permanent poverty so that the direct exploitation of labour forces has moved from the west into the Third World....We are in danger of forgetting not just how to act, but how to think in resistance to capitalism (ibid.).

Reflecting an awareness of such criticisms, some CDA practitioners have tried to distance themselves away from *extreme* postmodernist positions. Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999:89), for example, have issued the following 'disclaimer':

Our position is that postmodern theories thematise important issues in contemporary social theory and provide a powerful critique of Western epistemologies. In both these senses, they fertilise and advance traditional Marxist and critical problematics. Indeed, we share with postmodernist theories an indebtedness to poststructuralism – its deconstruction of dominant objectivist and humanist theoretical practices, and its radical contribution to theorising the social world and the subject form from the point of view of discourse. We do not however accept postmodernist social theories that abandon the project of social struggle and change; further, we do not agree with postmodern ontologies that conflate the social with discourse nor with epistemologies that advocate a 'just gaming' position for theoretical practice.

Chouliaraki and Fairclough's (1999) bid at self-absolution has been dismissed by 'hard-core' Marxists such as O'Regan (2001). According to O'Regan, the central theme in Chouliaraki and Fairclough's (1999) *Discourse in Late Modernity*, is:

...respect for difference as a counterpoise to late modern processes of transnationalisation and globalisation....The expression 'dialogue across difference' is repeated on many occasions in the book and is central to the perspective the authors are arguing for. In this perspective, dialogue has a dual meaning. On one hand, it refers to the Habermasian view of the public sphere as a necessary focus for democratic discussion and debate...although Chouliaraki and Fairclough conceptualise this as multiple public spheres in contrast to Habermas's unitary one. On the other hand, this refers to 'dialogue' across different disciplines and fields of research with the aim of creating new theoretical synergies and alliances (O'Regan2001:153).

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<sup>120</sup> Haslett (2000) consistently does not capitalise the term 'marxism'.

The first meaning which Chouliaraki and Fairclough attach to the expression ‘dialogue across difference’ – according to O’Regan – compromises their bid to detach themselves from the excesses of postmodernist ontology. Inspiring the notion of dialogue across difference is the Derridean<sup>121</sup> vision of a pluralistic society in which multiple constituencies abound and the only ‘reasonable’ option is to respect and celebrate difference<sup>122</sup>. In O’Regan’s opinion, the question which needs to be posed to Chouliaraki and Fairclough, is: Where such difference abounds, in which direction (*favouring which particular constituency*) should social transformation go? Homing in on the irony bedevilling Chouliaraki and Fairclough’s attempt at ‘self-exoneration’, O’Regan (2001:154) further remarks:

The problem which immediately presents itself is whether it is possible to do modernism from a postmodernist position....Is there any point at which a commitment to social transformation is compatible with a commitment to the differentiation [or plurality] of postmodernism?

Best and Kellner (1997) have described the equivocal (if not ‘reluctant’) postmodernism preferred by Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999), as *reconstructive*. This sort of postmodernism endorses epistemic relativism while making sure it steers clear of judgemental relativism (Bhaskar 1989). It also applies substantive criteria in its evaluation of theoretical positions. Reconstructive postmodernism, however, hardly qualifies to serve as an ‘ally’ (or ‘partner’) for Marxism. In spite of its denials, reconstructive postmodernism *still* espouses a politics that is ‘most active’ *within the realm of language* (O’Regan 2001). Justifying this assessment (with reference to Habermas’s notion of the ‘emancipatory knowledge interest’), and reaching an indictment on Chouliaraki and Fairclough, O’Regan (2001:158-159) writes:

It seems...that there are two ways the emancipatory knowledge interest may be realised. Firstly, it may be realised in a rearticulation of the social structures and practices of the public sphere in which the spread of technocratic consciousness to the lifeworld is weakened; or secondly, it may be realised in a radical rearticulation of structures and practices in which technocratic consciousness is fatally undermined. In the latter instance, capitalism would be dissolved and its imprint on society erased. This does not seem to be the theoretical trajectory of *Discourse in late Modernity*. The authors’ interest in

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<sup>121</sup>A reference to Derrida (1978).

<sup>122</sup> Fairclough (1989:229) is clearly inspired by this vision when he provides the following ‘inventory’ of ‘new’ social movements to which CDA could align itself: “Any listing...might include: the women’s movement, ecological and antinuclear groups, national movements, alternative lifestyle groups, the black movement and ethnic groups, the gay liberation movement, the peace movement, animal liberation groups, and so on.”

dialoguing across difference, the *preservation* of the public spheres and the extension of democratic control over language and social practices all suggest the contrary. There is not a Marxian providentialist view, but a postmodern reconstructive one. Social change and transformation, while very necessary...are gradualised in this perspective. Change is achieved through the development of self-reflective consciousness and the re-articulation of a variety of elements (moments) which constitute structures and practices...In keeping with Habermas, the emancipatory knowledge interest does not have a vanguard...it is a web of alliances, and the social changes these produce remain interwoven with the transnationalist and globalised market practices of late modernity. In short, the emancipatory knowledge interest is 'within' rather than 'without'.

As Eagleton (1983:214) once stressed, "Men and women do not live by culture alone....Any cultural or critical theory which does not begin from this single most important fact, and hold it steadily in mind in its activities, is...unlikely to be worth very much." Arguing along the same lines, Jameson (1984:184) has remarked that:

The currently fashionable rhetoric of power and domination...[with its]displacement from the economic to the political [is untenable because] the various forms of power and domination...cannot be understood unless their functional relationships to economic exploitation are articulated – that is, until the political is once again subsumed beneath the economic.

The reservations expressed here (by Marxist detractors of CDA) arise from a perception that CDA ultimately works *within* (rather than *without*) the late-capitalist mode of production. It seeks to *ameliorate* social relations (e.g. by promoting dialogue across difference) within an economic arrangement which is *itself* deemed to be 'unassailable'. Such reservations partly explain the rationale for proposing a *Marxist* stylistic method of text interpretation which 'culls' conceptual and analytical resources from CDA *without however identifying too closely with or seeking to locate a 'surrogate' from within the practice.*

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

This chapter explored key elements of the field of CDA. Some of the key issues which emerged from this exploration were that: CDA is highly multifarious; avows an emancipatory politics and eclectically draws conceptual and analytical resources from both Marxist and postmodernist paradigms. The chapter also highlighted some of the directions which have been taken in CDA. Thereafter, it undertook the task of transferring germane conceptual and analytical resources from CDA to AMC<sup>123</sup>. Finally, the chapter

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<sup>123</sup> The effects of those 'transfers' (i.e. in terms of how they have shaped the lineaments of the Marxist stylistic method) are discussed in the next chapter.

briefly questioned CDA's own leftist credentials, vis-à-vis Marxist positions. It emerged that while CDA often refuses to endorse 'extreme postmodernisms' (e.g. the treatment of theoretical work as mere 'gaming'), it nevertheless appears to endorse the politics (and philosophy) of reconstructive postmodernism – a positioning which effectively taints it, in Marxist eyes. The next chapter begins to trace, more firmly, the emerging lineaments of the (proposed) Marxist stylistic method.

## 5.0 Chapter Five: Tracing the Lineaments of the Marxist Stylistic Method

### 5.1 Introduction

This short chapter, which serves as a bridge between the (mainly) ‘conjectural’ and ‘application’ segments of this thesis, traces the emerging lineaments of the Marxist stylistic method. Firstly, it synthesises main points raised in the previous chapters to outline the key properties of the method. And secondly, it projects to the next (i.e. ‘application’) chapter by: (a) considering some of the challenges likely to surface during the ‘operationalisation’ of the Marxist stylistic method, and (b) explaining the broad criteria used to select the four fictional texts on which the method shall be applied.

### 5.2 Outlining the Properties of the Marxist Stylistic Method

As prefigured in the foregoing chapters, the Marxist stylistic method:

- (a) *Identifies AMC as its main ‘forebear’*. This theme was underscored in Chapters One, Three and Four of this thesis. As then clarified, the Marxist stylistic method emerges from the incorporation of ‘germane’ CDA resources *into AMC* (rather than vice-versa). The method thus locates its most essential theoretical and political bearings in AMC (rather than in CDA).
- (b) *More succinctly, the method prioritises relations of production in its identification of the ultimate stakes in social struggle*. This stance necessitates that power struggles (e.g. between the races, genders, age groups etc.) be consistently traced to their ‘*economic taproot[s]*’ (Resch 1992:35 – my italics). In other words, while the Marxist stylistic method recognises the plurality of society (and therefore, the heterogeneity of social struggles), it consciously prioritises class (or economic) issues in its determination of the central pivots of social struggle. The method thus distances itself away from *reconstructive postmodernism* (Best and Kellner 1997), which has been ascribed to some prominent versions of CDA (O’Regan 2001). As discussed in the previous chapter, reconstructive postmodernism celebrates both pluralism and dialogue across difference *within* essentially ‘set’ (or perduring) economic structures (O’Regan 2001). The Marxist stylistic method consciously seeks to transcend such subtle affirmation of the socio-economic status-quo and

expresses ‘preferred futures’ in which *radical* social change is deemed to be both desirable and *possible*.

(c) *The Marxist stylistic method builds on strengths already possessed by AMC vis-à-vis its determinist and reflectionist precursors. As highlighted in Chapter Three of the thesis, these strengths include:*

- The systematic ‘extrication’ of literature from the ‘overwhelming shadow’ of the socioeconomic base through: (i) elevation of the former superstructures to *material practices* in their own right; and (ii) the identification of the entire economic *mode of production* (rather than the economic *instance*) as the ‘real’ (albeit, *indirect*) determinant of all the other levels of the social formation (Jameson 1981; Bennett 1997; Feltham 2008).
- The transcendence of *mechanistic* (i.e. ‘cause-effect’ or ‘essence-phenomenon’) interpretations of texts; and the preference for more nuanced and diverse commentaries which encompass (*inter alia*): (i) explorations of the interface(s) between literary and ideological practices, and (ii) an accentuation of *stylistic* methods in textual critique (predicated on the notion that the *linguistic* and *narrative* structures of texts communicate (as well as ‘interrogate’) certain ideologies – Forgas 1982; Levine 2003).
- The transcendence of ‘socialist-’ and ‘critical-realist’ methodologies, one of whose main flaws has been their prescription that literary texts *should* ‘accurately’ mirror/depict ‘historical truth’ – as (supposedly) ‘empirically given’ to the critic. Instead, the adoption of a more *descriptive* orientation towards literary texts, which accepts that they *may* be ‘ideological,’ and which therefore creates scope for the description (or exploration) of textual ideologies (Eagleton 1986).

(d) However, *the Marxist stylistic method also emerges, firstly, from the perception that AMC needs to be mediated, and secondly, from the incorporation of ‘germane’ CDA resources into AMC. As established (between Chapters Three and Four), the Marxist stylistic method:*

- Identifies AMC’s tendency to equivocate between idealist and materialist premises in its definition of social practices as one of its key theoretical

weaknesses. In mediation of this limitation, the Marxist stylistic method emulates CDA in stressing the ‘overdetermined’ (and ‘overdetermining’) nature of social practices and in explaining their *internal* constitution with reference to ‘shiftingly articulated’ (and historically contingent) *moments* (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999). This theoretical stance effectively reinserts literature into the network of wider social practices such that it actively ‘impinges upon’ those practices (e.g. the political, the juridical and the economic instances) while also being impinged upon by those practices. This conceptualisation also strips literature of any universal (or idealistic) ‘inner essences’. The internal forms of literature are now decided, firstly, by the overdeterminations of adjacent practices within specific historical contexts, and secondly, by particular configurations of the historically-contingent moments<sup>124</sup> constituting those (literary) practices. Rejected, in this conceptualisation, is the notion of a universal ‘Literature<sup>125</sup>’ supposedly invested with an unchanging ‘inner essence’ and ‘eternally’ sitting midway between scientific and ideological practices (Bennett 1979, 1990).

- The Marxist stylistic method also moderates AMC’s *epistemic absolutism* by rejecting Althusser’s notion of historical science – which presumes that ‘pure’ (or ideology-free) ‘historical truth’ can be garnered from rigorous ‘scientific’ processes. The Marxist stylistic method emulates certain versions of CDA (cf. Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999; Fairclough 2003) by adopting the stance of *critical realism*, which has been elaborated by Bhaskar (1979, 1989). Critical realism rejects empiricist and positivist epistemologies by conceding that reality is too complex to be grasped in its entirety by the analyst. It also accepts that different observers will perceive reality differently, depending on their observational perspectives. Such validation of *epistemic relativism*, however, does not signal a collapse into *judgemental relativism*<sup>126</sup> – as celebrated in postmodernism. Critical realism insists that reality is extra-discursive (or ‘intransitive’)

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<sup>124</sup> E.g. styles, genres, dictions, aesthetic strategies, etc.

<sup>125</sup> Spelt with a capital ‘L’.

<sup>126</sup> I.e. the epistemological stance where *any* construction (or representation) of reality is deemed to be ‘valid’ – since different people are free to construct reality in different ways (Jenkins 1996).

and, as such, pre-exists human cognition. The real also imposes constraints on how it is construed (or represented) by observers. Thus, while different observers may offer differing accounts of the same reality – depending on their standpoints – there are limits; *imposed by this very reality*, to the range of ‘representations’ which they may produce (i.e. reality exerts a ‘generative effect’ on descriptive accounts of it). In short, critical realism accommodates epistemic relativism while simultaneously ruling out judgemental relativism. As an epistemological stance, it coheres much more with Marxist ontology (and politics) than Althusser’s notion of ‘historical science,’ which gives pre-eminence to ‘pure’ objects of knowledge, thereby risking a collapse into some form of judgemental relativism (Bhasker 1989, William S. Lewis 2005). Ultimately, critical realism provides a clear rationale for *organised* social struggle since it (i) perceives the grounds for social struggle as ‘intransitively real’ (or ‘extradiscursive’) and, (ii) allows that social constituencies can achieve broad political consensuses (based on shared interests) which would configure the frontiers of social struggle (Bhaskar 1989, Osborne 1991).

- The Marxist stylistic method also mediates AMC’s tendency to ‘over-emphasise’ social structures to the neglect of human agency. To address this discrepancy, the method adopts a *dialectical* perspective, which anticipates active interaction between social structures and human agency (cf. Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999). Three implications (for literary criticism) follow from this stance. Firstly, authors of fictional texts are deemed to be ‘conscious human agents’ who may very well be aware (or perhaps, even ‘*cynically aware*’ – Zizek 1989) of the ideologies communicated within their narratives. This position thus reverses AMC’s tendency to treat textual ideologies as ‘*unconscious* gaps’ or ‘fractures,’ which inadvertently ‘betray’ their presence within texts (cf. Macherey 1978, Eagleton 1986). Secondly, ‘consciousness-raising’ becomes a legitimate goal for textual analyses. If the critic regards his/her readers as ‘conscious’ (or ‘active’) human agents who are capable of ‘transformative political action’, it then behoves the critic to try to engage his/her readers at the political level. This stance resolves the contradiction once noted in AMC, where the critic – *a priori* – assumes that his/her readers are trapped

within a *permanent* ‘fog of ideology’, but then, proceeds to direct political commentaries at those (very same) readers (Poster 1974). Finally, this position undermines Althusser’s rigid dichotomies: between ‘science as such’ and ‘ideology as such’; and also between (so-called) ‘lived ideologies’ and ‘theoretical ideologies’ (Žižek 1989, 2004). If social subjects possess a certain degree of consciousness (or volition), it becomes redundant (if not out-rightly, *patronising*) to sequester them into one or other of these categories (Žižek 2004).

- The Marxist stylistic method harnesses discourse theory to address AMC’s ‘conspicuous silences’ on the link between discourses and ideologies, and the relationship between literary and non-literary discourses. The Marxist stylistic method: (i) invokes SFL and cognitive linguistics to illuminate some of the ‘mechanisms’ by which ideologies ‘embed themselves’ into discourses (including fictional texts). (ii) construes literature as a *discourse* in its own right, and therefore, as amenable to the same discourse analytical tools which are applied on other (‘non-literary’) texts (Fowler 1996). This position is not a denial of literature’s ‘special status’ vis-à-vis other (non-literary) discourses. Rather, it only underscores the constitution of literature by historically determined ‘moments’ (e.g. styles, genres and dictions) which *are* socially produced, and hence, amenable to discourse analytical tools (such as SFL) which trace the social conditions (and, possibly, *ideologies*) surrounding their production (Fowler 1996). (iii) The Marxist stylistic method also harnesses discourse analytical tools (such as SFL) *to systematically engage with the linguistic and narrative structures of texts* – as desired (but not convincingly achieved) in AMC.
- Finally, the Marxist stylistic method rejects AMC’s ‘artificial bifurcation’ between its ‘production-’ and ‘reception-oriented’ versions. As argued in Chapter Four of the thesis, the Marxist stylistic method emulates CDA in *integrating* the two approaches, and in conceiving a ‘mutually reinforcing’ relationship between them.

### 5.3 *Challenges Anticipated during the Operationalisation of the Marxist Stylistic Method.*

The theoretical and methodological positions summarised above merely sketch the *broad* ‘operational parameters’ of the Marxist stylistic method. As such, they do not cover (or anticipate) all challenges likely to surface during the actual ‘operationalisation’ of the method. This section briefly considers some of these challenges.

The first anticipated challenge pertains to the need for a strong consistency between the ‘theoretical preconditions’ of the method – as outlined in this (and the previous) chapters – and its practical application. This challenge stems from a basic contradiction where text analyses, by their very nature, often do *not* ‘pause’ (from time to time) to rehearse their theoretical preconditions. Nonetheless, they are expected to be consistent with those (‘un-enunciated’) theoretical preconditions – or else fail! Highlighting how this paradox has confounded many approaches, Titscher et al (2000:5) have remarked that while text analyses:

...are not isolated in space, but are either explicitly or implicitly related to theoretical assumptions and structures..., [*quite often, methods are applied without due reflection and without taking account of such theoretical roots* (my italics).

To avoid a potential ‘mismatch’ between the theoretical preconditions of the Marxist stylistic method (as outlined so far in this thesis) and its practical application, it shall be necessary to conduct the application so *transparently* that its ‘theoretical roots’ will be consistently reflected. Such transparency – in text analyses – is highly recommended by Wodak (2007:35), who has characterised CDA as, “...‘retroductable’ (*nachvollziehbar*) [which] means that...analyses...[are] transparent so that any reader can trace and understand [both] the detailed in-depth textual analysis” and any ‘underlying’ theoretical assumptions. In short, the Marxist stylistic method shall need to be ‘true’ to its theoretical (and methodological) roots – as outlined in this (and the previous) chapters of this thesis.

A second challenge is that the application shall need to carefully regulate the intensity of its stylistic component. Weber (1996) has observed that stylistic approaches range widely in the extent to which they deploy linguistic tools. Thus, while the structuralist stylistics promoted by Jakobson (1960) subjected literary texts to intensive ‘grammatical parsing’, the critical stylistics later promoted by Fowler (1996) was much more parsimonious in

that regard. As Weber (1996) goes on to suggest, critically-oriented approaches to stylistic analysis tend to prioritise the ideological and socio-political *content* of texts, rather than their formalistic features. Taking an explicit position on this issue, the Marxist stylistic method shall lean more towards ideological (and socio-political) critique than towards formalistic analysis ‘for its own sake’. In other words, the Marxist stylistic method shall only implement close linguistic analysis *where such analysis illuminates ‘interesting’ (i.e. socio-political or ideological) questions about texts*. Thus, the Marxist stylistic method shall identify more with ‘critical’ (rather than ‘formalistic’) interpretations of the term ‘stylistics’<sup>127</sup>.

Thirdly, the application shall need to effectively reconcile (or ‘hybridise?’) linguistic and literary discourses. Dornbrack (2009)<sup>128</sup> once cautioned against a possible mismatch “...between the highly technical [but] *simple* aspects of doing CDA, and the very erudite, lofty language [often] used in literary criticism”. While this ‘dialogic friction’ has (hopefully) not been too evident, so far in this thesis, there is a possibility that it may become much more pronounced in the application chapter, where the two discourses are required to work in unison. It is hoped, however, that the merger (between literary and linguistic discourses) shall yield fresh and interesting insights on the texts under examination, rather than detract from the quality of the critiques.

Finally, the Marxist stylistic method shall engage with texts which have received high levels of critical attention in the past (such as Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions*), alongside texts which have received ‘scant’ critical attention (such as Wilson’s ‘The Twelve Chitenges’). In the former case, the method shall engage intertextually with such previous critiques, while also endeavouring to chart fresh directions of inquiry. The main agenda, in this case, shall be to demonstrate the *unique* heuristic processes afforded by the Marxist stylistic method. In the latter case (i.e. when engaging texts that have received ‘scant’ critical attention), the method shall seek to demonstrate its versatility. The main agenda, this time, shall be to demonstrate how texts

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<sup>127</sup> Here, a certain degree of subjectivity would need to be conceded. Since the Marxist stylistic method does not possess ‘objective criteria’ to determine just *how much* stylistic analysis to apply to specific parts of the text (i.e. to ‘do justice’ to certain interpretations of those parts of the text), it is possible that two critics applying the method to the same text/theme might choose to implement different levels of linguistic analysis. Such decisions may ultimately depend on the critics’ intuitive assessments of what those analyses would achieve.

<sup>128</sup> One of the supervisors of this thesis.

which have been marginalised by the (so-called) literary canon are – potentially – *worthy* objects of critique (i.e. when examined under *alternative* lenses, such as the perspective afforded by the Marxist stylistic method).

#### ***5.4 Presenting the Texts to be Included in the Application***

In all, four texts – all drawn from Zimbabwean fiction – shall be examined in the next (i.e. ‘application’) chapter. Of these, two shall be the novels, and the other two – short stories. The texts included in the application shall be: (a) Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions*; (b) Yvonne Vera’s *The Stone Virgins*; (c) Brian Chikwava’s ‘Seventh Street Alchemy’ and (d) Chris Wilson’s ‘The Twelve Chitenges.’ As previously noted<sup>129</sup>, such an exclusive focus on *fictional* narratives was mainly motivated by the need to maintain the broad genre which AMC has predominantly worked with. As then explained, “Such maintenance of the general area of application would, hopefully, facilitate easier comparison between the [Marxist stylistic] method and its main antecedent<sup>130</sup>.” As also previously explained (*ibid.*), the choice of Zimbabwean fiction, in particular, was influenced by “...a long-standing personal interest in the novels and short stories produced in Zimbabwe” (*ibid.*).

While the sample of texts to be critiqued is quite limited both in number and in the variety of genres which are represented, it is hoped that the application shall enable the Marxist stylistic method to demonstrate its resourcefulness. Having noted this, the texts display a certain amount of variety as they include novels and short stories; pre- and post-independence settings; modernist and post-modernist forms; female and male authors as well as black (and at least) one white Zimbabwean author.

#### ***5.5 Conclusion***

This chapter traced the emerging lineaments of the Marxist stylistic method, before highlighting some of the challenges likely to attend the ‘operationalisation’ of the method. The chapter then presented the texts to be critiqued in the next (application) chapter and highlighted some of the criteria used to select those texts.

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<sup>129</sup>In section 1.6 of this thesis.

<sup>130</sup>Another reference to section 1.6 of this thesis.

## 6.0 Chapter Six: Applying the Marxist Stylistic Method

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter tests out the efficacies (and possible limitations) of the Marxist stylistic method by applying it to the interpretation of at least four fictional texts – all written and set in Zimbabwe. As previously indicated<sup>131</sup>, the primary goal of the application shall be to demonstrate the unique ‘heuristic properties’ of the Marxist stylistic method. Thus, rather than seek to comprehensively critique each of the included texts<sup>132</sup>, the application shall mainly endeavor to show *how* the Marxist stylistic method might be *put to work*. Nonetheless, the forthcoming critiques shall, hopefully, highlight ‘relevant’ (i.e. socioeconomic, political or ideological) themes in each of the texts, and illuminate these with close linguistic analysis.

The chapter shall be organised into four main sections – each featuring one of the texts – as follows. The first section shall deal with Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions*. Focus shall be on some of the **cognitive frames** and **event models** (van Dijk 2009; Wodak 2006a) operative within the novel, and on their *political* and *socioeconomic* effects. The second section shall examine Yvonne Vera’s *The Stone Virgins*. The critique shall discuss how Vera deploys a compelling ‘authorial **voice**’ (Blommaert 2005) to ‘**interpellate**’ (or ‘**position**’) her readers. Consideration shall also be given to how this ‘ideological positioning’ might be ‘resisted’ – particularly, by readers approaching the text from a Marxist angle. The third text shall feature Brian Chikwava’s ‘Seventh Street Alchemy.’ **SFL** tools<sup>133</sup> (Fairclough 1992; Martin and Rose 2003; Janks 2005) shall be used to show how Chikwava undercuts the ‘patriotic’ (or ‘nationalistic’) discourses (Ranger 2004) habitually purveyed by Zimbabwe’s ZANU PF government. The last section shall look at Chris Wilson’s ‘The Twelve Chitenges.’ The critique shall show how Wilson employs **irony** and ‘**implicature**’ (Grice 1975; Sperber and Wilson 1981, 1998) to portray an emerging disjuncture between social class and ethnicity in post-colonial Zimbabwe during the period leading up to the mid-2000s.

Each section shall begin with brief background notes on each text, followed by an

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<sup>131</sup>In section 5.4. of the previous chapter.

<sup>132</sup> Or, for that matter, illuminate the current state of Zimbabwean literature (as a broad genre).

<sup>133</sup> To recall (from Section 4.2.4), the acronym usually used to designate Systemic Functional Linguistics.

elaboration of the key themes to be explored within it. A recapitulation of the discourse analytical tools to be applied within the section shall then be provided, after which, the in-depth analysis of the text shall commence.

Without further ado, the focus now centres on Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*.

## ***6.2 Unraveling Politically Salient Cognitive Frames and Event Models in Tsitsi Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions.***

### **6.2.1 Background on the novel**

#### 6.2.1.1 Production and Publication

Dangarembga produced the first complete manuscript of *Nervous Conditions* in 1984, whereupon, she approached several Zimbabwean publishers to try to get the novel published. To her disappointment, the manuscript was rejected on the grounds that it was 'too radical' in its feminist and anti-male postures, and also due to fears that the book might not sell as it seemed 'poorly suited' for studious reading in schools and tertiary institutions (Marima 2011). Four years later, Dangarembga took the manuscript to London, where it was enthusiastically accepted for publication by the (no longer operative) Women's Press.

Following its publication in 1988, *Nervous Conditions* achieved such swift international acclaim that some reviewers have compared its reception to that of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (Treiber and Willey 2002). After the novel had 'proved its worth' on the international market, it was speedily printed in Zimbabwe by the College Press Company<sup>134</sup>. Interestingly, *Nervous Conditions* has become one of the 'canonical texts' of Zimbabwean literary studies (Ojaide 2009). Almost twenty-five years after its publication, the novel is still widely studied in schools and tertiary institutions, both within and outside Zimbabwe (ibid.).

#### 6.2.1.2 Critical Perspectives

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<sup>134</sup>'Locally produced' copies of *Nervous Conditions* were in circulation by the end of 1988.

Critical perspectives on *Nervous Conditions* have proceeded from a wide range of viewpoints, including: postcolonial, anthropological, feminist and psychoanalytical approaches (Marima 2011). These perspectives have generated a wealth of insights on the novel, some of which shall be highlighted here.

There appears to be wide consensus that *Nervous Conditions* both exploits and subverts conventional forms of the classical bildungsroman (Sugnet 1997; Aegerter 1996; Nfah-Abbenyi 1997). On one hand, the novel foregrounds the self-recounted coming-of-age narrative of its main protagonist – Tambudzai (or Tambu) – in conformity with established forms of the classical bildungsroman. On the other hand, the novel actively traces (and is obviously concerned with) the evolving experiences of *several* other female characters, who – together with Tambu – constitute a ‘woman-centred collective.’ Thus, *Nervous Conditions* has been characterised as a ‘*collective bildung*’ (Marima 2011) or, in other accounts, as a bildungsroman which features at least two principal protagonists<sup>135</sup> – identified as Tambu and her cousin, Nyasha (Sugnet 1997; Nfah-Abbenyi 1997; Aegerter 1996).

Another conundrum, which has been highlighted by several readers of *Nervous Conditions*, is the novel’s powerful evocation of the anti-colonial struggle in Zimbabwe, and yet, its avoidance of any explicit mention of the *Chimurenga* war<sup>136</sup> (Cohen 1992; Lenta 2005; Stone 2006; Sugnet 1977, 2005). As Cohen (1992:13) has observed, “...few traces of the war find space in the book...[and] the author finds her way back to this era largely free of the effects of *Chimurenga*...” In a bid to explain this ‘glaring omission’, Lenta (2005) has suggested that Dangarembga – like Nadine Gordimer (in her anti-apartheid narratives) – prefers to write history ‘*from the inside*,’ portraying the inner lives, thoughts and emotions of her characters rather than presenting any ‘grand’ (or ‘macrocosmic’) views of the struggle. As Cohen (1992:12) once put it, *Nervous Conditions*,

....explores the intimate arena of emotions, feelings, psyche. It is a text rich in psychological and psychoanalytic insight. Though material circumstances are richly drawn, the [real] arena of conflict...[pertains to] the emotional fortitude of individuals to deal with their *own* experience of power *and their own*

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<sup>135</sup> Aegerter (1996) has argued that Tambu and Nyasha are ‘doppelgangers’ who represent complimentary aspects of Dangarembga’s own early upbringing and adolescence.

<sup>136</sup> Which was the fulcrum of anti-colonial resistance in colonial Rhodesia during the 1960s and 1970s.

awareness of the complex contours of resistance and opposition.... (Original emphases).

Adding an interesting nuance to this interpretation, some critics have suggested that Dangarembga purposefully promotes a ‘woman-centred’ viewpoint in her novel in order to foreground women’s roles and *voices* in the anti-colonial struggle (Stone 2006; Sugnet 1997, 2005; Muponde and Primorac 2005). Framed this way, *Nervous Conditions* begins to assume the proportions of a particular inscription on a figurative ‘palimpsest’ presenting *competing* narratives on the anti-colonial struggle in Zimbabwe. By foregrounding the experiences and voices of women in the anti-colonial struggle, Dangarembga ultimately seeks to re-write (or ‘re-inscribe’) the liberation history of the country. More precisely, she attempts to challenge (or at least, undermine) *dominant* patriarchal and nationalistic narratives on the anti-colonial struggle (Muponde and Primorac 2005, Ranger 2004).

*Nervous Conditions* has been described as a ‘maverick text’ which seamlessly integrates modernist and post-modernist features (Marima 2011). The novel displays modernist forms through its faithfulness to a ‘realist’ plot, chronology and characters and also through its exploitation of the bildungsroman format. At the same time, the novel lends itself to postmodernist interpretations through its radical deconstruction of patriarchal (and nationalistic) discourses on the anti-colonial struggle in Zimbabwe; its subversion of the ‘classical’ bildungsroman format, and what appears to be a deliberate ‘exclusion’ of important historical processes, such as the *Chimurenga* War (Marima 2011)<sup>137</sup>.

### 6.2.2 Outline of main themes

Against this brief (and selective) background, the following line of enquiry shall be pursued in the present critique of *Nervous Conditions*. Firstly, I frame Dangarembga’s (aforementioned) preference to ‘*write history from the inside*’ against theoretical tools that have already been established in this thesis<sup>138</sup>. To recall the broader discussions, some consideration was given to the relationship between social structures and human agency (cf. Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999; Fairclough 2003; Buzan, Johns and Little 1993;

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<sup>137</sup> Admittedly (and *per contra* Marima’s view), these features are not *exclusive* to postmodern techniques or thinking.

<sup>138</sup> A reference to sections 4.3.3 and 5.5. of the thesis.

Archer 1988; Giddens 1979 *inter alia*). Exponents of this debate have generally endorsed the dialectical view, which perceives active (and mutual) interactions between social structures and human agency. As characterised by Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999:21-22) the dialectical view:

...reject[s] both a determinism which puts all emphasis on stabilised structures (which Althusser has been accused of...) and a voluntarism which puts all emphasis on concrete activity (which Laclau and Mouffe have been accused of).

Clarifying this position, Fairclough (2003:22) has observed that, "...social agents are not 'free' agents, they are socially constrained, but nor are their actions totally socially determined...." Applied to the proposition that Dangarembga 'writes history from the inside', the dialectical view would compel the critic to give particular heed to how characters' subjective experiences (which Dangarembga clearly focuses on) are shaped by (but also shape) *wider* social structures and institutions. In short, the dialectical perspective would construe Dangarembga's characters as, "...both free and enchained, capable of shaping...[their] own future[s] and yet confronted by towering, seemingly impersonal constraints" (Archer 1988: X).

Proceeding from this broad theoretical premise, the critique shall examine two encounters, two habitual rituals and one key motif in *Nervous Conditions* with a view to unravelling some of the ideological structures – organised as *cognitive frames* and *event models* – which shape (but are also potentially shaped by) these 'textual events.' Ultimately, it shall be shown that these ideological structures serve to reinforce (or undermine) prevailing relations of production – as portrayed within the novel. The first encounter that shall be scrutinised is the 'chance meeting' between Tambu, her teacher (Mr Matimba) and an elderly white lady named Doris, which occurs in Umtali<sup>139</sup> in the second chapters of the novel. As shall be seen, this encounter is shaped by (but also potentially reinforces as well as undermines) colonial ideologies. The second encounter to be examined shall be the conversation between the Sigauke family party and the nun who welcomes them when they first arrive at the Sacred Heart School in Salisbury. As shall be seen, this encounter further illuminates the contours (and the 'constraining effects') of colonial ideologies, while also exposing their limitations. The critique shall then proceed to highlight two habitual rituals, which are also described in detail within

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<sup>139</sup>The main town for the Manicaland Province of Zimbabwe, in which much of the novel is set. The town was renamed 'Mutare' after Zimbabwe attained political independence in 1980.

the novel. These are: the distribution and performance of household chores in the Sigauke homestead – particularly during large family gatherings; and dining table protocols in Babamukuru and Maiguru’s home – as observed by Tambu. Both rituals reveal the lineaments of patriarchal ideologies, and how these shape ‘inter-gender’ relations of production in the novel. Finally, the critique shall pay close attention to the witchcraft motif, which ‘surfaces’ in several parts of the novel. As shall be shown, this cognitive category serves as a ‘super-ordinate term’ for a wide range of ‘incomprehensible phenomena’ which include: the advent of colonialism; the effects of cultural assimilation; sibling rivalry; sudden death and the unorthodox behaviour of resistant female characters. As a cognitive frame, the witchcraft category appears to have ambiguous political effects. On the one hand, it potentially stymies resistant political action. On the other hand, the same category – used in relation to militant female characters (such as Lucia) – appears to promote resistant political action.

### **6.2.3 Discourse-analytical toolkit: Some concepts from socio-cognitive linguistics**

The application of socio-cognitive tools to the critique of *Nervous Conditions* shall be guided by the following presuppositions:

- The discursive events (i.e. parts or elements of the novel) under scrutiny shall be regarded as instantiations of social practice (Fairclough and Wodak 1997). Defined as such, these discursive events contract *dialectical* relationships with specific situations, institutions and social structures which frame or constrain them. More precisely, the discursive events are shaped by, but they also shape, the situational, institutional and wider social structures which frame them. To recall Fairclough and Wodak (1997:258), every discursive event is:

...socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned – it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people, and groups of people. It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it.

As Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1998) clarify, this important principle of CDA is influenced by dialectical views of the relationship between social structures and human agency.

- The socio-cognitive approach implies a specific focus on the *ideational* meta-function of language (Hart and Lukes 2007). This meta-function of language places emphasis on contestations over ‘truth’ or ‘reality’. To recall Fowler (1996:200):

Language structure, in its ideational function, is constitutive of a speaker’s experience of reality....Although, undoubtedly, some of the meanings encoded in language are natural, reflecting the kind of organism we are (e.g. basic colour, shape and direction terms...) most meanings are social; the dominant preoccupations, theories and ideologies of a community are coded in its language, so that the semantic structure is a map of the community’s knowledge and its organisation. An important development of this principle follows from the fact that communities are ideologically diverse: the existence of complex and competing sets of ideas gives rise to diverse... versions of reality according to the distinct views of individuals or subcommunities....

- Focus on the ideational meta-function of language requires a careful appreciation of the ways in which, “...phenomena (or experiences) are categorised and organised into ‘coherent patterns’” (van Dijk 1995:18) and further, consideration of how these cognitive frames, in turn, shape [event models, i.e.] how people, “...act, speak, or write...” in particular situations (van Dijk 1995:2).
- Cognitive linguists are especially interested in the ‘construal operations’ (Croft and Cruse 2004) which ‘organise reality’ for human actors. Construal operations are – to an extent – *subjective*, since “...in viewing a scene, what we actually see depends on how closely we examine it, what we choose to look at, which elements we pay most attention to, and where we view it from” (Langacker 2008: 55). This having been noted, it is also needs to be underscored that communities (and sub-communities) share certain ‘maps’ (or cognitive frames) through which they organise their ‘realities’.
- Cognitive frames and event models are ‘ideologically invested,’ and often, ‘historically circumscribed’ (Wodak 2006). They are “...connected synchronically and diachronically with other communicative events which are happening at the same time or which have happened before” (Wodak and Ludwig 1999:12). It is therefore important (when investigating the ‘historical origins’ of specific cognitive frames or event models) to systematically integrate “...all available background information” and to pay attention to “...the many layers of...written or spoken text” (Wodak 2006a:15).
- Moreover, cognitive frames and event models, “...tend to be articulated along ‘Us versus Them’ dimensions,...[where members of] one group ...tend to present

themselves or their own group in positive terms, and other groups in negative terms” (van Dijk 1995:22).

In a nutshell, socio-cognitive tools seek to unpack the systems of categorisation applied in ‘making sense’ of reality. These systems shape (but are also shaped by) how people speak or act in ‘everyday’ situations. They are often ‘naturalised’ in the discourses or *actions* of specific groups of people (van Dijk 2009; Wodak 2006a).

#### **6.2.4 In-depth analysis: Unraveling politically-salient cognitive frames and event models in *Nervous Conditions*.**

As already suggested, *Nervous Conditions* appears to display a ‘bifocal effect,’ whereby, its exploration of the *inner* lives of characters – most linked to a single extended family – effectively illuminates *wider* social structures and processes (Lenta 2005; Stone 2006). A case in point is the novel’s powerful evocation of anti-colonial resistance in Rhodesia, which is effectively ‘brought home’ in spite of an apparent occlusion of the *Chimurenga* war (Cohen 1992; Sugnet 1977, 2005). As previously argued (with reference to the dialectical perspective<sup>140</sup>), Dangarembga’s focus on the subjective experiences of her characters need simultaneously affords exploration of the wider social structures shaping (but also shaped by) these subjective experiences.

The present critique of *Nervous Conditions* shall examine specific encounters, rituals and ways of categorising (or organising) ‘reality’ – with a view to unpacking some of the cognitive frames and event models embedded within those discursive events. The possible historical origins and political (as well as socioeconomic) implications of those cognitive frames and event models shall also be considered.

##### 6.2.4.1 Anatomising colonial ideologies: An examination of two significant encounters in *Nervous Conditions*.

In the second chapter of the novel, Tambu and her teacher – Mr. Matimba – encounter an elderly white lady named Doris while visiting their local town (Umtali) to sell fresh maize cobs in order to raise money for her school fees. As Tambu and Mr. Matimba approach

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<sup>140</sup> Cf. Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999; Fairclough 2003; Buzan, Johns and Little 1993; Archer 1988; Giddens 1979 *inter alia*.

the town, Mr. Matimba suggests, “We will go to a place where there are many large shops and a place where white people leave their cars” (p.27). This innocuous-sounding statement is *already* shaped by a number of interesting assumptions. The first is that white people – as a generic category – are the most desirable population group to target when selling fresh produce from the countryside. The second is that significant numbers of white people – most owning personal cars – are likely to be found in the vicinity of large retail shops located in the central business district of the town. Thus, Mr. Matimba *automatically* ascribes relative affluence to white people, reflecting the colonial schema of social stratification – which was based mainly on ethnicity. The spot finally chosen by Mr. Matimba and Tambu to conduct their business indeed satisfies the criteria earlier suggested by Mr. Matimba. As Tambu reports: “We dismounted and walked to the side of a large shop mainly made of glass” (p. 27). Mr. Matimba also coaches Tambu on the standards of ‘comportment’ expected of her in this affluent part of town: “Keep well back against the wall so that you don’t get into anyone’s way...” (p. 27).

Soon after taking their position, Mr. Matimba and Tambu observe Doris approaching, walking “...arm in arm with her husband’ (p. 27). The fact that Mr. Matimba addresses *Doris* (rather than her husband) points to an ‘internalised’ hierarchy, which places white men at the top of the social pyramid – thus making it improbable that they would be interested in petty transactions such as buying a few green mealies from a couple of street vendors. Tambu also notices that Mr. Matimba accosts Doris in a manner and a tone of voice which is quite unfamiliar to her: “Excuse me Madam,’ Mr. Matimba said in English in the slipperiest voice I had ever heard him use.... ‘Excuse me madam, we are selling green mealies, very soft, very fresh, very sweet” (p.27-28). Taking the cue from Mr. Matimba, Tambu chimes in: “Nice maize, good maize. Nice, good.” Within this initial exchange, there are subtle signals that Mr. Matimba is a crafty communicator. A teacher by profession, he is most likely to command a much more sophisticated variety of language than the simplified (almost ‘child-like’) register which he uses to address Doris<sup>141</sup>. Mr. Matimba’s use of language appears to be *calculated* to match Doris’s own presuppositions about the kind of language proficiency possessed by ‘native vendors encountered on the streets.’ This presupposition – which Mr. Matimba chooses to reinforce – could be ascribed to colonial stereotypes, which often constructed ‘the natives’

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<sup>141</sup> A register which Tambu easily ‘takes to’, as it is ‘age-appropriate’ for her.

as ‘poorly educated’ and almost ‘child-like’ in their language proficiency and thinking processes (Mann 2004). The fact that Mr. Matimba decides to ‘conform’ to such a stereotype suggests that he is communicating *insincerely* with Doris. More precisely, he is merely ‘reflecting back’ at her the stereotypes which *he* expects her to hold. Tambu intuitively emulates this ‘inauthentic’ mode of communication – not so much through her diction (which could be deemed to be ‘age-appropriate’) as through her fake body language:

Smiling brightly, I held two cobs out while my stomach rolled itself into tight nervous knots. I did not like the way they [Doris and her husband] looked, with their skin hanging in papery folds from their bones, malignant-looking brown spots on their hands, a musty, dusty, sweetish odour clinging around the woman like a haze. Making sure not to wrinkle my nose, because they were the people who had the money that I needed to go back to school, I smiled more broadly, showing all my teeth...” (p. 28).

Doris’ kneejerk reaction, at being accosted by Mr. Matimba and Tambu on the street, is to register both shock and indignation:

Shocking, simply shocking’, protested Doris. ‘I’d be shocking myself if I simply walked by and didn’t say anything...Oi, young man, yes, you!’ she said, raising her voice to address Mr. Matimba. ‘Is she your little girl?’ Without waiting for an answer, she gave him a piece of her mind. ‘Child labour. Slavery! That’s what it is. And I’m sure you don’t need to make the poor mite work. You are natty enough, but look at the mite, all rags and tears” (p.28).

Ignoring her husband’s efforts to pull her away, Doris continues to ‘lecture’ Mr. Matimba, thus: “The child ought to be in school, learning her tables and keeping out of mischief,’ she railed. ‘Now don’t tell me there aren’t any schools, young man, because I know the Governor is doing a lot for the natives in the way of education” (p. 28).

The encounter between Mr. Matimba, Tambu and Doris appears to be shaped by negative stereotypes, which are *mutual* and also constructed along ‘us versus them’ dimensions (van Dijk 1995). Mr. Matimba and Tambu treat Doris as a *privileged white person* (rather than as just ‘a person’). This affected stance not only ‘warrants’ a calculated (i.e. ‘*inauthentic*’) mode of communication. It also ultimately dehumanizes Doris by reducing her to a mere ‘enactor’ of predictable behaviours, apparently ‘typical’ of ‘privileged white Rhodesians.’ In a sense, Mr Matimba exercises power (or control) over Doris by anticipating her reactions and, ultimately, manipulating those reactions.

Doris, on the other hand, appears to be constrained by what Mann (2004) has identified as the two central components of colonial ideologies. The first of these is a Darwinist assumption that colonised subjects are ‘not yet fully developed’ as humans – both intellectually and morally. Hence they should be treated like ‘adult children’. The second (closely related) belief is that the colonising population is essentially fulfilling a ‘civilising mission’. As Mann (2004:5) puts it:

It is inherent in the logic of colonialism that people who were different because they were regarded as inferior had to be made similar, and hence equal, by being civilized. This was the self-inflicted ‘duty’ of the ‘white man’ whose burden derived from the permanent atonement for original sin as well as from the sympathetic attitude of the enlightenment.

As Mann (2004:5) goes on to suggest, colonial ideologies are ultimately self-serving and self-legitimizing:

However, once the colonized peoples were equal and in consequence could justly demand their emancipation,... the basis of colonial rule would vanish, likewise, destroying the foundation of self-legitimation. This ultimately explains why colonizers would never admit similarity, let alone, equality between themselves and the subject people in the colonies.

Doris’ automatic assumption that Mr. Matimba *must* be exploiting ‘child labour’ is dramatically ironic, given the reader’s foreknowledge of Mr. Matimba’s motives – which are to assist Tambu to raise her school fees. Doris appears to be operating within a cognitive frame which essentially mistrusts the capacity of ‘natives’ to make ‘sound judgments.’ The Darwinist undertone of this assumption is explicitly voiced by one ‘beefy white youth’, who has stopped to witness the encounter: “What’s the matter lady? The munt being cheeky?” (p.28). As the encounter unfolds, the same vocal young man later adds: “They’re kaffirs...they don’t want to learn anything. Too much like hard work” (p.29). It is interesting that the young white man addresses Doris as ‘lady’ but attaches racial lexicons (such as ‘munt’ and ‘kaffirs’) to Mr. Matimba and Tambu and also does not ‘deign’ to speak to them directly.

The cognitive frames operative during this encounter not only shape how ‘participants’ act (or react) towards each other. The same systems of categorisation also shape how the encounter itself is ‘organized’ (or ‘modeled’) by the participants. Initially, Doris – acting as a typical ‘civiliser’ – construes the encounter as an opportunity to chastise an ‘errant native’. This assumed role affirms her institutionalized power *over* Mr. Matimba, and thus reinforces colonial relations of production. Doris’ authoritative tone when she

addresses Mr. Matimba is unmistakable: (“Oi, young man, yes, you!”). The event model which Doris brings to the encounter also envisages that Mr. Matimba will receive his ‘chastisement’ humbly (or *gratefully*), since the advice is ultimately ‘for his own good’. Doris appears to demand a clear confirmation that Mr. Matimba has taken her advice well when she commands, “Speak up for yourself, now...” (p.29).

The crafty Mr. Matimba seizes this opportunity to shift the event model (along with participant roles): As Tambu narrates:

Mr. Matimba did speak for himself. He spoke most sorrowfully and most beseechingly. Doris darkened like a chameleon. Money changed hands, paper money from Doris’ hands to Mr. Matimba’s hands. The beefy youth was disgusted. “That’s more than two crates of *shumba*<sup>142</sup>, wasted on a kaffir.’ Doris allowed her husband to lead her away. I offered my basket, repeating my slogan, for her to choose the biggest cobs. She patted my head and called me a plucky piccannin<sup>143</sup>. Some of the crowd [of black people who had also stopped to witness the encounter] cheered, saying she was more human than most of her kind. Others muttered that white people could afford to be, in fact, ought to be generous (p. 29).

The black onlookers who remark that Doris is ‘more human than most of her kind’ (ibid.) appear to be firmly anchored within the cognitive frame – displayed earlier by Mr. Matimba – which essentially dehumanizes ‘privileged white people.’ The other onlookers who reckon that Doris can afford to make the donation reflect the complimentary stereotype, which automatically ascribes affluence to *all* white people.

Mr. Matimba only tells Tambu what *really* transpired (between him and Doris) when they are well on their way back to their village, that is:

...how Doris had accused him of making me [Tambu] work instead of sending me to school and how he had told her I was an orphan, taken in by my father’s brother but, being the thirteenth child under their roof, had not been sent to school for lack of fees. He had said I was very clever, very hardworking and was selling mealies to raise my school fees with his assistance. He told me that Doris had commended him for trying to help me, [and] had donated ten pounds towards my school fees.

It is clear, from this explanation, that Mr. Matimba manipulates Doris into swiftly *recalculating* both the event model and participants’ roles applicable to this encounter. By portraying Tambu as an orphan needing charity, and himself as a ‘good Samaritan only trying to help,’ Mr. Matimba compels Doris to climb down from her high horse (as

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<sup>142</sup> A popular lager which was brewed and consumed in Rhodesia.

<sup>143</sup> An ‘infantilising’ lexicon reserved for black African children.

the ‘civiliser’ fulfilling the mandate to ‘enlighten the natives’). Doris switches to the more ‘personable’ role of a benefactor. However, this new role *still* fits into the broad (i.e. colonial) cognitive frame available to Doris, as it fulfils the coloniser’s mandate to engage in ‘philanthropic activities’ (Mann 2004). The moment Doris recalculates both the event model and participant roles is vividly dramatized as Tambu observes that she instantly, “... darkened like a chameleon” (p.29). Accordingly, Doris consummates her new role (i.e. as ‘benefactor’) by donating ten pounds towards Tambu’s school fees. In a sense, Doris is *under pressure* to donate quickly, or else be ‘upstaged’ (in fulfilling the ‘philanthropic role<sup>144</sup>’) by the scheming Mr. Matimba.

In spite of all his shenanigans, Mr. Matimba ultimately appears to achieve quite little. While he successfully ‘squeezes’ a donation out of Doris, the alternative social role (of ‘philanthropist’) which he compels Doris to assume *still* affirms her elevated status as a member of the colonising population. Thus, Doris remains firmly anchored within the prevailing (i.e. colonial) ideology. Ultimately, Mr. Matimba appears to affirm (or reinforce) colonial ideologies (together with the unequal relations of production which they promote) through his manipulative actions. One African onlooker is therefore angry with Mr. Matimba, as Tambu notes:

What is good is not given,’ warned the man in the cap. ‘What will she [Tambu] do when the money runs out? Look for another old White? He spat on the pavement. I did not know why he was so angry, but Mr. Matimba was smiling conspiratorially, so I knew that everything was alright (p. 29).

To sum up, the encounter between Mr. Matimba, Tambu and Doris illuminates key aspects of colonial ideologies, particularly, their ‘enlightening’ and ‘philanthropic’ components. The encounter also demonstrates the resilience of colonial ideologies, since Doris is able to shift participant roles (and event models) while remaining firmly rooted within those ideologies. The encounter has interesting political effects as it both demonstrates the resiliency of colonial ideologies while simultaneously encouraging the reader (like the angry African onlooker) to *question* that cognitive frame.

The second encounter under examination is the conversation between Tambu’s family party and the nun who welcomes them when they first arrive at the Sacred Heart School

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<sup>144</sup> I.e. a participant role normally assigned to members of the colonising population. Thus, Mr Matimba ‘threatens’ to reverse social roles by looking as if he might occupy ‘moral higher ground’ ahead of Doris.

in Salisbury. Tambu, who is much older by that stage, notices that there are very few black people in her new learning environment: “Anticipation. Disappointment. I looked and searched carefully through the crowd, but could not find a single black face which did not belong to our party, except of course the porters.” (p. 198). The behavior of the porters – whose presence is, ‘*of course*<sup>145</sup>, expected in this ‘exclusive’ environment – is worth noting in passing: “The porters were carrying trunks, but none of them offered to carry mine” (p. 198). It appears that the porters had become so immured to colonial relations of production that they automatically perceived other black people as their ‘equals’ or, to be more precise, as ‘fellow servants to the same colonial masters’ (Mann 2004).

The scarcity of ‘black faces’ in Tambu’s new school is an effect of colonial segregationist policies, which allocated ‘generous’ resources to the colonising population while restricting the ability of ‘natives’ to access such resources (Nherera 2000)<sup>146</sup>. As Tambu once observed (prior to securing a place at the Sacred Heart School), “Everybody knew that the European schools had better equipment, better teachers, better furniture, better food, better everything” (p. 182). Tambu’s admittance to the Sacred Heart School (together with five other black girls) could be seen as a form of ‘tokenism’ – to borrow a term coined by Kanter (1977) and later elaborated by Hogg (2008). Tokenism, which is widely practiced in segregated societies, involves the admittance of a few ‘representatives’ of the subjugated population to exclusive institutions normally reserved for the dominant population (Kanter 1977, Hogg 2008). This limited inclusion of a few ‘tokens<sup>147</sup>’ creates an appearance of ‘equity’ which helps to deflect accusations of discrimination. ‘Tokens’ are often treated differently<sup>148</sup>, or – somewhat ironically – occasionally regarded as ‘exotic’ and therefore ‘glamorous’ (Hogg 2008).

The behaviour of the nun who welcomes the Sigaukes to the Sacred Heart School appears to be constrained (or framed) by ‘tokenism.’ On encountering the family party, the nun

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<sup>145</sup> Tambu’s use of this adverbial is indicative of how the porters’ roles/social positioning has become ‘normalised’ in the ideological milieu which she is entering.

<sup>146</sup> Education for black Rhodesian children was mainly provided by church (or missionary) organisations rather than by the central government. Thus, two schooling systems existed before 1980. White Rhodesian children accessed compulsory (and therefore, close to universal) education with the government spending as much as twenty times more per white child than per black student (Nherera 2000).

<sup>147</sup> The term used by Kanter (1977) to refer to those few ‘included’ members of subjugated population.

<sup>148</sup> For example, subjected to higher levels of ‘supervision’ or ‘scrutiny’.

automatically assumes that this (for them) *must* be an occasion for great celebration. After all, one of their children has gained admittance to the ‘prestigious’ Sacred Heart School: “At the door, a nun smiling *beatifically*, made us welcome by shaking our hands and asking, ‘Which one is this?’ before taking us up steps and down corridors to a room at the end of a long hallway” (p.198. My italics). The nun appears to register no sense of irony when she explains, “All first-formers live on this corridor....And Africans [belonging to all year groups] live in here.” To the nun, there is nothing amiss in treating African girls differently from everybody else in the school. It is ‘normal’, in other words, for all of the African girls (including a sixth former and a fourth former) to share one secluded room, which is located in the wing normally reserved for first-formers. Tambu quickly notes that the room set aside for African girls is quite crowded. It “...certainly was not large enough for the six beds that stood in it” (p.198). In spite of these obvious discriminations, the nun still expects the Sigaukes to ‘heartily celebrate’ Tambu’s admittance to this prestigious school<sup>149</sup>.

Interestingly, the Sigaukes fail to ‘buy into’ the celebratory atmosphere promoted by the nun, and there could be several reasons for their apparent diffidence. One could be that since both Babamukuru and Maiguru acquired their tertiary qualifications in the United Kingdom, they may be sufficiently aware of the ‘pros and cons’ of receiving education in a multi-cultural setting (i.e. as part of a minority ethnic group) to react to Tambu’s admittance into the Sacred Heart School with a certain degree of caution. Secondly, both are practising teachers and Babamukuru actually heads another mission boarding school (albeit, one which mainly enrolls African students). Given their professional background, Babamukuru and Maiguru could therefore be construing the encounter not so much as a ‘beatific’ (or ‘transcendent’) moment but; more realistically, as a ‘basic orientation’ meant to familiarise them (as Tambu’s guardians) with the amenities provided by the school. Finally, Tambu herself is still quite naïve at this stage and not likely to fully appreciate the ‘structural hoops’ that she has surmounted to be enrolled in this exclusive school. Thus, she may be reacting to this welcome with a certain amount of complacency.

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<sup>149</sup> The irony is sharper when it is considered that this discrimination is being practised by a nun – a religious figure who actually symbolises ‘purity’ and ‘social justice.’

The encounter between the Sigaukes and the nun is thus complicated by a ‘misalignment’ of both cognitive frames and event models. Operating from what appears to be an administrative cognitive frame and construing the encounter as ‘a basic orientation’, Babamukuru poses the question: “I have been wondering sister,” began Babamukuru politely. “I was under the impression that the girls sleep four to a room, but I see they are six beds here” (p. 198). The nun virtually brushes aside Babamukuru’s query – not out of rudeness, but more likely – because she is construing the encounter as a celebratory event: “Ah yes, agreed the Sister, proud of the fact. ‘We have more Africans here than usual this year and so we have to put them all in here” (p. 198). From the nun’s response, it is clear that African girls *ought* to feel privileged to have been admitted to this kind of school at all; and further, that the school makes not much effort to differentiate amongst them since sixth formers are put in the same room as first formers<sup>150</sup>. When Babamukuru goes on to ask why there are only four wardrobes in the room, the sister responds, rather offhandedly, “It is inconvenient, isn’t it?... The youngest will have to share. We’ve got a sixth-former in here and a fourth former as well. They have to have their own” (p. 198). Thus, Babamukuru and the nun appear to be communicating at cross-purposes since the former is asking ‘nitty-gritty’ questions, consistent with his construal of the encounter as a ‘basic orientation,’ while the nun responds like one participating in a ‘celebratory event.’

The encounter between the Sigaukes and the nun illustrates some of the cognitive frames which shaped inter-racial relations in colonial Rhodesia during the 1960s and 1970s. The encounter shows that ‘natives’ were expected to be so immured to their underprivileged status that they would perceive ‘rare opportunities’ (such as gaining admittance to the Sacred Heart School) as ‘triumphant moments’. The encounter also brings home the reality that the colonial government operated a parallel system of development, which provided different amenities to black and white people. As we notice, Babamukuru and Maiguru (who are qualified and practicing teachers in their own right) need a ‘good orientation’ to make sense of basic arrangements within the Sacred Heart school, since the latter institution belongs to a ‘parallel’ system of education. Dangarembga maintains the pattern – discerned in the earlier encounter<sup>151</sup> – where at least one onlooker expresses the irony implicit to the encounter. This time, it is Nyasha who bids farewell to Tambu

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<sup>150</sup> The nun’s initial utterance, “Which one is this?” carries the same ‘homogenising overtone’ of it being rather difficult to distinguish/separate one African from the next one.

<sup>151</sup> That is, between Mr. Matimba, Tambu and Doris.

with the remark: “Have a good time *you African*” (p.199. My italics). Nyasha’s pointed mention of Tambu’s ethnicity is a mockery of the emphasis placed on race in her new school.

From these two encounters (which are presented in the early and later parts of the novel), it is clear that Dangarembga’s focus on the subjective experiences of her characters (Lenta 2005) effectively calls attention to the wider social structures and processes obtaining in colonial Rhodesia during the 1960s and 1970s. The next subsection focuses attention on two habitual rituals – also depicted in *Nervous Conditions* – which illuminate inter-gender relations of production, as depicted within the novel.

#### 6.2.4.2 The multiple burdens borne by ‘native women’ in colonial Rhodesia: Using socio-cognitive and Marxist tools to examine two household rituals described in *Nervous Conditions*.

In a critique highlighting the multiple oppressions suffered by black female characters in *Nervous Conditions*, Vambe (1995:1) once remarked that:

Dangarembgwa (sic) incorporates the sense that the margin which is the lot of Africans under the colonial system is also a physical, intellectual and psychological space with its own dynamics tensions and contradictions. In this squeezed space, black women live a life of sexual discrimination from their men and as a result black women find themselves collaborating with black men against colonialism even as the women fight their own men.

This subsection revisits this theme by focusing on two household rituals –described within the novel – which are: the allocation and performance of household chores in the Sigauke homestead, particularly during large family gatherings and the observance of dining table protocols in Babamukuru and Maiguru’s home, as observed by Tambu. Before examining these rituals, it shall be necessary to highlight some of the historical dynamics shaping ‘inter-gender’ relations of production among the Shona people of Zimbabwe. As noted earlier, such historical exploration is highly relevant to socio-cognitive analyses, which need to integrate, “...all available background information” (Wodak 2006a:15).

Historians generally agree that there were strong gender divisions among Shona people during pre-colonial and colonial times (Chigwedere 1982; Jacobs 1991; Phimister 1988; Goldin and Gelfand 1975). Shona society tended to be male-dominated, although women

enjoyed a limited range of rights and a certain degree of autonomy. As Jacobs (1991:245) explains,

Shona society was patrilineal, patrilocal and polygamous for those men who could afford to pay the necessary bride wealth. The economy of the Shona peoples in the 19th Century was based on subsistence production and on plentiful supplies of land. The chief was caretaker and dispensed land use-rights. Women did the bulk of tedious agricultural labor (sic), although men did participate in agricultural work. A wife (or, each wife) had her own plot on the family fields, allocated by the husband. On part of this she could produce a crop for her own use. Women had rights to produce from 'their' plots and had control over granaries of staple foods....[However], men had [ultimate] authority over land use and could convert any surplus into livestock and eventually into more wives. Women could own cattle, but had no right to [their] husbands' herds, nor could they control the surplus from family fields. Within the household economy, women had responsibility for meeting needs for food but men had the power to allocate resources.

Relations of production among Shona people thus gave men decisive control over both the primary means of production (i.e. the land) and the main 'currencies' used to conduct commercial transactions (i.e. grain surpluses and cattle). Women provided much of the labour required for agricultural production, but men had control over how agricultural surpluses were utilised. In a sense, women *themselves* constituted part of the 'means of production' since they were 'procured' by wealthier men partly to boost agricultural productivity (Jacobs 1991).

The advent of colonialism in the early 1890s had significant impacts on inter-gender relations of production among the Shona people, since it introduced a new social and economic cleavage between Africans and Europeans (or blacks and whites). This new cleavage reduced differences in social rank among Shona men while intensifying gender divisions between Shona men and women (Goldin and Gelfand 1975). Within a few years of colonisation<sup>152</sup>, the Shona people had lost almost three quarters of their land to the colonising population (Goldin and Gelfand 1975). Land expropriation, which was to continue for several generations<sup>153</sup>, had two main effects. Firstly, many African men – displaced from expropriated farmland – sought employment in metropolitan areas, thus creating a glut of cheap labour (Chigwedere 1982). Secondly, most Shona women, who did not join this 'new proletariat' (and remained in designated 'African reserves' conducting small scale farming) increasingly depended on remittances 'sent home' by

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<sup>152</sup> I.e. by 1902 (Goldin and Gelfand 1975).

<sup>153</sup> Land expropriation was formally 'written into' the Rhodesian Constitution with the promulgation of the Land Apportionment Act in 1930 (Phimister 1988).

their menfolk both to support themselves and to pay levies imposed by the colonial administration (Chigwedere 1982; Jacobs 1991). As Chigwedere (1981) has suggested, the need for cash in the African reserves dramatically increased after the colonial government imposed the ‘infamous’ hut tax in 1988<sup>154</sup>.

Some of the inter-gender dynamics outlined here appear to have persisted into the 1960s and 1970s, as is portrayed in *Nervous Conditions*. For example, descriptions of large family gatherings in the Sigauke homestead display the following patterns:

- The family gatherings are given very high importance by older members of the family such as Babamukuru. Thus, the latter “...was disappointed that [his son] Chido preferred to go to Chirundu rather than to the homestead” (p. 122). The gatherings appear to have high symbolic (if not, ‘ritualistic’) value. They reaffirm the essential (and enduring) ‘togetherness’ of the family in spite of separations necessitated by the movement of some family members to the ‘metropolitan’ areas (i.e. to seek employment). The ritualistic gathering of the entire extended family unit appears to be a way of mitigating the cultural changes introduced by colonialism (Goldin and Gelfand 1975). Colonialism disrupted a tradition where Shona people lived in close-knit extended family units. Occasional family gatherings (usually held during public holidays) therefore served – symbolically, at least – to preserve this tradition. This might explain why Babamukuru (and other older family members) attach so much importance to these gatherings.
- Family members who permanently live on the family homestead (i.e. in the African reserve) appear to rely on support or remittances sent (or brought home) by relatives returning from the metropolitan areas. For example, Babamukuru provides almost all the groceries consumed during these family gatherings. As Tambu notes,

The back of the car and the boot were packed with food and necessities – a side of an ox chopped into limbs to make it fit, pounds of mealie-meal, dozens of loaves of bread and buns, much margarine, sugar and tea....In fact, there was everything we needed for the two weeks’ stay and more besides....We did not have a Father Christmas but we had Babamukuru (p. 123-124).
- This trend reflects the ‘urban-to-rural’ flow of supports which developed (for Shona people) following their colonisation. Since more women (than men) lived in the African reserves, this pattern reflects the increasing dependency of women

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<sup>154</sup> A levy calculated by the number of dwellings on every homestead in the African reserves.

on their menfolk after colonisation. Babamukuru appears to be a ‘stalwart’ of this tradition as attested by his generous provisions during the family gatherings.

- All the family gatherings recounted by Tambu occur at the Sigauke homestead. This pattern reflects the patrilineal and patrilocal character of Shona extended family units<sup>155</sup>.
- Female members of the family are expected to perform almost all of the chores necessary to sustain the gatherings. As Tambu observes,

...there were twenty-four people altogether on the homestead, which was twenty-four stomachs to fill three times a day. Twenty-four bodies for which water had to be fetched from the Nyamarira [river]. Twenty-four people’s laundry to wash as often as possible, and Tete’s youngest was still in napkins. *Now this kind of work was women’s work* (p. 135. My Italics).

The expectation that females should perform all the household chores (as enumerated by Tambu) appears to derive from historical cultural dynamics which constructed women as the main ‘performers’ of tedious domestic and agricultural chores (Jacobs 1991). As previously mentioned, some wealthier Shona men entered into polygamous marriages to ‘boost’ their control of female labour power.

- The pattern where women perform most of the domestic and agricultural chores is sustained throughout the novel. To illustrate, Tambu’s mother does most of the work in the family home, the fields and the family garden while her father assists (in the fields) ‘when he feels like’. At one point, Tambu’s mother takes direct responsibility for raising Nhamo’s school fees. As Tambu observes:

[H]e [Nhamo] was told he could not go to school any longer because there was no money for fees. He cried. Fortunately, my mother was determined in that year....She began to boil eggs, which she carried to the bus terminus and sold to passengers passing through....She also took vegetables – rape onions and tomatoes – extending her garden so that there was more to sell (p. 15).

Such industriousness (and innovation) – as demonstrated by Tambu’s mother – illuminates an interesting aspect of patriarchal relations in colonial Rhodesia. Some women attempted to achieve a certain degree of independence by applying themselves to income-generating projects, such as these.

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<sup>155</sup>An interesting exception to this pattern is the attendance of Sigauke family gatherings by Tambu’s paternal aunt, who, however, acts as part of ‘the patriarchy’ during her visits.

- The cognitive frame which constructs women as the ‘main providers’ of agricultural labour appears to be inter-generational. Tambu narrates that her late grandmother “...had been an inexorable cultivator of the land, sower of seeds and reaper of rich harvests until, literally until, her very last moment” (p. 17). In Tambu’s own generation, Nhamo (her brother) not only gives numerous excuses to avoid going to help out in the fields. At one point, Nhamo even presumes that he can ‘harvest’ Tambu’s maize cobs and give them to his friends (p. 23), reflecting the pattern where males assume it is their prerogative to allocate the ‘agricultural surplus’ generated by female labour.
- Tambu’s paternal aunt is exempted from most of the domestic chores performed during large family gatherings because she belongs to the *paternal* side of the family: “Tete, having patriarchal status, was not expected to do much and four of us were only ten years old or younger. So Maiguru, Nyasha, the three helping girls and myself were on our feet all day” (136).

It is clear (from the points noted above) that Dangarembga’s female characters are doubly-marginalised. As black Africans, they fall on the disadvantaged side of a social and economic cleavage which separated black and white people in Rhodesia. However, as female members of an already disadvantaged group, they face additional discriminations stemming from pre-colonial and colonial ideological formations (as well as relations of production). The belief that women ought to provide much of the labour required to sustain their families appears to be deeply entrenched within the families portrayed in the narrative. Tambu’s father, for example, lives on the homestead (as he is not employed). However, he still expects Tambu’s mother to provide much of the domestic and agricultural labour – which he appears to view as ‘womanly work’. Tambu’s mother is aware of the multiple burdens that she has to contend with. As she explains to Tambu,

When there are sacrifices to be made, you [as a woman] are the one who has to make them. And these things are not easy; you have to<sup>156</sup> start learning them early.... And these days it is worse, with the poverty of blackness on one hand and the weight of womanhood on the other (p. 16).

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<sup>156</sup> The conviction with which Tambu’s mother gives this advice is reflected by the modals which she uses e.g. “...you are the one who has to... [sacrifice]” and later, you have to start learning them early.”

Dangarembga also shows that the event models attached to the Sigauke extended family gatherings are contested. While most men appear to perceive these events as ‘family reunions’ (or as ‘holidays’), the womenfolk – who have to do all the hard domestic chores – have different perceptions. As Tambu remarks, “During that holiday I realised that some things were not as they should have been in our family, though I call it a holiday when actually it was not” (p. 135). The contestation of event models hinted at here underscores one of the main themes explored within the novel. This is the essential ‘discord’ between male and female *points of view*, which is often ‘materialised’ in the lexical choices made by the two genders. Considering that discourses are shaped but they *also* shape social structures, the ‘dialogic struggle’ (over lexical choices) exemplified here could be a struggle to shape male-female relations of production (as well as the cognitive frames and event models structuring interactions between the genders).

Dining table rituals in Babamukuru and Maiguru’s household (as described by Tambu) appear to replicate some of the cognitive frames noted in relation to the gatherings in the Sigauke homestead. As seen before, there also appears to be contestation over event models (this time, as applied to meal times) in the home. As Tambu notes:

- Each family member sits at a designated place around the dining table: “Nyasha sat at her place reading her novel. She put it away on the dresser when Maiguru walked in to take her place at the table, graciously inviting me to sit beside my cousin” (p. 81). When he arrives – slightly late – Babamukuru, “...seated himself at the head of the table in the place set with a pile of plates” (p. 81). Here, the word ‘place’ is used at least three times. The tense and lack of modality evident in the description communicates a sense of fixity – suggesting that these places are not ‘interchangeable’ (or ‘casually occupied’).
- Meals appear to be preceded by ritualistic greetings, directed at Babamukuru – as if to affirm his status as head of the family:

‘Good evening Baba’ Maiguru greeted him in Shona. ‘Good evening Daddy,’ Nyasha said in English. ‘Good evening, Babamukuru,’ I said mixing the two languages because I was not sure which was the most appropriate (p. 81).

Babamukuru is clearly aware that these greetings are ritualistic hence they need not be responded to at length: “Babamukuru grunted briefly in a manner which told you at once that he had weightier things on his mind than the goodness of the evening...” (p. 81).

- In spite of his absent-minded demeanour, Babamukuru is alert to any ‘transgressions’ threatening the integrity of these rituals. For example, he becomes agitated when he suspects that Maiguru and the children were almost about to start the dinner without him (because he was slightly late): “You had already started,’ he observed to Maiguru. ‘Did you think I wasn’t coming, even after you telephoned to say supper was ready and I said I was coming?’” (p.81). Maiguru responds ‘tactfully’ to this implied charge of ‘insubordination’. She deflects a possible confrontation by using pet language with Babamukuru: “No, no, my Daddy-dear,’ chirped Maiguru fussing with dishes. ‘We were only just about to begin. But now you have come. Help yourself my Daddy-pie!” (p. 81). The fact that Maiguru addresses her own husband as ‘Daddy-dear’ and ‘Daddy-pie’ suggests that she is effacing her own status as one of the co-parents within their home. She is almost positioning herself as if she were one of Babamukuru’s children, thus further underscoring (and elevating) his patriarchal status.
- Babamukuru is served first, as per the protocol followed around this dining table. While Babamukuru is being served, it is realised that the cook forgot to prepare the gravy to go with the meal. Nyasha volunteers to go and prepare the gravy. When she returns, Maiguru declares that the food already served onto Babamukuru’s plate is no longer ‘fresh:’

She said she was going to eat it herself, that Babamukuru should serve himself another portion of food. Babamukuru thought his wife was making a fuss about nothing, but she insisted, so the ritual dishing out of my uncle’s food was performed again. *This time, Nyasha did not wait for her father to finish. By the time he was on the third dish, she was helping herself to rice.* ‘What are you doing, Nyasha?’ Babamukuru asked, without looking at her, so one wondered how he had noticed. ‘I thought you had finished with the rice,’ Nyasha replied, ladling meat and gravy on to her rice. ‘What about your mother?’ Babamukuru asked conversationally. ‘Do you think she doesn’t know what she’s doing, waiting on me like this?’ “*I don’t like cold food,*’ Nyasha pointed out, as willing as her father to engage in conversation (p.82-83. My italics).

The dining table rituals, described here, are clearly shaped by patriarchal ideals, as highlighted at the beginning of this subsection. According to these norms, women may significantly contribute to the production of surplus value. However, men control the allocation and *consumption* of all surplus produced within the household. In this case, Maiguru is a teacher, just like Babamukuru, and her salary certainly contributes to the food provided on the family table. However, Babamukuru acts as if everyone (including Maiguru) eats out *his largesse*. The cognitive frame operating here was alluded to by

Jacobs (1991:245) when she observed that, Shona women had “...rights to produce...[However], men had [ultimate] authority over...any surplus...Within the household economy, women had responsibility for meeting needs for food but men had the power to allocate resources.”

To Babamukuru, the dining table, which brings all household members together, is a site for reinforcing ‘traditional’ Shona cultural values. Thus, he vigilantly polices the observance of rituals which affirm these values (including his possession of a patriarchal status). Nyasha, on the other hand, clearly brings a different event model to the family meal times. As previously indicated, she brings a western novel to the dining table, which she puts aside – but keeps within ‘easy reach’ for the duration of the meal. In addition, Nyasha perceives the dining table as just a place where family members come to eat. Thus, her self-defence – after she is ‘caught’ serving herself before her turn – is that she does not like ‘cold food’ (p. 83). Again, Dangarembga hints here at an earnest contestation over event models, this time, pitting Nyasha against her father. While Babamukuru would construe the dining table as a place of ‘ritual and decorum,’ Nyasha – mainly through her reactions – contends that this is just a place for consuming food. It is interesting that Nyasha’s subsequent rebellion against her parents is mounted, most devastatingly, around the dining table. Nyasha refuses to eat the food served on this site – as if to underscore that *without* the eating, the dining table (regardless of all other ‘contrived’ purposes) would be rendered ‘meaningless’.

The next subsection shifts attention to the witchcraft motif, as used in *Nervous Conditions*.

#### 6.2.4.3 Taking political refuge in an anomalous category: A consideration of the witchcraft motif in *Nervous Conditions*

The label ‘witchcraft’ (or ‘wizardry’) is used to categorise a wide range of phenomena in *Nervous Conditions*. The label is first used by Tambu’s grandmother to describe the colonisers who took occupation of much of the country towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Tambu’s grandmother tells the following, rather harrowing, story:

Your family did not always live here....We lived up in Chipinge, where the soil is ripe and your great-grandfather was a rich man in the currency of those days, having many fat herd of cattle, large fields and four wives who worked hard to produce bountiful harvests. All this he could exchange for cloth and beads and

axes and a gun, even a gun from the traders. They did not come to stay in those days; they passed through and left...[Later], wizards, well versed in treachery and black magic came from the south and forced people from the land. On donkey, on foot, on horse, on ox-cart, the people looked for a place to live. But the wizards were avaricious and grasping: there was less and less land for the people. At last, the people came upon the grey, sandy soil of the homestead, so stony and barren that the wizards would not use it. There they built a home. But the third born son, my grandfather, lured by the wizards' whispers of riches and luxury and driven by the harshness of the homestead, took himself and his family to one of the wizards' farms. Yuwi! Only to find they had been enticed into slavery. But one day my grandfather managed to escape to the glittering gold mines in the south, where good men were said to be quickly made rich. The white wizard had no use for women and children. He threw my grandmother and her children off his farm. Destitute, they travelled back to the homestead, where my great-grandfather, although he had not regained his former standard of living, had managed to keep the family together (p. 18-19).

Following this narrative, which attaches the label 'wizard' to the white colonisers of Rhodesia, the term 'wizard' (or its 'feminine' variant, 'witch') is used in many other places within the novel. For example:

- The young Tambu deduces (after listening to her grandmother's narrative) that her father and her brother, Nhamo, suffer due to the 'magic' wrought by the colonising 'wizards':

From my grandmother's history lessons, I knew that my father and brother suffered painfully under the evil wizards' spell. Babamukuru, I knew, was different. He hadn't cringed under the weight of his poverty. Boldly, Babamukuru had defied it. Through hard work and determination, he had broken the evil wizards' spell (p.50).

- Sibling rivalry between the young Tambu and her brother Nhamo is characterised by the children's mother as an effect of bewitchment: "Now, what evil spirits have arisen between you two?" she scolded. "If you have been bewitched, then tell us so something can be done" (p. 51).
- Tambu's mother also thinks that changes in Nhamo's behaviour, which she increasingly notices as he spends more time at the mission school, are due to bewitchment:

The more time Nhamo spent at Babamukuru's, the more aphasic he became and the more my father was convinced he was getting educated. My mother was alarmed. She knew that the mission was a Christian place. Nevertheless, she maintained that the people were not ordinary people. She thought that someone at the mission was bewitching her son and was all for making an appointment with the medium (p. 53).

- When Nhamo dies suddenly while preparing to return home from the mission, his mother accuses Maiguru of bewitching him:

First, you took his tongue so that he could not speak to me now you have taken everything for good. Why are you keeping quiet! Why are you not speaking?

Because it is true. You bewitched him and now he's dead. Pthu!' She spat at Maiguru's feet. 'And you too Babamukuru! Pthu! I spit at you (p. 54).

- When Tambu's mother suffers a series of miscarriages and there is a delay before she falls pregnant again, rumours begin to circulate that she has been bewitched. The main suspect, in this case, is Tambu's aunt, Lucia:

There was talk that somebody had tied her and she was afraid that it might get so bad she would...not conceive at all. The rumours were vicious. One or two...people...predicted that my mother's younger sister, Lucia, was the culprit because Lucia was passing her prime but was still unmarried and it would be useful for her to be called in to be a second child-bearer for my father" (p. 51).

- Lucia's failure to fall pregnant, in spite of her known 'promiscuity', is also ascribed to witchcraft: "...but look at that Lucia! Ha! There is nothing of a woman there. She sleeps with everybody, but she hasn't borne a single child yet. She's been bewitched. More likely, she's a witch herself" (p. 128).
- When Lucia's lover, Takesure, is questioned by Babamukuru (and other family members) about his 'illicit' relationship, he tries to exonerate himself by claiming that he was bewitched by Lucia:

I was afraid, *Mukoma*, truly afraid,' Takesure quavered. 'You know what is said of her, that she walks the night?...She threatened terrible things. And we know what she is like. She would do them. Ehe! She would do them. She's probably the one bewitching *Mukoma* Jeremiah's children, so that he will marry her (p.158).

These various occurrences of the term 'wizard' (or 'witch'), within the novel, could be collated as follows:

The word	Its explicit or implied referent	Attributes assigned to the referent(s)
'Wizards'	White people from the South i.e. the colonisers of Rhodesia.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treachery</li> <li>• Possession/use of 'black magic'</li> <li>• Avaricious/grasping</li> <li>• Use of force</li> <li>• Use/exploitation of other people</li> <li>• Radical alteration of a people's 'traditional way of life'</li> <li>• Evil</li> <li>• Able to cast spells that cause poverty and misfortune on victims.</li> </ul>
'Evil spirits'	The attitude or 'force' causing 'fierce' sibling rivalry between	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evil</li> <li>• Intangible/spiritual</li> <li>• Caused by witches since it is an effect of 'bewitchment'</li> </ul>

	Tambu and her brother, Nhamo.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could be resisted or surmounted by seeking the interventions of a 'spirit medium'.</li> </ul>
'Witch/Witches'	Unspecified people at the Mission school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Causing Nhamo to be increasingly alienated from his family as he gets more educated.</li> </ul>
	Maiguru	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using magical powers to take away Nhamo's 'tongue' i.e. ability to speak.</li> <li>• Subsequently using the same powers to take away Nhamo's life.</li> </ul>
	Lucia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivated by secret ambitions to take over her sister's husband.</li> <li>• Causing her sister to have 'unnatural' miscarriages or preventing her sister from giving birth to healthy children.</li> <li>• Bewitched herself as she is unable to conceive in spite of her known promiscuity</li> <li>• Walking the night and capable of doing 'terrible things' to other people.</li> </ul>

As shown in the collation, the category witchcraft (or 'wizardry') serves as a superordinate term which encompasses a wide range of incomprehensible phenomena such as: colonialism; unequal relations of production (apparently casting a spell of poverty and misfortune on some black people); sibling rivalry; the alienating effects of western education; sudden death; persistent misfortune (e.g. the series of miscarriages suffered by Tambu's mother) and the unorthodox behaviour of resistant female characters (specifically, Lucia). It also needs to be noted the masculine variant of the term (i.e. 'wizard') is only used in relation to the white colonisers of Rhodesia while the feminine variant of the term (i.e. 'witch') is used mostly in relation to black characters thought to possess harmful magical powers<sup>157</sup>. This point shall be revisited later.

Hart (2011) has suggested that categories (or 'labels') have important political effects since they not only reflect the ways in which practical life-experiences are processed (or 'made sense out of'), but since they also effectively shape future reactions to new experiences. The primary utility of categories is to demarcate (or give order to) human

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<sup>157</sup> The only exception to this pattern is the time when Tambu's mother alleges that 'someone' at the mission is bewitching Nhamo. Since both black and white people live at the mission, the 'suspected witch' being referred to here could *possibly* be one of the white missionaries. However, this possibility is later excluded when Tambu's mother directly points out Maiguru as the witch who has initially taken away Nhamo's tongue before taking away his life.

experience. As Hart (2011:77) puts it, categories serve, “...to classify objects, entities, actions, events, situations, and processes as instantiations of some particular ‘type’ or ‘kind.’”

The present analysis of the wizardry/witchcraft motif in *Nervous Conditions* shall address two main questions, which are: (a) why is the witchcraft (or wizardry) label attached to certain people or phenomena? In other words, what ‘construal operations’ might have led to the use of this label (and why is it attached to certain people or phenomena)? And: (b) what are the political effects of using this label (or, of attaching it to certain people or phenomena?).

To answer the first question, it shall be necessary to delve briefly into the theories of categorisation (or ‘labelling’) developed by Levi-Strauss (1977). According to Levi-Strauss, human beings organise reality by breaking it up into conceptual categories, which ultimately serve as ‘cognitive schema’. Central to this process is the organisation of phenomena into binary oppositions, which could be defined as:

...a system of two related categories....In the perfect binary opposition, everything is either in category A or category B....[B]y imposing such categories upon the world, we are starting to make sense of it. So, category A cannot exist on its own as an essential category, but only in a structured relationship with category B: category A makes sense only because it is not category B. Without category B, there could be no boundary to category A and thus no category A (Fiske 1990:116).

Levi-Strauss (1977) cites the first chapter of the Bible – Genesis – as a prime example of the crucial role played by binary oppositions in making sense of reality. In this text, the dark is separated from the light and the earth separated from air. The earth is, in turn, divided into categories of land and water and water further divided into waters of the sea (infertile) and waters of the firmament (fertile). The divisions continue almost infinitely. Animals, for example, are categorised into wild and domestic; and domestic animals are in turn categorised into edible and not edible etc. Levi-Strauss (ibid.) thus perceives categorisation as predominantly occurring in the digital mode (which emphasises sharp binary oppositions) rather than the analogue mode (which allows categories to meld into continua that shift almost imperceptibly from one to the other). However, in reality, nature is *not* necessarily organised into binary oppositions. As Fiske (1990:117) explains:

In nature, there is no [‘sharp’] dividing line between light and dark but a continual process of lightening and darkening; there is not even a

clear line between land and water - the beach, quicksands, mud are all categories that resist neat binary oppositions.

Levi-Strauss (1977) describes categories which lie in-between binary opposites and seem to partake of characteristics from either side as 'anomalous categories'. Human beings appear to 'dislike' anomalous categories as they violate clear-cut divisions and appear to challenge the sense-making process. Thus, anomalous categories are often invested with too much meaning, or treated as sacred (or as 'taboo'). To illustrate, snakes, which possess characteristics associable with beasts of the land and beasts of the sea are semiotically 'too powerful' and hence often consigned (in many cultures) to the category of taboo. Homosexuality 'threatens' clear gender divisions, hence it is often controlled with legal and moral taboos. In numerous examples of folklore, the stepmother is portrayed as a taboo figure because she is neither a blood relative nor a complete stranger (Levi-Strauss 1977). Interestingly, when certain binary oppositions are too stark (or too 'extreme'), human societies tend to create mediating anomalous categories. For example, the binary opposition between man and God is so colossal that anomalous figures such as angels or ancestral spirits are invoked to mediate the contrast. The strong division between man and animal is also mediated by anomalous figures such as werewolves, centaurs, the sphinx etc. The immeasurable contrast between the living and the dead is mediated by anomalies such as ghosts, vampires, witches, *tokoloshi* etc.

It is fascinating that in *Nervous Conditions*, the anomalous category of witchcraft (or wizardry) is invoked to label such diverse phenomena as the advent of colonialism and the unorthodox behaviour of resistant female characters (such a Lucia). The common denominator shared by most phenomena assigned to this category is that they elude 'easy comprehension'. To illustrate, colonialism transformed the mode (and relations) of production known to 19<sup>th</sup> century Shona people so radically that most of them must have struggled to comprehend (and adjust to) this new way of life. The same could be said of other difficult-to-comprehend phenomena such as the fierce rivalry between Tambu and her brother Nhamo, the series of misfortunes suffered by Tambu's family (i.e. the mother suffering a series of miscarriages and then Nhamo dying suddenly) and the unorthodox behaviour of resistant female characters (particularly Lucia, whose pugnacity and unrestrained libido defies neat behavioural categorisations).

The categorisation of such incomprehensible phenomena under the label ‘wizardry/witchcraft’ appears to have ambiguous political effects. On one hand, labelling colonialism as ‘wizardry’ endows the phenomenon with a mystical aura which actually *inhibits* resistant political action. Ordinarily, humans do not take up arms (or mount insurgencies) against quasi-spiritual entities – supposedly invested with magical powers. Categorising colonialism (and colonial relations of production) under the label ‘wizardry’ thus begins to seem like some form of ‘political rationalisation.’ Having witnessed the technological superiority of the British (and suffering military defeat at their hands during the First *Chimurenga* of the late 1890s), Shona people avoided direct (or ‘large-scale’) military confrontation with their colonisers until the early 1960s, when the Second *Chimurenga* started (Martin 1981). The lull in militant anti-colonial resistance (between the First and Second *Chimurengas*) appears to be reflected in the categorisation of colonialism as a form of ‘wizardry’ – the use of the *masculine* variant of the term (i.e. ‘wizardry’ instead of the more ‘gender-neutral’ ‘witchcraft’) itself further underscoring the potency attributed to the colonisers. Ultimately, labelling the colonisers as ‘wizards’ could be seen as a way of explaining (or justifying) the absence of militant anti-colonial resistance between the late 1890s and the early 1960s. On the other hand, the designation of Lucia as a ‘witch’ actually seems to *promote* her quest for self-emancipation. Since not much can be done to reign in a ‘quasi-spiritual’ entity (reputedly endowed with supernatural powers), Lucia is able to get away with ‘misdemeanours’ that might have been severely chastised if committed by less mystical female characters. In this case, the witchcraft category appears to *advance* (rather than impede) resistant political action.

As a general rule, the more gender-neutral label, ‘witch’ – as used in *Nervous Conditions* – appears to give less mystical powers to its recipients compared to the masculine variant (i.e. ‘wizard.’). Thus, while the so-called ‘white wizards’ are virtually unassailable, almost all alleged ‘witches,’ pointed out in the novel, can be resisted in some way. For example, Tambu’s mother *directly* confronts Maiguru (or accuses her of being a witch) after Nhamo’s death is announced. The supposed ‘bewitchment’ of Tambu and Nhamo (said to fuel their fierce sibling rivalry) is apparently remediable by consulting with a spirit medium. True to the same pattern, the fiery Lucia is ultimately subdued as she literally ‘grovels’ (p.205) before the patriarchal figure of Babamukuru as she thanks him for securing her a menial job at the mission school. In short, the gendered labels (i.e. ‘wizard’ as opposed to ‘witch’) not only categorise ‘anomalous’ people (or phenomena)

within the novel. These labels also appear to impede or promote resistant political action. Moreover (depending on whether the male or female variant is used), these labels also appear to assign differentiated levels of power to their referents – this being another indication of the entrenchment of patriarchal values in the lifeworld portrayed in *Nervous Conditions*.

To conclude, this section illustrated how Dangarembga's preference to 'write history from the inside' (Lenta 2005) affords (rather than precludes) detailed exploration of the wider social structures obtaining in colonial Rhodesia of the 1960s and 1970s. Particular attention was given to how ideological structures – organised as cognitive frames and event models – actively shape characters' actions (and interactions) within the narrative; and to how those structures appear, in turn, to be shaped by historical circumstances. The 'construal operations' behind the prevalent use of the 'witchcraft/wizardry' label in the novel were also considered. It was suggested that the use of this label is a reflection of characters' attempts to make sense of 'complex' realities. It was also argued that use of this label – within the novel – potentially promoted (or impeded) resistant political action.

The next section focuses on Yvonne Vera's *The Stone Virgins*.

## 6.3 *A Marxist Stylistic Reaction to Reader Positioning' in Yvonne Vera's The Stone Virgins*

### 6.3.1 Background on the Novel

#### 6.3.1.1 A Note on the Author

Yvonne Vera<sup>158</sup> was a prolific writer who produced a collection of short stories<sup>159</sup> and five novels<sup>160</sup> in the ten-year period between 1992 and 2002. *The Stone Virgins* was the final offering; and – by several indications – a crowning moment of this oeuvre. It won the Macmillan Prize for Africa in 2002 and the Aidoo/Snyder Prize<sup>161</sup> in 2006. Vera's fiction has attracted the attention of critics applying postcolonial, postmodernist and feminist lenses to African fiction (Hunter 2003; Kostelac 2006; Muponde and Taruvinga 2002). Her works have been celebrated for their use of poetic prose; their coverage of 'difficult' subject-matter<sup>162</sup> and their portrayal of strong (and often, memorable) female characters (Muponde 2002).

#### 6.3.1.2 Critical Perspectives

Previous critiques of *The Stone Virgins* have addressed, among other questions, three key themes that shall be incorporated into (and hopefully, extended) in the present critique of the novel. These three broad themes relate to:

- (a) The maintenance of a pattern – established in virtually all of Vera's earlier novels – where the plot revolves around an incident of abominable violence (such as murder<sup>163</sup>, rape<sup>164</sup>, incest<sup>165</sup>, abortion<sup>166</sup> or mutilation<sup>167</sup>), which is visited upon a strong, central, female character, who then marshals her personal strengths/resources to transcend this extreme adversity (Kortenaar 2004; Muponde 2002, Muponde and Taruvinga, 2002). This recurrent pattern appears to enable Vera to ventilate some of the oppressions and deprivations suffered by

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<sup>158</sup>Born on 19<sup>th</sup> September 1964 and deceased (at age 40) on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2005.

<sup>159</sup> Entitled, *Why Don't You Carve Other Animals?*.

<sup>160</sup> These were: *Nehanda* (1993); *Without a Name* (1994); *Under the Tongue* (1997); *Butterfly Burning* (2000) and *The Stone Virgins* (2002).

<sup>161</sup> Which was posthumously awarded.

<sup>162</sup> In 2004, Vera was awarded the Swedish PEN Tucholsky prize for producing "...a corpus of works dealing with taboo subjects."

<sup>163</sup> E.g. in *Nehanda* (1993) and *Without a Name* (1994)

<sup>164</sup> In *Under the Tongue* (1997); *Butterfly Burning* (2000) and *The Stone Virgins* (2002).

<sup>165</sup> In *Under the Tongue*.

<sup>166</sup> In *Butterfly Burning*.

<sup>167</sup> In *The Stone Virgins*.

black, African women in colonial and postcolonial Zimbabwe – issues that are often silenced in mainstream (or ‘official’) discourses (Kostelac 2006; Ranger 2004; Muponde and Taruvinga 2002).

- (b) Critics have also debated Vera’s positioning between the modernist and postmodernist literary traditions (Kortenaar 2004, Muchemwa 2002). While Vera is sometimes cast as a ‘disciple’ of (fellow Zimbabwean novelist) Dambudzo Marechera, and categorised as ‘postmodernist’ (cf. Kortenaar 2004); Muchemwa (2002) has argued – more convincingly – that she actually straddles the modernist/postmodernist opposition. Undoubtedly<sup>168</sup>, Vera employs postmodernist forms and techniques in her fiction. However, she is also clearly concerned with key historical events that have taken place in pre- or post-independence Zimbabwe (such as the *Gukurahundi* war of the early 1980s, which she portrays in *The Stone Virgins*). In addition, Vera is a champion of the political rights of ‘subaltern Zimbabweans,’ particularly women (Kostelac 2006). She therefore displays levels of historical realism and political interestedness which undoubtedly surpass the ‘play’ (or ‘randomness’) often associated in postmodernist fiction.
- (c) The third theme relates to Vera’s habitual use of poetic or lyrical prose within her narratives (Muponde 2002, Muchemwa 2002). Highlighting this aspect (and also alluding to some of the aforementioned themes), Muponde (2002:1) observes that:

Some readers have expressed...bewilderment with her [Vera’s] writing. Some, unable to unlock her world, accuse her of being ‘difficult’. Yet others express outrage at the systematically shattered taboos. They are horrified by the unflinching descriptions of incest; rape; abortion; self-incineration; the dissolution and mutilation of the female body....

However, [t]here is an upsurge of insurrectionary feeling in the small people of her world. They negotiate the practice of everyday life in the cracks into which they are shoved by public histories. Yet, they insert their own ‘discordant’ voices in what Terence Ranger called the pauses...of official history.

Here, Muponde appears to suggest that Vera inhabits a private world – equipped with its own peculiar diction – which some readers have found difficult to ‘unlock’ (or to access). Commenting on Vera’s use of lyrical language, Muchemwa (2002) has proposed that this could represent an attempt to recover the repressed voices

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<sup>168</sup> As Muchemwa 2002 stresses.

of women. In Muchemwa's view, Vera's peculiar diction serves to project women's identities, points of view and their power to represent *themselves*.

These themes shall be woven into the Marxist stylistic critique of the novel – whose foci are outlined in the next section.

### 6.3.2 Outline of main themes

The present critique of *The Stone Virgins* shall pay close attention to the intimate relationship between text *production* and *reception*. Extending Muponde's (2002) observation; that Vera inhabits a 'private world' – equipped with its own unique system of signification – which some readers have found difficult to 'unlock,' the critique shall argue that Vera does not *just* occupy (i.e. in a finalised or 'accomplished' sense) the unique authorial position from which she engages her readers. Rather, she *actively* (or 'continuously') constrains how the reader should *receive* (or interpret) her meanings *throughout* the narrative. In other words, Vera dynamically *positions* (or 'interpellates') the reader as if to predetermine how the narrative should be received. As shall be demonstrated, she constructs a unique *universe of discourse*<sup>169</sup>, which the reader *has to* 'inhabit' (i.e. together with her) in order to successfully unlock her meanings. In that regard, Vera's agency is both dynamic and ongoing. It produces a unique 'interpretive frame' (Goffman 1974; Blommaert 2005; Fairclough 2004), which the reader has to continuously adopt (or accept) in order to keep pace (or 'run with') with the meanings communicated within the narrative.

In support of this argument, Blommaert's (2005) concept of '*voice*<sup>170</sup>' shall be harnessed to expound how Vera deploys a powerful system of *contextualisation cues* (ibid.), which serve to both produce the interpretive frame proffered by the narrative and while also positioning (or interpellating) the reader to receive the narrative in a particular way. The reasons why Vera projects such a strong 'authorial voice,' in *The Stone Virgins*, shall also be considered. It shall be suggested that Vera actively promotes a 'poststructuralist

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<sup>169</sup> Hurford, Heasley and Smith (2007:59) have defined the universe of discourse as, "...the particular world, real or imaginary (or part real or part imaginary) that the speaker [or writer] assumes..." when engaging with their audience. According to the Collins American Dictionary, the same term refers to: "...the totality of facts, things, or ideas that are implied or assumed in a given discussion, argument, or discourse" (<http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/american/universe-of-discourse>).

<sup>170</sup> Which is explained in more detail the next section.

feminism' in the narrative, which is radical as it perceives, "...antagonism, hostility and ineradicable conflict..." as the *essential* 'lifeblood' of feminist struggle (Barnett 2004: 5). Vera therefore needs to actively 'recruit' the reader to this radicalised political vision. As shall also be argued, Vera's political stance appears to be fraught with some inherent contradictions, which she attempts to 'suture' within the narrative. Towards its conclusion, the critique shall consider how Vera's 'positioning' (or interpellation of) the reader might be 'resisted;' particularly, by readers applying *alternative*<sup>171</sup> lenses to the narrative.

### 6.3.2 Discourse analytical toolkit: 'Contextualisation,' 'voice' and 'uptake' in interactive communication

Before defining the concept of *voice*, which shall be central to the present critique of *The Stone Virgins*, it shall be necessary to highlight three other concepts, which Blommaert (2005) links to this central notion. These are: '*context*,' '*contextualisation*' and '*uptake*'. According to Blommaert (2005:39), context is crucial to successful communication, and as also, as typically multilayered:

...the way in which language fits context is what creates meaning....Context comes in various shapes and operates at various levels, from the infinitely small to the infinitely big. The infinitely small would be the fact that every sentence produced by people occurs in a unique environment of preceding and subsequent sentences, and consequently, derives part of its meaning from these other sentences.... The infinitely big would be the level of universals of human communication and of human societies – the fact that humanity is divided into women and men, young and old people, and so on.

To illustrate how context shapes the interpretation of meanings, the comment, "Beautiful, isn't she?" – uttered by one young man to his friend as they walk past a parked sports car in which a pretty girl sits – might be interpreted to mean either: (a) that the car is beautiful, or (b) that the girl in the car is beautiful. To ensure that interpretation (a), which would be more 'polite' than (b) prevails (or receives what Blommaert 2005 describes as '*uptake*'), the speaking young man might accompany his remark with a sweeping gesture, which covers the length of the car and clearly does not single out the girl<sup>172</sup>. Blommaert (2005) describes all activities (or actions) which communicators perform to clarify their intended meanings, as *contextualisation cues*.

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<sup>171</sup> Including, the Marxist lens.

<sup>172</sup> Or, the young might even peer 'meaningfully' at the manufacturer's badge on the car to show that he *means* the car rather than the girl.

Interactive communication is thus almost always accompanied by some *contextualising cues*: gestures (as in the above example) or *verbalised cues* (e.g. “What I really mean is...”), which are embedded within the utterance itself. Contextualisation cues may also take discourse-level (rather than sentence-level) proportions. A speaker (or writer) may employ a particular language *register* (or style of speaking) which – in itself – guides the hearer as to how the utterance should be interpreted. Blommaert (2005:41) describes contextualisation cues in their various forms as, “...the *indexical*...[elements of discourse]; the connections between language form and social and cultural patterns.” Following Gumperz (1992), Blommaert points out that contextualisation cues often work together as *systems*. In other words, they mutually reinforce each other to promote certain interpretations of utterances (or texts). Blommaert (2005) also emphasises the cultural and conventional bases of contextualisation cues. Within particular cultures (or sub-cultures) cues tend to carry particular meanings. Thus, Blommaert (2005, 2007) postulates the existence of ‘*orders of indexicality*,’ that is, social spaces in which particular contextualisation cues (or *systems* thereof) carry particular significations.

On the notion of *uptake*, Blommaert (2005:45) firstly notes that contextualisation is a dialogical<sup>173</sup> process:

It is not the speaker alone who offers context to statements and generates context, but other parties in the communication process do so as well. And often what counts or what is most consequential is the contextualisation performed by the one who receives or decodes the message – the *uptake*.

Here, Blommaert suggests that the contextualisation cues provided by communicators may be interpreted *differently* by their audiences, particularly, if those listeners/readers emanate from different ‘orders of indexicality’. Thus, *uptake* sometimes fails to match the interpretations *intended* by communicators.

Against this background, Blommaert (2005:45) proceeds to define ‘voice’ as follows:

The concept of voice is...the capacity to *cause an uptake* close enough to one’s desired contextualisation. What people do with words...is to produce *conditions for uptake*, conditions for voice, but as soon as these conditions are produced, uptake is fully a social process...”.

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<sup>173</sup> i.e. a ‘negotiated’ process in which two or more minds ‘meet’ to jointly ‘establish’ the context (Bakhtin 1986).

In short, what gives a particular communicator ‘voice’<sup>174</sup> is his/her capacity to *constrain* hearers/readers interpretations so that the *intended* meaning is received. As Blommaert makes clear, the capacity to *cause* one’s desired uptake is not guaranteed at all. All the communicator can do is “...produce [adequate] conditions for uptake” (Blommaert 2005:45). The final fate of the utterance (i.e. how it is interpreted) lies in the dynamics of meaning-negotiation between speakers/writers and hearers/readers.

Blommaert (2005) then highlights some of the contextualisation cues – normally working within systems – which communicators employ to project their ‘voices’ (or to promote their desired ‘uptakes’ or interpretations). These cues include: *recontextualisation*; *intertextuality*; *frames* and *footings* as well as *entextualisation*.

Briefly, *recontextualisation* has to do with how information drawn from other sources (e.g. other books or other narratives) is modified or adjusted by the speaker/writer so that it suits the contextualisation at hand. Thus, a previously read book “...is re-set in a new contextualisation universe and becomes a new book” (Blommaert 2005:46). The manner in which previous texts (or narratives) are recontextualised in the ‘present text’, in itself, constitutes a cue as to how the immediate text should be interpreted. A Western novel, for example, may draw in and recontextualise previous narratives (e.g. the American civil war) in such a way that a *different* reading of that war becomes warranted. Thus, the historical narrative is assimilated into a new context of interpretation in ways which hint at how that new context, itself, ought to be ‘understood’.

The broad context in which the Western novel ought to be understood, is what Blommaert (following Goffman 1974) describes as the *frame*. As Blommaert (2005:46) explains, people, “...construct *interpretative universes* in which utterances are set and offered for interpretation”. Within the frame in which Western novels (to extend the example) are, “...set and offered for interpretation” (ibid.), people may be shot dead, and their deaths be (nonchalantly) described as ‘biting the dust’. If a reader were to react by crying, ‘Shame!’ or ‘How cruel!’, the novel would have *failed* to achieve its desired

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<sup>174</sup>Blommaert’s concept of ‘voice’ thus confers *agency* on communicators. In a sense, the concept resonates with the notion of ‘voice’ used in SFL – where voice can either be active or passive depending on the agency assigned to a particular subject.

uptake – either due to its own ineffectual ‘voice’, or perhaps, due to the reader’s ‘imperviousness’ (or resistance) to the contextualisation cues provided in the text. Blommaert (2005:46) also points out that *multiple* interpretive frames may operate simultaneously; that is:

...different potential sets of interpretive universes, [can be offered] between which interlocutors can choose or *shift footing*. In the space of one conversation, for instance, something that was a ‘serious’ utterance can be re-framed as a joke by a change in footing.

As shall be seen (in the forthcoming critique of *The Stone Virgins*), there appears to be a conspicuous *lack* of ‘shifts in footing’ within the narrative. Instead, Vera appears to be determined to ‘immerse’ her readers within the particular universe of discourse constructed by the author. .

The fourth contextualisation cue highlighted by Blommaert (2005) is *intertextuality*. Fairclough (2003:17) has provided a succinct definition of intertextuality as,

...how texts draw upon, incorporate, recontextualise and dialogue with other texts. [intertextuality]...is also partly a matter of the assumptions and presuppositions people make when they speak or write. What is ‘said’ in a text is always said against a background of what is ‘unsaid’ – what is made explicit is always grounded in what is left implicit. In a sense, making assumptions is one way of being intertextual – linking this text to a penumbra of other texts, what has been said or written or at least thought elsewhere.

In his definition of this concept, Blommaert draws attention to how certain words (or expressions) carry historically or culturally endowed meanings, which persist into ‘current’ contexts of use. An author’s decision to either adopt or *adapt* a historically established meaning, in itself, serves as a cue indicating how they would like to be interpreted. Vera, for example, rejects (or interrogates) ‘standardised’ terms such as ‘independence’ (as used in Zimbabwean political discourses). Such interrogation of established meanings signals that nothing – in this novel – should be taken for granted. Rather, conventional terms are likely to be rendered problematic (or ‘uncertain’) in the contextualisation provided in the novel.

Finally, Blommaert (2005) explains the concept of *entextualisation*. This refers to the ‘lifting’ of discourses out of their original (often spoken) contexts of occurrence and their representation in new textualised (i.e. written) forms. As Blommaert (2005:47) puts it:

‘Original’ pieces of discourse – socially, culturally and historically situated unique events – are lifted out of their original context and transmitted, by

quoting or echoing them, by writing them down, by inserting them into another discourse, by using them as ‘examples’ (or as ‘data’ for scientific analysis). This decontextualisation and recontextualisation adds a new metadiscursive context to the text; instead of its original context-of-production, the text is accompanied by a metadiscursive complex suggesting all kinds of things *about* the text.

Further, (and perhaps, more germane to the present discussion):

Entextualisation builds further on notions of the reflexive nature of language usage. Every utterance not only says something *in* itself (i.e. about the world, about an extralinguistic referent of some kind), but it also says something *about* itself, and hence, every ‘pragmatics’ (every way of handling language) goes hand in hand with a ‘metapragmatics’ (comments about, references to, the way of handling language - *ibid.*).

The next subsection examines the contextualisation cues used by Vera in *The Stone Virgins* to promote an uptake that validates her radicalized vision of feminism. As shall be shown, Vera appears to work, quite actively, to *impose* a particular interpretive frame on her readers.

### 6.3.3 In-depth analysis: Vera’s ‘interpellative voice’ in *The Stone Virgins*

In *The Stone Virgins*, Vera deploys a comprehensive system of contextualisation cues to promote a particular reading (or uptake) of the novel. One of the most prominent contextualisation cues deployed by Vera is the language used within the narrative. Vera revels in lexical, syntactic and semantic choices which violate ‘conventional’ norms. By so doing, Vera sets *preconditions* for the ‘interpretability’ of the text. Readers either ‘buy into’ this mode of using language, and ‘gain entry’ into this particular universe of discourse; or ‘refuse’ to accept such a mode of communication, thereby excluding themselves from the interpretive frame proffered by narrative. In that sense, Vera’s diction appears to serve a ‘gate-keeping’ function, as has been suggested by Muponde (2002). Illustrating how some readers fail to ‘unlock’ Vera’s universe of discourse, one (anonymous) reader, has complained:

Vera's writing could be described as vivid and graphic. It also strains for poetry and could possibly be described as lyrical. It certainly is full of fancy prose. Unfortunately, only a few bits are effective - and the bulk of the book is more *annoying* than anything else. Much of what she [Vera] writes might, to some readers, sound somehow impressive, but doesn't make any sense.... Among the examples:

The river had been so burned by the sun, you can measure it grain by glittering grain, and by the number of children swarming on it like bees.

Their voices more temporary than darkness.

The soil is chaos and ash. I enter into its burning. The soil is warm like a liquid.

Day is deep, sonorous, reverberating.

Some of this sounds like it might mean something, or make sense, but read closely it doesn't. Why on earth: "warm as a liquid"? What is the point of that? Or: "more temporary than darkness". Surely, darkness can last any variety of periods - ended with the flip of a light switch or continuing...for the duration of an entire night.... A few such sentences can be endured or overlooked, but the problem here is that *practically the whole book consists of them*. Some readers might be able to appreciate this sort of writing. We can't. [www.complete-review.com/reviews/zimbabwe/vera3.htm](http://www.complete-review.com/reviews/zimbabwe/vera3.htm) (My italics).

The point missed by the 'annoyed reader' (above), is that there might be a method (or *purpose*) to Vera's 'outlandish' diction.' The diction is, *itself*, one of the preconditions for accessing the interpretive frame constructed (for readers) by the author. Through her lyrical language, Vera ushers her readers into poststructuralist universe of discourse in which, "[e]very verbal signification lies at the confluence of countless semantic rivers" (Levinas 2003:11). Positioned within such a 'universe,' the reader is effectively groomed (or prepared) to 'buy into' the radical feminist vision promoted within the novel.

Another contextualisation cue, which Vera uses to constrain her readers' uptake of the narrative, is her radical 'decentring' of the characters. Vera displaces her characters from being, "...the secure foundation of thought and the world..." (Callinicos 1982:30) to being the mere "...result of certain relationships which both were prior to and exceeded [them]" (ibid.). Vera's characters are fictive embodiments of Lacan's (1977:264) decentred subjects, who might say of themselves, "I think where I am not, therefore I am where I do not think"; or, in Callinicos's (1982:38) paraphrase, "I am not within the circle of self-consciousness, but somewhere else, in the unconscious." Cephas, for example, *just follows* Thenjiwe home, like iron filings attracted by a magnet, and promptly becomes her lover:

As he stands briefly where Shoeshine bus has been, he knows that the swing in her walk places a claim on the entire earth. He is part of that earth, so he follows her like a shadow... (p. 40).

Thenjiwe also *just allows* this stranger to take over her life:

So here he is, this man. And if the man has followed her all the way from Thandabantu store like a helpless child, what is she supposed to do? What does a beehive do with a multitude of bees but harbour them and provide each a delicate task, each a shelter (p.41).

Later on in the novel, Sibaso descends from the Gulati hills – almost randomly – and kills Thenjiwe before raping and mutilating Nonceba. The brutal attack occurs in a surrealistic aura, as if happening in a dream: “He [Sibaso] may forget why he is here, why she [Nonceba] is with him, who she is. He too may be stunned by his own dramatic presence” (p. 43). Vindicating Blommaert’s (2005) point that contextualisation cues often work as a *system*, the ‘decentredness’ of Vera’s characters partly justifies the lyrical (if not sometimes, almost *incoherent*) language used to describe human experience within the novel. As Callinicos (1982:38-39) has noted:

The subject has become decentred: its meaning no longer lies in the self-certainty of the *cogito*, but in ‘the other scene’..., of which Freud speaks in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, ‘where it speaks. Its presence is to be detected in the gaps, the slips of the tongue, of everyday talk and the fragmented discourse of the dream.

Indeed, the ‘unconscious’ of Vera’s characters often speaks out in slips of the tongue or in the ‘fragmented discourse of dreams.’ The intense love relationship between Thenjiwe and Cephas, for example, is almost ‘unspeakable,’ since it is rooted in the unconscious. It is thus expressed in fragmented, almost, encrypted language: “He counts each circle of bone on her back. She wishes to conceive a child from this man. He would be a dream child from head to toe. She would name him Muzhanje?” (p. 43).

A curious feature of *The Stone Virgins* is that characters rarely use direct speech<sup>175</sup>. The few moments when direct speech (marked by quotation marks) is used are those times when a character remembers (or overhears) verbal exchanges. For example, Nonceba *recalls* her aunt Sihle’s direct speech (p.112). She also overhears some people talking in the hospital corridors about a woman who was forced to kill her own husband by government soldiers (p. 87). With the exception of such moments, the predominant mode of representing characters’ utterances is through *free indirect discourse* (henceforth, FID). FID – as described by Toolan (1988) – is a narrative technique which, among other features:

- Eliminates the reporting omniscient narrator (i.e. the orienting and evaluating raconteur who inserts such comments as, ‘...said Nonceba’ or ‘...shouted Sibaso’).

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<sup>175</sup> A notable exception to this pattern occurs in the episode chapter sixteen where Nonceba and Cephas exchange a ‘sustained dialogue’. As shall be argued, later, this ‘unusual’ scene marks a point where the ‘dreamlike bubble’ – sustained in much of the novel – is ruptured.

- FID also blurs the boundary between spoken utterances and *unspoken* ‘streams of consciousness’ - hence its (usual) non-use of quotation marks (e.g.: Today she must speak her mind....).
- It also often uses proximal deictics (e.g. ‘here’, ‘now’, ‘today’ etc. – as in the above example), even where (supposedly) *past* events or processes are being recounted.
- It typically inverts the clause subject and the finite element in the verb – usually in questions posed by a focalising character: (e.g. ‘Was she quite mad? How did he have the time to keep coming to see her?’ – Toolan 1988:123).
- Finally, characters (rather than the omniscient narrator) are often the *sources* of the modality markers occurring in FID (e.g. What he *ought to* do immediately is sell all his property and go to live on the beach).

The following (randomly chosen) extracts from the murder/rape scene (in Chapter Six of *The Stone Virgins*), illustrates Vera’s use of this narrative technique:

Her mind is scalded with the presence of his arms.

Are you afraid to look at me, he whispers. He cups her chin as though parts of her are crumbling, falling, blowing off with the wind....

He rocks her back and forth. Forwards, rocking back. He seeks the inside of her thighs, her dark skin, hard, over her knees. He holds her dark bone.

Hold me. Touch me here. Look at me. I said touch me here. She drops her arms from his neck....

The cruel surface of his body as it accompanies hers, solid. He leads her, moment by moment, to a place that only he has imagined. That cry comes directly from her mind, not from her mouth. Where is he taking her? (p.72).

Because it effaces the orienting and *evaluating* omniscient narrator<sup>176</sup>, FID affords Vera’s characters the leeway to think or say *almost anything*. As Toolan (1988:118) has pointed out, FID jettisons, “...the narratorial voice [which passes] ‘true judgment’ [and] intrudes to censure...character[s]”. However, FID simultaneously enhances *authorial control* on the language (or discourse) produced by characters. FID filters out the ‘raw utterances’ (or direct speech) which individual characters might have produced, thus subsuming their language under the discourse *preferred* by the author:

...the crucial question in FID...is, ‘To whom do we attribute these spoken words or articulated thoughts?’ In direct speech, it is definitely the character who speaks, in indirect speech, it is definitely the narrator who speaks, while

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<sup>176</sup> In the above extract, it is actually Nonceba (rather than the omniscient narrator) who senses that Sibaso ‘whispers’ the question, “Are you afraid to look at me?”

in FID it seems to be really the character who speaks, *but the speech appears embedded in the narrator's framing speech* (Toolan 1988:125 – my italics).

The authorial control (on language) described here is analogous to the processes of 'recontextualisation' and 'entextualisation' discussed by Blommaert (2005). To recall, recontextualisation assimilates prior discourses (and utterances) into new contexts of interpretation. In this case, whatever Vera's characters might have said *in their own language* becomes filtered or recontextualised (via FID) into the 'poststructuralist discourse' pervading the novel. Entextualisation, on the other hand, is the process where:

'[o]riginal' pieces of discourse...[including *spoken* utterances] are lifted out of their original context and [inserted] into another discourse....This decontextualisation and recontextualisation adds a new metadiscursive context to the text; instead of its original context-of-production, the text is accompanied by a metadiscursive complex suggesting all kinds of things *about* the text (Blommaert 2005:47).

Vera's assiduity in filtering out her characters' direct speech (i.e. through FID), preserves the dreamlike ambience of the narrative. FID thus works (together with other contextualisation cues) to sustain the 'poststructuralist ethos' promoted within the narrative.

Finally, Vera also employs *intertextual* references to 'clinch' the poststructuralist ambience promoted within her narrative. Broadly speaking, these intertextual references fall into two types. The first consists of allusions to elements of poststructuralist social theory. The second consists of *deconstructive* allusions to some of the historical meta-narratives ontologised in Zimbabwe. To start with the former, Sibaso evokes Foucault (1972, 1978) when he ruminates (while hiding in the Mbelele cave) that, "...history has its ceiling" (p.82). As discussed (in chapter four), Foucault holds that social subjects think, act and speak *within* specific historical archives. Archives thus impose limits (or 'ceilings') on what their occupants can think, do or say:

When he [Sibaso] stands, his head hits against something heavy – he discovers that history has its ceiling. He is surprised. He has to crouch, and his body has to assume a defensive attitude; the desire to attack. If he loses an enemy, he invents another....It is a posture both individual and wasteful. He cannot escape. He is the embodiment of time (p. 82).

That Sibaso is permanently 'interned' within 'a liberation war archive' (which Vera compares to "...a cubicle of time" - p. 83) is strongly suggested when he later observes that:

You cannot hide near a rock, you enter it, you hide inside, in its largest cavity.  
A room in a rock where you may swing your arms, where leopards give birth.  
Your eyes sweep over the course-grained surface – you are alone, as a carcass  
immured (p. 101-102).

Vera's preoccupation with *fields* and *species* of power is reminiscent of Bourdieu and Wacquant's (1992) treatment of these themes. Forms of power – in Sibaso's mind – are symbolised by different species of spiders, some of which walk on water while others are said to dance alongside wasps. Yet another type kills its partners, just after mating:

There is a type of spider which changes colour when mating. It devours its own partner and rolls him into a fine paste. With this it courts the next partner...Such a spider possesses a valuable secret, the knowledge that love cannot be founded on mercy, but that mercy can be founded on love (p. 84).

The motif of spiders epitomises Sibaso's own condition. Sibaso has literally internalised the cult of power symbolised by spiders since he ate, "...handfuls of spider legs throughout the war"(p.82). Sibaso's eternal internment within a specific historical archive is symbolised by:

...a spider which gathers all its kin before an earthquake, sending its messages through the air. Together the spiders gather into a cubicle of time, a bowl in peeling rock, a basin where the earth has been eaten by rain; before an earthquake, before the advance of an enemy, and war.

The *ephemeral* nature of Sibaso's power also mimics the conditional power of spiders. Sibaso atrophies in the absence of (or in-between episodes of) violence. In that regard, he is like spiders, which wield tremendous power when sitting on their webs, but which turn out to be weak if not puny creatures, once removed from those sites (or fields) of power.

As already suggested, Vera combines allusions to poststructuralist theory with *deconstructions* of some mainstream Zimbabwean meta-narratives. Although the first part of *The Stone Virgins* is set between 1950 and 1980 (i.e. the period coinciding with the 'much venerated'<sup>177</sup> Zimbabwean war of liberation), the war itself is hardly mentioned (nor does it even appear to 'register' in the collective memory of the ordinary people of Kezi). What really captivates the people of Kezi is the post-independence *Gukurahundi* war<sup>178</sup> which took place in Matabeleland during the early 1980s. Underscoring the much higher significance of the latter war, Vera uses the definite article to announce its

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<sup>177</sup> As Ranger (2004) has argued, the Zimbabwean war of liberation has a prominent place in the patriarchal and nationalistic discourses of post-colonial Zimbabwe.

<sup>178</sup> Or so-called 'Dissident Insurgency'.

beginning (i.e. “*The war begins*” – p. 88. My Italics). Another deconstructed ‘truth,’ in *The Stone Virgins*, is the notion of national independence. The women of Kezi<sup>179</sup>, for example, are surprised that, “...no spectacular fissures of the rocks” (p54) occur to mark the occasion. Even Sibaso (who actually fought for the nation’s independence) sardonically remarks that, “An individual wakes from sleep in the middle of the night, and moves from house to house, knocking on each door and announcing that independence is here” (p.116). In making ‘small beer’ of both the Zimbabwean war of liberation, and the significance of national independence, Vera effectively deconstructs mainstream political meta-narratives. This serves as another cue, working (together with the others) to construct the poststructuralist ambience actively cultivated by Vera within the narrative.

In short, Vera deploys a powerful system of contextualisation cues whose purpose appears to be to *position* the reader to receive the novel in a manner that ‘buys into’ her poststructuralist-feminist political project. This theme is further examined in the next section.

#### **6.3.4 In-depth analysis (continued): Resisting the interpretive frame promoted in *The Stone Virgins***

Extending this frame of argument, it could be suggested that Vera imposes a unique interpretive frame within her novel, whose purpose appears to be to secure a positive uptake of the *poststructuralist feminism* (Cullenberg et al. 2001) that she promotes. Poststructuralist feminism disparages the mere attainment of equal opportunities (or ‘sameness’) between women and men. Instead, it seeks to identify and then accentuate the unique strengths (or capacities) which *differentiate* women from men. As Cullenberg et al (2001:33) explain, poststructuralist-feminists, such as Butler (1990, 1993); Flax (1990, 1993); and Groz (1994) have moved well beyond arguments for:

...expanded enfranchisement and ‘equal rights’ (battles still mandatory to fight) to interrogations of the humanist (read masculinist) assumptions and practices that followed in the wake of the Enlightenment...[E]ach of these thinkers takes on the assumption that progress for women is a matter of establishing a stable subjective identity *of their own*...based on...irreducible biological difference...[P]oststructuralist feminists call attention to the implied and often enforced masculinism (or ‘phallogentrism’) that one can ‘read’ in the notion of the human subject and the cult of Reason as they have evolved in the past 300 years in the West. (My italics).

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<sup>179</sup>Whose reactions to the advent of independence are, also interestingly, ‘fore-fronted’ in the novel.

In *The Stone Virgins*, Vera pits intrinsic female power against elemental masculine power, and allows the former to triumph. By the end of the novel, Nonceba has bounced back into physical, mental, and spiritual equilibrium; and is poised to embrace what appears to be an auspicious future in the city of Bulawayo. Meanwhile, Sibaso has been ejected from the plot like a mere ‘irrelevance’. He is last seen wallowing inside a cave in the Gulati Hills, like a fossil forever trapped within a ‘time capsule’. In fact, the tables appear to completely turn on Sibaso. His attempt to transform Nonceba into an *eternal* figure of pain and suffering – rather like the sacrificial virgins frescoed on the stone walls of the cave in which he hides – boomerangs upon *him*. By the end of the novel, it is Sibaso who appears to be eternally trapped within a (now anachronistic) ‘liberation war archive’.

The physical contrast between Sibaso and Nonceba also underscores Vera’s preoccupation with difference. While Sibaso is physically brawny and corporeally combative, Nonceba is described as, “...light, like a feather....she has always been thin. Like a twig....” (p.132). In Vera’s metaphysics, women need *not* possess brawn – like men – to exercise their most potent forms of power. In fact, ‘masculinised women’, such as the ex-guerillas who, for some time, lounged on the veranda of Thandabantu store, are shown to be only ephemerally powerful. These female ex-guerillas have:

...breasts, held carelessly up as though they are nothing but another part of the body where some human life just might be nurtured and survive, the breasts only a shape on the body, like the curve of the shoulder, a useful but wholly unremarkable part of the anatomy (p.62).

Somewhat like Sibaso, these women only wield power for a limited term. Thus even the ‘cowed’ male villagers, who gaze at these women in awe, are shrewdly aware that:

...there will never be a time like this again and that next time they see these women again they will no longer be these women and no moment at all like this will continue to exist....(p.64).

After the destruction of the Thandabantu Store, Vera presents the following ‘mock-epitaph’ in remembrance of these women:

Here, female soldiers once reclined during the ceasefire, they spread curiosity and awe throughout the population (p125)....They made independence sudden and real, and the liberation war fought in the bush became as true as the presence of these soldiers....Today, stray paper is trapped around the raised platform [where they used to sit], feathers, sugar-cane peelings. Goats leap over the rubble of bricks and cement, the collapsed wall, the mixture of broken glass, smashed bottles, burnt wood, pieces of shelving, bent metal door frames, melted plastic bottles, burnt wooden crates”(p.126).

Vera's 'poststructuralist feminism' deconstructs fundamental truths and norms by rejecting conventional (or masculine) accoutrements of power, such as physical strength or even *economic* potency. It is surprising that Nonceba feels deeply peaceful and tranquil when she returns to a vandalised Kezi, after her discharge from hospital. Due to drought and war, the Kezi to which Nonceba returns has become an unproductive dustbowl, which lacks basic amenities (after the Shoeshine Bus, which was the 'lifeline' linking Kezi to Bulawayo) has withdrawn its service and Thandabantu Store (i.e. a crucial node at the end of that lifeline) has been reduced to rubble. In spite of these harsh living conditions, the narrative depicts a contented Nonceba appreciating the beauty of her tranquil surroundings, thus:

Nonceba can raise her arm and breathe in the marula, a fine layer of perfumed air over her. She inhales the tranquil and intoxicating scent of this tree, and she closes her eyes to see it, closes them enough that she can block from her mind what lies behind the tree, the remains of Thandabantu Store, which is now buried, not there, destroyed and gone. It has never been.

It is almost as if Vera is trying to construct an idyllic (and *idealistic*) lifeworld in which inner strength, *alone*, can sustain the female subject in almost any circumstances. This is the point at which *Marxist* readers of the novel – particularly those who have resisted Vera's 'intense interpellation' – would start questioning some of the assumptions at the heart of her narrative.

Vera's poststructuralist feminism predicates female emancipation on psychological and spiritual resources, rather than on the basis of the *material* conditions in which women lead their lives. Such a vision of the essential preconditions for 'true' female emancipation is hardly sustainable (nor convincing), from a Marxist perspective. It is the sort of vision which would *need* to be buttressed by *intense* ideological interpellation to gain traction, for most readers.

Clearly, the 'tranquil' Nonceba who is shown breathing in the natural scents at the end of the novel is a *destitute* individual. Unlike her late sister Thenjiwe, who could at least procure essential groceries from Thandabantu Store, Nonceba has nowhere to buy such supplies. In fact, so devastated is the local Kezi economy (both by war and drought) that even local schools (where Nonceba – being a trained teacher – might have earned her upkeep) have been closed. The sense of desolation surrounding Nonceba as she sits

outside her Kezi homestead is thus quite tangible:

The ploughed waiting fields stretch and cultivate the distance, waiting for absent rain, long absent, while the fields traverse the boulders and circle after circle of huts. The water is so absent you can taste drops of it on your tongue. There is no crop growing. The grass is driest, splitting and crackling, ready to burn (p.139).

Vera, herself, appears to realise that the dire economic circumstances in which Nonceba finds herself (after her return from hospital) warrant a speedy '*rescue*'. Thus, as she continues to survey her 'beautiful' but desolate environment, Nonceba observes a *man* walking towards her homestead:

Sitting under the shade of the mphafa tree and listening to the perfumed shadow and the smooth calling of doves, Nonceba sees a man emerge in the far horizon, winding purposefully along the pathway, left to right, back to the left.... He is coming this way (p.139).

Interestingly, FID – which Vera has extensively used up to this point to filter her characters' thoughts, emotions and language through some kind of 'poststructuralist haze' – is noticeably discarded. Nonceba and her visitor, Cephas (i.e. Thenjiwe's former 'mysterious lover') speak in their own voices. An uncharacteristic supply of *detail* also 'kicks in' at this point. Cephas divulges his name for the first time (a sharp contrast with the 'speechless' Cephas who impulsively followed Thenjiwe to her home in Chapter Three and who later anointed her with milk without *explaining* his actions). Cephas also reveals that he works and lives in Bulawayo; was Thenjiwe's former lover and that he once visited Nonceba while she was in hospital. It is almost as if Vera decides, at this point, to suture a contradiction emerging in the narrative by resorting to 'plain' language and by (uncharacteristically) supplying a copious amount of detail. A reader might be forgiven for wondering if the following conversation is a part of *The Stone Virgins*:

'Who are you?' She insists, wondering at his presence, his tenacity.  
'My name is Cephas Dube. I live in Bulawayo. I have lived there for some years now. I work there.'  
'How did you manage to arrive here? The roads are so difficult'. She waits for his answer, as though it will either raise or dispel her fear of him.  
'A man I know was coming to Kezi in a truck. I asked for a lift. He was kind. He let me ride with him. We had an easy drive. He has gone on' (p.145)<sup>180</sup>.

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<sup>180</sup> From this point on, there are more parts, within the narrative, where Vera switches to more detailed realism. For example, Cephas goes on to explain: "I work in an office in the city. I file documents in an archive. One morning, I was clipping cuttings from the newspaper. I saw a picture of Kezi in it. I read what happened to you and Thenjiwe here in Kezi. I knew immediately I had to see you...."

In the end, Cephas persuades Nonceba to relocate to Bulawayo and live with him. As he argues, “Kezi is a naked cemetery....There is no certainty of life, only death. To die here is to be abandoned to vultures and unknown graves.... Let me help you. You can return again if everything changes” (p.151). The suturing noticeable at this point in the narrative is a consequence of Vera wanting to have her ‘poststructuralist feminist cake’ and then wanting to eat it too. By pretending that female emancipation can completely rely on intrinsic (or ‘atavistic’) resources supposedly possessed by women, Vera creates a situation where her protagonist is over-stripped of *necessary* social supports and therefore needs to be ‘rescued’ – by a *man* too<sup>181</sup> – to achieve complete restoration. Cephas’s unlikely intervention is, ultimately, one of the means by which Nonceba can truly claim victory over her adversary (i.e. Sibaso). It is certainly an intervention that helps the novel to achieve a happier ending.

### 6.3.5 Concluding remarks

The Marxist stylistic critique of *The Stone Virgins* focused on how Vera ‘positions’ (or interpellates) her readers by assiduously promoting a ‘poststructuralist uptake’ for the novel. The critique illuminated *how* Vera works to position her readers within a ‘poststructuralist universe of discourse.’ The critique also discussed how readers might resist the positioning promoted by Vera, and read the novel *against the grain* (or against the uptake intended by the author).

The next section shifts attention to Brian Chikwava’s ‘Seventh Street Alchemy’.

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<sup>181</sup> And through a rather unlikely ‘twist’ of coincidence.

## ***6.4 Politicising Chikwava's Vision of a Dystopia: A Marxist Stylistic Reaction to 'Seventh Street Alchemy'.***

### **6.4.1 Background on the Narrative**

#### 6.4.1.1 Publication and Reception

Brian Chikwava's 'Seventh Street Alchemy' first appeared in the short story anthology, *Writing Still*, which was published by the Weaver Press<sup>182</sup> in 2003. The narrative attracted significant interest after it won the 2004 Caine Prize for African Writing (Gagiano 2013). Some reviewers have located 'Seventh Street Alchemy' within a 'wave' of postcolonial Zimbabwean fiction, which challenges (and ultimately seeks to undermine) 'patriotic discourses' (Ranger 2003) – as promoted by Zimbabwe's ruling ZANU PF party<sup>183</sup> (Staunton 2003; Primorac 2005). Chikwava's literary career has continued to advance following the success of 'Seventh Street Alchemy.' In 2010, he published his first novel entitled, *Harare North*, which went on to win the National Arts Merit Award (NAMA) conferred annually by the National Arts Council of Zimbabwe.

#### 6.4.1.2 Outline of Main Themes

In 'Seventh Street Alchemy,' Chikwava portrays Harare<sup>184</sup> as a veritable dystopia crawling with prostitutes; drunkards; petty criminals; greedy (and trigger-happy) policemen; riotous mobs and corrupt bureaucrats – all 'single-mindedly' hunting for "...the dollars...[which will] stave hunger off their doorsteps" (p. 17). Harare, which could be seen as a metonym for the whole of Zimbabwe towards the mid-2000, exemplifies what Mobley (2009) has described as '*postmodern chaos*;' essentially, the pervasive sense of disorder, purposelessness and futility, which – in the narrative – is accentuated by the loss of moral values; family life and social cohesion. Chikwava certainly does *not* point alluringly to a 'habitable' postmodern condition<sup>185</sup> – as if to 'invite' readers into its 'universe of discourse.' Rather, he invokes '*modern*'<sup>186</sup> criteria (e.g. moral/social values and 'effective governance') to vilify (and lampoon) the chaotic

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<sup>182</sup> The anthology was compiled and edited by Irene Staunton of the Weaver Press (in Harare). It has twenty-four short stories including Chris Wilson's 'The Twelve Chitenges,' which shall be examined in the next section of this chapter.

<sup>183</sup> Which has been in power since the country attained 'independence' in 1980.

<sup>184</sup> The capital city of Zimbabwe.

<sup>185</sup> In a manner reminiscent of how Vera points alluringly to a habitable poststructuralist universe of discourse.

<sup>186</sup> A reference to Chikwava's essential anchorage on 'enlightenment ideals'.

‘lifeworld’ depicted within his narrative. Chikwava’s *representation* of the political and socioeconomic crisis unfolding in Harare towards the mid-2000s directly *refutes* ‘official’ representations and explanations of the same crisis.

Ranger (2003) has highlighted the emergence of powerful ‘patriotic meta-narratives’ – sponsored by Zimbabwe’s ZANU PF government – which represent (or explain) the ongoing socio-economic crisis in Zimbabwe in ways which promote the political interests of the State. Drawing attention to the power, influence and ‘ubiquity’ which these patriotic discourses have recently acquired in Zimbabwe, Ranger (2003:255) observes:

Over the past two or three years there has emerged in Zimbabwe a sustained attempt by the Mugabe regime to propagate what is called 'patriotic history'. 'Patriotic history' is intended to proclaim the continuity of the Zimbabwean revolutionary tradition. It is an attempt to reach out to the 'youth' over the heads of their parents and teachers, all of whom are said to have forgotten or betrayed revolutionary values. It repudiates academic historiography with its attempts to complicate and question. At the same time, it confronts Western 'bogus universalism' which it depicts as a denial of the concrete history of global oppression. 'Patriotic history' is propagated at many levels - on television and in the state-controlled press; in youth militia camps; in new school history courses and textbooks....It is a coherent but complex doctrine (Ranger 2003:255).

Chikwava’s ‘Seventh Street Alchemy’ could be read as a counter narrative which sets out to refute patriotic meta-narratives on the socioeconomic and political crises that have beset Zimbabwe during the past fifteen or so years. As such, the narrative engages in what Ranger (2004:7) has described as ‘ideological combat.’

...the [current] Zimbabwe crisis...[is] not merely a ruthless struggle for wealth and power. It...[is] also *an ideological combat*, partly powered by and partly reflected in [the realm of] ideas (my italics)

The forthcoming critique of ‘Seventh Street Alchemy’ shall examine *how* Chikwava projects an oppositional stance vis-à-vis the dominant, patriotic discourses that have proliferated in postcolonial Zimbabwe during the last fifteen or so years. **SFL** tools shall be used to examine how Chikwava exploits the **ideational**, **textual** and **interpersonal** functions of language to counter patriotic meta-narratives within his short story. As part of this analysis, attention shall be given to how Chikwava **appraisals** people, places, objects and social processes in the narrative. The **transitivity** patterns employed by Chikwava to assign ‘agency’ to people (or particular characters) within the narrative shall also be scrutinised. Finally, the ways in which Chikwava uses both

‘**constitutive**’ and ‘**manifest**’ **intertextuality** to engage with political (or economic) positions attributed to Zimbabwe’s ZANU PF government, shall also be considered.

#### **6.4.2 Discourse analytical toolkit: Some key concepts from SFL**

Chapter Four<sup>187</sup> of this thesis highlighted several aspects of SFL, as practised *inter alia* by Halliday (1978), Fairclough (1992), Martin and Rose (2003) and Janks (2005). To recall, Halliday (1978) distinguished several ‘meta-functions’ of language, of which the ideational, interpersonal and textual meta-functions were highlighted as ‘key.’ As discussed, the ideational (or experiential) function of language pertains to how language ‘constructs’ (or ‘represents’) ‘reality’. The interpersonal function relates to how language enacts (or reinforces) social relations. According to Martin and Rose (2003), the interpersonal meta-function also includes the appraisals (of people, objects or social processes) proffered (or asserted) by specific communicators. Finally, the textual function relates to the organisation of language within extended texts, particularly, the patterns of cohesion and coherence established within texts. It pertains to how information is organised (or prioritised) within texts and how logical links are made between actions (or ideas) presented within the text (Martin and Rose 2003).

Regarding appraisals (which fall under the interpersonal function – Martin and Rose 2003), it was previously noted that speakers (or writers) may evaluate the personal or moral attributes of other people (i.e. judgment); the emotions felt by themselves or by other people (i.e. affect) and the qualities of objects, events or processes occurring around them (i.e. appreciation). It was pointed out that appraisals (i.e. judgments, affect or appreciation) could be either positive or negative; and also, that they can be ‘toned up’ (i.e. amplified) or ‘toned down’. In addition, it was also noted that appraisals are often attributed to specific *sources*, and that they may be projected (i.e. reported by speakers/writers who are not their original sources) (Martin and Rose 2003).

Janks’ (2005b) rubric of discourse analytical tools (for application in SFL approaches) was also discussed. These tools include transitivity analysis, which clarifies the processes signalled by verbs (or helps to establish if they are material, relational, mental, or

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<sup>187</sup>In section 4.2.4.1.

behavioural). The use of active or passive voice positions participants (in described actions or processes) as either subjects (i.e. ‘doers’) of particular actions or as objects (i.e. the ‘patients’ or ‘done-to’s’). Nominalisations are also interesting in that they reify processes, thus obscuring participant roles in such processes (Janks 2005b).

Finally, the concepts of ‘manifest’ and ‘constitutive’ intertextuality (Fairclough 1992) were highlighted. The former kind of intertextuality is overtly marked (e.g. by quotation marks or attributive tags such as, ‘according to....,’ etc. Constitutive intertextuality, on the other hand, tends to ‘ingrain’ concepts, opinions or textual forms from other sources without explicitly marking (or acknowledging) such borrowing.

### **6.4.3 In-depth analysis: Examining Chikwava’s Representations (and Explanations) of the Mid-2000s ‘Crisis in Zimbabwe.’**

#### **6.4.3.1 Sketching the ‘Casus Belli’ of the ‘Ideological Combat’ Depicted in ‘Seventh Street Alchemy’**

In ‘Seventh Street Alchemy,’ Chikwava systematically works to undermine (or discredit) powerful representations (and ‘explanations’) of the socioeconomic crisis that has enveloped Zimbabwe during the past fifteen (or so) years. Some of these powerful representations of the situation in Zimbabwe have been articulated by none other than the nation’s President, Mr. Robert Mugabe himself<sup>188</sup>:

We knew and still know that land was the prime goal for King Lobengula as he fought against the British encroachment in 1893; we knew and still know that land was the principal grievance of our heroes of the first *Chimurenga*, led by Nehanda and Kaguvu; we knew and still know it to be a fundamental premise for the Second *Chimurenga* and thus a principal definer of the succeeding new Nation and State of Zimbabwe. Indeed, we know it to be the core issue and imperative of the Third *Chimurenga*, which you and me are fighting, and for which we continue to make enormous sacrifices (Mugabe 2001:92-93).

As Ranger (2003) has pointed out, the evocative term, ‘Third *Chimurenga*,’ has recently emerged as a powerful ‘master signifier<sup>189</sup>’ in Zimbabwean politics. The term persuasively associates the ongoing crisis in Zimbabwe with historical (and popular) anti-colonial struggles, specifically, the First and Second *Chimurengas*. Such framing of the recent crisis in Zimbabwe connotes (*inter alia*) that:

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<sup>188</sup> Who has ruled the country since its attainment of ‘independence’ in 1980.

<sup>189</sup> To borrow from Žižek (1989) – as discussed in section 3.4.3 of this thesis.

- The anti-colonial struggle in Zimbabwe did *not* end with the nation's attainment of independence in 1980.
- The current crisis in Zimbabwe is, in fact, a new phase of the anti-colonial struggle which, like the previous phases, requires much sacrifice on the part of all 'patriotic Zimbabweans.' Taken to its logical conclusions, this line of argument serves to *exonerate* the ZANU PF government from any blame in having caused the current socio-economic crisis in Zimbabwe. The 'official' representation of the current crisis construes it as: (a) a 'heroic struggle' being collectively waged by *all* 'patriotic Zimbabweans' (b) partly an effect of 'malicious' economic sanctions imposed by the Western World (and other 'neo-colonial' forces) to try to 'thwart' the 'Third *Chimurenga*' and, therefore, (c) a *necessary* sacrifice which ought to be endured by all 'patriotic Zimbabweans' whose 'heroic resilience' will ultimately nullify the 'evil machinations' of the 'neo-colonial' enemy.
- The upshot of these political messages is that colonial and neo-colonial forces continue to 'maraud' (and threaten) the sovereign State of Zimbabwe. These forces – which ought to be resisted – include: the (opposition) Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party; the displaced (and few remaining) white commercial farmers; the Western World and its mass-media 'proxies' (such as the BBC or the CNN); moral or intellectual dissenters (such as churches, some 'westernised' university professors, some creative writers, etc.). In the face of such a concerted onslaught, 'patriotic Zimbabweans' need to rally around the vision of the Third (and final) *Chimurenga* and, *ipso facto*, around the ZANU PF political party which is the torch-bearer (or vanguard) of this 'popular revolution.'

Patriotic discourses – as crafted by ZANU PF politicians – thus impose a sharp binary between 'loyal' as opposed to 'treacherous' Zimbabweans. The latter are said to have been brainwashed by neo-colonial ideologies, in whose interests they work to sabotage the current 'people's revolution.' Articulating this view in a vitriolic speech aimed at the (opposition) MDC party, President Mugabe once declared:

The MDC should never be judged or characterised by its black trade union face; by its youthful student face; by its black suburban junior professionals; by its rough and violent high density (urban) elements. It is much deeper, whiter and wider than these human superficialities; for it is immovably and implacably moored in the colonial yesteryear and embraces wittingly or unwittingly the repulsive ideology of the return to white settler rule....It is a counter-revolutionary Trojan Horse contrived and nurtured by the very

inimical forces that enslaved and oppressed our people yesterday (Mugabe 2000 cited in Meredith 2009).

The dichotomy – imposed in patriotic discourses – between ‘revolutionary’ and ‘reactionary’ Zimbabweans serves to legitimate the brutal suppression of opposition political movements in Zimbabwe, since they are cast as ‘treasonous *foreign agents*,’ trying to ‘hand’ the nation back to its historical colonial oppressors. As Žižek (1989) might have put it, the term ‘Third *Chimurenga*’ functions as a powerful master signifier (or ‘rallying symbol’) that both *recruits* political acolytes and proscribes political dissent. It could be further noted that patriotic discourses often represent themselves as *morally* superior, to buttress their legitimacy in the eyes of ‘ordinary Zimbabweans.’ This strategy is clearly discernible in the statement once made a previous Foreign Minister in the ZANU PF government – Mr Stan Mudenge – who made reference to Zimbabwe’s Land Reform Programme (LRP) as follows:

We have a powerful ally in our land reform programme, namely a clear conscience. Yes, we know that our cause is just. *Morality* bids us to correct the present skewed land system. The poverty of our people congested in the communal lands enjoins us to act. (Mudenge 2009:9. My italics).

Critics of the patriotic discourses promoted by the ZANU PF party have often questioned claims (or assumptions) implicit to these meta-narratives, which represent the ongoing crisis in Zimbabwe as a ‘spontaneous mass-revolution-in progress,’ which could be likened to (or be placed in the same ‘revolutionary teleology’ as) the First and Second *Chimurengas* (Raftopoulos 2004). Specific bones of contention include:

- ZANU PF’s oft repeated assertion that the ongoing socioeconomic crisis seen in Zimbabwe since the late 1990s is a direct effect of ‘punitive sanctions’ imposed by the Western World to ‘thwart’ the (so-called) ‘Third *Chimurenga*.’ Relatedly, ZANU PF’s framing of the suffering visited upon ordinary Zimbabweans by the current socioeconomic crisis as a ‘*necessary* sacrifice’ to be expected during a time of revolution and therefore, to be resiliently endured by all patriotic Zimbabweans (Mugabe 2001). Rejecting these formulations, critics often point out that Zimbabwe’s economic crisis actually started in 1997 (i.e. *before* the inception of the LRP, which allegedly ‘sparked off’ the so-called Third *Chimurenga*). The economic crisis was initially caused by the government’s decision to disburse huge (and unbudgeted) pay-outs to liberation war heroes amounting to Z\$50 000 per individual beneficiary (Raftopoulos (2004). The

nation's economic problems were further compounded by the state's decision to join an expensive war fought in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 1998<sup>190</sup> (ibid). Faced with street riots protesting rising inflation, poverty and shortages of basic commodities, the ZANU PF government hastily proclaimed the launch of the (so-called) Third *Chimurenga*, effectively positioning *itself* as the torchbearer of a new 'popular revolution.' In short, the so-called Third *Chimurenga* has been dismissed as a 'ruse' by the ZANU PF government to reinvent itself after realising that it was losing popular support. This *alternative* explanation is often *silenced* in 'official' ZANU PF discourses, which treat such explanations as 'heretical' attempts to undermine (or sabotage) the Third *Chimurenga* (Ranger 2003).

- Counter narratives which point out that the so-called 'Third *Chimurenga*' was a 'political gimmick' hastily executed by the ZANU PF government to ensure *its own* political survival are borne out by the generally haphazard manner in which the LRP was implemented. The farm occupations of the early 2000s were spearheaded by vigilantes affiliated to the ZANU PF party<sup>191</sup>. The single most important criterion used to target farms for occupation was the *ethnicity* of the farm owners. As a result, the LRP has been criticised for promoting a form of 'reverse racism' (Dore 2012). More systematically implemented, the LRP could have benefited *all* Zimbabweans (regardless of ethnicity) by – for example – *reducing* farm sizes (which would have enabled existing commercial farmers to continue their operations). Conducted that way, the LRP might have increased (rather than decreased) Zimbabwe's agricultural production.
- The question of *who* has *really* benefited from the LRP is also vigorously contested. In the confusion surrounding the implementation of the LRP, for example, the political elite of Zimbabwe<sup>192</sup> secured the best and most productive farmland in the country (Dore 2012). In addition, many well-connected members of the political elite acquired multiple farms (ibid.). Thus, the so-called Third *Chimurenga* is criticised for creating a new, black, landowning elite to replace the former white, landowning elite<sup>193</sup>.

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<sup>190</sup> A war which most 'ordinary Zimbabweans' neither fully understood nor supported (Johwa 2004).

<sup>191</sup> Most were former guerrillas who had received the huge pay-outs made by the government in 1997.

<sup>192</sup> Most comprised of 'high ranking' ZANU PF officials.

<sup>193</sup> In a comment posted to the Zimbabwe Herald on 9 June 2013, one 'ordinary Zimbabwean' using the pseudonym, 'Muzori' complained, "I wanted...[a] farm but I couldn't get. I did all I could and nothing

- The collapse of Zimbabwe’s agro-based economy meant that the ZANU PF government could not sustain essential social services (in crucial areas such as health and education). The government also struggled to maintain the country’s infrastructure. Again, the brunt of all these deprivations (which Chikwava portrays in his narrative) has been borne by ‘ordinary Zimbabweans.’

The areas of contention highlighted here merely sketch out the broad ‘casus belli’ driving the “...ideological combat...” (Ranger 2004:7) currently unfolding in postcolonial Zimbabwe. The next subsection examines *how* Chikwava acquits himself in this ‘battle of ideas.’

#### 6.4.3.2 Examining the Strategies Used by Chikwava to Undermine Patriotic Discourses in ‘Seventh Street Alchemy’

Reading Chikwava’s ‘Seventh Street Alchemy’ is rather like overhearing an angry telephone conversation. The observer can see (and hear) only *one* of the interlocutors in the exchange. However, careful observation of *how* that (observed) interlocutor speaks and acts may facilitate (more or less) ‘accurate’ inference of what the other interlocutor (i.e. on the other end of the line) must be saying. In other words, Chikwava’s text – which is before the reader – contains numerous *rejoinders* to ‘truths’ or ‘assumptions’ whose source is – clearly – Zimbabwe’s ZANU PF government. The meta-narratives articulated by the latter are not immediately in front of the reader. Nevertheless, the reader can *infer* some of them by examining how Chikwava reacts to specific political positions.

One such assumption – which Chikwava refutes in his narrative – is the notion that Zimbabwe’s (ongoing) socioeconomic crisis is a ‘popular’ and ‘*organised*’ resistance against colonial (or neo-colonial) forces, fit to designated as the ‘Third *Chimurenga*,’ and therefore, occupying a place within the series of historic mass-revolutions which began with the First *Chimurenga* of the 1890s. Chikwava contests this framing of the current crisis in Zimbabwe by deliberately portraying – within his narrative – a lifeworld that has been rendered almost *devoid* of any sense of purpose or social cohesion. Chikwava effects

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materialised. If this thing was not a political game, us Zimbabweans could have benefited equally. Land was just transferred from a few whites to a few blacks. What's the difference if you are not one of the few blacks. The same way we were surviving before the "land reform" is the same way me and my family are still surviving, through peasant farming. Now it's even worse coz we can't get jobs which were there in the 80s.”

this *intertextual* ‘rejoinder’ by presenting a disjointed plot, which fosters the impression that there is *no* shared vision, purpose or *pattern* shaping the activities of ordinary Hararians. To underscore this alternative *representation* of the social organisation of people in Harare, Chikwava presents at least two main plots – each internally disjointed – which run parallel to each other. The first of these plots tracks the misadventures of a ‘bureaucrat’ working in the Registrar General’s office<sup>194</sup> called Anna Shava, which include: a bitter confrontation with her ‘errant’ husband in a ‘seedy’ nightclub (one of whose highlights is a chance-meeting with a prostitute named Fiso in the ladies’ toilet); a traffic accident in which she hits and kills a street kid while driving absent-mindedly (apparently because she is ruminating on her marital woes); a second chance meeting to discuss a bribe with Fiso (fortuitously arranged by an unnamed ‘middle person’ and held outside Anna’s church) and finally, a telephone conversation with a rude mortuary attendant who tells Anna that her husband has died – unless the corpse lying in the mortuary is that of an unidentified thief who stole his cell phone. Many of these episodes are left hanging (the reader is not shown, for example, how Anna’s accident finally resolves or how she deals with her sudden bereavement). As already suggested, links between the individual episodes are usually tenuous (the sudden death of Anna’s husband is an almost random occurrence as it is not directly anticipated by preceding events). The second main plot of the narrative tracks Fiso’s mock-epic (but ultimately ‘*futile*’) quest to secure identity documents for herself and her daughter, Sue. Initially, Fiso and Sue make a ‘disastrous’ visit to the Registrar General’s. Thereafter, Fiso meets Anna to negotiate a bribe that will secure the desired identity documents. When the ‘deal’ collapses (following Anna’s sudden bereavement), Fiso decides to storm unaccompanied into the Registrar General’s. She is promptly arrested for causing public mayhem and incarcerated in a crowded police cell. The two main plots of ‘Seventh Street Alchemy’ (as summarised above) have no inherent connection. Anna and Fiso cross paths, almost always, by ‘pure chance’. Thus, the elderly prostitute who ‘bumps into’ Anna in the nightclub toilet, turns out to be one of the people living in the block flats near which Anna has her accident and, later, shows up as the ‘customer’ arranged for Anna by an unnamed middle person. The numerous discontinuities in Chikwava’s narrative fulfil both *textual* and *ideational* functions as they render the narrative a ‘burlesque’ that portrays human ‘caricatures’ while also underscoring the randomness (or lack of social cohesion) that has

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<sup>194</sup> The department which issues birth and identity documents (including passports) in Zimbabwe.

overtaken the city of Harare. In political terms, Chikwava refutes ZANU PF patriotic discourses in two interrelated ways. On one hand, he deconstructs the ‘hallowed master signifier’ of the Third *Chimurenga* by poking fun at it (and its effects) through selection of a genre that invokes laughter (or mockery) rather than serious contemplation. Secondly, Chikwava undercuts the claim that ‘ordinary Zimbabweans’ are the *real* driving force behind the so-called Third *Chimurenga*. Clearly lacking any sense of *purpose* or political/social *cohesion*, ‘ordinary Zimbabweans’ – as depicted in ‘Seventh Street Alchemy’ – hardly fit the stereotype of a potent (and purposeful) ‘anti-colonial force’ often painted in ZANU PF patriotic discourses.

The *transitivity* patterns employed by Chikwava in the narrative further underscore the general sense of apathy and malaise attributed to ‘ordinary Hararians.’ Often, Chikwava’s characters come across as more of ‘patients’ (or ‘done-tos’) rather than ‘actors’ (or ‘doers’) of described actions<sup>195</sup>. Such minimisation of agency is evident in the very first paragraph of the narrative, which reads:

By 5 a.m. most of Harare’s struggling inhabitants are out of their hovels. They are on their varied ways to innumerable places to waylay the dollars they so desperately need to stave hunger off their doorsteps. Trains and commuter omnibuses burst with exploitable human material. Its excess finds its way onto bicycles, or simply self-propels, tilling earth with bare frost-bitten feet all the way to city centre or industrial areas (p. 17).

The transitivity patterns used in this paragraph could be analysed as follows:

<b>Subject (with or without adverbial clause).</b>	<b>Type of verb used</b>	<b>Object or complement</b>
By 5 a.m. <b>most of Harare’s... residents</b>	are [verb of being]	out of their hovels.
<b>They</b> (i.e. the residents)	are [verb of being]	on their varied ways to to waylay the dollars they so desperately need to stave hunger off their doorsteps.

<sup>195</sup> Even when they act (as in the riot during which Anna’s husband is shot dead by the Police), there is no sense of purposeful planning attached to the event. The riot is described almost as if it were a random, unplanned, occurrence.

<b>Trains and commuter omnibuses</b>	burst with [verb denoting physiological/behavioural process]	exploitable <u>human material</u> .
<b>Its excess</b>	finds its way [physiological behavioral process]	onto bicycles, or simply self-propels, tilling the earth with bare frost-bitten feet all the way to the city.

The (above) table shows a progressive reduction in the agency ascribed to ordinary Hararians. In the very first sentence, ‘Harare’s struggling inhabitants’ are placed in the subject position, suggesting that they possess a *certain* degree of agency which is, however, *already* attenuated as it is expressed by an existential verb of ‘being’ (i.e. ‘*are*’) rather than an action verb of ‘doing’ (e.g. ‘get out’). This pattern is repeated in the second sentence (where the residents are also depicted as subjects acting in a limited manner as suggested by the use of another verb of ‘being’ (i.e. ‘are’)). By the third sentence, even the limited agency initially assigned to the residents (i.e. in the first two sentences) has been revoked and been transferred to inanimate objects (i.e. trains and commuter omnibuses), which now occupy the subject position. The displacement of ‘ordinary Hararians’ from the subject position is also accompanied by their reification (or ‘dehumanisation’) as they are now described as ‘*exploitable human material*.’ This pattern is sustained into the next sentence, where the *impersonal* and *singular* pronoun ‘it’ is used to designate these human characters: “Its excess finds its way onto bicycles, or simply self-propels, tilling earth with frost-bitten feet...” (p.17). It is also significant that verbal clauses such as, ‘...finds its way;’ ‘self-propels’ and ‘tills the earth,’ all indicate reduced levels of agency. The actions described here lack purposefulness (i.e. ‘finding one’s way’ is less purposeful, for example, than, ‘they go to...’; ‘self-propelling’ and ‘tilling the earth’ both denote a rather *indirect* – if not ‘listless’ – means of achieving motion). The same pattern (i.e. of reducing human agency) continues into the next paragraph, which reads:

The modes of transport are diverse, poverty the trendsetter. Like a colony of hungry ants, it crawls over the multitudes of faces scattered along the city roads, ravaging all etches of dignity that only a few years back stood resilient (p.17).

Here, ‘faces’ – serving as a metonym for ‘people’ – are ‘crawled over’ by an active and ubiquitous force identified as poverty. Later on within the narrative, Chikwava actually reifies one of his *main* characters, Fiso, as follows:

At the corner of Samora Machel Avenue and Seventh Street, in a flat whose bedroom is adorned with two newspaper cuttings of the President, lives a fifty-two year-old quasi-prostitute with thirty-seven teeth and a pair of six-inch heeled perspex platform shoes.... (p.18).

In this part of the narrative, Fiso is introduced as if she were just *another* item amongst a catalogue of accoutrements that are ‘lying about’ in the room. This effect is achieved by mentioning her within a *series* of items, most of which are inanimate. To sum up, Chikwava appears to both reduce the agency of ‘ordinary Hararians’ and reify them (including even some of his main characters). These techniques advance Chikwava’s counter narrative, that ‘ordinary Hararians’ have become so dehumanised by their harsh conditions of existence that they have become ‘patients’ (or ‘done tos’) rather than active ‘doers’ of unfolding social processes. Again, such citizens are a far cry from the revolutionary zealots portrayed in ZANU PF patriotic discourses.

Chikwava’s *appraisals* of objects, people, and their emotions are generally negative, emphasising the high level of suffering experienced by many ordinary Zimbabweans at the height of the socioeconomic crisis of the mid-2000s. The first four paragraphs of the narrative, for example, contain the following patterns of appraisal:

<b>Word/Expression</b>	<b>Type of Appraisal</b>	<b>Negative or Positive?</b>	<b>Amplified or not Amplified?</b>
<i>Hovels</i> [used by Harare’s residents].	Appreciation	Negative	Amplified (i.e. the word ‘hovel’ suggests the dwelling is in a state of <i>extreme</i> disrepair.
<i>The dollars</i> [which] <i>they so desperately need.</i>	Judgment	Negative	Amplified (i.e. ‘ <i>desperately</i> ’).
<i>Paranormal activities</i>	Appreciation	Negative	Amplified as ‘paranormal’ suggests an <i>extreme</i> level of ‘abnormality’ i.e. which is beyond just ‘abnormal.’
<i>A voodoo economy</i>	Appreciation	Negative	Amplified as ‘voodoo’ suggests an <i>extreme</i> form of ‘strangeness.’
<i>Threadbare resignation</i>	Affect	Negative	Amplified (i.e. by qualifier ‘ <i>threadbare</i> ’).
<i>Threadbare shirts</i>	Appreciation	Negative	Amplified (i.e. <i>threadbare</i> ).

<i>Socks and underpants that resemble a ruthless termite job.</i>	Appreciation	Negative	Amplified (i.e. <i>ruthless</i> ).
[Some vendors use] <i>simple primitive violence...</i>	Judgment	Negative	Amplified (i.e. the words ‘simple primitive’ underscore both a <i>readiness</i> to use violence and an ‘uncivilised’ approach to its use.
<i>Scavenger tactics</i>	Appreciation.	Negative.	Amplified. ‘Scavenger suggests extremely brutal tactics.’
<i>The supposedly civilized well-to-do ...population</i>	Judgment	Negative due to use of qualifier, ‘supposedly’	Toned down. ‘Supposedly’ suggests they are not <i>really</i> civilized.
A pitiful lot	Affect	Negative	Not amplified.
<i>Indefatigable amiability</i> [i.e. of well-to-do population].	Affect	Negative	Amplified (i.e. <i>Indefatigable</i> ).
<i>A State whose methods of governance involve incessant roguery</i>	Judgment	Negative	Amplified (i.e. <i>incessant</i> ).

The (above) table is dominated by negative appraisals, which are mostly *amplified* to emphasise the extent of the suffering experienced by ordinary Hararians. In *interpersonal* terms (Martin and Rose 2003), Chikwava proffers the negative evaluation that ‘ordinary Zimbabweans’ have experienced untold suffering under the stewardship of the current ZANU PF government. Such an evaluation could be seen as a *moral* indictment of the State, which counters its (often repeated) assertions of ‘moral superiority.’

Much of the discussion, so far, has focused on Chikwava’s exploitation of *constitutive intertextuality*. To recall, this kind of intertextuality is usually ingrained into the text without any overt marking (or acknowledgement of such cross-textual engagement). There are also moments, in ‘Seventh Street Alchemy,’ when Chikwava employs *manifest* intertextuality to directly quote and question certain statements (or assumptions) attributed to the State. An example is the incident during which Sue (Fiso’s daughter) listens to ‘government propaganda’ coming out of her radio then explicitly dismisses it as irrelevant to her circumstances:

The following morning, Sue switched on her miniature radio, to be confronted by the continuously recycled maxims of State propaganda, which ranged from the importance of being a sovereign nation to defending the gains of independence in the face of a 'neo-colonialist onslaught'. Leaning against the sink, she failed to grasp the value of the messages to her life. She gulped her tea and went to the Union Avenue flea-market. There, among other vendors slugging it out for survival, she could at least learn where to get the next bag of sugar or cooking oil (p. 21).

In this instance, Chikwava explicitly states ZANU PF political positions in order to frame them against the more 'realistic' (or 'believable') ruminations of Sue. Sue's dismissal of this 'propaganda' is intended, by Chikwava, to be shared by the reader. To ensure such an outcome, Chikwava makes the propaganda sound both tired and irrelevant to the needs of 'ordinary Zimbabweans' by using *nominalisations*, which do *not* specify who needs to do what to achieve the vision expressed in the propaganda; or even, who the alleged neocolonial enemies of the nation are: "[the] propaganda ranged from the importance of being a sovereign nation to defending the gains of independence in the face of a neo-colonialist onslaught" – *ibid.*). Such reporting of ZANU PF 'propaganda' – which does not specify the *agents* expected to perform certain actions – renders the entire message vague and irrelevant to the needs of ordinary people suffering the extreme deprivations described within the narrative. Further on in the short story, Chikwava again uses manifest intertextuality to *directly* lampoon other 'ridiculous' assumptions attributed to the ZANU PF government:

Officially, basic food commodities are affordable because prices are State-controlled. Officially, no one starves because there is plenty of food on supermarket shelves. And if it is not there, it is officially somewhere, being hoarded by Enemies of the State (p.23).

The spurious claims made here are finally dismissed with the sarcastic rejoinder: "With all its innumerable benefits, who would not want to exist in this other world spawned by the authorities – where your situation does not daily remind you what a liability your mouth and stomach are?" (p. 23).

#### **6.4.4 Concluding remarks**

From the textual evidence presented in this critique, it is clear that Chikwava's 'Seventh Street Alchemy' engages intertextually with several statements (or assumptions) attributed to Zimbabwe's ZANU PF government. Chikwava also employs textual, ideational and interpersonal strategies to engage in 'ideological combat' (Ranger 2004) against a powerful adversary; one of whose weapons of choice has been the deployment

of the master signifier ‘Third *Chimurenga*’ to frame the political and socioeconomic developments that have unfolded in Zimbabwe during the last fifteen or so years.

Chikwava’s narrative raises important questions about *who* is best qualified to represent the political (and socioeconomic) interests of ‘ordinary citizens’ within the post colony. Patriotic discourses – as outlined by Ranger (2003) – often assume that former anti-colonial liberation movements are *forever* ‘best placed’ to safeguard the political and socioeconomic interests of ‘ordinary citizens.’ However, this assumption is often belied by inevitable realignments in class positions, where nationalist parties often transform into ‘ruling elites’ – which begin to promote their own interests while continuing to rely on ‘ordinary people’ for their political survival. As the leader of Zimbabwe’s main opposition party, Mr. Morgan Tsvangirai, once observed<sup>196</sup>, “Yesterday’s people cannot provide answers to the challenges we face today. Today’s problems need today’s people, new people with new ideas and a new vision. ”

The next (and final) section of this chapter looks at Chris Wilson’s ‘The Twelve Chitenges.’

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<sup>196</sup>At the May 2013 MDC Congress.

## ***6.5 Witnessing the Dissolution of a ‘Historical Cleavage’: A Marxist Stylistic Review of Chris Wilson’s ‘The Twelve Chitenges.’***

### **6.5.1 Background on the Narrative**

#### 6.5.1.1 Publication and Reviews

Chris Wilson’s ‘The Twelve Chitenges’ was published in the short story collection, *Writing Still*<sup>197</sup>, which was released by the Weaver press in 2003. Reviews of ‘The Twelve Chitenges’ have highlighted how Wilson employs irony to question some of the assumptions perpetuating ethnic divisions in post-colonial Zimbabwe; and how he raises the possibility that black and white Zimbabweans could forge tentative political alliances to augment their capacity to confront challenges that have continued to beset the nation more than two decades after its attainment of ‘independence’ (Kiguwa 2004; Madamombe 2008).

### **6.5.2 Outline of main themes**

Wilson’s ‘The Twelve Chitenges’ recounts a bus journey that appears to be fraught with cultural, class, and gender-based tensions. These tensions reach a peak when the young white protagonist of the narrative ‘reneges’ on his earlier promise to help a black woman-trader (travelling on the same bus) smuggle her goods through customs. Wilson interrogates (and ultimately, deconstructs) the historical socio-economic, cultural and political cleavage separating black and white Zimbabweans, which appears to lie at the heart of the tensions portrayed in the narrative. By the end of the short story, the young white man and his black fellow-travelers have become reconciled after realising that they share significant socio-economic, cultural and political commonalities.

The following critique of ‘The Twelve Chitenges’ shall highlight how Wilson employs **implicature** and **irony** to undermine the historical perception of ‘unbridgeable difference’ between black and white Zimbabweans. As shall be seen, the ‘economic meltdown’ which overtook the country (particularly, after the year 2000) appears to have created opportunities for new political alliances, which are dramatised in the narrative.

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<sup>197</sup> Alongside Brian Chikwava’s ‘Seventh Street Alchemy.’

### 6.5.2 Discourse analytical toolkit: Some concepts from pragmatic and semiotic analysis

Partly to demonstrate the wide range of discourse-analytical tools available to the Marxist stylistic method (and also in order to illuminate the *how* irony and implicature work within the narrative), **pragmatic** tools shall be applied to the critique of ‘The Twelve Chitenges.’ The use of pragmatic tools in critical stylistics<sup>198</sup> has been demonstrated by (Black 2006) and is consistent with Fairclough’s (1989) perception that CDA may employ discourse analytical tools from virtually *any* level of linguistic analysis (e.g. structural linguistics, text linguistics or discourse analysis) as long as the *descriptive* capacity afforded by those linguistic tools facilitates *analysis* (in terms of what certain linguistic patterns show) and *interpretation* (i.e. what the discerned patterns suggest about social structures and relations).

Pragmatics as an approach to discourse analysis pays particular attention to how *contexts* of communication shape (or constrain) the meanings of utterances. The main distinction between pragmatics and semantics is that, whereas the latter investigates the ‘standard’ (or ‘context-free’) meanings of words or expressions<sup>199</sup>, the former looks at what utterances mean in *particular* communicative contexts (Grice 1975, Leech, 1983). As Leech (1983: X) has noted, pragmatics has a strong ‘problem-solving’ component:

A speaker qua-communicator has to solve this problem. “Given that I want to bring about such and such a result in the hearer’s consciousness, what is the best way to accomplish this aim by using language?” For the hearer, there is another kind of problem to solve: “Given that the speaker said such and such, what did the speaker *mean me* to understand by that?” (My italics).

To illustrate, a person visiting a colleague’s office may make such a remark as: “Cold in here, isn’t it?” The *locutionary* (i.e. literal or semantic) value of the utterance is that the temperature inside the office is quite low. However, at the pragmatic level, the utterance may be interpreted as a polite request for the colleague to close a window that is letting in cold air. This is *illocutionary* (i.e. pragmatic, or ‘context-dependent’) meaning of the utterance. If the colleague jumps up and shuts the window, then s/he has worked out the *real* meaning of the utterance. In such a case, the utterance has achieved its *perlocutionary* effect (i.e. it has elicited the response intended by the speaker). In pragmatic terms, the speaker who got his/her colleague to shut the window by making an observation about

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<sup>198</sup> Which, to recall, is the application of CDA to literary texts (Coulthard 1977, Black 2006).

<sup>199</sup>Such as ‘dictionary meanings.’

weather conditions would have performed an *indirect speech act*, which appears to say one thing but actually means something different (Leech 1983).

Grice (1975) used the term '*implicature*' to refer to both the act of using indirect speech acts and to denote the 'illocutionary meaning' of utterances. Thus, in Gricean terminology, a speaker may resort to 'implicature' thereby compelling his/her listener to work out the 'implicature' of the given utterance. Grice (1975) also investigated the conditions under which implicature (in both senses) typically occurs. According to Grice, implicature occurs when speakers (or writers) deliberately flout certain *conversational principles or maxims*. This 'flouting' is often necessitated by a clash (or a conflict) between two (or more) maxims. Before looking at how this happens, it may be worthwhile to briefly look at two examples of conversational principles (and their constitutive maxims). Specifically, the *cooperative principle* (and its constitutive maxims) as well as the *politeness principle* (together with its constitutive maxims) shall be highlighted.

The **cooperative principle**, which is tacitly understood by all proficient users of language, states that speakers (or writers) should *contribute what is required by the accepted purpose of the conversation*. The cooperative principle can be broken down into four main maxims, which are:

**The maxim of quality** (to do with truth), i.e.:

- Do not say what you believe to be false.
- Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

**The maxim of quantity:** (to do with information), i.e.:

- Make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange.
- Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

**The maxim of relation:** (to do with relevance), i.e.:

- Be relevant.

**The maxim of manner:** (to do with clarity), i.e.:

- Avoid obscurity of expression.

- Avoid ambiguity.
- Be brief ("avoid unnecessary prolixity").
- Be orderly.

According to Grice (1975), cooperative maxims are not just ‘arbitrary conventions,’ which language users may choose to apply or ignore. Rather, they are tacit rules governing rational and cooperative communication. As Grice explains, someone helping a friend to build a house will hand them a hammer rather than a tennis racket (relevance); more than one nail when several are needed (quantity); straight nails rather than bent ones (quality); and will do all this quickly and efficiently (manner). Failure to observe any of the cooperative maxims may lead to a swift breakdown in communication, as illustrated in the following example:

**Interlocutor A:** What’s your name?

**Interlocutor B** (in response): After getting to Plumstead, you still need to travel a bit further to get to Wynberg.

In this (unlikely) example, interlocutor B fails to observe the maxim of relation, which states: “Be relevant”. Grice (1975) stresses that the observance of conversational maxims is *as* crucial (if not *more* so) for successful communication as the observance of grammatical rules.

To proceed, the **politeness principle** comprises of at least six maxims, as follows:

**Tact** (i.e. maximise benefit to other; minimise cost to other).

**Generosity** (i.e. minimise benefit to self; maximise cost to self).

**Approbation** (i.e. minimise dispraise of other; maximise praise to other).

**Modesty** (i.e. minimise praise to self; maximise dispraise of self).

**Agreement** (i.e. minimise disagreement between self and other; maximise agreement between self and other).

**Sympathy** (i.e. minimise antipathy between self and other; maximise sympathy between self and other).

Failure to observe politeness maxims may also lead to breakdowns in communication, as is shown in the following example:

**Interlocutor A:** I hope my speech sounded okay?

**Interlocutor B:** Nope. It was both stupid and confusing. *I* could have done much better than that!

Ignoring politeness maxims (in this case, the maxims of approbation and modesty) may, at best, result in a hostile (or embarrassed) silence, or, at worst, in open conflict.

After outlining several conversational principles and their constitutive maxims, Grice (1975) theorises that implicature occurs when speakers (or writers) *are caught between two or more conflicting principles or maxims, resulting in their having to flout one of the principles or maxims*. Leech (1983:80) has illustrated a ‘clash’ between conversational principles and maxims with the following example:

**Interlocutor A:** We’ll all miss Bill and Agatha, won’t we?

**Interlocutor B:** Well, we’ll all miss Bill.

In the above exchange, Speaker B only responds to *part* of the proposition made by A. By so doing, B violates the maxim of quantity, which states: ‘Give the right amount of information’. When A notices that the maxim of quantity has been violated, s/he is compelled to *work out* the reasons behind this ‘deliberate’ flouting of the maxim. This problem-solving process might proceed as follows:

- B probably dislikes (and will therefore not miss) Agatha.
- However, B cannot say this directly, as that would violate the ‘politeness principle’, some of whose maxims state: ‘Minimise antipathy but maximise sympathy between self and other, and: ‘Minimise dispraise of other but maximise praise to other’.

Through this problem-solving process, A would then realise that B is *indirectly* expressing his/her dislike for Agatha (by violating the maxim of quantity while upholding elements of the politeness principle). When A correctly works out the implicature in B's statement (and, perhaps, goes on to tell an anecdote confirming just how 'awful' Agatha is), it can then be said that B's utterance has achieved its *perlocutionary* effect.

Leech (1983) gives another interesting example of implicature as follows. A mother who lives with her small daughter (and no one else) shouts:

**Mother:**       Someone has eaten the icing off the cake!

**Daughter:**    It wasn't me!

In this exchange, the daughter responds to the *implicature* contained in the mother's statement. Since only two people live in this house, the 'someone' being accused of tampering with the cake *can only be* the daughter. The daughter quickly realises that the mother has flouted the maxim of manner, which states: 'Avoid ambiguity/obscurity of expression'. She however understands that this maxim was flouted in order to uphold the politeness principle (i.e. the maxims of tact/sympathy). By denying that *she* did not eat the icing off the cake, the daughter is responding to the implicature (or indirect speech act) communicated by the mother.

Grice (1975) characterises irony as a blatant violation of the maxim of quality (i.e. 'Say what you believe to be true'). An example would be:

**Interlocutor A:**               Someone has just borrowed your car.

**Interlocutor B:**               Oh, that's lovely!

If it can be assumed that B is displeased with the unauthorised 'borrowing' of his car, his/her response (i.e. "That's lovely!") would be a blatant violation of the quality maxim, which states: 'Say what you believe to be true.' In this response, B *oversubscribes* to the politeness principle at the *obvious* expense of the quality maxim. As Grice points out, irony actually expresses displeasure more forcefully than a forthright complaint.

Post-Gricean pragmatists, such as Wilson (2006) and Recanati (2004) have further considered how irony is communicated. Wilson (2006) characterises irony as a type of *echoic allusion* to an attributed utterance or thought. Thus, when a speaker (who shall be named Mary) says, after a difficult meeting: ‘That went well’, she is not, *herself*, asserting that the meeting went well (in which case she would be violating the quality maxim). Rather,

...she is expressing her own reaction to a thought or utterance with a similar content which she tacitly attributes *to someone else* (or to herself at another time), and which she wants to suggest is ludicrously false, inadequate or inappropriate” (Wilson, 2006:3).

Thus, Mary may produce the ironic utterance to denote that it was ridiculous of her to imagine the meeting would go well, or stupid of her friends to assure her that it would. In this case, Mary “...*echoes* a thought or utterance with a similar content to the one expressed in her utterance, in order to express a critical or mocking attitude to it” (Wilson 2006:3). According to this theorisation, therefore, irony expresses a speaker’s ‘dissociative attitude’ to a tacitly attributed utterance, thought or representation of the world which is adjudged (by the speaker) to be ‘wrong’, ‘mistaken’ or ‘erroneous.’ Recanati (2004) characterises irony as a form of *pretence*. Speakers (such as Mary in the above example) merely ‘pretend’ to assert certain propositions (such as that the meeting went well), while anticipating that their hearers will see through the pretence and recognise the critical or mocking attitude behind it.

Post-Gricean theorisations of irony (i.e. both ‘echoic’ and ‘pretence’ accounts) extend Grice’s framework by suggesting that irony is not just the result of speakers communicating the opposite of the ‘literal truth.’ However, Gricean and post-Gricean accounts of irony share a similar thread in that they both draw attention to some kind of discrepancy between a description of the world (proffered by a particular speaker in a particular context) and the way ‘things *really* are’.

The next section examines how Wilson communicates what shall be described as ‘*political* implicature’ by deliberately flouting certain conversational principles (or maxims) and further, by making effective use of irony. Thereafter, the effects (or ‘*perlocutionary value*’) of this implicature is considered.

### 6.5.3 In-depth analysis: Wilson's use of implicature and irony to undercut 'ethnically-configured' relations of production in post-2000 Zimbabwe.

Scrutinised under a pragmatic lens, Wilson's 'The Twelve Chitenges' displays at least three main 'waves' of *political* implicature, which shall be individually scrutinised in this commentary. For the most part, these waves of indirect communication occur successively. However, they also partly meld (or 'overlap') into each other. The first such '*illocutionary* movement' is the proposition – communicated in the opening parts of the narrative – that Wilson's young white protagonist is *fundamentally* different<sup>200</sup> from all the other (i.e. black) passengers travelling with him between Lusaka and Harare on the Dzimiri Bus. The main source of this *implied* assertion of difference appears to be the young white man himself, since Wilson employs the technique of interior monologue to project the young man's thoughts (so that they are shared with the reader). The second wave of political implicature commences roughly midway through the narrative. This is the proposition – expressed through sarcastic questioning of the young protagonist's assumptions – that he is not really *that different*<sup>201</sup> from everyone else on the bus. The final wave of political implicature is strongest towards the end of the narrative. This is the 'exhortation' – apparently made by the omniscient author – that black and white Zimbabweans need to urgently come to terms with their socioeconomic 'realities;' and therefore, recalculate their political allegiances. This proposition is particularly salient to the historical period in which 'The Twelve Chitenges' was published. Towards the mid-2000s, Zimbabwe underwent a severe economic meltdown which radically reconfigured socioeconomic and political structures within the country. As already indicated, the three waves of political implicature, outlined here, often overlap into each other. Thus, the ironical questioning of the young protagonist's 'segregationist assumptions' (which belongs to the second wave of implicature) commences even while those assumptions are *still* being communicated (as part of the first wave). Likewise, the exhortation that black and white Zimbabweans need to forge new political alliances is communicated even while the ironical questioning of the young man's 'separatist' assumptions is still under way. The rest of this commentary systematically moves through these three phases of political implicature – as presented in 'The Twelve Chitenges.'

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<sup>200</sup>In terms of his socioeconomic, cultural and *political* outlooks.

<sup>201</sup> I.e. This is a questioning of the *degree* of difference initially asserted by the young protagonist.

The first indirect speech act – communicating the proposition that Wilson’s young protagonist perceives himself to be socio-economically, culturally and politically *different* from everyone else on the Dzimiri bus – is performed right in the opening sentences of the narrative, which read:

Lusaka Intercity Bus Terminus. 9 a.m. The same bus on which he had come up from Harare was waiting. Not the luxury Trans Zambezi which he had once been able to afford but the more downmarket Dzimiri Bus. Not that the trip had been at all bad, apart from leaving and therefore arriving, so much later than scheduled. As before, departure was supposed to be at 9.30, but of course this time he was prepared for a wait (p. 243).

Here, the reader is indirectly informed that the young protagonist feels ‘personally degraded’ to be travelling on the ‘more downmarket’ Dzimiri Bus. This implicature is communicated through a slight violation of the maxim of quantity, which states: “Make your contribution as informative as *is required* for the current purposes of the exchange,” and further, “Do not make your contribution *more informative* than is required.” Considering that the main proposition being communicated here is that, ‘*the young man arrived at the Lusaka bus terminus in time to catch his bus back to Harare,*’ mention of the ‘more luxurious’ Trans Zambezi Bus, which the young man “...had once been able to afford” (p. 243) and the comparison made between that kind of service and the “...more *downmarket* Dzimiri Bus” (ibid.), which the young man now needs to adjust himself to – could be read as a slight superfluity of detail which puts across *another* (unstated) proposition. This is the implied statement that the young man feels both socially downgraded and out of place on this kind of bus. The reason why this proposition is not *directly* stated could be that the author (who is projecting young man’s feelings and thoughts) is observing the politeness principle<sup>202</sup>, which states: “Minimise praise to self; maximise dispraise of self” and, “Minimise dispraise of other; maximise praise to other.” In short, the quantity of information communicated in the opening lines of the narrative immediately invites a ‘problem-solving’ (rather than ‘literal’) mode of interpretation.

Wilson’s young protagonist also seems to view the expectation that he should ‘blend-in’ with other passengers on the bus as patently ludicrous: “The bus was already almost full and the front seat which he had had his eye on was already taken. Automatically, he felt a flash of annoyance – *as if it was his right!* – then remembered who he was and humbly made his way towards an empty seat at the back” (p. 243. Original emphasis). Here,

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<sup>202</sup>Specifically, the maxims of modesty and approbation.

Wilson appears to ‘double back’ in his use of irony by mocking an ‘ironical echo’ made by his protagonist. The young man ironically echoes (or mocks) *those people* who would question his right to claim a seat which ‘separates’ him from the other passengers. This ironical echo is sustained into the next sentence, which reads: “...then remembered who he was and humbly made his way towards an empty seat at the back” (my emphases). The mockery, here, appears to be directed at the *current political dispensation*, which both denies him the right to assert his difference and which ‘mistakenly’ assigns him such a ‘lowly’ social status that he may as well ‘blend in’ with the rest of the passengers. The omniscient author thus holds up the young man’s mocking attitude to further ridicule – this time invited from *the reader*. To do this, the omniscient author deliberately flouts the maxim of quality, which states: “Do not say what you believe to be false,” and further, “Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.” In this case, the reader already knows that the young protagonist has fallen onto hard socioeconomic circumstances. Thus, he uses the Dzimiri Bus, not out of choice (or out of a sense of adventure), but because this is now the only transport option which he can afford. Thus, the young man’s assertion of an elevated socioeconomic status (which would distinguish him from everyone else on the Dzimiri Bus) is patently *untrue*. As Recanati (2004) might have put it, the young man *obviously* ‘pretends’ to occupy a higher socioeconomic status (than everyone else on the bus), but this pretence is meant to be *seen through* (and therefore ridiculed) by the reader<sup>203</sup>.

As already indicated, the second wave of political implicature – which questions the young man’s assertion of socioeconomic, cultural and political difference – commences even while the first is still in motion. Thus, the young man’s mockery of the assumption that he should ‘blend in’ with everyone else on the bus (i.e. part of the first ‘wave’ of political implicature’) is simultaneously held up to ridicule (i.e. signalling the introduction of the second wave of political implicature within the narrative). The ridiculing of the young man’s assumptions appears to intensify as the narrative progresses. No sooner has the young man finally settled in an empty seat towards the back of the bus than a black, female, fellow passenger accosts him, as follows:

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<sup>203</sup> To an extent, the young man possesses some self-irony i.e. not *all* ironic remarks about him are supplied by the omniscient narrator (since interior monologuing is at play). There is actually a sense that this character is struggling with his own thoughts, reactions and prejudices.... Which ‘redeems’ him somewhat (and makes him ‘more likeable’) in the eyes of the reader.

Immediately, a woman was towering over him. ‘Hello.’ She had red eyes and mud-coloured hair. ‘How are you?’ He recoiled from her stereotypically seductive tones. Surely, it was too early in the day for that? Her body emanated waves from within an old red tracksuit, shapeless and stretched, the sort one might sleep in. The red HIV/AIDS sign flashed on and off his brain (p. 244).

The young man’s automatic responses both underscore his perception of ‘unbridgeable difference’ between himself and the other (black) passengers on the bus and the *ridiculousness* of his ‘prejudiced’ mind-set. It is ironical, for example, that:

- The young man instinctively recoils from this female passenger simply because he *fancies* that she is addressing him in ‘*stereotypically* seductive tones.’ Since the young man’s thoughts are being ‘projected’ here, it is clear that he himself *is aware* that he is reacting on the basis of a stereotype. However, he appears to be ‘powerless’ to resist that stereotype. Thus, the young man is, ultimately, the ‘butt’ of the sarcasm being communicated here.
- The young man’s automatic assumption that this female passenger wants to seduce him is also clearly ‘ludicrous’ and not at all supported by what transpires as the conversation (and the journey) progresses. Thus, the young man invites more mockery to himself (i.e. his prejudicial assumptions continue to be exposed in order to be ridiculed by the reader).
- The young man’s instinctive alarm, that he might contract HIV/AIDS from merely associating with the woman, is also ironical. It suggests that he is potentially not in control of his actions – since this interaction may go in any direction. The reaction also dramatises one of the stereotypes reinforcing the cultural cleavage between black and white Zimbabweans.

As the bus journey continues, the young man commits more ‘blunders,’ which are also ‘mercilessly’ subjected to ridicule. To illustrate:

- The young man suddenly reneges on his earlier promise to smuggle six pairs of Nike sports shoes across the border for the woman-trader (who accosted him earlier). This reaction occurs after he has seen a written sign warning against ‘taking goods through customs on behalf of anyone else’ (p. 246). The young man instinctively detaches himself from the class of ‘law-breaking cross-border smugglers.’ Emphasising his *difference* from this class of traveller, the young says, “I’m sorry, I can’t take your shoes.’ And [he] turned his prissy white back on her” (p.247).

- The young man's 'unreasonable' reaction soon backfires as *he* himself is intensively interrogated by the customs officer after declaring twelve *chitenges* (instead of the maximum six allowed by customs regulations). The young man's interrogation systematically deconstructs his assertions of difference. For example, he is asked what he wants to do with all these *chitenges* and the *implied* accusation is that he (like everyone else on the bus) must be planning to resale the items once he reaches his destination.
- Exasperated with the customs officer's persistent questioning, the young man finally snaps:

Just tell me how much,' and he pulled out his wallet and waved it so everyone could see the fat wad of Zim dollars inside it. *It's no skin off my nose. I'm white and therefore rich aren't I? I've got more money than (sic) the rest of you put together!*" (p. 249. Original emphasis).

However, the young man's angry reaction is clearly meant to be 'seen through' since it is already known (to the reader) that he could not afford the more luxurious Trans Zambezi Coach and had no other option but to travel on the Dzimiri Bus.

The third (and final) phase of political implicature, in the narrative, is the indirect 'exhortation' – by the omniscient author – that black and white Zimbabweans need to urgently recalculate their socioeconomic positions and political alliances. This exhortation is made against a background where the socioeconomic, cultural and political cleavage between black and white Zimbabweans has been significantly attenuated as a result of the economic meltdown, which overtook the country towards the mid-2000s. The young man's pretence at 'socioeconomic difference' is now only *partially* true – since almost *all* 'ordinary Zimbabweans' experienced severe socio-economic problems during that period. As this final phase of political implicature gets under way, Wilson's young protagonist appears to increasingly acknowledge the folly of his earlier assumptions. At one point (while he is still being harangued by the customs officer), the young man reflects, "Oh Jesus! The ridiculous logic. But in fact, he faintly realised, he had known this all along hadn't he? The woman with the shoes had told him at the beginning. Why hadn't he listened?" (p.248). In a sense, the manner in which the customs officer deals with the young man helps him to realise that he shares many commonalities with the other passengers on the bus. When his bag is searched (by a different customs officer):

[E]veryone crowded around to see the famous *chitenges*; the fabulous colours flowed out of his backpack along with his dirty underpants which he hurriedly stuffed back in. Finally satisfied that there was no other contraband in this *suspicious character*'s bag, the female official let him go....[B]ehind him, derisive laughter hung in the air (p. 249. My italics).

Here, the omniscient author echoes the social ranking assigned to the young white man by the female customs officer. In her eyes, he is clearly nondescript (as he is described as "...this suspicious character..."). This description undermines his earlier assertion of difference vis-à-vis all the other passengers on the bus. It is particularly interesting that the young man no longer appears to echo this description *ironically* – suggesting that he is starting 'recalculate' his own social standing.

Towards the end of the narrative, the young man discovers that he actually shares significant political commonalities with the woman-trader whom he antagonised earlier. Frustrated by having to wait long for their bus (which has gone in search of diesel on the Zimbabwean side of the border – and at a time when the country is sending diesel to the Democratic Republic of Congo to support a war which most 'ordinary' Zimbabweans neither understand nor support), the woman finally vents her frustration by chanting the well-known MDC slogan:

[S]he jumped up, walked deliberately out into the middle of the road and shouted, 'Eee weh!...' [Th]ey saw her raise her arm and give the open-handed MDC Party wave. As if to reassure them they weren't seeing things, she did it again, and then they all heard her shout '*Chinja! Maitiro Chinja!*'<sup>204</sup>.... There was a shocked silence. Then slowly, a nervous murmur became a babble of voices, growing louder and bolder in hilarity. Laughter peeled round. Courage born of her audaciousness grew. In silence, he [the young man] bought two more cokes and handed her one. She took it without a trace of gratitude but they sat there together, *united*. By the time the bus eventually arrived,...they had switched from Cokes to Bohlingers<sup>205</sup>, and several bottles lay in the dust at their feet (p. 251 – my italics).

The narrative ends on an optimistic note as the young man and his erstwhile adversary celebrate their 'newfound' commonalities. There is much more harmony and common purpose on the Dzimiri bus, when it eventually continues its journey towards Harare<sup>206</sup>.

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<sup>204</sup>Literally, 'Change! Change your ways!' (The 'trademark' MDC slogan).

<sup>205</sup>A popular beer in Zimbabwe.

<sup>206</sup>The bus journey itself could be read as a symbol of Zimbabwe's political journey into the future.

#### **6.5.4 Concluding remarks: The use of implicature (or what Wilson communicates but does not directly state in ‘The Twelve Chitenges’)**

‘The Twelve Chitenges’ could be read as a political allegory which dramatizes the increasing socio-economic, cultural and political commonalities shared by black and white Zimbabweans in the aftermath of the economic meltdown which intensified after the year 2000. Clearly, this economic meltdown radically reconfigured socioeconomic, class and political structures in postcolonial Zimbabwe. Wilson’s young white protagonist appears to initially ‘lag behind’ in his acceptance of this new reality. Thus, he asserts his fundamental ‘separateness’ from all the other passengers on the bus. As already noted, this assertion of difference is not directly communicated to the reader. Rather, it is signalled through what was described in this section as a ‘first wave of political implicature.’ The young man’s segregationist attitude is systematically queried (or ridiculed) as the narrative progresses. Again, implicature, taking the form of irony, plays a major part in deconstructing the young man’s assumptions. The young protagonist finally realises that he actually shares many socioeconomic, cultural and political commonalities with the other passengers on the bus. More precisely, the young man realises that he *is* a Zimbabwean riding on the same bus (or, figuratively, placed ‘in the same boat’) as all other ‘ordinary Zimbabweans.’ By this stage of the narrative, Wilson appears to be indirectly exhorting black and white Zimbabweans to urgently recalculate their socioeconomic and cultural positions, and to exploit the new opportunities for political cooperation, which have recently emerged in Zimbabwe.

## 7.0 Conclusion

### 7.1 Summary of Key Outcomes

This thesis set out to develop a hybridised method of text interpretation – labelled as ‘Marxist stylistics’ – which essentially proceeded from AMC but which also incorporated salient theoretical and methodological resources garnered from the field of CDA. The rationale for mediating AMC with resources appropriated from the field of CDA was two-sided. Firstly, it was recognised that AMC *already* possessed significant strengths vis-à-vis its determinist and reflectionist precursors – hence the need to further augment its effectiveness. Secondly, it also argued that AMC has been beset by numerous theoretical and methodological weaknesses, which have inhibited its scope and potential. To address AMC’s weak points, the thesis initially surveyed the field of CDA before proceeding to ‘mine’ it for germane theoretical and methodological resources – capable of mitigating the gaps identified in AMC. The survey of CDA included a brief exploration of its *own* political limitations<sup>207</sup>, which emerge most clearly when the field is reviewed from a Marxist perspective.

The process of mediating AMC with resources garnered from the field of CDA produced a hybridised method of text interpretation possessing several unique characteristics. As seen (in Chapter Five of the thesis), the Marxist stylistic method incorporates resources garnered from CDA while continuing to identify AMC as its *main* ‘forbear.’ This stance is realised through the method’s perception of relations of production as the ‘ultimate stakes’ in social struggle. Thus, the method endeavours to trace power struggles to their ‘economic taproot[s]’ (Resch 1992:35). As also underscored in Chapter Five, the Marxist stylistic method builds on strengths *already* possessed by AMC vis-à-vis its determinist and reflectionist precursors. Such strengths include: the treatment of literature as a material practice in its own right; the construal of the entire *economic mode of production* (rather than the economic *instance*) as the ‘real’ (albeit, *indirect*) determinant of all other levels of the social formation (Jameson 1981; Bennett 1997; Feltham 2008) and finally, the transcendence of *mechanistic* (i.e. ‘cause-effect’ and ‘essence-phenomenon’)

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<sup>207</sup> As discussed, some prominent versions of CDA appear to tacitly affirm the politics of ‘reconstructive postmodernism’ as defined by Best and Kellner (1997).

interpretations of texts that has come to be associated with socialist- realist and critical- realist methodologies. As also established, the Marxist stylistic method emerges, essentially, from the perception that AMC *needs* to be mediated, and further, from the incorporation of ‘salient’ CDA resources into AMC. Areas of such mediation (as identified in Chapters Three and Four of the thesis) include:

- AMC’s ‘equivocation’ between idealist and materialist premises in its definition of social practices (including literature). The Marxist stylistic method emulates CDA in unambiguously stressing the ‘overdetermined’ (and ‘overdetermining’) nature of practices and in defining the internal properties of practices with reference to their constitutive ‘moments’ (cf. Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999).
- AMC’s ‘epistemic absolutism’ as articulated in Althusser’s (1969) notion of ‘historical science.’ The Marxist stylistic method follows prominent versions of CDA by adopting the stance of critical realism developed by Bhaskar (1979, 1989).
- AMC’s failure to reconcile social structures and human agency (i.e. its stance of ‘Structuralist superdeterminism’ – Giddens 1979). As an appropriate mediation, the construal of a dialectical relationship between social structures and human agency (cf. Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999).
- Paucities in AMC’s grasp of discourse theory (Resch 1995). The Marxist stylistic method harnesses discourse theory to explain the link between discourses and social structures (particularly, ideologies), and to clarify the relationship between literary and non-literary discourses.
- Finally, the rejection of the artificial bifurcation – discernible in AMC – between ‘production-’ and ‘reception-oriented’ approaches to text analysis. Instead, the integration of the two approaches based on the perception that they actually *complement* each other (van Dijk 1989; Fairclough 1989).

The theoretical construction of the Marxist stylistic method was undertaken between Chapters One to Four of the thesis. The key lineaments of the method were then delineated in Chapter Five. Finally, the method was practically applied to the interpretation of at least four Zimbabwean fictional texts in Chapter Six. The application

of the method yielded some interesting insights, not only on the texts under examination, but more significantly, on the ‘operational contours’ of the Marxist stylistic method *itself*. The next section briefly reflects on the practical application of the method.

## **7.2 Reflections on the Application**

It became evident that prior conjectural work, which sought to clarify the theoretical and methodological positions assumed by the Marxist stylistic method, was crucial (rather than peripheral) to the application itself. Put more precisely, the resources required to operationalise the Marxist stylistic method *exceeded* just the discourse analytical tools borrowed from the field of CDA. Clarity on the philosophical, political and epistemological positions occupied by the Marxist stylistic method proved to be equally important. Such clarity informed (and fostered a certain degree of consistency on) the ‘problematics’ applied to interrogate the various texts. Thus, although different discourse analytical tools were applied on the various texts, there was a sense that the critiques shared certain areas of common ground defined by their political stances and their reversion to socio-economic themes; particularly, the exploration of relations of production in calculations of the ‘ultimate stakes’ in social struggle. Clarity on the epistemological stance assumed by the Marxist stylistic method also helped to shape ‘interpersonal relations’ between the critic and (a) the authors of the various texts, (b) focalising characters portrayed within the narratives and (c) the assumed audience (or readers) of the commentaries. What became quite clear – throughout – was that relating to authors, characters or assumed readers from a stance of ‘epistemic absolutism’ (as affirmed by some practitioners of AMC) would contradict the epistemological (and axiological) stances assumed in this thesis. It would also detract from the quality (and authenticity) of the critiques.

Not all of the focus, during the application, was on producing answers to posed questions. In some cases (as with the critique of ‘Seventh Street Alchemy,’) the main concern was to clarify questions *which needed to be posed* on who ‘truly’ represents ‘ordinary citizens’ in postcolonial societies. Generally, the Marxist stylistic method proved to be an evidence-based approach to textual commentary as it focused not so much on delivering ‘verdicts’ on issues raised within the texts but placed equal value on showing *how* those

interpretations were arrived at. Much of this ‘evidencing’ was effected through ‘targeted analyses’ of relevant linguistic and narrative structures of the texts.

The link between ‘close linguistic analysis’ and ‘interpretation’ is also worthy of note in this reflection. It needs to be clarified that the critic’s interpretive intuitions often *took precedence* over close linguistic analysis. In other words, the critic did not start by analysing textual structures in order to arrive at certain interpretations (or conclusions about) texts. Rather, the critic began by posing certain questions (and ‘intuitively’ supplying certain answers to those questions) before engaging with linguistic and narrative structures to reinforce those interpretations. Thus, while the evidencing of certain interpretations received priority, it almost always *followed* prior intuitions about (or interpretations of) the texts.

Another interesting pattern, which emerged during the application, was that textual descriptions, analyses and interpretations often occurred as ‘separate phases’ of the critiques. Usually, descriptions (highlighting linguistic or narrative patterns) occurred separately from interpretive/analytical processes (which highlighted patterns or trends discernable within specific texts). The interpretive schema described here appears to resemble the ‘three tiered’ method of engagement with texts proposed by Fairclough (1989, 1992, 2003).

Broadly speaking, the application of the Marxist Stylistic method demonstrated the compatibility of linguistic and literary approaches to text interpretation. As already suggested, this compatibility was, perhaps, only possible because the linguistic component ‘subordinated’ itself to (or was directed by) ‘interpretive intuitions.’ Withal, the application also demonstrated the feasibility of integrating production- and reception oriented approaches to textual critique, as highlighted in the commentary on *The Stone Virgins*, which simultaneously explored reader positioning, as effected by the ‘producing’ author, and and reader reactions to (i.e. reception of) the text.

Ultimately, it appears that the Marxist stylist method meaningfully distinguished itself from AMC on the one hand and (the various versions of) CDA, on the other. The method mediated several of the theoretical and methodological ‘gaps’ identified in AMC and also harnessed discourse analytical tools (borrowed from the field of CDA) to inform its

interpretations of texts. At the same time, the method ‘consciously’ prioritised relations of production in its construal of the ultimate stakes in social struggle – thus occupying a political stance which disassociated itself from the ‘reconstructive postmodernism’ (O’Regan 2001) that has been ascribed to certain prominent versions of CDA.

One possible limitation of the Marxist stylistic method, perhaps, was that due to the application of CDA methods (which have traditionally focused on short-length texts), the method tended to restrict linguistic analyses to relatively short ‘extracts’ of much longer narratives. Thus, a pattern emerged where the Marxist stylistic method tended to ‘zero in’ on extracts from longer texts, then support its interpretations (of those texts) with reference to patterns discerned in those extracts. However, this limitation is somewhat mitigated by the consideration that attempting to parse ‘entire texts’ would surely serve little purpose. Moreover, it also needs to be noted (as previously mentioned) that linguistic engagements generally *followed* prior ‘interpretive intuitions’ (rather than the other way round).

### ***7.3 Directions for Future Research and Development***

The Marxist stylistic method developed in this thesis was quite ‘generic.’ It explored the possibility of combining resources garnered from various versions of CDA with an AMC-based approach. It would be interesting if other researchers focused on developing more ‘streamlined’ approaches, which incorporated *specific* discourse analytical tools (i.e. drawn from a specific version of CDA) with the AMC-based approach. Such a direction of enquiry might, perhaps, achieve a depth of refinement (and inter-disciplinary engagement) which was not realised in this thesis.

Conversely, future applications of the Marxist stylistic method could also explore the possibility of deploying *various* discourse analytical tools (for example, SFL approaches coupled with cognitive linguistic and pragmatic stylistic methods) to foster ‘multi-systemic’ engagements with the texts. Such an approach might achieve a high level of resiliency (emanating from its ability to simultaneously engage with multiple systems/levels of textual structures) – this being a degree of resiliency which was not demonstrated in this thesis.

Yet another permutation of the Marxist stylistic method would be to develop a ‘hybrid’ which emanated from an *alternative* Marxist approach, such as Lukacsian ‘reflectionism.’ Such a method might incorporate appropriate discourse analytical tools to illuminate, for example, how authors (or given characters) projected an ‘informed consciousness’ within the literary narrative. Sociocognitive tools could illuminate such a line of enquiry, by – for example – investigating the ‘realities’ regarded as ‘normal’ (or ‘commonsensical’) by particular authors or characters, and the construal operations giving rise to such perceptions.

Finally, future researchers could also explore the possibility of developing an analogue of the Marxist stylistic method which specifically focused on ‘non-literary’ texts, or which was pliable enough to deal with both literary and non-literary discourses.

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