

VIOLENCE AND WRITING: THE WORK OF ANDRE BRINK

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a study of the relationship between violence and writing, and it takes as its focus the post-1976 novels of André Brink, ranging from Rumours of Rain to An Act of Terror. Its chief argument is that Brink's work undoes the opposition between violence and writing, both in its thematic content and in the self-reflexively foregrounded dynamics of its utterance. While Brink's novels suggest that violence impedes writing inasmuch as it traumatises the speaking subject, it is no less the case that they present the subsequent resurgence of writing as an act of violence directed against forces constraining the subject to silence. For Brink, violence negates writing, yet it also informs it.

Chapter 1 develops these themes by arguing that violence incapacitates the subject of knowledge, and it argues this by outlining three metaphorical systems by which the subject's impairment may be represented. The chapter suggests that through writing, the subject re-engages in an agon which he had missed in other contexts. In particular, by suffering death in the signifier, he re-enacts and comprehends traumatic events which had eluded his conceptual grasp. Chapter 1 concludes by claiming that an analogy exists between the statements Brink produces in his writing about the distinction between violence perpetrated by hegemony and by those who resist domination, and the problems of utterance which his texts bring to the fore. As far as this distinction is concerned, Brink maintains that certain forms of violence perpetuate a composite silence in which the oppressed is dehumanised, the oppressor is self-alienated, and the prospect of their common meeting-place is dispelled.

These three silences are analysed respectively in Chapter 2, while Chapter 3 examines an opposing form of violence which, according to Brink, shatters each of the silences. In this category of violence, the oppressed assert their autonomy, call the oppressor to account by inducing in him a guilty consciousness-of-self, and project a metanarrative movement towards a national agora.

I discuss these contending forms of violence in terms of Hegel's notion of the struggle for recognition and the dialectic of the master and slave. Given the analogy between the level of statement (what is said) and the level of utterance (the saying of the said), the struggle for recognition can be

discerned in both levels. What is at stake in either case is the re-assertion of subjecthood.

In addition to its focus on Hegel, the dissertation draws on Alexandre Kojève's interpretation of the Hegelian struggle for prestige, Jean-Paul Sartre and Immanuel Levinas's conceptions of the self-Other relation, and Derrida's reading of Levinas. The dissertation also meditates on the thought of Maurice Blanchot, Jacques Lacan, Elaine Scarry, Roland Barthes, and Louis Althusser, and makes extensive theoretical use of Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman's reflections on witnessing.

\*

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FOR PATRICIA

&

FOR MY FATHER

'Father, it was ever the vision of yourself,  
so often mournfully appearing to me, which  
compelled me to make my way to the threshold  
of this world'

-- 'The Visit to the Underworld',  
Virgil's The Aeneid

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A NOTE ON CITATION

Since the following works by André Brink are cited so frequently, references to them have been abbreviated as follows:

- Act                    An Act of Terror. 1991. London: Secker & Warburg.
- ADWS                   A Dry White Season. 1979. Flamingo: London.
- AVTFL                'An act of violence: thoughts on the functions of  
.literature'. Pretexts 3, 1991, 32-47.
- CoV                    A Chain of Voices. 1992. London: Flamingo.
- Dove                   'The dove in the grave'. 1993. The Guardian  
Weekly, 148, no. 18, 11.
- RR                     Rumours of Rain. 1978. Flamingo: London.
- States                States of Emergency. 1988. London: Faber and  
Faber.

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## PREFACE

The day after Chris Hani's funeral, André Brink wrote a newspaper article in which he confessed that the assassination of the former chief-of-staff of the guerilla army umKhonto we Sizwe and secretary-general of the South African Communist Party had led him into 'the temptation of despair' (Dove, 11). In the upheaval following Hani's murder, the political negotiations taking place at the time were in peril, as, after signs that they had fallen tentatively into abeyance, long-standing class and racial antagonisms re-asserted themselves. Mortified by the prospect of seeing his ideal of a non-racial democracy come to naught at a moment when <sup>it</sup> they seemed so close to realization, Brink proclaimed that a 'dark wave' seemed to have flooded South Africa and 'the space of experience' seemed to have been 'invaded by an incomprehensible clamour of rage, pain and fear' (11). For all its uproar, this uproar concealed a profound 'historical silence' (11) derived from the social divisions ingrained by the policy of apartheid. In the deluge, faculties of comprehension and reasoned assessment are unable to grasp a bewildering, unmanageable succession of events and impressions; and in this twilight of the faculties of reason, as Brink says elsewhere, it is as though 'the sun has set, the light has gone out' (States, 130). For the benighted land's inhabitants, all engrossed in the isolating delirium of 'rage, pain and fear', such darkness is a condition in which one is 'deprived of one's own shadow' (States, 130), of the foil or counterpart who puts one's presence into relief and exposes the nature of one's actions through an interplay of opposition and partnership. This absence of communication between self and Other, an absence in which each flounders in cognitive blindness, constitutes the 'historical silence' to which Brink refers: the silence of the tomb.

As the article on Hani, 'The dove in the grave' (1993), intimates by its title, Brink is quick to draw various ironies into his text, the chief of them being that a white dove, liberated in the course of the funeral, chose not to take to the air, but ominously fluttered down into the grave instead, as if suggesting how the hopes for national reconciliation it was

supposed to signify were fated to be swallowed up by death. The second of the ironies is the fact that Hani was murdered on an Easter weekend. Hani's assassination and its aftermath thus comes to represent, for Brink, the 'darkness between crucifixion and resurrection' (Dove, 11), an unpredictable and volatile period of arrestation within an otherwise securely-ordered narrative structure which threatens to subsume the country's denizens (as it did with the signifying dove) into the same grave which claimed Chris Hani. The citizenry would thus languish in a vast, restless crypt, deadened to one another, deadened by despair, and dead to hope of a resplendent meeting-place beyond the crypt's walls.

But while in one reading the essay's title stresses that the dove is unable to fly, because trapped in the grave, in another reading the title suggests that the grave contains possibilities for its own transcendence: inscribing the assassination and funeral in a text of omens and portents, Brink notes promisingly that a soldier of umKhonto we Sizwe retrieved the dove to set it aflight. If the title alludes to this incident, at another level, naming the essay itself, it implies that what Brink has written is likewise 'a dove in the grave' and participates in the title's ambivalent meanings. Enthralled by the grave, contemplating the death, not only of a single person but possibly of an ideal condition of communal existence as well, Brink is tempted by despair, by a fatigued and resigned disposition towards inactivity and silence. The dove falls; writing stops. Yet, given the title's shifting nuances (and the essay's overall thrust from despair to a renewal of hope), the resurgence of writing is akin to the flight of the dove from the grave. It is a writing issuing forth from a captivation by deadness, a missive despatched from within the crypt to discover a way out of the clamorous, darkened enclosure towards the illuminated openness of a futural national topos.

The question is, How does writing escape the grave? How does Brink overcome his disablement as a writer by the violent tableau he so disconsolately beholds? And if (as we shall see) his novels tend similarly to open on a situation in which a writer, or more broadly, a speaking subject, declares himself numbed, deadened and unable to write thanks to the traumatic impact violence has

had on him, one may ask, too, What constitutes the state of deadness, or numbness, and what is writing? If deadness implies the silence of the grave, how does writing break (out of) it? One may sketch a provisional answer to these questions by asking, What prompts Brink to write his essay so soon after Hani's funeral? 'I am writing a mere day after Hani's funeral' (Dove, 11) he says. What spurs on Brink's promptitude of response, all the more impressive for having been accomplished in the face of a debilitating 'temptation of despair' (Dove, 11)?

Clearly, one answer is that he perceives it to be his duty both as a citizen and a writer not to vacillate before intervening in the worsening crisis. A duty to contribute to the instatement of a post-apartheid order necessitates a swift intervention lest the prospects for attaining such a polity be wrecked irreversibly; and the form Brink's intervention assumes is that of a eulogy for Chris Hani. In this funerary oration, Brink reads Hani's death -- aptly enough, considering that the latter was murdered on an Easter weekend -- into the Christian narrative paradigm of crucifixion and resurrection, and while Hani is mythographically inscribed as Christ, the country's unrest is likewise situated as an intermediate period in an encompassing narrative advancing, however uncertainly, towards a glorious denouement. The effect of this mythicising construction is, of course, to suggest the impermanence of the individual's death and of the seemingly-intractable conflicts besetting the country; but, in addition, it imputes a sense of necessity to personal and collective sufferings, as if, rather than being the product of sudden, random allotments of misery, these were moments serving a purpose in an occulted rational (or at least meaningfully coherent) order, preliminary stages necessary for the attainment of some higher, as-yet obscure, good. Hani's death is thus implicitly -- and consolingly -- conceived as a sacrificial offering fostering the emergence of the future society. According to this reasoning, his death loses its quality of scandalous absurdity, and comes to serve a purpose as a sacrifice for a greater end; with the realization of this goal, his life is resurrected and preserved in the social body to which he had entrusted it.

To place Hani's death in such a metanarrative is thereby to imply that it carries meaning; death becomes a site from which meaning can be extracted. Indeed, meaning must be salvaged from it, in order to safeguard it from being 'the meanest all deaths, with no more significance than cutting off a head of cabbage or swallowing a mouthful of water' (Hegel, 1977, 360). For Brink, it is incumbent on the writer to produce meaning from death, to save the dead from vanishing from the view of the living: they must be liberated from their graves, set into flight. Very simply, this means that one must learn from Hani's death and affirm the ideals for which he sacrificed himself. By doing so, his demise will serve a purpose by becoming an instructive site productive of meaning for others, and he will rise from the grave by participating in the discourse of the living.

If Brink places Hani's fate in a metanarrative development from crucifixion to resurrection, a metanarrative which gives that fate a certain necessity as a stepping-stone to a higher wisdom and prevents it from disappearing into pointlessness, this transition from crucifixion to resurrection must be effected by the writer's decision to salvage meaning from death and propagate its lessons. Confronted by the absurdity of the death, Brink's logic seems to be as follows. Hani must be rescued from a shocking, absurd death; his death must be made part of a system of rational coherence, a contribution to it; as such, he dies (sacrifices himself) in order that the system evolve; or more pointedly, his death is an occasion from which others may learn the lessons they need if they are to bring the system to its eventual realization; and since Hani is unable to speak, someone else must take responsibility for articulating these lessons; by disseminating them, this special agency -- the writer -- both facilitates the emergence of the system and returns the deceased to the vitality of discourse. Such is the heroic duty which inspires Brink's promptness in addressing Hani's assassination: that of a eulogist taking the dead into his custodial care and bearing witness among the living to their exemplary aspirations.

Disturbed by the 'mindless violence' (Dove, 11) which claimed Hani's life and spread in the ensuing pandemonium, Brink is particularly intent on stressing the extent to which Hani's

own practice of violence differed from 'mindless violence'. As we shall see, a distinction between different kinds of violence is not confined to the eulogy of the umKhonto we Sizwe chief-of-staff and Shakespeare-enthusiast, but informs Brink's characterisation in his fiction of the violence exercised (on the one hand) by an hegemonic formation trying to enforce its hierarchies of domination and subjugation, and (on the other) by those who resist hegemony in the name of political emancipation. So, in contrast to the assassin's 'mindless violence' (11), ostensibly intended to subvert the negotiation of a political settlement and impede national reconciliation, Brink celebrates Hani as the model of one who had as a practitioner of violence succeeded in combining 'the word, the mind and the nobler achievements of the human spirit' (11). While he had made 'word' and 'sword' mutually reinforcing, the agents of 'mindless violence' recklessly return these polarities to 'their initial positions of antagonism, mutual exclusion and otherness' (11) with respect to each other; their violence, being purely destructive, excludes all hope of any socially constructive outcome.

It will become evident to the reader of An Act of Terror, Brink's most extended analysis of the distinction between violence opposing word to sword, and violence reconciling them, that this is no facile contrast, no straightforward or settled antithesis; rather it is a troubled one, formulated with an awareness of the measures which are sometimes prescribed by extreme situations and the insoluble ethico-moral dilemmas attendant on them. Yet however precarious the opposition is, and however much he feels the need to buttress it with various qualifications and precautions, Brink presses ahead with it. One of the central features of 'mindless violence', as he sees it, is that while fomenting 'clamour', it nevertheless entrenches an 'historical silence' (11) between oppressor and oppressed. Once again, Brink's association of violence and silence is not unique to the essay on Hani. Elsewhere, he links hegemonic rule to 'a silence of confusion and incomprehension' (ADWS, 305), while a gun battle makes one of the characters in An Act of Terror aware that what she fears about violence 'is not the noise of shots and



explosions and screams and shouts, not the din that accompanies and surrounds it, but the silence that lurks deep inside it ... [silence which] is inhuman because it is beyond language' (621). In 'The dove in the grave' it appears that this silence has three components. Alluding to Sartre (who in turn refers to Hegel's famous analysis of the relations between master and slave), Brink asserts that the 'historical silence' at 'the heart of the present clamour' consists in 'the dehumanisation of the oppressed' and 'the alienation of the oppressor'; in this juxtaposition a third silence arises, from the suppression of 'an unstoppable groundswell towards understanding' (11). Obliterating possibilities for interpersonal discourse and the reciprocity of speech, standing 'beyond language', (Act, 621), violence institutes a tripartite silence between self and Other -- a silence founded, in Brink's account, on varying degrees of awareness or disavowal of mortality, for he argues that while the oppressed 'knows too much' about its mortality, the oppressor 'knows too little' (11).

Nonetheless, Brink points to an opposing form of violence which, for him, combines sword and word, and facilitates discursive exchange instead of impairing it. His presentation of the violence of political resistance stresses precisely the point that the violence of the oppressed, waged in response to the violence of hegemonic rule, is a resumption of a dialogue between them. Violence, in other words, broaches the silence of violence; and no longer standing in opposition to the definitive human attribute of speech, violence comes to typify speech itself and so to 'define[...] our humanity' (Act, 426). In a significant passage in An Act of Terror (Brink reproduces it almost verbatim in 'An act of violence'; 1991, 37), Landman asks, 'What can be more violent than a question?'

She [Lisa] spoke about questions; never stops speaking about them. Her very existence is a question mark. Her questions about violence -- any question, all questions -- determine our limits, define the periphery of what is admissible, of what has so far been thinkable. And it is our search for answers to these questions which prompt us to transcend limits. This is the core of the violence which defines our humanity (426).

If a question (a discursive addressing of an-other) epitomises

violence, then violence is conceived as an act of questioning. Where the oppressed had been silenced, through their violence they address a question to the oppressor, that is, they recover their autonomous voices, in defiance of the oppressor's efforts to silence them; and where the oppressor had been trapped in a self-alienated silence, he is brought to an awareness of the limitations and injustice of the conceptions he had entertained about the Other. In short, he receives word of the prospective death of his world, a situation he had denied, while the oppressed surmount their paralysing overconsciousness of mortality by risking their lives in a struggle so as to regain the power of discursive self-assertion; this struggle unleashes the silenced 'groundswell towards understanding' (Dove, 11), inaugurating (in Brink's apocalyptic imagery) a teleological metanarrative movement to a national agora or public forum in which speakers can be recognised and heard by others whom they reciprocally recognise and hear. For Brink, the violence of political resistance thus shatters each of the three silences imposed by hegemonic violence.

As a eulogist, custodian, and witness to the dead, Brink promulgates the lessons of Hani's exemplary practice of violence amidst a distressing prevalence of 'mindless violence' (Dove, 11). In so doing, he exhorts his fellow citizens to model themselves on Hani's conduct, which is to say he seeks to cajole a refractory reality into fitting into the categories and terms of his discriminatory project concerning violence. His exhortations are therefore guided by a wish: a wish that an 'incomprehensible clamour' (11) would resolve itself into the intelligibility and conceptual clarity of an interpretive, and interpretable, order. Like Nelson Mandela's plan to 'harness young energies' and 'recapture the imagination of the young' by announcing 'a programme of continuing "rolling mass action"' (11), he attempts to channel these same disruptive energies into a socially useful and controllable framework. In other words, by raising Hani from the dead through the propagation of his good example, Brink tries to raise himself from the dead; by urging the country to accede to a set of distinctions, he tries to maintain cognitive mastery over events in the face of threats to

that position of mastery. Brink's efforts to 'make sense' of troubling occurrences are not only exercises in epistemological resourcefulness and the management of objects of knowledge, but are attempts to re-constitute himself as a subject of knowledge, or, more plainly, to reassert himself as a masterful subject in circumstances which traumatically unmaster him.

Given that the civil disorder Brink describes is one which endangers each and every inhabitant of the country, that nobody is exempt from this all-inclusive menace which threatens, like a stellar black hole, to plunge an entire nation into a mass grave, his speed in responding to the crisis by resurrecting Hani and liberating the dove from the grave (by re-affirming the soldier's aspirations for peace) indicates the panic -- the terror -- of one who is mortally endangered and endeavours to stay alive by the re-assertion of mastery over hostile otherness.

Ironically, resisting death, struggling against it, involves not a retreat from it but a struggle with death-bearing forces, and thus a movement into even greater danger. Brink must intervene in the conflict and become an active participant in it; he must himself become a perpetrator of violence, interrogating and opposing the tendency towards 'mindless violence' by means of a polemical address; he must counter the violence paralysing and silencing him with a violence of his own; he must put himself at risk in an agon if he is eventually to put himself out of risk.

And if, confronted by violence which reduces him to shocked and despairing silence, Brink struggles against it so that his act of writing is an act directed against a counterforce negating speech, an act implicated in violence as violence waged against violence, then is it not the case that the violence approaching him from outside himself is a displaced and projected image of the violence capable of emanating from within himself? To write against violence is to inwardise exteriority; it is to convert the obliterating, negating, and explosive force approaching from the outside into a potential available to the subject in his acts of self-assertion. 'I wonder whether you will ever understand ... that this was the reason for it, the explanation for my involvement?' Thomas Landman, protagonist of An Act of Terror, notes of the bomb he detonates: 'I had to be present, I had to be

there' (122). Landman wants to be 'present' to and self-identical with the blast, described as 'a collective scream' and 'a timeless shofar resounding over the crumbling walls of Jericho' (31). He wishes to be identical with this 'scream' shattering the imprisoning walls of hegemonic structure; what he wishes, in short, is to be the explosion, to be that explosive utterance.

If this act of saying, or utterance, is implicated in a struggle for mastery, and is therefore amenable to being analysed in terms of Hegel's famous notion of the struggle for recognition, what Brink says concerning the violence practised by Hani and other resistance fighters lends itself to a similar analysis. In other words, the dominant preoccupations found in Brink's narratives -- namely, those concerned with political violence, the struggle for pure prestige, and the dialectic of master and slave -- can be regarded as shedding light on the dynamics involved in the act of narrating, or articulating, these narratives. In Chapter 1, I examine the idea that violence traumatizes and silences the subject, and take States of Emergency as a point of departure for exploring issues of narratorial paralysis in Brink's post-1976 novels (ranging from Rumours of Rain to An Act of Terror). Self-reflexively foregrounding the process at work in its narration, States of Emergency shows how an apparently mutually exclusive opposition between violence and writing (in which the former disables the latter) is undone when writing replicates violence within itself. Writing simulates or re-enacts the violence which the narrating subject failed to comprehend in the outside world, a simulation premised on the notion that the author dies in the Other's semiotic codes.

What is crucially at issue in Chapter 1 is the claim that while violence negates writing, it is also the case -- paradoxically enough -- that it is violence which informs the resurgence of writing. Chapter 2 is an elaboration of the contention that violence imposes silence on both oppressor and oppressed. Its analysis of silence proceeds from observations Brink makes in 'The dove in the grave' concerning the oppressor's ignorance of death, the oppressed's impairing knowledge of mortality, and the consequent suppression of a 'groundswell

towards understanding' (11). Starting with these observations, Chapter 2 develops a philosophical excursus on silence, concentrating on Jean-Paul Sartre and Emmanuel Levinas's conceptions of the self-Other relationship (a theoretical focus which includes an examination of Derrida's critique of Levinas) and on Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman's claims about the link between the act of witnessing and the supposition of an addressable Other capable of hearing one's testimony rather than relegating it to silence. In contrast to Chapter 2, Chapter 3 discusses precisely the shattering of silence, and it is here that the Hegelian motifs of the dissertation come most strongly to the fore. In particular, the struggle to write is viewed in relation to the struggle for recognition as described by Hegel and his influential interpreter, Alexandre Kojève, who argues that desire involves a transgressive, explosive negation of delimited modes of being impressed on the subject by the institutions of mastery. While the first segment of the chapter investigates the play of forces at work in the act of saying, or narrating, the second part amplifies the ideas raised in the course of this investigation by attending to what is said -- by attending, that is, to the thematic pre-occupations of Brink's narratives with violence waged in the name of political emancipation.

\*

## 1. 'TOO NUMB TO ACHIEVE ANYTHING'

'These masterful images because complete  
Grew in pure mind, but out of what began?  
A mound of refuse or the sweepings of a street,  
Old kettles, old bottles, and a broken can,  
Old iron, old bones, old rags, that raving slut  
Who keeps the till. Now that my ladder's gone,  
I must lie down where all the ladders start,  
In the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart'  
-- W. B. Yeats<sup>1</sup>

### I. Disintegration

#### (i) Climbing the ladder: inhibition and enablement

What inhibits writing, and what liberates it? For the industrious André Brink the short reply in both cases could well be: the terror inspired by violence.

If Brink can overcome the trauma caused by an act of terror and convert it into an elaborate disquisition on violence like An Act of Terror, then a strange reversal has taken place in which the violence debilitating his writing has been laboured on and changed into nothing less than writing's motive force. He has shifted from 'maiming to meaning' (Breytenbach, 1984, 240), but by way of the construction of meaning, he nevertheless shifts back to meditate on 'maiming'. In this shuttle-movement of departure and return, the wound which stifles discourse and from which discourse has to distance itself if it is to endure, is revisited as a resource which can energise rather than vitiate discourse. So, as an army is said to move on its stomach, Brink's narratives are nourished and sustained by violence in their progression towards a terminal cataclysm. They feed on violence, inwardising and ruminating on atrocities which -- at first -- imperil the writer and obstruct the advance of narration. His novels are replete with prefigurations of apocalyptic devastation, as well as accounts of murders in police detention, bloody slave rebellions, armed struggle, states of emergency, revolt and repression, sadomasochistic behaviour, and episodes in which his characters passively induce destructive effects among their fellows as though they were exercising demonic powers; threaded through the grisly tableau are speculations on the

conversion of loss into gain, revivification, utopia, communality and love. Yet bearing in mind that this voluminous writing about violence is (as hypothesized) the outcome of a process in which violence's silencing of discourse is supplanted by violence's energising of discourse, the itinerary of the process can be pursued in reverse order, allowing one to follow his writing back into the silence from which it emerges. By descending the ladder down to 'the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart', one may be in a better position to observe how the writer goes about ascending from his moribund underworld to produce 'masterful images'. In so doing one may find possible answers to the opening question: how can terror be changed from being a cause of paralysis to being a resource of literary productivity, or more simply, how can violence be made to enable writing instead of disabling it?

What the latter tactic implies is that the writing which generates statements about violence as a topic can be resituated as a response to the problems of utterance posed by violence as a mortal threat. That is to say, Brink's writings about violence can be conceptualised as writings about writing, and as indirect reflections on acts of writing jeopardised by -- and finally transcendent over -- acts of terror. In general terms, then, how do acts of terror impact on acts of writing? Following a line of thought developed by Sartre and continued by Levinas, Blanchot and Scarry, one may regard endangerment as a threat to not only the subject's physical integrity but to his psychical functioning. The subject cannot 'make sense' of experience since endangerment distresses his capacity to posit himself as the basis of certitude upon which his mental world can be cognitively structured and set in a meaningful order. Likewise for Brink, at first blush violence is not assimilated by the interpretive categories of a self-possessed subject as it dispossesses his faculties. Violence makes itself known as a dissolution of knowledge, as an anxiety undoing the masterful subject's ability for power. Without a subject of knowledge, violence cannot be delimited as an object for a subject. It cannot be grasped as a theme for exposition, comprehended as an encounter for narrativization, or brought into relation with the subject as a speculum in which he can recover his identity: it is unintegrated

in the subject's schemas, and its advent is marked by an incapacity to write or to speak. Overwhelmed by atrocity, the subject is stupefied, powerless, violated, despairing and apathetic -- a spectrum of affective enervation and cognitive atrophy which shades into acquiescence, insensibility, a detached sense of invulnerability, and blunted indifference, the apparent frigidity of which conceals a deeper rage at his thwarted self-assertion. In a word, the subject is: numb. →

Yet in Brink's novels acts of terror do not eclipse acts of writing. His novels testify to the reversal by which the terror stifling writing and is surmounted and put to work in literary production, while by the same token they enact the processes by which a numbed authorial subject breaks through his numbing by confronting terror and recuperating it as precisely the generative source and telos of his writing. How might one set about the task of explaining exactly how this reversal takes effect in Brink's work? One heuristic opening is the following: if discourse on violence arises from a silence instigated by violence, then discourse may be found to contain implicit references to the very dynamics by which it managed to posit itself; the statement about violence may be regarded as recapitulating in its thematic content the travails of its own utterance. Indeed, Brink's fictions often reflect on their conditions of enunciation by charting the passage from a narrator's initial disablement to a corpus monumental in scope and ambition as well as in its function as a funerary edifice consecrating the dead. Thanks to their frequent self-reflexivity, the novels draw attention away from an exclusive contemplation of the propositional content of statements so as to stress the vicissitudes of enunciation involved in producing these statements in the first place. Textual self-reflexivity consequently underscores that what is at stake in the act by which these statements are uttered is discourse itself; it stresses that discourse is dogged every step of the way by the danger of an entropic lapse into aphasia. A rider to this is that the statements uttered under such circumstances, especially observations concerning the broadly political relations governing discursive exchange in situations of interpersonal conflict or



reciprocity, comprise an oblique commentary on the practice of writing, for what is written retains a troubled sense of how it emerged from a context of violence by overcoming the silence associated with violence, a 'silence that is inhuman because it is beyond language' (Act, 621).

Elaborating on these claims about self-reflexivity, one may note that it is a striking feature of Brink's novels that they frequently open on a scene of trauma in which the narrator bears witness to the death of a stranger (States), a distant friend (ADWS), victims of a past uprising (CoV), or a nameless entanglement of unfortunates (RR). Significantly, the narrator's attestations about the violence before him is coupled with an admission that he is cognitively and functionally incapacitated. 'I've always felt that something must have escaped me, a submarine something ...' (RR, 11), Mynhardt (once an aspirant writer) laments as he attempts to rationalise his destructive role in the collapse of his major personal relationships, while the narrator of A Dry White Season (a self-confessed hack) remarks that Ben du Toit's murder 'challenged everything I'd always thought or felt about him' (9), exposing the inadequacy of his knowledge. He is baffled by the death, not only in the sense that he does not have all the facts at his disposal, or that he lacks the information which could be annexed to an existing system of knowledge and so explain the riddle; he is also perturbed by a memento mori disempowering him as a subject of knowledge and altering the complexion of his familiar world in a way that is insidious and yet decisive. Importantly, this visitation by otherness coincides with a crisis in his writing career, evinced by an impasse in his ability to produce, and by his discontent with the social relations bound up with his status as a popular author. Recalling the '[w]eariness' and 'inertia' (RR, 12) which afflict Mynhardt, he describes the crisis as a 'vast apathy which has been paralysing me for months' (ADWS, 11). It is as though the 'arid present landscape' of his writer's block, the 'dry white season' of apartheid, and his bewilderment at Ben's death, are intimately interrelated.

(ii) Prolepsis

But if Brink's fictions are typically inaugurated by allusions to the deleterious effects of violence and death on writing and cognition, allusions which point to the aphasic underside of the ensuing discourse, it is States of Emergency which explores most emphatically the problems of attempting to write under conditions of quandary and abjection. This text will thus serve as a useful point of departure for elucidating how in broad terms Brink changes terror from an impediment to an empowering force in his writing. Touching on other of Brink's novels to amplify my arguments, I shall describe in detail various models accounting for the subject's impairment, and subsequently indicate how they may be combined in order to characterise the numbed condition. After having thus set up the first part of my thesis about the subject's functional inhibition by violence, I shall go on to show how this numbness is broached in States, highlighting its thematic and performative reversal and overcrossing of apparently antithetical domains of experience. In the course of doing so, I will group these reversals under the rhetorical figure of apophasis and discuss certain post-structuralist notions of writing and intertextuality (the relevance of which will become evident again in Chapter 2). Having elaborated on my contention that Brink's writings about violence can be regarded as writings about the problems of writing, I shall then address his article on Chris Hani's murder, 'The dove in the grave', using it as a springboard into the following chapters in which I look at the thematic statements he makes about the relationship between violence, language and desire. In keeping with my claim that Brink's pronouncements about violence -- commentaries always on the verge of lapsing into the aphasia with which the novels begin -- retell the story of their own passage from an initial numbed-silence, I shall consider his statements about language and violence as harbouring valuable insights into the means by which writing may come to flourish. As I shall explain, these statements are concerned with the commerce between the Same and the Other, and the way that the Other's violent self-assertion brings news to the Same of its mortality, thereby making the Same conscious of itself; in other words, if the traumatizing otherness of violence at first puts

the Same into cognitive crisis, Brink responds to this predicament by recuperating interpretive collapse as a preliminary stage in an ethical interrogation of the Same by the Other's violence, an interrogation in which the Same guiltily acknowledges its responsibility for the Other's acts. The terror striking at the Same from the outside, that is to say, is inwardised and recognised by the Same as stemming from within itself. In a similar way, the narrating subject must recognise himself in the terror which appears to stand outside himself, and engage with this terror as the principle of his own desire. The process necessitates that boundaries between opposing categories -- inside/outside, Same/Other, writing/violence -- be crossed. States of Emergency gives an object lesson in showing how these chiasmic reversals operate, reversals which (as I have contended) are foregrounded to varying degrees of prominence in most of Brink's fiction.

### (iii) Janus

With its title punning on emergency rule, the emergence of writing, and the merging of these antagonistic domains, States of Emergency thus announces its febrile preoccupation with the problem of how writing can be made possible under circumstances which vitiate all discourse, while suggesting, conversely, that the statements it makes about violence bear the trace of its prior engagement with the incapacitation of utterance by violence. Janus-faced, States of Emergency is the site of an intersection between 'violence' and 'writing'. On the one hand, 'violence', apparently separate from and antithetical to 'writing', crosses over from its 'own' extra-linguistic space to inform 'writing'. On the other, 'writing' tries to distance itself from 'violence' but crosses back into it to absorb and replicate 'violence' in its structures. This crossover between the text's space and 'the violence of "the world"' (AVFL, 34) implies that States is enunciated from an unstable position on the verge of speechlessness -- a position neither too irremediably situated in the zone of violence to be struck entirely mute, nor too far out of danger to let experience of the State of Emergency be comprehended in deceptively fluent

discourses that are forgetful of its horror. While the intersection between violence and writing may well be turned to productive ends, initially their proximity is felt as an attrition of speech.

In the tradition of Scheherazade, whose narratives in The Arabian Nights defer the moment when she is due to be executed, the authorial personage narrating States (a version of Brink) consequently writes in desperation, seeking to postpone his undoing in the disaster through an activity in which he can exercise at least some degree of control over events, and by means of which he can hold onto a provisional identity as a speaker. 'Perhaps the making of notes has become compulsive in itself,' he says: 'I have no choice but to continue ... because all around me, if I were to stop, there would be only that other inextricable weaving of a land in flames' (104). To reiterate an earlier formulation, his writing is dogged every step of the way by the danger of an entropic lapse into aphasia. Yet Brink actively incorporates the nemesis of aphasia into his text. Driven by the same impulse Balzac expressed in his remark that 'I put myself at the exact point where knowledge touches on madness, and I refuse to put up any safety rail' (in Felman, 1985, 115), Brink places himself at the point where 'writing' is bruised by 'violence' and refuses to keep a self-protective barrier between them. By connecting the desire and the imperative to write with their antithesis, he locates himself in States at the risky intersection where writing teeters on ruination. While the narrator, it would appear, strives to delay execution by sustaining his discourse, the repeated allusions to his turbulent context suggest, not so much an unreflective will to life, as a vertiginous fascination with the precariousness of his life-sustaining discourse -- a fascination in which he knows himself to be alive inasmuch as he is in danger of dying, inasmuch as he risks death.

The text hence proceeds as a thematic and formal elaboration of the tensions between violence and writing by staging the interpenetration of heterogeneous realms normally opposed to each other. A reverie on literary theory will be disrupted by appalling news from the black townships, or a disquisition on romance will

rub shoulders with a journalistic report on atrocities committed under emergency rule; the solitude of lovers will be despoiled by a reminder 'of everything happening out there ... in those burning smoking streets, invisible from inside this ordered comfortable room, but no less there for all that, a small fierce stab in the mind' (75). Likewise in A Dry White Season, zones of experience relegated to a 'totally different world' (56) round back on suburban normality, which is predicated on their expulsion. Unable to carry out his teaching chores or make love to his wife, Ben du Toit is troubled by the thought that 'while we're here talking in this room', the cleaner at his school, detained by security police, is 'standing under a bare bulb, his feet on bricks and a weight tied to his balls' (56). The juxtaposition of conflicting 'orders of simultaneous experience' (Steiner, 1967, 181)<sup>2</sup> undercuts the composure and self-assurance the subject needs so as to function as a social agent by ceaselessly reminding him of the impropriety of his aesthetic pursuits in a world where others suffer and where he, too, is vulnerable.

Multiplied relentlessly, these uncanny proximities serve to sharpen awareness of the aporias from which writing struggles to emerge: each is 'a small fierce stab in the mind' (States, 75). The result is that States makes its own disablement the insistent focus of its fascination by means of 'weaving' together ('text' is etymologically akin to 'textile'), in a tattered fabric, disparate regions which militate against each other. As such, the text plays constructive forces off against corruptive ones to yield a series of 'small fierce stab[s] in the mind' (75). These 'stabs' intensify the subject's sense of his disintegration under the impact of violence -- they constitute a self-mutilation which mimes the lacerating effects of the Emergency.

#### (iv) Tongue-tied

Subtitled 'Notes towards a love story' (1), States of Emergency is an account of work in progress. With its montage of discourses intercalating diverse textual media -- ranging from excerpts from a (fictitious) novel and diary written by a

stranger named Jane Ferguson, to reports by a resident on conditions in besieged townships, to accounts of discussions with Ferguson's uncle, to citations from scholarly books and meditations on the craft of literary narrative, to drafts of experimenting with the love story the narrator wishes to write, to footnoted references to Brink's earlier work -- States of Emergency self-reflexively foregrounds the practices of fiction-making in order to dramatise the way in which the narrator writes himself out of the quandary into which the civil unrest has plunged him. However, the novel has raised a good deal of controversy in South Africa, related largely to Brink's personal life, but linked in part to the perception that its postmodernist aesthetic amounts to an injudicious, if not exploitative, response to the severities of the State of Emergency imposed on South Africa for most of the 1980s. Contemporary literary academia is divided in its appraisal of textual discontinuity and self-referentiality. While apologists or champions of the latter customarily dwell on the potential of self-conscious fictionalisation to indicate the artificiality of hegemonic norms and so dispel mystifications concerning their apparent naturally-given immutability (a strand of thought indebted to Shklovsky's early formalist thought on literature as defamiliarisation of habitual perception, as well as to Benjamin and Brecht's ideas on the political value of an anti-illusionist artistic practice displaying its own constructedness)<sup>3</sup>, a contending faction denounces what it regards as socially irresponsible navel-gazing blithely complicit with ideological forms engendered by an imperialising late capitalism.

Given the absence of any visible demystificatory intention on Brink's part, must one perforce concede the validity of the second argument in the case of States of Emergency? From the latter viewpoint, formal introversion gives narcissistic pleasure in which the writer sustains himself by openly delighting in his own creative powers; even worse, in a move that seems to invite a rebuke similar to Adorno's much-quoted aphorism that 'to write lyric poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric' (1977, 188), real-life suffering is glossed over and made into the occasion for aesthetic enjoyment and financial enrichment. While we shall

return later to the character of the profiteer in Brink's work, three points should be noted in Brink's defence. First, alternative aesthetic strategies are themselves not exempt from Adorno's indictment, for his reproach embraces art in its entirety, not one literary form in particular; indeed, States is a re-articulation of key elements of Adorno's problematic: how can one forge ahead with the writing of lyric poetry -- in Brink's case, a love story -- while people nearby are being killed? Second, the inward turn of self-conscious form need not imply an indifference to worldly affairs. Instead, by opening up a space of experimentation free from external constraints or exigencies, one may be cultivating the means, otherwise impaired, precisely by which such external concerns may be addressed. Third, the decentred form of States testifies to the destabilising effects of violence. More specifically, the novel's reflections on its aesthetic procedures, its brooding on the difficulties of articulation, arise precisely as a result of the narrator's wish to respond to the Emergency and suffer its perils within the space of his writing, rather than ignore them. It is exactly the narrator's sense of political duty which first impells him towards the Emergency and so leads him into the articulatory impasse in which the necessity to speak is thwarted by the impossibility of speaking, an impasse in which that of which he can speak (a romance, for instance, or lyrical poetry) is not that of which he feels he ought to speak only.

Let us examine these claims in more detail. Asking 'whether any art now has a right to exist' in the wake of the Holocaust, Adorno declares that the situation of art 'is one of paradox, not merely the problem of how to react to it' (1977, 188). Irrespective of the measures he or she might adopt, the writer's dilemma is inescapable: to write is to slight the dead, either by ignoring the hideousness of their fate or by turning it into an object of aesthetic contemplation. Nevertheless, suffering 'also demands the continued existence of art while it prohibits it' (188): to refrain from writing is thus to abjure the moral imperative to speak. But once again, to write about horror is insidiously to give it an aesthetic dimension and thus to palliate the horror: one cannot write about that of which one

must write nevertheless, and one can write only by means of a certain avoidance. A writing aware of this double-bind is tongue-tied, wavering between an all-too-fluent discourse and a scrupulous silence that is not far, though, from submission to a world 'which permanently puts a pistol to men's heads' (180). For the narrator of States of Emergency, Adorno's catch-22 touches directly on the tension between speech and aphasia. The desire to write a love story implies 'betrayal towards the great current of history sweeping past' the narrator (5), and produces speech guiltily silent on the suffering of his fellows. Yet casting facile lyricism aside to do one's duty and face up to the turmoil, one finds a pistol at one's head reducing one, in a seizure of cognitive malfunctioning, to silence that is itself guiltily tantamount to acquiescence in brutality. To write is to write a love story -- a betrayal. But to attempt to write about the Emergency is to fall silent -- another betrayal. How then to reconcile the desire to write with the duty to confront what obstructs writing? How to make 'the thing you want to do coincide with what you've got to do' (Act, 86)? How to change the duty to confront terror into something one wants to do, into something inextricably related to the nature of desire? How to inform duty with the vertiginous fascination referred to earlier? How, that is, to turn the speech-impeding danger to which duty leads him into a precariousness that desire wants to undergo? Or, more plainly, as the narrator asks in a discussion of literary-political commitment, 'How does one cope with a period like the one we have been living through in the past year or so ... ?' (States, 5).

In order to 'cope' with traumatic events and satisfy the obligations of political duty, the narrator must write about violence and make it the object of a discourse formulated by himself as a subject of knowledge. To put it simply, he must 'make sense' of the surrounding upheaval. However, two difficulties present themselves. They can be said to define the ways in which violence debilitates writing. First, for the observer, violence does not appear pre-given as an object of knowledge. Second, violence (as I have suggested from the outset) endangers and undermines the subject of knowledge, leaving him



numb and speechless -- or, to anticipate the three predominant systems of metaphors which are often employed to present the subject's abasement, he is overloaded with stimuli, blinded and enclosed. (NP)

In the case of the first difficulty, text tries to address context, but the narrator is disempowered by statistics listing the casualties of the State of Emergency. 'Almost two thousand killed, countless thousands wounded; ... well over ten thousand people ... in detention; torture; ... burning tyres and charred bodies' (5). Although an agglomeration of fragments is available to the narrator, the succession of noun phrases suggests that these impressions have yet to be organised into a coherent syntax or interpretive system. Context, in other words, is not available to the subject as a settled category of knowledge which his discourse will subsequently reflect or re-present, but will have to be mediated by sense-making activity. This is to invoke a philosophical and literary critical postulate so familiar as to border on the self-evident: ever since powers of world-creation were transferred from divine to human agency, whether this agency was seen as being vested in either social collectivities or individual consciousness, humankind has been regarded not as passive recipients of a reality pre-encoded with signification, but as the active shapers of worlds rendered meaningful in and as their own varying images; in its insistence on the logically unmotivated but labile, conventionally determined relationship between linguistic signifiers and signifieds, post-Saussurean linguistics in its turn has developed this motif, emphasising that language is not a medium for transparently reflecting a pre-given reality but has a constitutive, world-creating function, such that 'reality' is defined within a flux of socio-discursive constructions, while context needs to be worked over by the text in order to acquire an intelligible significance. As Mynhardt's father explains, an 'act is not something clear and defined and tangible like a stone you can pick up from the ground' -- a condition which makes it necessary for history's 'doers' be followed by interpreters 'who try to find the meaning of what the others have done' (RR, 222).

Yet while it is the case that contextual events are not

given to consciousness im-mediately (that is, without linguistic and ideological mediation), but have to be constructed as meaningful objects put before a subject ('object' stems 'from Late Latin objectum something thrown before {the mind}'; C. E. D.), the subject himself is not simply given either, always ready to receive experience into his schemas, but is disintegrated by traumatic experience; the implication is that the work of discursive construction is as much a self-reconstruction as it is an elaboration of an object of knowledge. Seeking to confront the Emergency, to address it face to face, the narrator finds that if it is not an event with an intrinsic meaning, the words by which he hopes to turn it into an object 'thrown before (the mind)' are 'overtaken by events' (5), so that in spite of the Emergency's excessive quality it is an experience which, paradoxically, he misses and cannot con-front. Not only does it elude his objectifications: it impairs the means by which he can posit himself as a subject determining an object ('from Latin subjectus brought under, from subicere to place under, from SUB- + jacere to throw'; C. E. D.). Admitting that he had stopped work on a novel 'for the simple reason that too much was happening around me -- a whole country ... erupting in flames -- to find the inner lucidity without which, even when one is in pain or rage, writing is impossible' (States, 3), the narrator recapitulates in abbreviated form three major conceptual models within which the effects of violence on the subject are often presented: sensory overload, defective vision, and paranoid space. Taken together, these three models provide a composite description of the state of numbness to which the narrator confesses when he complains that the Emergency 'had left me too numb to achieve anything' (3).

## II. The subject and sensory overload

### (i) The missed encounter

The first, apparently straightforward, model of subjectal impairment centres on the notion of violence as an unassimilable excess over the subject's ability to process information. With 'too much ... happening around [him]', the narrator finds himself

'overtaken by events' (States, 3). Elsewhere in Brink's writing, the model of excess is often found in the motif of violence as a deluge. A flood has overpowering mass, bears destructive force, submerges entire communities, but for all its emphatic presence, water (or violence) cannot be grasped by the hand (or mind) as an entity (or object of knowledge) 'defined and tangible like a stone' (RR, 222). 'If only something visible and graspable would present itself to grapple with and overcome,' Nicolaas\* says, exasperated by the menace of an impending catastrophe and by the dangers which surround yet elude him: 'But in this anonymous flood I was helpless' (CoV, 316). Should one imagine that such excess is simply a quantitative overload outstripping the powers of an integral, if limited, subject, it must be added that the flood deprives one of independent movement and self-examination. Having 'lost [his] grasp' over himself as he is borne away in a metaphorical rising tide, Galant is not simply outdone by something beyond his control but is himself undone in the deluge. Nicolaas senses in Galant, the slave who is soon to rebel, a 'dark secret flood ... moving behind his actions' -- a flood of which Galant 'appeared to have no understanding' (275). There is a flood, but no grasp, which suggests a quantitative superfluity over an otherwise stable base; yet the agent of the grasp may be affected by the flood in ways of which he is unaware, a situation implying that a quantitative excess is coupled with a qualitative lack in the subject. In excess, there is both too much and too little.

This paradox informs Blanchot's The Writing of the Disaster. While calling the disaster 'an excess of experience', he claims, 'We feel that there cannot be any experience of the disaster ... even if we were to understand disaster to be the ultimate experience' (1986, 51). Blanchot's paradox turns upon two varying meanings of 'experience', the one fairly common-sensical, the other, philosophical. Following the common-sensical usage, the disaster does of course entail 'experience' in the sense that it is something which happens to one, which one undergoes. 'My experience of the disaster' refers to involvement in an event. But the same sentence may also suggest a distinction between my perception of the disaster, and the 'reality' of the occurrence

as it exists in itself. In this instance, 'experience' is understood as the condition in which phenomena appear to be what they are only by virtue of what they are for the specific subject in question. In other words, phenomena come into being as meaningful and intelligible only inasmuch as they are constructed as objects by and for the subject. Following this, philosophical sense, there is no experience of the disaster as 'there is no "I" to undergo the experience' (Blanchot, 1986, 51). Blanchot can thus say that the disaster is a deficient excess: it is 'an excess of experience, and affirmative though it be, in this excess no experience occurs; it cannot ... bestow itself lavishly in some point of incandescence: it marks only the exclusion of such a point' (1986, 51). This exclusion means that the disaster is not given to the subject as the unfolding of light, visibility and conceptual clarity, or as a phenomenon localized in a site ('a point of incandescence'; emphasis added) where all its meanings are condensed and originally accessible for the subject. To believe otherwise would be to imagine that the subject is immediately present to that which he suffers, as though his 'experience' were grasped by him in all its dimensions at the instant of impact, as if the experiencing (or suffering) subject were consistently and necessarily identical with himself as the subject of experience (a cognizing agency). Blanchot's paradox interrogates this putative self-identity. In line with Bettelheim's observation that while he and other prisoners were beaten by guards en route to a German concentration camp, he 'became convinced that these dreadful and degrading experiences were not happening to "me" as a subject, but only to "me" as an object' (1960, 127), Blanchot points to a similar sense of dissociation when he notes that 'the disaster threatens in me that which is exterior to me -- an other than I [that is, "me" as an object] who passively become other [the execrable otherness which he is in the aggressor's point of view]' (1986, 1). If the disaster is not given in an instant to the subject as an object of knowledge, and if the real is an unsayable 'which can only be invaded by language post facto' (Brink, 1992, 1), it is correlatively the case that the suffering subject is disjunct from the cognizing subject, and that reconstructing the event is

thus an attempt at 'restoring' this fissured self-identity -- or, more pertinently, it is an effort at arriving, however belatedly, at a 'missed encounter' (Lacan, 1977b, 55) with trauma so as to make good a deficiency of experience in the midst of too much experience.

Likewise Derrida takes the phenomenologist Edmund Husserl to task in Speech and Phenomena for his presupposition that the subject is unitarily self-present to his own experience. Derrida argues that in order for this assumption to hold good, Husserl must further presuppose that the subject is im-mediately present to experience: since any delay between experience and its registration by consciousness negates self-presence, Husserl must maintain that the unity of experience (the co-incident between suffering and cognizing) is 'produced in the undivided unity of a temporal present' (1973, 60). Experience as consciousness and an undergoing is necessarily given in 'the now as point, as a "source-point"' (61). As Husserl himself is cited as saying, the 'now-apprehension is ... the nucleus of a comet's tail of retentions' (62). To paraphrase this, the subject's integral presence to himself in the instant or moment of undergoing forms a solid grounding and primary perceptual event which is retained as ~~as~~ a merely derivative and secondary memory-trace. But to follow Derrida's critique by way of a comparable metaphor often employed by Brink, a metaphor in which gunfire is likened to 'a star streaking through the sky light-years after it has burned out' (Act, 5), it is precisely through delay and deferral that an experience (a gunshot, a star's explosion) comes to be received into the subject's cognitions; the implication is that it is the 'retentions' (or later representations) which have primary efficacy since they constitute the subject's retroactive experience of the 'nucleus' and thus allow the missed 'nucleus' to come into being for the subject in the 'first' place. Derrida observes that Husserl 'rejects the "after-event" of the becoming conscious of an "unconscious content" which,' he adds, 'is the structure of temporality implied throughout Freud's texts' (1973, 63). Rather than conceptualising the subject as identical to himself in a punctual instant of apprehension, Freud's theory of the unconscious implies the subject's radical non-self-presence,

such that, in Lacan's formulation, 'I think where I am not, therefore I am where I do not think' (in Borch-Jacobsen, 1991, 190). Non-self-presence in turn implies that experience of trauma is postponed, and that the subject arrives late, never punctually.

(ii) Deferred action

In short, Derrida's reference to Freud's 'structure of temporality' is an allusion to the notion of deferred action, the psychic process in which 'impressions and memory-traces may be revised at a later date to fit in with fresh experiences' (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973, 111). The locus classicus of this concept is Freud's work on the 'Wolf Man', a boy who had witnessed the primal scene of parental coitus in his second year but who had succeeded in understanding these memories only in his fourth year when his own libidinal development made it possible for him to make sense of what he had seen two years before. 'It is by deferral,' Derrida notes, 'that the perception of the primal scene -- whether it be reality or fantasy hardly matters -- is lived in its meaning' (1978, 214). Above all, what is crucial is that it is only through deferred action that the child suffers the trauma of his initial perception, in the same way as the sound of gunfire and the light from a celestial cataclysm only reach the subject belatedly, bringing him to consciousness of his endangerment when in 'reality' -- it hardly matters from the perspective of pathogenic effectiveness on the subject -- the threat is over: 'I'd never known how serious it had been,' Mynhardt says of a childhood illness, but '[b]y the time I realised it, the crisis had passed' (RR, 158). While trauma is 'an influx of excitations that is excessive by the standard of the subject's capacity to master such excitations and work them out psychically,' it is equally true that, since it is the 'epitome' of an experience which it is 'impossible in the first instance to incorporate fully into a meaningful context' (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973, 465; 112), its impact can only be inscribed in the subject by deferred action. 'Massive trauma,' Laub says, 'precludes its registration; the observing and recording mechanisms of the mind are temporarily knocked out,

malfunction': as such, '[t]he victim's narrative ... does indeed begin with someone who testifies to an absence, to an event that has not yet come into existence [or has 'not been taken cognizance of' by the traumatized subject], in spite of the overwhelming and compelling nature of the reality of its occurrence' (1992, 57). That is to say, 'a record ... has yet to be made' of the trauma (57). Thus, it is 'only after the event' (Freud, in Derrida, 1978, 214) that the subject can fully apprehend the seriousness of the crisis he has undergone and so (re-)experience it at his leisure, as it were.<sup>5</sup>

From these and other observations, Derrida draws several conclusions about language. If Husserl treats the subject's self-identical experience as 'the nucleus of a comet's tail of retentions' (1973, 62), this nucleus is 'an undivided unity' having 'nothing to reveal to itself by the agency of signs' (60): it does not need to come into being for a subject through the deferred action of linguistic re-membering of fragmentary experience. In the same way as the nucleus is a primary base and its 'retentions' are secondary outgrowths, '[l]anguage and its representation is added on to a consciousness that is simple and simply present to itself' (58). Language for Husserl is a supplement, added on to the foundation of a pre-existing positivity and unfissured wholeness. The idea of deferred action, on the other hand, grants an entirely different role to language as it suggests that it is 'by the agency of signs' (60) that the subject seeks to 'mend' his non-self-presence to trauma and reconcile the cognizing subject with the one-who-undergoes. More specifically, non-self-presence implies that the nuclear integrality of 'now-apprehension' is in fact riven, and that the supposed foundational positivity on to which language is added hides a crucial fracture. Language remains a supplement, but now the supplement 'which seems to be added as a plenitude to a plenitude, is equally that which compensates for a lack' (Derrida, 1978, 212). The addition of signs to the nucleus 'comes to make up for a deficiency, it comes to compensate for a primordial nonself-presence' (1973, 87). From 'maiming to meaning': one may thus say that inasmuch as the sign follows after and proceeds in the wake of the trauma, adding on to it, it

describes at the same time an itinerary of return and revisiting, seeking to insinuate itself into the breach of an anterior lack, so that it is through the posterior sign that the antecedent event is 'lived in its meaning' (Derrida, 1978, 214): from meaning back to maiming.

### (iii) Living death: the death drive

It can be argued, then, that Brink's novels tend to be structured on the principle of deferred understanding of trauma as they typically begin with a scene of violence and narratorial impairment, while the subsequent narratives retrospectively examine the course of events leading up to the primal scene, and cyclically end at the chronological point at which they had begun. To reiterate, Brink frequently employs the formal structure of the frame narrative in which an analeptic hypodiegesis is embedded within the diegesis, such that the hypodiegesis supplements the trauma recounted in the diegesis, successively adding to it yet retroactively compensating for the deficiency given in the narrator's 'missed encounter' with trauma and death.<sup>6</sup> In Rumours of Rain, for example, Mynhardt attempts to clarify the sequence of developments which had finally precipitated the crisis in his familial and politico-economic identity as a powerful white Afrikaner male. He is baffled by his bafflement and uncertainty about these events, 'since I was fully alive to what was happening all the time' (11), and so apparently self-present to the experience he underwent. Yet despite these claims to integral self-possession, he admits that 'I've always felt that something must have escaped me, a submarine something' (11). This rend in his self-identity in turn necessitates a project of self-recovery through the act of writing: 'one inevitably reaches this stage of simply feeling either unwilling or unable to go on,' Mynhardt says, 'before clearing up whatever lies behind in order to catch up with oneself' (12). Putting it differently, the cognizing subject lags behind, while the one-undergoing is in advance. The attainment of deferred understanding is hence at once a movement toward the future (an attempt 'to catch up with oneself') and a return to what 'lies behind': the cyclical narrative has a Janus-faced structure in



which a face looking to the future gazes at its own face in the act of surveying the past. Rumours of Rain demonstrates the principle most vividly in its description of Mynhardt's return-trip from the family farm to Johannesburg, a journey which duplicates his earlier itinerary in reverse. 'I gradually became conscious of a curious impression of driving in against myself, against my own past,' he remarks: 'If only I could see more clearly, I felt, I would be able to see myself coming on ahead on my way down to the farm' (415). It is as though two spatially and temporally separated forces are converging on each other, the one directing from the past into the present (and deferring trauma to a later period), the other directing from present into past (and thereby belatedly experiencing what had happened previously). Significantly, their convergence -- as well as, of course, Mynhardt's self-recovery -- is envisaged as a cataclysm. While movement into the past is connoted as an aggressive penetration ('driving in against myself'), the countermovement of the past into present time is presented as a menacing upsurge by a foe, 'somewhere ahead, invisible but inescapable' (431). What would happen at the 'point of encounter' (431)? he wonders. 'A moment of illumination, or the apocalypse?' (431). In this 'point of incandescence' (Blanchot, 1986, 51), trauma is (re-)experienced in a violent agon, yet it is nonetheless the case that the violence which appears to endanger Mynhardt as foe outside himself is, at the same time, precisely an unassimilated aspect of himself -- his own monstrous desire. As a result, one may hypothesize that, where the sensory excess of trauma fractures the subject's notional self-identity, and necessitates the work of deferred understanding, the consequent passage from maiming to meaning back to maiming is a process in which the subject recovers and re-asserts himself by taking exterior violence as the displaced image of his desire. Deferred understanding, in this reading, is a desire-driven operation in which the subject desires to know violence, desires to know the violence of his desire. In short, and as I shall explain later in greater detail, the subject desires to know (himself in) that which he initially misses: the terror of death, which Mynhardt approaches in his death drive.

So if Brink's fictions are typically structured on the principle of deferred action, and if the latter's function is to bring the subject to a knowledge of that which he cannot grasp in the trauma's disintegrating impact, then his fictions are explorations of the terror of death. A Dry White Season begins with the narrator's bemused reflections on the death of his friend Du Toit, an accidental activist liquidated by the security police. 'His death challenged everything I'd always thought or felt about him' (9), the narrator says of Du Toit's anomalous fate. But by the same token, his death puts the narrator's preconceptions into crisis, showing them to be unwarranted. The Other's death, that is, serves to remind him again of his own mortality at a time when he has already been reduced to 'a vast apathy' by an awareness that he 'is no longer immortal' (11). Yet more than his sense of personal transience is at issue. As if compounding the 'challenge' to his assumptions by Du Toit's death, a demonstration in Johannesburg, seat of South African capital, brings it to a standstill in which silent white onlookers, caught in a 'trance' (19), watch the silent advance of black protestors. 'The very heart of the city appeared to have been seized in a cramp, as if an enormous invisible hand had reached into its chest to grasp the heart in a suffocating grip' (19). As a figure for the narrator's collective political identity and the socio-economic order underpinning it, the city is dumbstruck by this portent of its mortality. Yet the news of mortality is strangely muted, viscerally felt but for all that received in a trance-like state in which shock is little more than a 'subterranean shudder' (19). If the city's foreboding amplifies on large-scale the narrator's own sense of finitude, it is similarly the case that however momentous an effect his friend's death has on him, he can discuss it only in the trivialising terms of certain journalistic discourses, and so make it sound either 'melodramatic' or 'humdrum' (9) -- in both cases, the discourse he has been professionally trained to inhabit is inadequate to register the magnitude of his perplexity. Whether as a citizen hearing tidings of massive political disruption, or as a friend whose identity is called into question by his counterpart's privateness and difference,

the narrator cannot assimilate these omens of mortality and recognise that it is he himself who is at risk. (To recall Bettelheim's observation, danger does not strike at "me" as a subject, but only [at] "me" as an object'; 1960, 127.) In this non-encounter, then, the narrator misses his own death. But since the Other's death is an analogue for, and herald of, the narrator's mortality, his reconstruction in the analeptic hypodiegesis of the course of events leading to Ben's death represents an attempt at writing himself into the Other's life and belatedly experiencing the Other's dying as his own. The narrator tries 'to catch up' (RR, 12) with himself by undergoing from the inside that which stands outside him as the death of another, a death which for all its apparent foreignness is uncannily pertinent to his own condition: it is as if a counterpart's death gives narratable form to his otherwise unaccountable feeling of deadness, so that by narrating the story of the Other's death he articulates for himself, and comes to know, the obscure, missed event/advent of his own death. As Ma-Rose declares in A Chain of Voices, knowing the external facts of a situation (such as the ones provided by the court's official description of the slave rebellion) is 'not enough' (19). 'One must try to understand too' (19), she urges at the commencement of the first embedded narrative to follow on the court's introductory summary of the rebellion; thanks to its inaugural position, her appeal stresses that, as in A Dry White Season, the dominant purpose of the retrospective hypodiegeses will be to seek deferred understanding of violent events by revisiting codified facts from the inside, from the perspective of insiders and the desires for self-affirmation which cause them to risk and incur the death reported in the framing diegesis.

Through the deferred action operating in a cyclical narrative form, the subject relates himself to the initially dis-related, and enters the interior of what had been exterior to him in order to live out the death he had missed in the trauma's overloading of his assimilatory abilities. Deferred action engenders a simultaneous backwards and forwards movement in which the narrative's advance from the opening aporetic scene is also a retreat into the past: a crab-like movement. Brink takes this

temporal pattern of co-incident retrospection and anticipation as paradigmatic of understanding in general, later suggesting that the pattern is informed by the subject's impulsion towards consciousness of mortality. Watching a seagull, Landman realizes that his comprehension of 'the whole exquisite pattern of its flight' occurs 'only the moment after it is gone, when its imprint is retained by the retina'; alternatively, it is comprehended 'in advance' through foreknowledge of the 'inevitable sweep', with the result that he apprehends the flight 'only through what is either past or yet to happen' (Act, 375). The present, correlatively, is not present to itself: far from being an integral unit, it lacks positive content, 'is devoid of meaning' (Act, 375), and is defined relationally as the intersection of a past and a future. It can be understood only by deferral, such that 'the moment we grasp is already past in the grasping' (Act, 625). These ideas provide the thematic context for the litany of metaphors which close the first section of An Act of Terror. One such metaphor repeats the motif of the crayfish which has had its tail torn off and 'claws its way across a slithery concrete slab, not knowing ~~it~~ it is already dead' (626). Yet in its crab-like movement, 'it curiously defies death' (626). How so? On one level, it can be said to defy death in that its death-throes maintain the illusion that it is still fully alive. But on another, less simple level, its defiance of death ought to be interpreted in terms of the surrounding meditation on the theme of deferred action. In this sense, the crayfish's defiance is based not so much on its ignorance of or obliviousness to the mortal blow, as it is on its persistent movement -- movement which, like the gull's flight, describes a pattern in which knowledge of a sense-less present is deferred to a later stage. The crayfish's forward movement is, thus, simultaneously an evasion of death and a deferral of the moment in which it will come to experience death in its own good time: the crayfish defies death because its activity creates for it the time in which it can become conscious of that which negates all consciousness. Its defiance is a defiance of nonconsciousness and any unreflective submission to injury. 'The crayfish get used to it' (371), a fisherman remarks about the gutted creatures

thrashing at his feet, a comment as much on the fisherman's own habitual indifference to the pain he inflicts, as it is on the crayfish's tendency towards resignation, acceptance, compliance and forgetfulness (a sentiment echoed by Kat Bester, the police officer commanding the manhunt after Thomas and Lisa: 'People get used to everything'; 139). Without the work of deferred understanding, then, the crayfish and the human subject are undefiant, enslaved to deadness, overloaded by trauma, insensible and paralysed: they are numb.

#### (iv) Reprise

'[T]oo numb to achieve anything' (3), the narrator of States of Emergency is disabled by a deficient excess. Yet aside from the fact that 'too much was happening' around him, he claims he lacks 'the inner lucidity without which ... writing is impossible' (3). With the loss of 'inner lucidity', the 'light' of his consciousness is extinguished ('lucidity' derives from lucidus, 'full of light'; C. E. D.). If violence darkens the mind, if it is not an illuminating 'point of incandescence' (Blanchot, 1986, 56), it is not available either to the subject as a concentration of force gathering itself into the spatial coherence of a 'point'. Instead, the disaster 'erupting' (States, 3) around him is a rapid centrifugal displacement of itself and thus an overcrossing of adjacent boundaries -- in particular, the boundary between menacing exteriority and the claustral interiority of 'inner lucidity'. The second and third models of subjectal impairment, therefore, are photological and spatial in nature.

### III. The subject and defective vision

'Come, thick night,  
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,  
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes'  
-- Macbeth<sup>7</sup>

#### (i) Dark mirrors

In the photological and optical metaphoric, generally and in Brink's work in particular, the extinction of light, sight and visibility signifies epistemological failure and ethical lapse.

More specifically, 'darkness' connotes the disappearance of cognition, self-awareness, the subject's control, and social mutuality. At the risk of belabouring the obvious, one may point out that the equation between vision and knowledge is foundational in the Western philosophical tradition<sup>8</sup> -- truth is clarity and transparency, error is benightedness, and so on. Less obvious perhaps are the etymological roots which key terms in the philosophical lexicon have in visuality. 'Phenomenon' stems from the Greek phainesthai, which means 'to appear' or 'to show itself'; 'idea' derives from eidein, 'to see'; and 'theory' comes from theorein, 'to look at'. In this specular tradition, Heidegger points out, knowledge is a 'lust of the eyes' (1962, 216) in which the attributes of vision are generalized to the rest of the senses. He cites St Augustine's remarks that 'we even use this word "seeing" for the other senses when we devote them to cognizing': for example, one says, 'See how that tastes' and 'See how hard that is' (215). Thinking, that is, is conceived in all its forms according to the structure of vision in which a subject throws an object before or under it, the better to see it. '[C]ogitatio ... is a Vor-stellung,' Borch-Jacobsen says (paraphrasing Heidegger), a 'representation' and 'a posing-before' (1991, 54): Heidegger claims that the cognized is for the subject 'the bringing-before-itself and what-is-brought-before-itself and made "visible" in the widest sense' (in Borch-Jacobsen, 1991, 54, emphasis added). In the optical metaphoric, then, violence impairs the subject's ability to see, to look at, to theorize, and casts a pall over what ought to be a brightly displayed object of knowledge. Violence contracts the subject in hyperemotionality (the narrator is in 'pain and rage'; States, 3) so that he cannot accomplish the projective posing-before or looking-at that constitutes thinking ('writing is impossible'; States, 3).

\* But this blinding loss of 'inner lucidity' (3) is as often a sign of self-blindness as it is an indication that external events have darkened into incomprehensibility. That is to say, the subject's disintegration by trauma implies not only that he cannot 'make sense' of events and arrange them before himself in a satisfying interpretive order, but that he fails to make sense

of himself either; conversely, by making sense of violence for himself, he will be making sense of himself. The traumatized subject is estranged both from a bewildering exteriority and from himself. In his self-alienated self-blindness, he is unable to see himself as an object of knowledge posed before himself as thinker/seer or to recognise himself in the object placed before him. After all, Heidegger's discussion of the Vorstellung and the structure of visuality held to inhere in intellection is a meditation on the way that the subject is regarded in post-Cartesian philosophy in terms of self-knowledge and self-consciousness: the subject is 'self-knowing-itself' (Heidegger, in Taylor, 1987, 38). Taylor puts it succinctly: 'In Vorstellung the subject "places" (stellt) itself "before" (vor) itself' (1987, 12). According to Heidegger's interpretation of the credo, cogito, ergo sum, the Cartesian subject's desire for certainty is a desire to exhibit himself reflexively before himself. To find that of which he can be completely certain, Descartes calls everything into doubt (the veracity of his perceptions, his body, the apparent fact that he is sitting in a room, and so on) until he reaches what he considers alone to be indubitable -- the existence of his doubting thought which empties the world of substance. Since the subject knows himself to exist indubitably only inasmuch as he thinks -- 'doubt is recognised as certainty' (Lacan, 1977b, 126) -- the (doubting) cogitations which are posed before him are thus a mirror in which he poses himself in front of himself in order to assure himself of the certainty of his being. The subject's thoughts, or the objects constructed by his cognitive activity, are self-projections in which he recognises himself -- '[i]n the object the subject represents itself to itself or places itself before itself' (Taylor, 1987, 13). As Heidegger writes, '[E]very "I represent {I pose before myself} something" simultaneously represents a "myself" {poses me before myself}...', with the result that '[e]very human representing is ... a "self"-representing {a "self"-posing before oneself}' (in Borch-Jacobsen, 1991, 54). So while violence may be conceived as a darkness eclipsing the object of knowledge and blinding the knowing subject, the object before which the subject is blind is himself; in this metaphorical scheme, the 'darkness' of violence

is an opaque mirror in which the subject has yet to re-cognise himself.

The implication is that the writing of violence entails more than the objectification of events (putting them at a distance, in a lighted clearing as visible objects of knowledge) but crucially includes the re-subjectification of these objects of cognition. The subject, that is to say, must construe them as his 'self'-posing: what has been objectified and set at a distance to enhance theoretical visibility must in turn be re-subjectified and re-interiorized by means of self-recognition. Rumours of Rain, for example, opens with Mynhardt's description of 'a whole swarm of gnats plastered on the windscreen' (11, 63, 415) of his car, an image to which he returns obsessively as the narrative progresses because 'for some reason or other it remains important to me' (63). His disturbance of vision is a recurring figure for his bewilderment at the deterioration of his personal relationships and the broader South African malaise of which these deteriorations are emblematic. In the text's network of allusions, Mynhardt's scotoma initiates a motival play on the link between vision, self-consciousness and violence. The gnats obscuring his view are the debris of an injurious impact, a 'yellowish smudge on the windscreen, speckled with blood' (63). Within a system of metonymic transpositions, they signify the unacknowledged consequences of his brutality towards others as an unscrupulous entrepreneur, a womaniser, an errant boerseun betraying his familial heritage, a member of an oppressing ethnic class, and -- in general -- a subject of desire. The opacity on the windscreen, symptomatic of violence's damaging repercussions for the I/eye, is thus an instance of the narrator's refusal to see (to know, to re-cognise, to re-subjectify) his culpability in the compelling obscurity posed before him. Resolving not to allow the poor visibility to interrupt his motor-trip, Mynhardt quips to his son, 'One can still see, even though it's through a glass darkly' (66), but leaves unstated St Paul's anticipation of a face-to-face confrontation, an apocalypse ('from Greek apokalupsis, from apokaluptein to disclose'; C. E. D.) of light in which we are said to know in full.



## (ii) Sights and surveillance

If the Cartesian subject is a theorist, a looker, and the I is an eye, then it is easy for light to lose its beneficent connotations and become the agency through which the subject subjugates otherness with his imperious scrutiny. Vision turns into the instrument of domination, as is apparent in Mynhardt's case. Having broken his spectacles, he retrieves the fragments 'as if that would ensure a grasp on the world', reflecting that in 'the vagueness of myopia ... one is exposed to space and left without any protection against objects invisible in the distance' (RR, 217). Clarity of vision facilitates his comprehending and appropriating 'grasp on the world' and ensures that he is ascendant over -- and never at the mercy of -- obstacles in his path. When he is unable to clean the windscreen thanks to a malfunction in his luxury car, he generalises the loss of clear-sightedness into an omen of wider cognitive and technico-political breakdown: 'If the wipers wouldn't work, anything else might fail me' (63). Reinforced by a technological infrastructure, light and sight are synonyms for mastery. Yet it is equally true that the power of Mynhardt's gaze is undermined by a recurring opacity. Since his blind spot is a figure for his self-blindness concerning the damaging effects of his mastery, this scotoma suggests that light, unbeknownst to itself, conceals a certain darkness (or 'barbarity').

Similar inversions of the pacific qualities usually attributed to light have featured significantly in the work of thinkers ranging from Nietzsche to Levinas, Derrida and Foucault. The gist of their suspicions about the metaphoric of light and visibility is conveyed by Lacan's pun that 'the gaze is the instrument through which ... I am photo-graphed' (1977b, 106). Light 'graphs' one, inscribes one into a determinate form and a reductive legibility. The inscription into a 'photo-graph' delimits one's existential possibilities by separating one from what is protean and concretely lived, and correspondingly projecting one into a defined and de-realized form: one 'receives from the Other ... a mask, a double, an envelope ... a separated form of [oneself]' (Lacan, 1979b, 107) which for all its

'abstractness' is the focus of the very tangible effects of attendant kinds of power. As the eye grids one into the cross-hairs of its scope, one becomes a target, transported from the condition of being oneself into a reified category which bears the brunt of deadly force.

Invoking Nietzsche's opposition between Dionysian bacchanalia and the form-giving abilities of the sun god Apollo, Derrida gives prominence to these trans-fixing properties of light in an essay on structuralist literary criticism.<sup>9</sup> 'The meaning of meaning,' he argues, 'is Apollonian by virtue of everything in it that can be seen' (1978, 26), implying that attempts at delimiting meanings are part of an Apollonian or heliocentric metaphysics seeking to stabilize being in, and for, an all-comprehending theoretical gaze. Derrida contends that structuralism constrains the flux of textual signification by imputing the fixity and architectonic unity of structures to textuality. Not only are the text's proliferating meanings then hemmed in by being drawn back within the parameters of a structural design apparently anterior to the construction, but the text's sequential and linear nature (which gives duration to reading and lends itself to contingency and forgetting) is converted into 'a simultaneous network of reciprocal relationships' presenting itself 'in its entirety to the mind's scrutiny' (1978, 42, emphasis added). The text is made into a 'panoramagram' so that 'one can glance over the field divested of its forces more freely or diagrammatically' (5, emphasis added). The object, defined and neutralised, is a 'form which is visible for the metaphorical eye' (27), subject-ed by the heliocentrism of Western metaphysics. As a result, in the text 'everything not intelligible in the light of a "pre-established" teleological framework, and not visible in its simultaneity, is reducible to the inconsequentiality of accident or dross' (25). In an essay on Levinas,<sup>10</sup> who berates 'the synoptic and totalizing objectifying virtues of vision' fundamental to Hegelian and Husserlian phenomenology (Levinas, 1979, 23), Derrida's critique of the photological and optical metaphoric is more overtly displayed, particularly in a section entitled 'The Violence of Light' (1978, 84-92). Following Levinas, Derrida asserts that otherness is

always in danger of having its independence violated and of being subsumed into the categories of the observing, theorizing subject, since '[e]verything given to me within light appears as given to myself by myself' (Derrida, 1978, 92). Such reductiveness, he believes, stresses the 'friendship between light and power, the ancient complicity between theoretical objectivity and technico-political possession' (91).

While Levinas and Derrida provide philosophical analyses of the reifying tendencies implicit in a dominant heliological metaphoric, Michel Foucault investigates this complicity between power relations, subjectal vision and objectal visibility as it is articulated in specific institutional contexts, notably the prison. In Discipline and Punish he argues that various disciplinary micro-practices prevalent in the 1700s found a theoretical crystallization in Bentham's influential Panopticon, a work which gave surveillance a central place in penitential machinery. As Bentham devised it, the Panopticon would be the 'perfect disciplinary apparatus' since it enabled 'a single gaze to see everything constantly' (1977, 173). In this ideal embodiment of the principle of 'hierarchical observation', Foucault writes, 'A central point would be both the source of light illuminating everything, and locus of convergence for everything that must be known: a perfect eye that nothing would escape and a centre towards which all gazes would be turned' (1977, 173). It is worth noting how far removed Foucault is from Plato's allegory of the cave. Where Plato described the ignorant as prisoners chained together with their faces pressed to a wall on which they can see only the shadows cast by a dim fire behind them, Foucault's prisoners are irradiated in an antiseptic light which constitutes them as objects of knowledge. For Foucault, unlike Plato, the prison is not the zone of mystification, but the site in which knowledge is produced and the truth determined. Where Plato regards luminous space as the locus of freedom and truth, Foucault considers it to be the constitutive topos of imprisonment.

### (iii) Agora

But in spite of the disparaging links Rumours of Rain

institutes between vision, light and Mynhardt's imperiousness, Brink's imagery frequently recalls the Platonic distinction between the cave and the sunlit plain in order to stress that light opens up a beneficent space of social reciprocity. 'All I can bring you is misery,' Galant tells his lover, attributing their estrangement to a common enslavement:

We can't see properly because we got the eyes of slaves. But once we reach the other side we'll know for sure. There will be a sun rising. Then I'll tell you who I am. For the first time we'll really know each other (CoV, 395).

In States of Emergency an activist describes how he had abandoned a career in the District Surgeon's office after examining a detainee tortured by the police. He had been advised, after protesting to a senior official, that '[t]he sooner you patch up your bleeding heart, the better your chances for survival in this business' (States, 128). Lamenting that he and his addressee are 'imprisoned in our whiteness' (129), he concludes his account of state violence by observing that 'this mess of "us" and "them"' (130), a division ingrained in apartheid ideology, is 'like being deprived of one's own shadow': 'the sun has set, the light has gone out', leaving everyone 'groping in the dark' (130) like the inmates of Plato's prison/misprison.

Crucially, one's blindness to the other entails a correlative blindness to oneself, an inability to posit an identity, or as Galant says, to 'tell you who I am.' Those who are opposed to each other lose sight of the alterity (the term means 'the state of being other or different; diversity, otherness'; Taylor, 1987, xxix) which serves as a foil to the antagonists' entrenched and notional self-understandings. It is as though the Other needs to be taken from his or her classification as part of an undifferentiated and alien 'them' in order that the subject may know himself. A luminous clearing is required in which the Other is recognised as an equivalent subjectivity who can show the subject what he is. In this luminosity, the subject 'sees' the Other as other (not as one subsumed in the subject's schemas) and therefore 'sees' himself as well. In particular, 'seeing himself' means 'examining his conscience', since the 'shadow' of which he is oblivious

signifies untenable aspects of himself which he would rather disavow: a cicatrised heart must be made to bleed.

Thomas Landman, philosopher-bomber of An Act of Terror, similarly looks to a future dispensation of light in which former enemies escape from a vertiginous loss of perspective so as to recognise -- rather than degrade -- each other. At a funeral for those he has killed, he issues an imaginary plea to the victims and the bereaved:

It isn't you I wanted to hurt! For God's sake, believe me. If not today ... then some day in the future. One day when we have all broken free from this whirlpool that has sucked us in and churns us round and round, madness, darkness, evil. It was to get us out of it that we have done it [the bomb attack] (230).

To break free, to reach the safety of the shore: to emerge from darkness in an illumination unfolding the Heimat. Earlier Landman had likened his bomb blast to 'a burning glass' in which 'all the history and prehistory of Africa would converge, beams of light bent inward ... to a single searing point where it erupts in flame' (Act, 31). Light synthesises the labours of the exiled and imprisoned, and heralds imminent repatriation in the same way as 'columns of fire or smoke lead[...] the children of Israel through the desert in search of a promised land' (Act, 230). To emerge, to arrive, to gather, to know each other authentically in the clarity of light and the stability of the site, and to settle: to find repose on the solidity of land (Heimat) after the turbulence of water (war), to reach a settlement in a forum, an assembly in a well-lit site or agora. The maelstrom exerts an irresistible force drawing everyone inside its alienating darkness -- and the closer to the vortex, the more disoriented and benighted foes are, estranged from self and other alike. Each confronts the other not in his or her independence as Other, but as a reified pejorative category constituted on the negation of the Other's independence. Beyond the odium of misrecognition, however, is the site in which 'we'll really know each other', an agora in which subjects manifest themselves, freed alike of the vexatious imputations of their adversaries and of their own misperceptions of themselves.

While darkness is associated with a movement spiralling

inwards, the socially constructive violence of Landman's explosion is described as the 'converg[ence]' (Act, 31) of disparate elements, and, then, as if pent-up forces had been released against darkness's constricting pressures, as an expansion towards the agora. Darkness volatilizes space, isolates ('[we]'re all groping in the dark!'; States, 130), and mystifies. By contrast, light stabilizes space, joins one into the homely plurality of the public site, and allows one to know, by way of others, the truth of one's identity, as well as to reveal to them dimensions of one's selfhood that were previously occluded by oppressive misprisions.<sup>11</sup>

#### IV. The subject and paranoid space

'The stress makes me inclined to pull into  
my shell. I just lock myself in my room'  
-- Riot policeman<sup>12</sup>

For the traumatized and benumbed subject, violence is a deficient excess; in a second pervasive system of metaphors, it is an extinction of light in which cognition fails and the subject lacks consciousness-of-self. If violence is said to eclipse the radiant agora in which self-consciousness may be produced, there is a third, and related, model which presents the deleterious effects of violence in terms of the violation of spatiality.

Light unveils space, distancing it in a panorama; darkness constricts it, bringing it depthlessly closer (as Mynhardt says, '[T]he impression I have is not so much that the vagueness of myopia causes one to feel isolated and remote from everything, but rather that one is exposed to space'; RR, 217). Likewise, violence strikes its victims as a combination of the intrusive and constrictive, that is, as an encroachment scrambling and reinscribing subjectal boundaries. Territories are invaded, distances between domestic safety and foreign menace contract, formerly inviolate lines of division between meum et tuum are contested until borders are crossed, retracted, redrawn and overrun once more. Structures are occupied, the sanctuaries of the domus, hearth and church are seized, destroyed or altered -- made other, re-made to bear the impress of the Other, who divests these spaces of previous cultural content and meaning, subverting

their integrity and fixity, and appropriating them into his own designs. Inasmuch as aspects of selfhood such as bodily form, mental processes and social practices are presented in terms of territorial organization and the attributes of edifices, violence is conceived as a dis-placement drawing the self out of the territories or edifices which it is usually said to inhabit. If one were to concatenate a series of binary oppositions pertaining to territory and edifice -- inside/outside, form/formlessness, control/powerlessness, familiar/strange, protection/danger, same/other, composure/anxiety, near/far, and so on -- the unsettling repercussions of violence could be put down to a transgression of the border between the opposing elements, such that the second term crosses over and superimposes itself on the lineaments of the first. The interior is then turned inside out, exposed and vulnerable to the destructuring work of an external agency, rather than enfolded in a sanctum; the distant insinuates itself into the intimacy of what is nearby<sup>13</sup>; the familiar becomes alien, no longer a site in which the subject ~~is~~ exercises his autonomy but one in which he is heteronomous ('subject to an external law, rule, or authority'; C. E. D.).

In this conflation of 'orders of simultaneous experience' (Steiner, 1967, 181) normally divorced from each other, the aggressor's invasive inward movement is matched by the victim's eversion: the domus loses its self-containment. The condition is underlined in Ben du Toit's reverie on torture in police cells, discussed earlier.<sup>14</sup> His anxious thoughts are accompanied by a sense that the domus is at risk in the outlying space onto which it opens, exterior space all the more menacing in that he is routinely unaware of how it engulfs him and makes his safety contingent on forces outside the ambit of his control. Surrounded by homely sounds (a refrigerator door opening, his wife sighing in her sleep), Ben envisions 'the night [lying] around him, limitless, endless; the night with its multitude of rooms, some dark, some dusky, some blindingly light, with men standing astride on bricks, weights tied to their balls' (ADWS, 75). This 'small fierce stab in the mind' (States, 75), one will remember, is the same estrangement and incapacitation suffered by the narrating subject in States of Emergency, a text whose

collocation of diverse materials proceeds as a violation of borders between interior and exterior, between 'everything happening out there ... in those burning smoking streets', on the one hand, and the security of lovers 'inside this ordered comfortable room' (75), on the other.

What is apparent from Ben's powerlessness is that exposure to space is linked to an awareness of his own confinement. Through its contiguity with the torture chamber, he thinks of his dwelling not as an autonomous unit but as another room in a 'multitude of rooms' collusively bound in a single institutional complex. It is a complex devoted to cruelty, and its engineers may move from room to room, until they perhaps happen even onto Ben's corner. The domus becomes a prison, its space being 'both familiar and hostile' (Davies, 1990, 59): the form of the first term in the series of binarisms mentioned previously is retained, but now to signify the attributes of the opposing term. The inside is occupied by the outside, the distant installs in the nearby, the familiar becomes strange, the formerly protective appears entrapping. While in the spatial metaphoric violence is described, on the one hand, as an invasion of an edifice or territory, an invasion which takes one outside of habitual modes of residence, violence is presented, on the other hand, as an occupation by an aggressor in which a victim is interned or placed inside an oppressive structure or territorial dispensation. To repeat: on the one hand, the subject seeks an interior space which is instead ex-posed (the border is overrun, the edifice collapses); on the other, the subject's tendency to extend himself outwards from a secure base is constrained (an enclosure is demarcated, he is fitted into a cell). Living his disquiet through a set of spatial metaphors, the victim is consequently at once agoraphobic and claustrophobic, troubled by the menace of the 'limitless, endless' night (ADWS, 75), yet no less alarmed that his room, interchangeable with others, partakes of the persecutory form of a torture chamber. Scarry conveys the double sense of violence as an exposure and an internment in an observation that, during torture, the 'dissolution of the boundary between inside and outside' is an 'obscene conflation of private and public' bringing 'all the solitude of absolute



privacy with none of its safety, all the self-exposure of the utterly public with none of its possibility for camaraderie or shared experience' (1985, 53). The sufferer is wide open and shut in: a bear tied to a stake.<sup>15</sup> Although his body is 'turned inside out' (53), his will to move out beyond himself to share experience is curbed and he is driven back into 'absolute privacy' (53). His is an exposure without self-extension into an agora, and an internment without sanctuary: Scarry's comment evokes the contradiction that in spatial terms violence is an opening up of limits and frontiers, and a limitation of the subject in which his borders are closed.

Indeed, Scarry's wideranging and insightful investigation into the nature of violence in The Body in Pain frequently takes recourse to the metaphoric of spatial violation and constrictive emplacement in order to account for the impact of violence on the subject. Nor is her use of the metaphoric an unselfconscious one adopted only for descriptive purposes, since she argues that representations of spatial closure may at times not simply provide a conventional means of re-presenting violence, but might well be complicit in aggravating acts of harming. That is to say, Scarry reflects on the metaphoric she employs, claiming that it is not merely a nonviolent expression of violent acts happening at a remove from their verbal or physical imaging, but is itself likely to perpetrate an act of harming. In short, representations of closure may well be articulated in an intersubjective address in which the representations' performative or rhetorical effect on the addressee is to impress upon him the sense that his subjectal world is being encroached upon, negated and redefined by a menacing Other: the narrator of States of Emergency suffers a comparable anxiety when he perceives that his own writing will be 'invaded' (14) by the codes of the Other, and that, in this semiotic closure, his personal uniqueness will be erased and replaced by the Other's impersonality. Let us, however, work through these arguments in finer detail.

One may begin by examining Scarry's use of the metaphoric of closure in her formulations on pain. Pain, she says, is 'world-destroying' (1985, 29) since it negates 'the contents of consciousness' (30) and redirects one's attention away from an

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`increasingly substanceless world' toward an `increasingly palpable body' (30). `As the body breaks down,' she claims, `it becomes increasingly the object of attention, usurping the place of all other objects, so that finally ... the world may exist only in a circle two feet out from [the one in pain]' (33). The motif of pain as an `"ever-shrinking perimeter of pleasure"' (33) is fundamental to Scarry's descriptions. Underscoring the notion of violence as an internment or an exposure, she writes that in pain the destruction of `a person's self and world' is `experienced spatially as either the contraction of the universe down to the immediate vicinity of the body or as the body swelling to fill the entire universe' (35). This constriction is at odds with what she regards as a fundamental human tendency, namely, `the human being's impulse to project himself out into a space beyond the boundaries of the body in acts of making' (39), which are either physical or verbal. For Scarry, the room and `its protective, narrowing act is the location of the human being's most expansive potential' (40), because it is `back in the inward and enclosing space of the single room and its domestic content that the outward unfolding ... of civilization originates' (39). The room is hence both a metaphor for this expansive propensity and an aggregation of metonymies which stand in for different bodily functions. As `an enlargement of the body' (38), the room stabilizes temperature and `the nearness of others so that the body can suspend its rigid and watchful postures' (39); its furnishings serve functions on which the body would otherwise have had to expend energy -- one sits on a chair rather than balancing on one's haunches, for instance -- so that one can `move weightlessly into a larger mindfulness' (39). As it makes the body less of an `object of perception and concern' (39), the room enables humanity to realize its projective impulsion. In the case of torture, on the other hand, the `torture room is not just the setting in which torture occurs' (40). The room, `both in its structure and in its content' (41), is `converted into another weapon, into an agent of pain' (40). A refrigerator door is turned into a bludgeon, a bathtub is used for drownings, and so on. In general terms, formerly beneficent artefacts are unmade by being turned to anti-human purposes. This

'unmaking of the made' (41) radically alters the value assigned to the domus. For example, by using a door as a weapon, the 'domestic act of protecting becomes an act of hurting and in hurting, [consequently] the object becomes what it is not, an expression of individual contraction, of the retreat into the most self-absorbed and self-experiencing of human feelings, when it is the very essence of these objects to express the most expansive potential of the human being' (41, emphasis added). Where the domus had previously signified self-extension and weightlessness, it now impresses the victim with a sense of his entrapment and vulnerable bodiliness.

Scarry maintains that the torture room becomes a weapon, both in its contents and its structure. That is, its contents are employed to inflict physical harm, while the deconstruction of its self-realizing potential, 'an expression of individual contraction' (41), represents the sufferer's painful world-contraction and simultaneously amplifies (41) this process. The torture room is not simply the place in which cruelty occurs, but in its 'spectacle of power' (27) it 'is itself the torturer's weapon' (45), by which Scarry means that the representation of world-disintegration can have injurious efficacy in its own right, and can perform the same action which, on another occasion, it reports on from a non-participatory remove. In the torture room's 'spectacle of power', the made world is desecrated so as to pose before the victim a representation of pain which enacts his murder in effigy. Scarry believes Poe's The Pit and the Pendulum conveys the archetype of torture -- a situation in which 'walls collaps[e] in on the human centre to crush it alive' (45). For the victim, space does not unfold to the horizon as an extension of himself or as an objectification through which he poses himself before himself in his activities. Instead, it is compressive and emplacing, and saturated with the intentions of an adverse Other who, like the invisible inquisitors in Poe's tale, does not have to be present to the victim as the agent of physical harming but can be apprehended as the bringer of death in the representations he gives of his world-contracting capacities. The steadily-compressing walls of Poe's chamber -- which are physical objects operating on the body and emplacing

representations inducing anguish -- have a single final aim: to drive the subject into the pit, into nullity. ↵

Thus, Scarry draws a distinction between two levels of violation. On the one hand there is a level of physical harming, and on the other there is a level of harming by representation in which the objects causing pain serve both literal and figural purposes. Within the latter level, one may draw a further distinction between representations of spatial desecration which fulfill expressive functions and those which fulfill a performative function. That is, inasmuch as the torture-chamber's compressing walls -- to use Scarry's paradigmatic example of torture -- are divided from their physicality into the abstractness of signs, they 'externaliz[e] the way in which the person's pain causes his world to collapse' (41). Here signs nonviolently 'mime', 'externaliz[e]' (41), or re-present a violence which is undoing the victim's interior world -- the 'unmaking of the [physical] made' (41) becomes a sign standing in for his destruction. '[A]t the same time,' Scarry observes, 'the disintegration of the world is here ... made painful, made the direct cause of the pain' (41). In other words the sign no longer reports on pain from a distance but is actively involved in its production: the sign 'amplif[ies]' (41) the pain it re-presents, assuming injurious efficacy in its own right. 'Demonstrat[ing] that everything is a weapon' (41) posed against him, the domus and its objects hem in the victim by forcing him to 'experience the body that will end his life, the body that can be killed' (31) -- the body that is killable for others and that is an execrable, expendable thing for the Other, the lived reality that the Other seeks to nullify and appropriate.

As we shall soon see, in States of Emergency Brink deploys a similar range of metaphors pertaining to contraction, closure and the crossing of boundaries. Yet in a move which invites comparison with Scarry's argument that representations of violence need not only report on violence but can themselves produce the subject's world-contraction, Brink uses notions of spatial delimitation both to describe the effects of the violence as they occur outside the text in the Emergency, and to simulate these effects in the space of his writing. In the same way as

Scarry isolates in torture a level of representational harming from a level of physical harming and in turn distinguishes between the expressive and performative functions of these representations, Brink draws a parallel between, on the one hand, the processes of semiotic determination at work in the text and, on the other, the Emergency's world-contraction. In one sense the processes of semiotic determination are invoked as expressions of processes operating in the Emergency. But in another sense, they also perform or enact these processes upon the narrator. The result is that the text's foregrounding of semiotic determination is an 'expression and amplification' (Scarry, 1985, 41) of world-contracting processes occurring in the Emergency -- a re-presenting of what happens outside the text, and an amplification in the text of those selfsame processes.

#### V. Numb

`Don't project,  
Don't connect,  
Protect:  
Feeling numb'  
-- U2

Let us briefly retrace the steps that have been followed so far, before going on to describe the traumatized subject's numbness in terms of the three preceding systems of metaphors.

Wavering between writing and silence, States of Emergency's narrator is at impasse between the desire to write a 'simple love story' (5) and a duty to address his political context. While the context is not available to him as a settled object of knowledge which can be re-presented in his writing, it impedes the interpretive work it calls for, since the effect of trauma is to undermine the subject's cognitive mastery by which he can subject ('bring under') his experiential flux into a graspable objectal ('thrown before the mind') coherence. Like many of Brink's narrators, he begins with the admission that violent events 'had left me too numb to achieve anything' (3).

The condition of numbness recapitulates aspects of the three models which often present the cognitive impairment caused by violence. For the numbed subject, violence is an excess of

excitation over his assimilatory abilities, a failure of cognition's self-projective visual posing-before, and a spatial intrusion restricting his tendency towards self-extension. In these respects, numbness is equivalent to a state of powerlessness and vulnerability induced by an acute awareness of one's mortal endangerment. Yet to call the subject 'numb' is to field a metaphor in which the body's insensate and anaesthetized surfaces of-the body stand in for diminished mental receptivity to external and internal stimuli. Numbness, that is to say, both demonstrates and denies these registers of dysfunction -- there is (no) elusive excess, (no) opacity on the speculum, (no) threat clamped around one, and (no) piercing of subjectal interiority. Rather than feel engulfed by a traumatic influx, the subject neutralises it in a swathe of frigidity; far from being blinded before violence or himself, the subject protests his clear-sightedness and self-possession, blind to a blindness. Instead of being opened up, he is protectively self-enclosed; instead of being coercively shut in, he imagines himself unconstrained, free to roam fearlessly. Again: an overload of affect is belied by the subject's dazed and automatous state, a dissociative fugue in which he is unaware of the impulses controlling his behaviour (one thinks of Galant, borne along by currents of which he 'appeared to have no understanding'; CoV, 275). The subject, frozen, indifferent to a dangerous exteriority and his troubled affectivity, is, like Landman following the bomb attack, 'a body stored in ice' (Act, 81), inured to the death he has missed, given to a blanket insensibility precluding the trauma from being placed-before him in its specificity. As Alexandre Kojève says in his exegesis of Hegel's notion of the struggle for recognition -- a battle in which antagonists either risk death to assert their supremacy, or draw away from it and so elect to preserve life at the cost of freedom -- 'in the enslaving dread that the idea of death inspires ... terror [initially] remains internal-or-private and mute, and consciousness does not come into being for itself' (1986, 118). Helpless and inhibited before a danger he cannot control or escape, the subject is silenced by his terror: he cannot exhibit what is 'internal-or-private' in an external-or-public form, and thus he cannot project his terror before

himself in a constructed object which he can intro-ject in a moment of self-consciousness. In short, he cannot become self-conscious. But if terror leads to the subject's silencing, and his inability to be self-conscious, his silence and corresponding absence of self-consciousness retroactively cancels out his direct awareness of the terror he suffered. Aphasia and cognitive inhibition are hence ambivalent signifiers indicating both an overpowering impression of endangerment and a refusal to contemplate this threat (the combatant draws back from death and opts for servility to, and identification with, a master). Putting it differently, the benumbed subject's silence points to the co-existence of two opposing attitudes which may alternately shift into greater or lesser prominence under varying circumstances -- that is, too great an awareness of mortality (an excess of traumatic experience) defensively changes into too little an awareness of it (a deficiency of experience, a postponement of understanding), while a protectively curtailed knowledge of mortality dissolves in a re-experiencing of an intolerable traumatic influx. To be struck mute by violence, to be unable to function, is at one and the same time to acknowledge and disavow<sup>16</sup> mortality. It is to be dead already but to be deadened (or numbed) to this death and to miss it at the moment one undergoes it. As Brink has the fisherman -- and the security policeman -- say about the pain of his prey, 'The crayfish get used to it' (Act, 371). '[W]eariness' and 'inertia' (RR, 12), and 'apathy' and 'paralysis' (ADWS, 11) express 'an immobilising stasis before a superior force and a dulling-over which suspends and de-realises this force: numbness attests alike to surrender and to continuing defensive action. With respect to the spatial metaphor of intrusion, numbness combines a lowered sensitivity to outside stimuli with the subject's distancing or detachment of himself from them, and his correlative withdrawal into a secure interior site, whether this take the form (as it does in States of Emergency) of a textual enclosure or the lovers' chamber. With respect to the related metaphor of violence as an internment, numbness is a denial of the delimitation implied by a retreat into an enclosure; yet its inertia, its lack of self-extension, its recessive movement into 'a "dead space" within' (Peterson,

Schwarz, and Prout, 1990, 22), amounts to nothing less than an accommodation to an enclosure imposed on the subject by an aggressor. The numbed subject may repudiate or blunt the reality of the aggressor's pistol pointed at his head (to recall Adorno's image<sup>17</sup>), but his retreat into an inner sanctum is nevertheless a surrender to delimitation.

Numbness circumscribes a set of a multiple and contradictory subject-positions which alternate between mastery and servility. Yet an apparent mastery is belied by vulnerability, while servility is itself also more apparent than real, concealing as it does the violence of a desire which awaits its moment to risk death again in a resumption of the struggle for recognition.<sup>18</sup>

## VI. Ecstasy

'But love also goes beyond the beloved. This is why through the face filters the obscure light coming from beyond the face, from what is not yet, from a future never future enough, more remote than the possible'

-- Emmanuel Levinas<sup>19</sup>

'I love the bad luck that you're bringing'

-- David Bowie

### (i) Foreword

The narrator's attempts to do his duty and address the violence around him leave him 'too numb to achieve anything' (States, 3). As a result, he can fulfil neither duty nor his desire for aesthetic production. How does States of Emergency describe his breaching of numbness and silence? I have argued that since Brink's fictions typically begin by recording a scene of narratorial impairment, the writing which ensues is an implicit commentary on the act of surmounting this impairment. Brink's 'masterful images' (his completed statements) allude to the 'mound of refuse' (that is, the derelict circumstances of enunciation) from which they originate, and thereby draw attention to the sublimatory artistic work of ascending the ladder from Yeats's 'foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart'.<sup>20</sup> In other words, Brink's self-reflexive narrative structures -- self-reflexive, in that narrators self-consciously grapple with the



task of narration, with the result that their fictions reflect on fiction-making -- suggest that the statements he produces so avidly can be examined not only in terms of their propositional content, but their performance and utterance as well. What is said by them can be subordinated to a consideration of what their very saying entails: namely, a surmounting of a tendency towards aphasia. The saying of the said is an overcoming of unsaying -- but an overcoming that is always provisional, always in need of reiteration. In short, I am describing two directly opposed forces. On the one hand, violence expands its field of devastation and commensurately contracts the subject's self-extension by means of his speech ('[S]o long as one is speaking,' Scarry says, 'the self extends out beyond the boundaries of the body, occupies a space much larger than the body'; 1985, 33). Encroaching on one's borders from the outside, violence tends to unsaying and a numbing entrapment. On the other hand, however, the counter-force produced in an ecstatic saying is likewise a form of violence, a point Brink stresses (as we shall see) in 'An act of violence: thoughts on the functions of literature': to cite my opening contention, the terror of violence both inhibits and liberates writing. Brink's assertion of saying over unsaying thus effects a crucial reversal in which violence no longer incapacitates discourse, but instead empowers it. More schematically, it can be said that Brink reinscribes an opposition between violence and writing as a concordance in which the two previously exclusive categories mutually reinforce one another. Where the opposition between 'violence' and 'writing' could be broken down into the opposition, in one case, between 'non-writing' and 'writing', and between 'violence' and 'non-violence' in another -- a set of oppositions in which 'violence' necessarily means 'non-writing' (or unsaying), while 'writing' is definitionally 'non-violent' -- Brink modifies their antagonism, such that 'violence' engenders 'non-writing' and 'writing', while 'saying' is not 'non-violent' but is informed precisely by 'violence'. I have argued that States of Emergency is Brink's most ostensibly self-reflexive novel to date, and that it consequently provides a useful organising framework for demonstrating how his fictions tend to reflect on the

problematics of writing under disabling conditions. In particular, I have depicted it as a Janus-faced text, a text in which violence intersects with the space of writing, and vice versa. To restate this, writing is initially placed at risk by the encroachment of violence within its sphere of operations: saying is thwarted by unsaying, by a tendency to end discourse, to close it, to contract its proliferation of meanings into a determinate, imposed form. But this systolic movement, caused by the violence of unsaying, is matched by a diastolic (or ecstatic) action attendant on the violence of saying -- closure is shattered, the text's meanings expand into the realm of intertextuality. With respect to the conflict between the violence of unsaying and the violence of saying, then, one should not think of these systolic and diastolic movements in terms of successiveness; rather, they ought to be conceived in relation to the simultaneity of a struggle. Once we examine how States of Emergency plays out this tension between saying and unsaying, and ecstasy and numbness, I shall go on to investigate how the said -- Brink's 'masterful images' -- illuminates the dynamics of its saying; to this end, I shall take 'The dove in the grave' as the point of departure into Brink's voluminous body of work.

The question is: how does States of Emergency tackle the difficulty of asserting saying against counterforces of unsaying? What follows is an introductory overview of the narrator's attempts to re-affirm saying.

Given that his aim is to have duty inform desire, and desire inform duty, his first move is to revive desire by writing 'a simple love story' (5). He stresses that the act of writing a love story, and the love story itself, are analogues of each other, since similar dynamics are involved in either case. The narrative about Philip and Melissa's love affair, for instance, is a dramatic exemplification of abstract processes involved in the text's narration (that is, the said exemplifies its saying); equally, the writing's juxtaposition of ordinarily separated domains of experience -- its transgression of boundaries -- performatively underscores the way the lovers cross the frontiers between one another and between themselves and the world at large (the saying exemplifies the said). Since narrative and narration

are analogous, the narrator's aphasic numbness corresponds to Philip's lovelessness, while the commencement of writing and the love affair entails in either case an ecstatic passage beyond a circumscribed self. However, what writing and the love affair have in common at first, is a tendency to seek security in an enclosed space, whether of aesthetic production or erotic intimacy, unhampered by the riskiness of the public sphere. Since this tendency is essentially a flight from a violent world, the writer and the lover still remain entrapped in a numbing foreclosure of terror. The nature of desire, according to the narrator, is to shatter boundaries. As such, the strategy of seclusion ultimately stifles desire, although it initially appeared to be a means of reactivating it. In the love story, then, the lovers' enclosure and its frenzied context begin to cross over into each other. A similar interpenetration takes place at the level of narration: the Emergency's violence is refracted into the space of textuality, while the text reciprocally extends into the Emergency, so allowing violence -- which in the beginning stands outside and opposed to text -- to be experienced inside the text. By so doing, the text actually con-fronts the violence its earlier self-absorption disavows; it comes a full circle from its benumbed starting position. Thus, text is no longer simply predicated on avoidance of terror and a retreat into the safety of the story -- it is nothing less than an insistent attestation to terror. Seen in this way, the text duplicates the Emergency's violence, not only in the sense of reporting on it, but inasmuch as the very enunciation of the text enacts the narrator's movement into danger, disintegration, and death. The text thus postulates a concomitance in the effects of writing and the effects of violence. To this end, it implicitly draws on a body of post-structuralist literary theory, in particular the latter's themes about the 'death of the author' and semiotic closure (in this respect, one ought to bear in mind Scarry's claims that representations of closure can simulate the experience of world-contraction entailed in acts of physical injury). Having previewed the course writing and desire follow in States, let us proceed through the argument in closer detail.

(ii) 'Stuck in myself'

While confronting violence leaves the narrator numb and workless, by turning away to reflect on the intended love story's formal properties he asserts a provisional detachment from events which permits him to sustain a discourse, no matter how precariously. 'It is, perhaps, no more than an attempt to test the extent of my own freedom,' he remarks of the project, 'that freedom which may involve the choice to write a love story ... when something else appears to be demanded of me ...' (States, 6). There seems to be a necessary connection between his wish to test his limitations and his wish to write a love story. If violence narrows his freedom of self-extension and causes him to withdraw into a state of numbness disavowing terror, Philip's lovelessness is also a denial of the 'terror that lies in exposing oneself totally, unreservedly [to the Other], the readiness to risk everything' (55), and likewise entails his retreat into 'my own solitude, the feeling of being "stuck" in myself' (55). If the narrator regards writing, on the other hand, as a way of broaching constriction, loving involves a similar transformation -- in an imaginary address to Melissa, Philip appeals, 'Don't you realize, I felt my insides crying at you in the silence, don't you realize I want to open myself up to you, to deliver myself to you; I want nothing of my life to remain secret to you ...' (55, first emphasis added). Significantly, for Philip love is not a state of benign affectivity only. He describes it instead as an address, an oblation, a self-transformation through speech. Love is discourse: it is a rapture of speech and an ecstatic offering of self to the Other, an ekstasis of a delimited form (from Greek for 'displacement, trance, from ex- out + histanai to cause to stand'; C. E. D.). The narrator underlines the analogy between a narrative about love, and the ecstasy of narrating such a narrative. 'Love, and the text I should like to write about love,' he says, 'cannot be separated' (104), implying that statements reporting or representing a condition of ecstasy anterior to them are inseparable from an ecstasy inhering in the very act of uttering them. The saying of the said is an address to a beloved

interlocutor, an address which takes the form of a sacrificial self-opening offered to the Other. But what he offers is not so much the said, but the fact of his saying. His ecstatic speech itself constitutes the gift rather than simply being the medium in which the gift is transmitted: his gift is a performance, an 'open[ing]' up, more so than it is a statement disclosing whatever had been concealed before. In particular, the gift of the saying acquires its value from the resistance against which it has to struggle. The lover's will to manifest himself to the interlocutor, to 'expos[e him]self totally' and broach the 'silence' in which he has been 'stuck', courts the 'terror' of 'risk[ing] everything' (55). As a supplication, his discourse is a movement towards the beloved; yet the ekstastic movement away from the position in which he is 'stuck' is a risky movement against a countervailing force which pits its tendency to unsaying against his saying. The struggle is performed in the view of and for the benefit of the Other: the greater the struggle of saying against unsaying, the more valuable the gift which is dedicated to the interlocutor. As ekstasis, then, saying is both struggle and gift. In relation to struggle, saying implies the existence of a foe; with respect to the gift, it entails a recipient, 'a subject of desire and, as such, a subject of response, of a called for answer' (Felman, 1992, 32). That is, the violence of saying presupposes and invokes an Other-as-agora for whom the struggle is enacted, thereby situating itself in relation to a larger community, or '"opening" and "openness" into which [truth] can unfold and where everything comes to light' (Borch-Jacobsen, 1991, 131); by contrast the violence of unsaying atomizes people into unrelated monads 'stuck' in themselves. Breaking out of the anomie of his numbed silence, the lover's violent engagement with constricting forces is an invocation and positing of a youtopia, a summoning of the Other who stands at a threshold between private intimacy and the agora's worldliness.

If love is a discourse, if the utterance of statements about ecstasy itself performs an ekstasis for the constricted narrator, then there are important parallels in States of Emergency between the level of narrative and the level of its narration. As such, an examination of the love-story will shed light on the

vicissitudes of utterance in contexts which negate the ability to speak: this is the path we shall now pursue before looking at the level of the text's enunciation.

The act of writing and the oblation of love both entail an ekstasis; however, writing and loving also share an inclination towards seclusion. As writing turns away from the Emergency to take pleasure in elaborating scenarios of desire -- apparently vindicating the Fugard epigraph, 'The only safe place in the world is inside a story' -- the lovers 'retreat from a violent and urgent world' (20) into the mythical sanctum of 'the island, the encapsulated paradise' (131). Although withdrawal facilitates writing and nurtures the love-relationship, the problem for the narrator remains '[h]ow to articulate, within the desperate exclusiveness of their love, the weight and madness of the violence surrounding them' (States, 158). By cultivating a space for aesthetic experimentation, the narrator has escaped his original sense of constriction -- but only to arrive in yet another enclosure. In the same way, Philip goes beyond being 'stuck' (55) in himself, but finds that he is emplaced in a different solitude, the lovers' retreat. This sanctum and writing's claustral realm arrest the ecstatic, world-extending propulsion of eros, which 'exposes one to an experience radically different from that of order, regularity, equilibrium, common sense': eros 'propels one towards the transgression of frontiers' (231). It precipitates the interpenetration and emergence into each other of mutually exclusive domains; but by maintaining these domains in an unmediated opposition, the flight into enclosure suspends desire.

### (iii) The narrative: enantiodromia

The ideal of an edenic lovers' sanctuary (an analogue for the notion of a self-contained site of artistic endeavour) is shown to be chimerical from the start, since it is always at risk of suffering intrusions by the outside world. For example, Melissa and Philip first make love in a hotel rumoured to contain a bomb. 'Are they not walking more deeply into danger with every step?' (States, 31) Philip wonders, while a footnote warns him about the 'pain and exposure and terror and chaos' (35) that is

likely to attend his adultery. Every refuge the lovers find afterwards is disturbed again by reminders of the political turmoil imperilling their liaison. As Melissa exclaims, '[A]ll around us the country's burning, the troops are massing ... [t]here's no security in our love' (63). Yet a curious change occurs as the text advances, one which parallels Brink's reinscription of the antithesis between writing and violence. Where love and violence were first seen as polar opposites negating each other, they are described as 'meeting, intersecting, reinforcing one another' such that each discovers 'something of the other in the self' (184). Where 'violence' embodied the principle contrary to 'love', it informs the lover's ekstastic movement to the Other and against dangerous constraining forces. And where 'violence' implied the absence of communality, it now suggests an ekstastic positing of a loving agora, as is evident in the campus demonstration in which the separate areas of individual consciousness, political violence and sexual ecstasy are described as converging into a continuum. More specifically, the violence of political assertion or saying (having a demonstration) is countered by the violence of unsaying (the riot squad waiting to charge); the violence of this ekstasis issues into a loving unity (continuity with others). In the mass, Melissa enters 'a kind of ecstasy' (182); alongside her, Philip is in a state of transport:

There is no 'I' or 'you' left; they are no longer a thousand individuals standing there: in the simplicity of this singing all separateness is transcended. No sentiment or thought or conviction is located 'inside' anyone anymore: they have been transformed into pure energy, a single, vast electric field (183).

In this merging of love and violence, sexual transgression and political conflict, the lovers emerge from their former insularity into the public space of history, ethical responsibility and mortality. Each lover is in relation to the other a liminal figure mediating between interiority and exteriority, the opening onto the agora's openness rather than the limit sealing off a circumscribed domain of privatized intimacy.

From closure to 'the openness ... of a country for which the

future is still possible' (States, 244), from the opposition between categories to their intersection: the crossover from Same to Other happens not only at the outer borders of the lovers' 'encapsulated paradise' (131) but in the very interior of their union, where it takes place as the piercing of a figurative hymen. Enraptured by Melissa, Philip ruptures the boundaries between himself and the Other: no longer keeping otherness defensively at bay by remaining 'stuck' in himself, he breaks his 'silence' (31) with an ekstatic discourse. Melissa likewise ensures that 'her "silence" remained impenetrable' (144) despite Philip's sexual penetration. Traumatized by a past rape, she retains her virginity or 'innocence' -- which the narrator defines as 'a state of mind' (144), as a system of psychological defences -- by disavowing the shock of the intrusion into her body. 'Innocence' is a condition of numbness. In reaction to the rape Melissa withdraws behind a hymenal barrier, 'distancing herself from whatever was happening to her body [so that] she was never really involved' (144); in response to a traumatic overload, she denies its reality, meaning that 'in her deepest experience nothing had happened' (145): in excess there is deficiency. In short, her 'innocence' is predicated on the diffusion of danger emanating from the Other, and on an inhabitation of a paradisaal garden in which she is 'without history, weightless' (131). However, weeping 'uncontrollably' during an orgasm, 'she fully inhabited her body' and so 'offered herself to love -- which also meant exposing herself to the possibility of being hurt, betrayed, wounded to the quick' (145). She crosses the distance she had held between 'herself' and her body, the target of aggression and a source of empowerment. She risks assuming the historicity of her specific embodiment, that is, her past engagement with trauma and her exposure to ~~to~~ the prospect of future suffering. At the same time as Melissa comes to terms with her mortality, she welcomes alterity, no longer suspending the Other in a de-realized form with the aim of preempting injury. Crucially the combination of welcoming alterity and knowing mortality concludes her introverted 'silence' (144) in a fit of crying. Hymenal innocence is thus a polysemous trope for disavowed experience, in the same way as the hymen evolves



into its opposite to embrace meanings normally disjunct from it. Paraphrasing Derrida, the narrator notes that the term 'hymen' refers to the 'vaginal membrane' and coitus: '[t]he word that signifies separation, division, boundary, also signifies the transgression of the boundary, the celebration of unity' (103). In other words the experience of the lovers, and the semantic reversals in the terms which exemplify their experience, demonstrate the concept of enantiodromia, 'the turning of each thing into its opposite' (McFarlane, 1976, 84).

#### (iv) The narration: apophysis

While the narrated love-relationship is governed by the principle of enantiodromia, the self-reflexively foregrounded level of its narration is subjected to a similar change. At first, the narrator concentrates on the internal procedures of fiction-making in order to avert his gaze from his perilous context, but the repressed violence returns to be re-enacted in the asylum of literary form itself. Janus looks away from terror, but simultaneously stares back at it in fascination -- the silence caused by violence (the absence of writing) is replaced by discourse, yet discourse subsequently revisits violence and death. When one is located within the scene of violence, Shoshana Felman observes, one undergoes the loss 'of voice, of life, of knowledge, of awareness, of truth, of the capacity to feel, of the capacity to speak' (1992, 231). The narrator tries to ward off this loss. Scheherazade-like, his 'episodes, character sketches, ... trial runs' (States, 104) delay an impending lapse into silence. 'That,' after all, 'is what novels are about,' he quotes Fuentes as saying: 'the postponement of death' (205). He concurs. 'Perhaps our most basic drives are those directed towards countering, or negating, or rebelling against [the 'sense of an ending'],' he declares, mentioning '[a]rt, love, work, religion, language, sex' as examples of deferral, '[e]ven if each of them ends up by confirming what it has set out to deny' (17-18).

The significance of this qualification should not be overlooked. Not only does it underscore the processes of

enantiodromia at work in States, but in so far as Brink inverts the relation between violence and writing, it provides an invaluable description of the reversals informing the rest of his fictions as well. Enantiodromia, in other words, is related to the principle of deferred action on which his novelistic forms are frequently based. Inasmuch as his narratives return cyclically (and compulsively) to the traumas on which they open, one may schematize their structures even more by thinking of them as describing sequentially the subversion of the opposition between 'violence' and 'writing'. As such, the text which, at first, sustains itself in opposition to 'ending' (States, 17), death and the termination of discourse, returns through a sidelong, crayfish-like, Janus-faced movement to assimilate the trauma it sought to evade -- each thing turns to and merges with its contrary since the textual supplement to trauma adds onto it (a series of additions progresses away from their founding term) while compensating for an anterior deficiency (the series of additions loops back to its first term). Again: 'writing' maintains a rigid distinction between its aesthetic self-enclosure and the 'violence' outside itself, but insidiously comes to engage with 'violence', in that non-violent 'writing' turns into a form of 'violence'; thus, as an act of 'violence', 'writing' is embroiled in an agon between the violence of its ekstatic saying (a shattering of circumscribed forms) and the violence of unsaying (an imposition of delimited forms). Like Mynhardt, 'driving into in against [himself]' (RR, 415) as he heads towards the looming disaster, the violent 'writing' confronts exterior violence but finds 'something of the other [of 'violence'] in the self' (States, 184). Like the crayfish, 'not knowing it is already dead' yet 'claw[ing] its way' (Act, 626) to a deferred consciousness of the death it missed, 'writing' postpones ending and evades 'violence' yet 'ends up by confirming what it set out to deny' (States, 18). In the otherness of violence, it discovers something of the self: the death it missed through its evasive tactics. The inclination of each thing to turn into its opposite hence implies that, firstly, writing recognises the violence of its own ekstatic desire in the violence facing it from the outside, and that, secondly, writing

becomes conscious of the death or 'ending' it tried to disavow. The principle of enantiodromia -- enacted in the double movements of deferred action, a process confirming what it denies and mediating the antithesis of Same and Other by showing the Same to contain elements of the Other -- is consequently a principle of self-consciousness. 'Writing' recognises itself in 'violence', and by acknowledging implicit concordances between the inside and outside, Same and Other, it inwardises exteriority. As a result, 'writing' experiences 'violence' within itself, allowing the writer to become conscious of the violence of his ekstatic desire and of the death he failed to encounter: he becomes conscious of himself as a mortal, desiring subject within and by means of his writing.

In short, writing shows him his mortality and the ekstatic violence of his desire. His saying of the said, his assertion of a self-extending voice, is an act of breaking through the world-contracting counterforces of exterior violence which press him into an enclosure; by entering this agon he necessarily puts his self-possession (his authorial control over the meanings of his text) at risk and, increasingly aware of what he has to lose, and how tenuous his hold over it really is, he is made of aware of his mortal finitude, something of which he previously tried to remain oblivious. That is, he denies the 'ending' (States, 17) of his discourse by waging a struggle, yet in placing himself in danger, he confirms, for himself, his capacity to end and shatter into 'nothingness'. For himself: in States of Emergency the narrator self-reflexively foregrounds the act of saying the said, as if by bringing it into greater relief, and making it visible to him, he were 'stepping back' from his saying the better to view it and pose it before himself. In the same way, then, as Descartes (according to Heidegger) finds certainty of self by placing his doubting thoughts before his theoretical gaze as the the evidence which convinces him that he exists indubitably ('I think, therefore I am'), the narrator places his ekstasising enunciation/s before himself as a Vor-stellung in which he can recognise himself in the action of ekstasising, 'doubting', or otherwise negating the determinate forms surrounding him. '[E]very "I represent {I pose before myself} something"

simultaneously represents a "myself" {poses me before myself},' Heidegger writes (in Borch-Jacobsen, 1991, 54): the subject projects an object and introjects it when he sees himself as a subject 'over there' in the object. Saying is therefore an ekstasis of given form, but it is also an expressing or exteriorization specifically of the subject. It is an autoenunciation -- that is to say, an enunciation by and of a subject, and an ekstastic action by which the subject dis-places himself from his compact or constricted 'unity' with himself to exteriorize and pose him before himself in the statements he utters. As Borch-Jacobsen says, the speaker projects 'himself "outside" himself in the utterance of the statement where he (re)presents himself' (1991, 189). Following this autoenunciative model of language, when the narrator of States reflects emphatically on the act of utterance, he is simply underscoring the way in which a speaker 'normally' views himself reflexively in the statements presenting or expressing him to the Other.

So, writing is initially disabled by violence, but by subsequently maintaining itself in opposition to violence, it succeeds in developing its own procedures; like the crayfish which stays alive a little longer by forgetting its death, yet which moves to knowledge of death, writing describes a trajectory of deferred action in which opposites merge into each other and writing experiences violence within itself. Furthermore, the narrator draws attention to the vicissitudes of saying in order to heighten his (self)consciousness of his ekstastic shattering into death. By actively placing before himself 'the violence of [his] articulation' (AVFL, 37), the narrator recognises the principle of his own eros -- an impulsion 'towards the transgression of frontiers' (States, 231) -- in his rapturous/rupturous saying: he comes to know violence, the violence of desire, and to recognise himself in and as it. That the subject poses specifically violent enunciation/s 'in front of' himself is corroborated by Brink's article, 'An act of violence' (1991). Arguing against what he perceives as the 'traditional' (33) notion of literature as a safe haven from the dangers of conflict, he contends that 'literature as a body and as a phenomenon, and each individual poem, play or novel

separately, [is] a subtle and complex set of responses to ... the violence of "the world"' (34). Retreat is one such response, but since it implies, contrary to his stated intentions, that literature is a nonviolent refuge, he refines his position. '[T]he literary text,' he emends, 'is not merely a [nonviolent] response to violence, or even ... a subsuming [and hence a suspension] of violent impulses in an otherwise serene narrative package, but is itself an act of violence' (36). To stress that his argument does not 'concern only representations of processes of violation' (39), which would suggest that violence is the represented content of a proposition whose utterance is itself free of violence, Brink declares that 'what is important is not only the articulation of violence, but the violence of articulation' (37). 'It is an action,' he claims, 'directed in the first instance against the very notion of "authority"' -- not particular invidious manifestations of it, 'but, in Platonic terms, the idea of authority' (39), which withdraws behind every instance it supplies of itself. This 'sanctioning authority [is] ultimately a deity who determines what is "right"' (36), Brink adds, firmly situating 'the violence of articulation' in the intersubjectivity of a struggle between a superior and a putative inferior. Their polemic ('from polemos war'; C. E. D.) is, once again, presented as the conflict between an expansive and a constrictive force. In this 'interpenetration between text and reader' (41), or (for our purposes) literary codes and speaking subject, 'text' seeks to conscript 'reader' into obeisance with its authoritatively codified meanings, while 'reader' penetrates 'text's' space through an act of reinscription and re-interpretation; by the same token, 'reader's' assimilation of 'text' into his received categories is disrupted when 'text' crosses its boundaries and calls these assumptions into question: systole meets diastole, diastole meets systole. 'Reader', or narrator, is, crucially, put at risk, placed in crisis. To recall the contradictory implications identified in the metaphoric of invasion, the victim is opened up and shut in, exposed without the protection of inner sanctuary (since the latter has been disrupted or called into question by the aggressor), and interned without self-extension (circumscribed, that is, by an

authoritative determination). Entering the polemos necessarily entails that one puts oneself at risk; and as the conflict escalates one must needs take increasing risks, a predicament which brings home to one with ever-shriller urgency how much one stands to lose and how frangible one's being in fact is. Thus Philip's ekstatic speech causes him 'terror' since his desire for self-projection into alterity is accompanied by his 'readiness to risk everything' (States, 55), while the narrator pictures himself as a Macbethian figure who has no choice but to continue with the 'violence of [his] articulation' (AVFL, 37), violence which distances him ever-further from the shore's safety (that is, his enclosed identity) and launches him into conflict bound to take his life. 'I've stepped in blood so far' (States, 104), he laments, that should he wade no more, returning were as tedious as to go o'er.<sup>21</sup>

Through the self-reflexive form of States of Emergency, the narrator poses before himself his implication in a mortal agon. More specifically, he poses himself before himself precisely as a desiring subject prepared to violate his boundaries and (inasmuch as ekstasis involves the 'terror' of risking his being) to shatter into death. The death which he risks in this context is his death in the signifier. He undertakes a passage from a condition in which he is apparently self-identical and self-possessed, in control of his text's meanings, to one in which his significations are re-defined by authoritative codes -- codes which circumscribe him and put his self-understanding of his meanings into question. In other words, the subject 'solidifies into a signifier' (Lacan, 1977b, 199) inscribed in a particular symbolic system. 'The signifier ... makes manifest the subject of its signification,' Lacan explains, '[b]ut it functions as a signifier only to reduce the subject in question to being no more than a signifier, to petrify the subject ...' (1977b, 207). The narrator's appearance in a signifier, his autoenunciative expressing of himself, is thus accompanied by his disappearance, for 'when the subject appears somewhere as meaning, he is manifested elsewhere as "fading", as disappearance' (Lacan, 1977b, 218). The enunciating subject and the subject of the statement pro-jected before him simultaneously coalesce and

divide; as such, his appearance in the statement 'in front of' himself marks his disappearance, while, oddly enough, this disappearance is simultaneously the appearance (note Lacan's use of 'manifested') of the subject as a void constituted by his tendency to ekstatise into no-thingness, that is, to go beyond or transgress every delimited form of himself until he is no-thing, no given signifier. It is precisely 'in this movement of disappearance that I have called lethal,' Lacan reiterates, that 'the subject manifests himself' (1977b, 207-8). So an appearance is a disappearance, while a disappearance is an appearance: each thing turns into the other, discovering something of the self in the other. That is to say, as the subject appears in the statement, striving, Scheherazade-like, to evade ending (closure and death), he undergoes that very same 'lethal' disappearance (Lacan, 1977b, 208). Yet while suffering this disappearance in which his mortality is revealed to himself, he also manifests himself to himself as one who, broaching self-containment in an ekstatic act of saying and thereby exposing himself to the danger of such a fatal disappearance, is propelled by 'the readiness to risk everything' (States, 55). Eros, driving him towards the transgression of existential frontiers, is life-endangering, and as much a source of 'terror' (States, 55) as the menace which approaches him from the outside world. Therefore, his disappearance into signifying orders exterior to himself reveals not only the threat which these orders hold (they 'petrify' him; Lacan 1977b, 207), but the threat which his own self-extensive desire holds for him in that it impells him into an agon with them; and, inasmuch as the subject 'is' his desire,<sup>22</sup> his disappearance manifests him to himself as a being who, heedless of self-preservative needs, emerges into a signifying order by plunging himself into states of emergency. In this way discourse 'ends up by confirming [the ending] it has set out to deny' (States, 17-18) -- as much as it postpones ending, or the punctual moment of termination, it effects within itself ending as a process of undoing and disappearing, a process which is autoenunciatively posed before the speaking subject.

If art and language, according to the narrator of States, confirm in fact what they ostensibly deny, they are forms of

apophasis, which is the rhetorical 'device of mentioning a subject by stating that it will not be mentioned' (C. E. D.): it involves an '[a]ffirming by apparent denial, a stressing through negation' (Cuddon, 1979, 52). A famous example is the Verneinung, or defence of negation, which Freud identified in the speech of his patients. Should the analysand say, "You ask who this person in the dream can be. It's not my mother," Freud 'changes this to: "So it is his mother"' (1925, 437). The narrator's hypothesis, however, applies to more than isolated statements, embracing language in toto -- irrespective of their content, all statements in this view are apophantic allusions to the unutterability from which they emerge and with which they will merge. So if writing is the surmounting of inertial counterforces to silence, a negation, it is a negation which insistently refers to and aligns itself with that which it repudiates: if to write or to speak is to live and to appear to oneself, speech and writing insidiously manifest their other in themselves.

In States of Emergency the notion of text as an apophantic reference to violent context is shown most clearly in the case of the novella sent to the narrator by the character Jane Ferguson. Initially, it appears to be a love story notable only for the striking absence of political themes when all about the country is beset with strife. But the absence proves to be apophantic, an affirmation by negation of Ferguson's engagement in the Emergency's severities. As if showing in reverse-order how a text overcomes a troubled context -- and therefore in turn demonstrating how an accomplished statement or 'masterful image' refers to its utterance in traumatic situations -- States begins by noting how anomalous Ferguson's text is, and how enigmatic her self-immolation, only to reveal later that her novella is rooted in her love affair with an activist who had died in police detention, and that the apparently apolitical love story is indeed intended as a monument to the activist's memory. In line with Benjamin's pronouncement that '[t]here is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism' (in Davies, 1990, v), her text emerges from violence to constitute a 'nonrepresentational testimony' (Felman, 1992, passim) to the anterior event of a murder; in addition,



Ferguson's text -- which she likens to '[w]ords of fire' (States, 205), a figure combining the lovers' ardour with the intensity of the political struggle -- merges with the violence of 'ending' since she burns herself to death after completing the novella. Hers is hence a felicitous demise which suggests that death by fire is part of an inexorable textual logic and the necessary outcome of her ekstatic, self-endangering utterance of '[w]ords of fire'.

Ferguson's novella exemplifies the process through which 'the text detaches itself from the world in order finally to be restored, in a changed form, to the world' (States, 75): that is, her text's negation, or detachment from, the Emergency amounts to an apophantic presencing of the Emergency. As the narrator says, 'Every story can be traced back to a trigger character or episode,' although these 'may not even appear in the final text' (7). 'What assumes the form, at the moment [of composition], of an agglomeration of citations will eventually ... be absorbed by that text to exist only ... as "mirages"' (205). Statement is the surmounting of an enunciatory situation. Yet the latter persists in the statement in the negative, negated form of a 'mirage': it is mentioned in the mode of not-being-mentioned, it is made present in that which is predicated on its disappearance, it is negated, yet preserved in an altered, voided form. In its fiery assertion of life, love and writing, Ferguson's text is premised on the supersession of the antagonistic principles of death, the loss of love, and the silencing of the activist. However, it is also a testament to the activist's fate in the cells. As such, Ferguson's text insists that that which has been negated in the process of composition is nonetheless present -- present as a 'mirage', as the activist's ghostly lineaments. In the text's affirmation of life, text points back to death; in the lover's discourse, death speaks.

What applies to cases presented in the narrated diegesis of States of Emergency applies to the travail of its narration. If the narrative sketches, meditations on craftsmanship, literary critical commentaries, fragmentary structure and other self-reflexive devices chart a prospectus for the novel the narrator wants to write, and so signal a strengthening capacity for

production, isn't it self-evident that writing about writing and deferring the completed work to a future occasion is a reiteration as well of a present inability to write? Isn't it the case that this formal introversion -- termed 'narcissistic' by Linda Hutcheon and others<sup>23</sup> -- is matched step for step by the registration of the disablement threatening that apparent 'narcissism' and self-regarding aestheticism? Aren't these metafictional strategies, that is to say, apophantic, highlighting the effects of violence with the same gesture by which the narrator had hoped to neutralise them, and reiterating his anxiety with every attempt at escape? Moreover, as his escape attempts multiply and his notes accumulate (an empirical volume which, one might imagine, would indicate a growing mastery over his perilous circumstances), courts a new danger, namely, 'the danger intrinsic to the story-telling act: having committed oneself to it, there is no turning back. Which is why I still insist that this is only a preliminary exploration, a testing of possibilities' (65). Yet his insistence betrays a fear that writing may end up by 'confirming [the danger] it has set to deny' (18) and replicate its negated other. What is this danger? Through his pun on 'commitment' the narrator refers to the perils of commitment to an adulterous relationship, the dangers of a literary engagement with political struggle, and the hazards of writing itself. As we have seen in the discussion of the narrated love story, to embark on a love affair is ultimately to enter the alterior space of the Emergency which exposes one 'to the possibility of being hurt, betrayed, wounded to the quick' (145). But what have narration and the Emergency's violence in common, particularly when 'violence' and 'writing' have been regarded as mutually exclusive? On the one hand, the narrator claims that his writing must continue as stopping would leave 'only that other inextricable weaving of a land in flames' (104), repeating the idea that writing sets itself in opposition to a violent world; on the other hand, writing also advances implacably through annihilation: the narrator must carry on 'because I've stepped in blood so far' (104), implying that through his writing, he has become embroiled in a polemos in which he is both an aggressor and victim.

#### (v) Death of the author

Violence overloads, blinds, disintegrates, and paralyzes the subject into a retracted form imposed on him. In the disaster, 'I am wrested from myself' for its contingencies strike at me as a categorical target rather than 'the unique being I would like to be': 'I am he whom anyone at all can replace, the nonindispensable by definition' (Blanchot, 1986, 18). By precipitating the death of the author, writing enacts a similar fall into nonindispensability and delimitation.

Barthes' famous essay on this topic addresses several issues -- the canonical privilege traditional literary scholarship has given the institution of authoriality, the principles of bourgeois property relations granting private ownership of the text to a juridically defined person, as well as the 'metaphysics of subjectivity'. According to Taylor, the latter has been the foundation of modern Western philosophy ever since Descartes maintained 'that the subject's relation to all otherness is mediated by and derived from its relationship to itself' (1986, 3). The subject, Taylor explains, is 'the first principle from which everything arises and to which all must be reduced or returned' for it is the 'locus of certainty and truth' (3). Similarly, Barthes' author is the mythical original or 'final signified' (1988a, 171) underlying the text's diversity, such that the 'explanation of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it' (168). In this mystified logic, the author absorbs the other of textuality. He is the source, owner and final court of appeal for determining<sup>in</sup> the meaning of the text, which is illumined in signification thanks to an imaginary or expressive continuity with the author's interiority. Conversely, the text is a Vor-stellung, reflecting back to the author the mirror-image he has posed before himself. But the image does not 'take' on the textual surface. The portrait's narcissistic uniqueness is eroded by the effects of symbolic articulation, so that the mirror is shown to be an anamorphosis disclosing a memento mori much like that found in Holbein's The Ambassadors: Lacan notes in his discussion of this painting that as you turn to leave its specular gratification, 'you apprehend in this form

... What? A skull' (1977b, 88). What the authorial subject poses before himself is the enantiodromia of an appearance of himself to himself in which he disappears, and a disappearance of himself which, nevertheless, 'appears' before him.

Barthes' deconstruction of authoriality proceeds from the premise of Saussurean linguistics that the subject is not the origin or guarantor of the meaning of his statements, but is a function of the linguistic system which inscribes him in it as a speaking subject. That is to say, subjectivity does not precede discourse -- for Benveniste, 'Ego' is he who says "ego"' (1971, 224), while for Barthes the subject speaks only within an autonomous network of cultural codes which precedes him, and which exceeds his efforts to control linguistic meanings. The 'inner "thing"' the subject seeks 'to "translate" is only a ready-formed dictionary, its words only explainable through other words ...' (Barthes, 1988a, 170), for subjectivity is always-already written into discourse as 'the wake of all the codes which constitute me' (Barthes, 1974, 10). The author, Barthes says, 'is never more than the instance writing, just as I is nothing other than the instance saying I' (1988a, 169).

Barthes' reference is to Benveniste's essays on subjectivity in language, in particular to the latter's assertion that each use of the personal pronoun I does not signify on every occasion the same lexical entity. 'There is no concept "I" that incorporates all the I's that are uttered in the mouths of all speakers, in the sense that there is a concept "tree" to which all the individual uses of tree refer' (Benveniste, 1971, 226). Instead, the I is 'solely a "reality of discourse' (218) -- a 'mobile sign' (220), it is one of the 'empty' forms (219) of discourse (along with shifters like deictics and distinctions in tense) which receive a 'momentary reference' (226) only in relation to the specific discursive context in which they are spoken. 'I signifies "the person who is uttering the present instance of the discourse containing I"' (218), Benveniste writes. Were it not for these shifters or 'empty' forms, each speaker would ideally be obliged to invent a language to suit his or her circumstances, so that 'there would be as many languages as individuals' (220). However, it is the case that language 'is

so organized that it permits each speaker to appropriate to himself an entire language by designating himself as 'I' (226). What is important to Barthes is Benveniste's suggestion that individuals do not themselves constitute their subjectivities when writing, but insert themselves into pre-existing subject-positions available in discourse.

The crucial difference between Barthes and Benveniste turns upon the distinction between speech and writing. Benveniste accentuates the way in which 'empty' forms acquire determinable reference in specific 'instances of discourse' (217), while the enunciations which concern Barthes subvert attempts to ascertain their reference. For Benveniste, shifters like here and there, now and then, and I and you, are 'defined only with respect to the instances of discourse in which they occur' (226), that is to say, in 'the discrete and always unique acts by which the language is actualized in speech by a speaker' (217). Speech gives shifters content.

But Barthes puts forward a very different view in a segment of Roland Barthes titled 'The shifter as utopia'. Discussing a postcard with the message, 'Monday. Returning tomorrow. Jean-Louis', he remarks,

[I]f Jean-Louis knows perfectly well who he is and on what day he is writing, once his message is in my hands it is entirely uncertain: which Monday? which Jean-Louis? How would I be able to tell, since from my point of view I must instantly choose between more than one Jean-Louis and several Mondays? ... I speak [as a writer] ... but I wrap myself in the mist of an enunciatory situation which is unknown to you [as a reader] (1977, 165-6).

The inscription of speech negates the self-enclosure in which the subject is self-certain and in continuity with the signs he emits, signs having a univocal meaning thanks to their proximity with the speaker who serves as their guarantor. Distanced from himself by the inscription on a postcard, however, and thus no longer posing himself before himself in a circuit of self-reflexivity, the author of the message loses his self-identity while his meaning becomes indefinite. The transition announces the beginning of the textuality and writing celebrated by post-structuralists, for writing is an ekstasis of 'signalization'

which, according to Derrida, 'is always enveloped within the regional limits of nature, life and the soul' (1978, 12). Derrida maintains that the inscription of speech frees meaning from the constraint of univocality and 'from the natural predicament in which everything refers to the disposition of a contingent situation' (12). He says, more pointedly, that it is 'when that which is written is deceased as a sign-signal that it is born as language; for then it says what is, thereby referring only to itself, a sign without signification ... since it ceased to be utilized as natural, biological or technical information, or as the transition from ... a signifier to a signified' (12). Barthes' own formulation in 'The death of the author' is strikingly similar. 'As soon as a fact is narrated no longer with a view to acting directly on reality but intransitively, that is to say,' he declares, 'finally outside of any function other than that of the practice of the symbol, this disconnection occurs, the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death, writing begins' (1988a, 168).

And as writing commences, various privileged terms are dispossessed by their other -- speech is inscribed, univocality yields indeterminacy, bounded territory 'enveloped within regional limits' and 'wrap[ped] in its own mist' opens its borders to a hazardous exteriority, the self-proximate is distanced from itself, the centrifugal gives way in Barthes' imagery to flight, migration, dispersion, irrevocable departures and scattered ashes, while life is negated, only to return as the birth of the reader and the text. Writing dislocates 'subjectivity at rest in itself and contemplating its own images' (Sartre, 1986, 296); text 'takes my body elsewhere, far from my imaginary person, toward a kind of memoryless speech which is already the speech of the People' (Barthes, 1977, 3). 'What summons us to write,' Blanchot contends, 'is the attraction of (pure) exteriority' (in Taylor, 1986, 32).

If the text's semiotic plurality emerges as an ekstatic outward crossing of borders, the determination of meaning is a constrictive inward movement. The narrator of States of Emergency regrets that the name of his central female character 'will be invaded and tarnished by meanings' so that its evocation of

`limitless possibilities will be reduced to a circumscribed set of codes' (14). What should have remained `undetermined and intact' will be snuffed out by being made `accomplished and forgettable' (15). A lovers' enclosure is `invaded by meaning' and vulgarised as an `affair': `Through the intrusion of language this experience can now be compared to others', implying that the incomparable `can be defined, circumscribed. ... Decay sets in' (132). Less and less can the narrator's love story `be regarded as exclusive, insular, unique' (103). `To love' implies `I love you, here, now' (103), he says. `But this "I", this "you", this "love": do they not already include all my own previous experience of love, and yours, and of all others who have been involved in it? An entire history and literary tradition converge in us' (103). According to Barthes, the text suffers the `subjugation' (1974, 9) of connotation, which limits it to `a circumscribed group of privileged signifieds' (Silverman, 1983, 30). The text's denotative signs (the sign is the union of signifier and signified) are a base for a `second-order semiological system' (Barthes, 1972, 123) in which they become connotative signifiers. Each is linked to `anterior, ulterior, or exterior mentions, to other sites of the text (or of another text)' (Barthes, 1974, 8) which are their signifieds. That is, each connotative signifier `represents a digression outside of the text to an established body of knowledge [from which it draws its signified]' (Silverman, 1983, 31). The connotative signifier is `the starting point of a code' (1974, 9), Barthes says, defining literary codes as `so many fragments of something that has always been already read, seen, done, experienced' (20). They are `systems of literary knowledge possessed by the reader [and] inscribed in the literary community to which he belongs' (1977, 97), and in the course of reading the text is assimilated by these `déjà-vu models' (Rimmon-Kenan, 1983, 123). The codes are systemacities of conventionalized meaning which structure the text's reading, steering it in pre-ordained directions by assigning habitual and seemingly natural or compulsory signifieds to connotative signifiers. In short, they close the text in a `nauseating mixture of common opinions, a smothering layer of received ideas' (Barthes, in Silverman, 1983, 31) that `are so

worn we take them to be marks of nature' (Barthes, 1988b, 192).

Thus the narrator says, 'At every moment meanings tumble into this love from outside,' but adds that 'at the same time, from the inside, it keeps spilling over its own boundaries' (States, 103), dispersing its own specificity by embodying elements of the great love narratives which have preceded it. The change of perspective from inward to outward movement is significant in terms of the value which is placed on the codes. Where in one reading they impoverish meaning through the operations of connotation (as in Barthes' Mythologies, where connotation 'naturalises' historically specific ideologies), in another they afford access to the classic text's limited plurality, becoming 'avenues of meanings' (Barthes, 1988b, 173), the 'beginnings of intertextuality' (193). This altered perspective is the result of 'a choice' -- a choice 'to live the text in its plurality' (Barthes, 1988b, 173) despite pressure toward restriction. In particular, Barthes' practice of interrupting the text's superficial continuity and 'the "naturalness" of ordinary language' (1974, 13) by dividing it into arbitrarily chosen lexias and so examining in 'slow motion' (12) how the text produces meaning, is nothing less than 'a renewal of the entrances to the text' (13), sealed by received interpretations, for he postulates that 'everything signifies ceaselessly and several times' (12). That is, a plurality of codes overlap across the denotative sign, each translating it into a connotative signifier linked to 'anterior, ulterior or exterior meentions' (1974, 9). The codes create a 'stereophony' (1988b, 193) of meanings simultaneously resonating about the denotative sign. But the key point Barthes makes is that there is no basis on which to choose which is the 'true' one, since even the denotative meaning is emptied out as being merely 'the last of the connotations' (1974, 9). '[W]hat is specific to the text, once it has attained the quality of a text, is to constrain us to the undecidability of the codes' since 'in an utterance, several codes and several voices are there, without priority' -- writing 'is precisely ... this loss of "motives" to the profit of a volume of indeterminations or overdeterminations' (1988b, 194). That is why codes become 'departures of meaning, not arrivals'



(1988b, 174). They are the means by which texts spill over boundaries and are 'plugged in' (1988b, 174) to other texts, 'even if the author of the text had not foreseen them, and even if it was historically impossible for him to foresee them' (1981, 37). 'What founds the text . . .,' Barthes maintains, 'is the outlet of the text onto other texts; what makes the text is the intertextual' (1988b, 174). One may say that intertextuality is the '(pure) exteriority' (Blanchot, in Taylor, 1986, 32) into which the initially self-proximate disperses -- 'pure', because severed from subjective self-reference. The intertext is a proliferation of 'codes, formulae, rhythmic models, fragments of social languages' (1981, 39), anonymous 'citations, references, [and] echoes' (1977, 160) which traverse the text as always a text-between-texts. And if the text, 'destroyer of all subject, contains a subject to love, that subject is dispersed, somewhat like the ashes we strew into the wind after death' (Barthes, 1971, 8-9).

#### (vi) The art of dying

Writing flees violence and the numbed subject seeks ekstasis instead of remaining 'stuck' (States, 55) in himself; but writing is circumscribed by invasive codes, and the codes' capacity to withdraw the writing from itself into intertextuality intimates to the subject his imminent 'ending' (17) and the time of his non-being. The codes close in; beyond them one senses the era of the text's independence and the subject's death. While Melissa sleeps, oblivious to him, Philip looks ahead to this era in which the world will continue despite his absence and even its memories of his most despa<sup>e</sup>rate experiences will disappear. 'My love, my love,' he wonders, 'will you remember, thirty years from now, when I am dead and you about as old as I am now, your lover of this deranged year?' (204). Once again, what applies to the diegesis obtains at the level of its enunciation. 'I have begun to write: surrounding my words lie the horizons of their end' (17), the narrator says. Initially, formal introversion is an attempt to evade a numbing delimitation caused by dread of the Emergency. Yet as the text is elaborated, it sets up several

equivalences between the Emergency's effects and semiotic closure by the codes. The text's delay in producing a finalised, closed narrative is therefore a reiteration of its evasion of the Emergency; but at the same time the text's 'subjugation' (Barthes, 1974, 9) by the codes is unavoidable: closure, or 'ending', is no longer an extra-territorial threat but is the intratextual threat towards which the text is headed even as -- or precisely as -- it tries to avoid it. As such, formal introversion implicitly affirms that which its function is to negate.

Fragmentary writing, for instance, indicates at first the narrator's hesitation in committing the different narrative trajectories he plots to a non-contradictory structure. 'Liking to find, to write beginnings, he tends to multiply this pleasure: that is why he writes fragments: so many fragments, so many beginnings, so many pleasures,' Barthes says of himself (1977, 94). Since multiple beginnings keep the text in an indeterminate suspension, they are not beginnings at all. They are vacillations before the prospect of entering the rigour and synoptic totality of the Book, and of broaching the Emergency. Nonetheless, the act of 'branding the paper' implies that 'instead of unlimited potential, there are facts -- a presence, a thereness -- to be respected; or at the very least traces to be respected' (States, 17). Freedom is insidiously impaired because 'one has to take responsibility' (17) for these traces; dispossessing the narrator of autonomy, it is the text (rather than the intention preceding writing) which asserts a logic of its own, establishing by dictate (and fortuity) which paths are to be followed, and which not. Consequently, the accumulation of 'beginnings' unwittingly affirms 'ending' since their encrustation of detail delimits the options available to one who seeks to nurture 'unlimited potential': the latter 'will be reduced to a circumscribed set of codes' (14) beyond one's control. Having inadvertently committed oneself to writing, 'there is no turning back' (65) from a fatal destination.

Brink demonstrates the lethal power of heteronomous definition in a showdown between the adulterous Philip and his wife. He

listens to the world she is conjuring up for him: a sordid affair in dark rooms, underground, dishonest, insignificant, perverse. Nothing of what she says is relevant to him. It cannot be Melissa and him she is talking about. (So detached does he feel that he finds time for a literary reflection. Lacan: 'It is the world of words that creates the world of things.') She is fabricating an existence wholly strange to him, a world that has no right or reason to exist (192).

Exposed to judgment by an outsider, the lovers' enclosure is negated in its lived reality and re-constituted in an-other's interpretive framework as 'an existence wholly strange to him' (192). As interior intimacy is displaced by an external determination, and the familiar rendered strange, the autonomous made heteronomous, Philip loses the basis of his self-certitude. After all, whose version is right? Philip's status as an authorial guarantor of the 'original' meaning of his desire is undone. Can his authorship of an apparently privileged interpretation withstand the relentless restructuration of experience by the Other's discourse? Is he -- or someone else -- the master of his meaning?

What is true? [he wonders.] Does that smooth cool room exist in which he was with Melissa but an hour ago, with its roughly plastered uneven walls, the crevices in the ceiling .... Does that bed exist, with its grey-and-yellow duvet? The table with its pile of books ...? ... Does the deserted garden exist, and this wood, and the night they first met? -- What happened that night? Did she come to him in his study? ... Did they spend the night in a hotel where a bomb might go off at any moment? He isn't sure: he can no longer tell. He doesn't know anything anymore (192-3).

His doubts remove all substance from a once stable structure, erasing the lovers' room and then the diegetic world in which he is situated. To recall Scarry's discussion of torture and spatial imagery, his loss of self-projective and self-defining capacities is presented in terms of the collapse of space, a world-contraction culminating in the obliteration of the contents of his consciousness -- 'He doesn't know anything anymore' (193). His world contracted, the contents of consciousness dispelled, Philip is nullified into fictiveness by a displacing/emplacing discourse. But what delivers the coup de grâce is the concluding narratorial interpolation:

There he stands, wondering whether Melissa's room, or the past, or memory exists. Whereas he himself doesn't exist! He owes the possibility of his own being to me as I sit here writing him into literary existence. (Does that make me exist?) (193).

Philip's inscription as a cipher in an-other's narrative order is made overt so as to emphasise his fictionality and thereby take to its logical extreme his disintegrative passage from a self-subsistent reality existing for himself, to an unreal state in which he is no more than a 'paper I' (Barthes, 1977, 161) or 'a tissue of quotations' (Barthes, 1988a, 170), sustained by a meshing of semiotic codes. And as Philip's diegetic world loses its depth and rises to the surface formed by a layer of codes given by the Other, the narrator's own world of 'unlimited potential' projected before himself into the diegesis correspondingly empties and retracts into a paper-thin surface marked by signifiers which will receive their signifieds not from him, but the Other. The reality of the narrator's existence, thus, also falls under suspicion ('Does that make me exist?'; 193): he is as heteronomous as his fictional characters.

Here and elsewhere, foregrounding the fictiveness of the fiction is coupled with the narrator's underscoring of 'the danger intrinsic to the story-telling act' (65). Textual self-reflexivity highlights -- or poses before the narrator as a Vorstellung -- his disappearance; it sharpens his awareness of the way that the text not only reports on violence, but enacts in its enunciation the transition from a state in which 'he is at one with himself ... [facing] the perfection of the yet unstarted narrative' (Blanchot, 1982, 84), to a realization that the ideal text he wants to write has been ossified by an accretion of meanings. He is thus brought to the terminal 'horizon' (States, 17) beyond which it is the Other who invests words with meaning, not the Author. In Heidegger's formulation, the 'relation between death and language flashes up before us' (in Vattimo, 1988, 69). Formal introversion foregrounds the experience of dying in, as it were, the controlled environment of a text. 'Perhaps,' the narrator muses,

the concept of the island, like the concept of the novel as a rounded whole ... is not just a

manifestation of the urge to escape, to deny the world, to seek refuge from what you cannot handle, but the result of the need for self-preservation and survival. In which case the supreme irony is that on the island we recreate the conditions of the world we try to escape (204).

In short, his textual strategy is to stay alive by evading death from the outside world, but to stay alive the better to die inside the text -- to stay alive in the face of death, to die while staying alive, and to live on his own terms the death which gestures blindly at him in the Emergency and paralyzes writing. Efforts at self-preservation are 'circuitous paths to death', Freud notes, for 'self-assertion' and 'mastery' are 'component instincts whose function it is to assure that the organism shall follow its own path to death, and to ward off any possible ways of returning to inorganic existence other than those which are immanent in the organism itself' (1984, 311). Con-fronted directly, violence halts writing. It can be approached only circuitously by way of artifices simulating terror for the subject, allowing him to pose before himself, within his own labours, that which initially resisted symbolic registration, and to be present at his death, which, numbed, he would otherwise miss.

#### VII. Clamour

'While reasoning is a dialogue which acknowledges the opponent as a source of interests, claims and arguments, violence can be described as a monologue, and in that sense it is mute and irrational'

-- Johan Degenaar<sup>24</sup>

I have argued that Brink's fictions testify to a reversal in which terror and violence are transformed from impediments to writing to the resources which empower literary production. Noting the way in which his narratives often follow the principle of deferred action, and so describe a sequence consisting in a self-protective departure from an initial scene of trauma and a cyclical revisitation of it (a revisitation in which the narrating subject undergoes the death he missed), I suggested that this pattern may be seen schematically as representing a re-inscription of the opposition between 'violence' and 'writing',

where 'violence' implies 'non-writing', and 'writing' implies 'non-violence'. Focussing on States of Emergency as a text which exemplifies this process, I pointed out how 'writing', which at first maintains itself in distinction to the silence, ending and death associated with 'violence', insidiously confirms what it negates and thus replicates its other inside itself: non-violent writing participates in a polemos between the violence of saying and the violence of unsaying. As I said at the outset, States is concerned with the merging of antagonistic domains -- the domains of the Emergency and of aesthetic activity.

Two points follow from this summary. The first is (again) schematic, but it will serve as a bridge to more complex inquiries. We have seen how the category 'writing' is altered from the condition of 'non-violence' to 'violence', but we have yet to find out how the category 'violence' loses its exclusive characterisation as an example of 'non-writing' and becomes supportive of rather than oppositional to 'writing'. In a sense, this has already been addressed: if writing is a form of violence, then obviously 'violence' reinforces 'writing'. But in another sense, these distinctions between 'violence' which, on the one hand, degrades writing in particular and more generally, relations between interlocutors, and 'violence' which promotes them on the other hand, represent a crucial component of Brink's meditations on violence which I have as yet not examined.

The second point which follows from the preceding summary is this -- if States (taken as exemplary of processes operating in other of Brink's novels) foregrounds the criss-cross movement from 'maiming' to 'meaning' and 'meaning' to 'maiming', and hence stresses that completed statements are apophantic allusions to their derelict circumstances of enunciation, these statements, in particular Brink's statements about armed struggle and the effects of political violence on interpersonal relations, may be regarded as an indirect commentary on the practice of writing and may be examined in order to expand on the problems of utterance raised by States of Emergency. In short, the said -- the 'masterful images' underlain by the 'rag-and-bone shop of the heart' -- can be considered to illuminate the dynamics of its saying.

What, then, indeed does Brink have to say about violence? As I noted earlier, the distinction between violence which debases relations between interlocutors, and violence which promotes them, occupies a crucial place in Brink's work. Not only does it inform a dominant theme concerning the armed struggle in South Africa, but if his thematic statements are viewed as reflections on the processes of writing, then Brink's analysis of the factors distinguishing legitimate militant resistance from less salutary violence can provide insight into the ways in which violence changes from a force inhibiting writing to one liberating it. In that case, what form do relations between speakers take when they are afflicted by violence, and what form when stimulated by it? From the commentary Brink supplies, what analysis may one unpack of the interpersonal conditions prevailing in a state of terror? And as these conditions describe a general malaise which affects the practice of writing as well, what are the implications for writing?

Brink's qualified endorsement of violence as politically necessary, and often even virtuous, is well known. A Chain of Voices and An Act of Terror, for example, are sophisticated apologias for urban terrorism and insurrectionary bloodshed, while in Rumours of Rain Franken is tried for his involvement in sabotage. The sophistication of the apologias resides in Brink's attempt to differentiate between violence which entrenches an 'historical silence' (Dove, 11) between oppressors and oppressed, and violence which endeavours to re-open dialogue between them and shatter the 'historical silence' by affirming discursive exchange. The most trenchant formulation of this viewpoint (as well as other of Brink's key pre-occupations) is to be found in 'The dove in the grave', a newspaper article he wrote in April 1993 shortly after Chris Hani, then leader of the South African Communist Party, had been assassinated by a right-wing movement. Anguished by the renewed political polarization and upheaval which followed the assassination, and on the verge of being paralysed by 'the temptation of despair', Brink eulogises Hani, formerly the chief-of-staff of umKhonto we Sizwe, as a soldier and a Shakespeare enthusiast who had set an influential example inasmuch as he harmonised the 'sword and word' (Dove, 11). Hani

was a 'man of action inspired by the conviction that we shall not live by the sword alone but by the word'; he managed to 'reconcile in himself these two urges normally regarded as incompatible' (11). Unlike Hani's use of violence, that practised by his assassins is 'mindless' (11): his murder 'negated the voice of reason itself' and returned the forces of 'sword and word' to 'their initial positions of antagonism, mutual exclusion and otherness' (11). The implication, then, is that word and sword need not inevitably be opposed to each other -- the opposition can be displaced to appear within the category 'violence' as a distinction between violence in which 'the word, the mind and the nobler achievements of the human spirit' (11) are advanced, and violence perpetuating retaliation and reprisal. The former ideally introduces a centripetal tendency to social unanimity, abolishing itself as it achieves an eventual 'triumph of reason over violence' (11); the latter fragments the body politic into the anomie of a Hobbesian war of each against all. It ruins 'the word', fomenting an 'incomprehensible clamour' (11) instead.

'What seems like a dark wave has broken over South Africa; and all the space of experience ... appears invaded by an incomprehensible clamour of rage, pain and fear' (11), Brink writes, reprising the motifs which convey the subject's sense of ethical and cognitive impairment in the disaster. Violence is a deluge or ungraspable excess, violence is a disturbance of vision. Above all, it is an invasion of a closed space and an agora. As such the apparent extroversion of the conflict -- a 'clamour of rage, pain and fear' -- is belied by the antagonists' retreat into an isolating, socially atomising hyperemotionality. It is precisely this estrangement from others which Brink views as 'the core of the historical silence lurking in the heart of the present clamour' (11). The assassins' 'mere mindless violence' 'invades' 'the word', hollows out its interior, and leaves behind a void of 'silence', so that language retains only the debased form of a 'clamour' (11). What is subtracted from 'the word' is reciprocal interaction between speakers, who withdraw instead into their own troubled bodiliness. In the babble everyone speaks past each other, missing one another in



their delirium. If 'mindless violence' (unlike its supposed counterpart, 'mindful violence') instigates a 'clamour' -- if 'clamour' lacks a vital feature of 'proper' language, if the lack turns language into a virtual 'silence' -- then this is another way of pointing to the profoundly flawed relations between self and other which obtain in a condition of violent engagement. In spite of outward clamour, these relations manifest 'a silence of confusion and incomprehension, not true stillness but an inability to hear properly' (ADWS, 305). They fit into the pattern of what Degenaar calls the 'mute and irrational' 'monologue' (1990, 85) between aggressor and victim, and into the paradigm of what Brink himself calls, citing Sartre, 'the dehumanisation of the oppressed' and 'the alienation of the oppressor' (Dove, 11). Consequently, dominator and dominated, or aggressor and victim, do not exchange the word but are asymmetrically positioned at opposing ends of the sword which cuts into the interior of 'the word'.

To summarise, we have a category of violence which debases language, severs the 'sword' from the 'word' (it does not advance 'the mind and the nobler achievements of the human spirit'), and reinforces the 'historical silence' between oppressor and oppressed. On the other hand, there exists a category of violence which promotes language, allies the 'sword' to the 'word' (it eventuates in a 'triumph of reason over violence'), and clears the way to dialogue between oppressor and oppressed. Yet since 'mindless violence' is inseparable from the 'clamour' it instigates, it is evident that 'violence' has infiltrated 'language' such that 'language', in turn, becomes one of the staging-grounds for 'violence': language is violence. This implies that the opposition between the two categories of violence outlined above must be re-inscribed as follows: on the one hand, we have language-as-violence degrading an ideal model of language ('the word') in which language is conceived as a paragon of nonviolence enabling peaceful resolution of antagonisms; on the other hand we have language-as-violence which promotes this ideal model. In total, then, there are three forms of language -- there is the pacific ideal and two subcategories of language-as-violence, one negating the ideal and the other

furthering it. We shall examine these subcategories respectively in the next two chapters.

The first category of language-as-violence we shall explore is that which asserts the `sword' to the detriment of the `word' and in so doing entrenches an `historical silence'. This silence may be broken down into component silences, since in the configuration determined by the `sword' there are three interlinked silences: at the sword's point, at its hilt, and across its shaft. We shall take this configuration -- as well as the claims Brink makes in `The dove in the grave' -- as the organizing trope for the next chapter; on the horizon of the questions raised therein will be the encompassing problem concerning the alteration of violence from an inhibiting to a liberating force in writing.

\*

## ENDNOTES

1. 'The Circus Animals' Desertion'. In W. B. Yeats: Selected Poetry, 1962, Pan.

2. Discussing the Holocaust, Steiner writes, 'Precisely at the same hour in which Mehring or Langner were being done to death, the overwhelming plurality of human beings, two miles away on the Polish farms, 5 000 miles away in New York, were sleeping or eating or going to a film or making love or worrying about the dentist. This is where my imagination balks. The two orders of simultaneous experience are so different, so irreconcilable ... that I puzzle over time' (1967, 181).

3. Linda Hutcheon gives an exemplary articulation of this position in The Politics of Postmodernism (1989, New Accents, London).

4. Fredric Jameson has, in a range of works, presented what is widely considered to be the most influential version of this argument.

5. Discussing hysteria and deferred action, Freud writes, 'Every day {the patient} would go through each impression once more, would weep over it and console herself -- at her leisure, one might say' (in Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973, 114).

6. 'Diegesis' is equivalent to 'story' or 'the world constituted in the story'. Rimmon-Kenan states that the term designates the 'succession of events' (1983, 106) abstracted from their textual arrangement; even more simply, 'diegesis' equals 'story', 'narrated events and participants in abstraction from the text' (6). McHale uses the term in the senses of 'primary world' (1987, 113) and 'narrative domain' (passim).

7. I, 11 50-2.

8. The reference here to a 'philosophical tradition' and to philosophical issues elsewhere in this dissertation should not be confounded with the narrow sense of 'philosophy' as the paradigms and problematics of an institutionalised discipline distinct from other disciplines such as economics, sociology, the natural sciences and literature. In all these disciplines, Derrida points out, 'there is philosophy. To say to oneself that one is going to study something that is not philosophy is to deceive oneself. ... Philosophy ... is present in every scientific discipline and the only reason for transforming philosophy into a specialized discipline is the necessity to render explicit and thematic the philosophical subtext in every discourse' (in Kearney, R., 1984, 114).

9. 'Force and signification'. In Writing and Difference. Cf. pp 25-30.

10. 'Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas'. In Writing and Difference, 1978.

11. For a development of these themes, cf. Chapter 2.
12. Cited in The Weekly Mail & Guardian, 21-1-93.
13. 'The war came to them hard,' Steiner begins a short story. First, the Sunday cake grew smaller. Then the icing took on a grey, worn air, and crumbled under their teeth with the taste of ash. And now ... rumour and unquietude sifted like fine dust through the parlour and corridors (1964, 69).
14. Cf. 'I. (iii) Janus'.
15. 'They have tied me to a stake,' Macbeth says as the invading army draws closer to Dunsinane: 'I cannot fly, / But bear-like I must fight the course' (V, vii, ll 1-2).
16. In its psychoanalytical usage, disavowal is a '[t]erm used by Freud in the specific sense of a mode of defence which consists in the subject's refusing to recognise the reality of a traumatic perception' (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973, 118).
17. Cf. 'I. (iv) Tongue-tied'.
18. An account of the Hegelian and Kojévian notion of the struggle for recognition is given in Chapter 3.
19. Totality and Infinity, 1979, 254-5. For a discussion of Levinas's thought, cf. Chapter 2.
20. 'The Circus Animals' Desertion'. In W. B. Yeats: Selected Poetry, 1962, Pan. Cf. also the epigraph to 'I. Disintegration'.
21. Macbeth, III, v, ll 135-7.
22. 'As often as not, it seems to be assumed that man has his being independently of his passions. I affirm, on the other hand, that we must never imagine existence except in terms of these passions' (Bataille, 1962, 12).
23. Cf. Endnotes 3 and 4.
24. 1990, 85.

## 2. THREE SILENCES

`[I]t was inconceivable that any historical insider [to the Holocaust] could remove herself sufficiently from the contaminating power of the event so as to remain a fully lucid, unaffected witness, that is, to be sufficiently detached from the inside, so as to stay entirely outside of the trapping roles, and the consequent identities, either of the victim or of the executioner'

-- Dori Laub<sup>1</sup>

### I. Introduction: the death sentence

How do words kill? If one may infer from Brink's commentaries on violence that there is a species of 'clamorous' language-as-violence which asserts the 'sword' to the detriment of the ideal of an eirenic 'word', one might ask how language participates in, and enacts, violence. Lecercle contends that a 'direct relationship' between language and the body's violation is 'one in which words would kill' (1990, 234). How then might words be said to execute a death sentence? And if the utterance of a death sentence, or the act of plunging the sword home, imposes an 'historical silence', what is the nature of the silence's various components? What are the registers of subjectivity determined by each component, and how do these feature in Brink's work? More importantly, why does Brink believe that language-as-violence is also capable precisely of shattering each of these respective silences? And again, what light can these shatterings cast on the work of transforming violence from an impediment to a resource of writing?

The opposition between language and violence self-evidently suggests that language is either unrelated to the prosecution of conflict, or that it is at least trivial and secondary to it. In the latter sense, language is superstructural and derivative with regard to a determining base: it is an epiphenomenal froth rising from the place where the real work is done, simply representing (or misrepresenting) tensions at another constitutive level. Yet clearly this view precludes discourse from having constitutive capacities in its own right, in the sense that it actively contributes to the shaping and construction of conflictual

relations and therefore plays a formative role in conflict by conditioning the way in which the various parties interpret their predicaments, opponents and themselves. Discourse and social practice are inextricably linked, so that it is in and through historical discourses that conflicts are experienced -- instead of merely giving abstract expression to conflicts happening elsewhere in pure form, these historically-located and ideologically-inscribed 'way[s] of talking (and writing and thinking)' (Belsey, 1980, 5) establish the mise en scène of socio-political conflicts. That is, while discourse as social practice shapes the field of interpretation within and through which conflicts are waged, discourse (given its historicity) is itself shot through by traces of its implication in antecedent and ongoing conflict: in other words the shaper of conflict is, in turn, determined by conflictual practices. This implies that any specific conflictual relation, mediated by discourse, is situated in, and replicates, overarching histories of conflict. As Fowler says, utterances by individuals carry 'semantic and social meanings' only by virtue of an encompassing 'diachronic and synchronic' context, so that the 'immediate speech situation and what is said and done within it are constituted by, and simultaneously constitute, social macro-structure' as a result (1981, 191). On the one hand, one may contend that the universal devolves into the particular inasmuch as a specific conflictual situation is informed by wider antagonism. On the other, the particular can be said to magnify and project itself into the universal: as microcosm reproduces macrocosm, speakers cast colossal shadows and their utterances are turned into violent events located in a panoptic syntax, skirmishes in a war, or 'interventions' consolidating and sabotaging political structures looming behind the antagonists.

How do words kill? In the preceding model utterances in an immediate speech situation participate in violence in two senses. First, utterances are inscribed within contending ideologies, and are produced according to socially specific 'way[s] of talking (and writing and thinking)' (Belsey, 1980, 5). Utterances thus mobilize these ensembles of interpretations and bring their weight to bear on the situation in question. Words kill since

they are instrumental in shaping relations between antagonists; and while shaping these relations, they necessarily import determining histories of conflict into particular instances of utterance. Words kill (in the first sense of language-as-violence) as the social macrocosm's violence inserts into the immediate speech situation. By same token, however, words become violent engagements in a second, broader sense. That is, they are seen as manoeuvres contributing to a macrocosmic agon. In this view, speakers are not so much individuals as proxies, or incarnations, of collectivities at war with each other, while their words are parts of an encompassing whole -- a whole which is a massive battleground or Manichean struggle (a class war, an ethnic war, a religious war, a gender war, and so on). Enactments of discourse, then, are considered to be violent in that they are said to underwrite or subvert the interests of rival collectivities and therefore to be implicated, willy-nilly, in the overarching polemos. Following this conception of language-as-violence, there is no such thing as a 'private' utterance or a Switzerland of neutrality. Whether they know it or not, or whether they protest their 'innocence', speakers are always considered to be speaking from the determining context of warfare (however this warfare is characterized), with the result that they are always-already declaring for a certain camp and, consequently, against rival social formations, in spite of their claims to the contrary.

Yet this model explaining how words kill practices a violence of its own. While it rightly insists on regarding conflicts in their contexts by emphasising the socially located identities of speakers, it runs the risk of construing violence exclusively in terms of 'macrocosmic' conflict and thereby understanding violence only at the level of an encounter or clash between hypostatized collectivities and social categories. The model runs the risk, that is to say, of reifying the speakers, and of thus repeating the reificatory tactics the speakers themselves employ with regard to the enemies they attack in their speech. Reification is the 'act of regarding an abstraction as a material thing' and so ossifying the real in a fixed, reductive conceptual model; applied to conduct toward human subjects, the

term refers to the 'treatment of men as objects of manipulation' (Bullock and Stallybrass, 1977). Antagonists typically reify each other by viewing one another as metonymies of adverse totalities. As Manganyi and Du Toit argue, 'political violence is aimed not against particular individuals as such, but as representatives of an oppressive order, or, conversely, of a subversive group ...': what is important is 'the representative character of the agents and targets of these acts of violence' (1990, 6). To regard violence only from a macroscopic perspective, in which representatives of collectivities are seen to pit themselves against each other, is hence to risk thinking of violence as an action performed by one collectivity upon another, and to overlook the violence by which the antagonists reify each other as representatives and metonymies in the first place. 'The other is present in a cultural whole and is illuminated by this whole, like a text by its context,' Levinas claims: 'But the epiphany of the other involves a signifyingness of its own, independently of this signification received from the world' (1986, 351). By fixing the Other as simply an element in a whole, violence obliterates his or her independent capacity to signify.

How do words kill? Degenaar argues that violence -- or language-as-violence -- takes the form of a monologue annihilating the Other. Citing Aristotle's dictum that violence 'seems to be that whose moving principle is outside, the person compelled contributing nothing' (1990, 70), Degenaar notes that while 'reasoning is a dialogue which acknowledges the opponent as a source of interests, claims and arguments, violence can be described as a monologue, and in that sense it is mute and irrational' (85). Words kill, that is to say, when they institute a monologue negating the Other 'as a source of interests, claims and arguments' and imposing upon him or her a heteronomous definition. More simply, words kill by negating the Other in the inaccessible privateness of his or her own lived reality, in which he or she is an-other 'origin of the world' (Derrida, 1978, 125). Words kill by performing the negating act of denigrating, repudiating, vituperating, damning, caricaturing, excluding, subjugating and categorising. They kill by enacting a death sentence, by consigning the Other to nullity.



If words kill, and language-as-violence affirms the 'sword' over and against the 'word' (Dove, 11), this implies that they are amenable to the analysis Scarry gives of the structure of the weapon. Trigger and muzzle, hilt and blade, grip and bludgeon, may be conceived as being bounded by a 'singular vertical line yet so radically different at its two ends that it can ... be pictured as connecting the two realms and preserving their absolute difference' (Scarry, 1985, 198). The sword's point intensifies the victim's sense of his bodiliness through the threatened or the actual infliction of pain, and thus retracts the worldly extension of sentience, destroying above all the ability to use language, which is a potent means by which 'the self extends out beyond the body' (33). While the weapon's one end causes a 'diminution of personhood' (199), its 'power end' (213) induces a feeling of invulnerable potency in the aggressor, as he beholds the spectacle (the display, the grotesque) of his world-negating capacity registered at the weapon's 'sentient end' (213). Traversed by the sword's dis-relating connection, the self-immured aggressor opposes himself to a self-withdrawn victim as a 'bodiless voice' to a 'voiceless body' (200).

From an earlier summation of her account of torture<sup>2</sup> it will be recalled that Scarry makes an implicit distinction between two categories of harming, one physical, the other, representational. She notes that in the practice of torture domestic artefacts and space are utilized as means of inflicting pain such that 'the unmaking of the made [world]' (41) becomes an instrument, a weapon. At the same time torture involves 'an obsessive, self-conscious display' (27) of the torturer's ability to inflict damage: the torturer endeavours to make the pain in the victim's body 'visible to those outside the person's body' (28) and pass it off as an indication of the state's strength. Given this feature of torture, the 'unmaking of the made' is not simply an instrument. It is a sign -- a sign 'externalizing' (41) the unmaking of the victim's own subjectal world, a sign aggravating and 'amplifying' the victim's distress by being 'made [itself] the direct cause of the pain' (41). Intriguingly, what Scarry's analysis suggests is that these two levels can have an injurious efficacy independently of one another. A weapon, that is, can be

turned from a physical instrument into 'the sign of the weapon' (17), and both the weapon and the weapon-as-sign can hurt. If an actual weapon or material thing can be distanced from its physicality into the abstractness of a sign, 'the sign of the weapon', it is self-evident that the thing is a signifier signifying a signified. But Scarry says in addition that this signifying function can be fulfilled by verbal constructs as well as physical artefacts. For instance, she quotes Richard Nixon as having said, whenever he had discomfited a journalist, 'That really flicks the scab off' (18). Nixon implies that his utterances were weapons inflicting pain on the journalists, and that the pain caused served to impress on his interlocutors the palpable and thus unmistakable 'fact' of his dominance over them. By purporting to oppose his discursive command and own triumphant freedom from pain to the addressees' silencing and distress, Nixon poses himself as a 'bodiless voice' exalting above 'a voiceless body' (200) and so reproduces in his utterance the structure of the weapon. What this example suggests, then, is that the sign, or verbal construct, can be a weapon, and that this sign-as-weapon can consequently assume the same signifying functions as the weapon-as-sign. Where a thing could be used as the instrument of pain (a first level of physical harm), but could also become a sign (a second level of representational injury), a verbal construct could come to signify the same signified as that which is signified by the physical thing in its capacity as a sign.

So, if the weapon is a sign, what does it indeed signify? And if the sign is a weapon, what does its weapon-likeness in turn signify? Physical artefacts and verbal statements, Scarry remarks, can give an objectified, visible and publically shareable form to a sufferer's invisible, private reality -- they can externalise for the observer what is an isolating and internal experience for the one in pain. The artefacts Scarry has in mind are the instruments causing pain: to show an observer the nail upon which one has stood is to give that person an idea of the pain one experiences, and hence to rouse him or her to come to one's assistance. The statements she has in mind are, likewise, those which refer to the object inflicting pain, or

which (in the absence of external causation) liken one's pain to that caused by an external object: one speaks of a 'hammering pain' or 'a drilling pain', for instance. In other words, she notes, 'an actual agent [of pain] (a nail sticking into the bottom of the foot) and an imagined agent (a person's statement, "It feels as if there's a nail sticking into the bottom of my foot") convey something of the felt-experience of pain' to an observer (15). An actual or imagined weapon is evoked as a sign to signify the sufferer's internal condition to an observer. But while this 'mental habit of recognizing pain in the weapon' (16), that is, of seeing the weapon as a signifier of a sufferer's pain, can be put to beneficent purposes, it is equally possible that the actual or imagined artefact may become independent of its bodily referent and thus signify something else besides the sufferer's malady. If the weapon -- whether physical thing or statement -- externalises (and absorbs, as it were) pain's attributes, it can happen that these attributes can be appropriated from the body and be transferred onto political institutions as their attributes. Scarry lists the attributes of pain. They are 'incontestable reality', the 'ability to eclipse all else', 'totality', and 'the power of dramatic alteration and world dissolution' (56). When the sign of the weapon is appropriated by a political formation, the weapon still signifies pain, but it signifies it precisely as a confirmation of the formation's indubitable existence: the Same reads the Other's actual or imagined pain as the index of its power. Thus, in torture, for instance, the weapon is an actual agent of pain and a sign representing the features of pain as the regime's properties. This is why torture is an 'act of display' (27): it announces that 'it is not the pain but the regime that is incontestably real, not the pain but the regime that is total, not the pain but the regime that is able to eclipse all else, not the pain but the regime that is able to dissolve the world' (56). Scarry calls this transposition 'analogical substantiation' (13) -- a process in which political constructs turn pain into analogues of power and convince themselves of their realness by regarding the Other's bodily suffering as a testament to their world-dissolving power.

The weapon-as-sign signifies a mutually reinforcing polarity between a world-dissolution and a world-dissolving agent, between a world that is vitiated and a world that is (therefore) incontestably real. Likewise the sign-as-weapon signifies, by virtue of its weapon-likeness, a capacity of world-negation that underscores the realness of the aggressor's world and diminishes that of the victim's. The speaker, situated at the 'power end' (213) of the weapon, performs in his utterance the act of nullifying the Other as the 'source of interests, claims and arguments' (Degenaar, 1990, 85), of negating the Other as a self-determining voice, and of dissolving the Other's world. In the death sentence, the speaker regards the Other's (directly or indirectly) invoked pain and distress as confirmation of his essentiality: that is to say, he displays his ability to incarnate world-shattering pain for the Other, to be the harbinger of his or her death. The speaker claims this power of world-negation for himself as validation of his conception of himself as a 'bodiless voice', as a pure, unhampered self-extension transcendent over the Other. Through his act of sentencing to death, he asserts himself as being-death (for the Other) -- a diabolic voice. However, at the 'sentient end' (Scarry, 1985, 213) of the word-as-weapon, the victim finds himself interpellated as a nullity, and reduced to the status of a 'voiceless body' or a silenced, execrable thing. Where the aggressor presents himself as being-death, the victim is reified as a dead being; and while these registers of subjectivity are linked together within the determining structure of the weapon, they nonetheless preserve 'their absolute difference' (198).

Brink's own descriptions in 'The dove in the grave' of the clamorous language-as-violence besetting South Africa after Chris Hani's death give similar prominence to the speaking subject's relationship with death; his descriptions suggest, in addition, that one may discern three silences in the 'historical silence' (Dove, 11) perpetuated by the assassination. The first silence derives from 'the dehumanisation of the oppressed' (11) and it is Nelson Mandela, aware that he is 'a prisoner of unfolding history', who represents this silence: in particular, he is 'paralys[ed]' inasmuch as he 'knows too much [about death]' (11).

Mandela's silence arises from his overconsciousness that he is a dead being. The second silence -- that stemming from 'the alienation of the oppressor' -- is exemplified by F W de Klerk, then President, whose 'ignorance' Brink lampoons: 'Ignorance, above all, of his own -- that is, his regime's -- mortality' (11). Brink gives a key role to such 'ignorance' as it is nothing less than 'the core of the historical silence lurking in the heart of the present clamour' -- 'the core' of 'the silence that divides white from black, the silence of unknowing' (11; emphasis added). If De Klerk 'knows too little [about his death]', this does not simply mean that he is unaware of his finitude: it implies as well that given his 'obliviousness of the need to show remorse for apartheid' (that is, given his inability to recognise the Other whom he has subjugated), De Klerk is unaware of himself as having being-death for the Other. The third silence -- or the 'absolute difference' between the sword's polarities (Scarry, 1985, 198) -- arises from a situation in which the prospects for the establishment of an agora are shattered. The assassination of Chris Hani, Brink says, impeded a 'real and unstoppable basic groundswell [in South Africa] towards understanding' (Dove, 11) and national reconciliation. While De Klerk exacerbated this state of affairs by neglecting to try to gather 'the whole of South Africa into a communal act of contrition and concern', Brink confesses that even he himself came close to compounding this particular silence when he nearly succumbed to 'the temptation of despair' (11). If he were to have despaired, he would have fallen into unproductive silence; but more than personal quiescence is at stake. Indeed, his despairing silence would have been 'an insult to the future' -- that is, he would have contributed to the silencing of the 'unstoppable groundswell towards understanding' by negating the idea of a youtopic agora, by negating an other to the present quandary: by negating the Future/the Other.

In this following chapter, I shall discuss each of these silences at length. A dominant concern in my examination of the silences found at the sword's hilt and its point will be the relationship between mortality and alterity. Given that, in Brink's view, the oppressed (or the victim) is a 'living corpse'

(Kojève, 1986, 108) knowing too much about his mortality, while the oppressor (or the aggressor) is a solipsist knowing too little about it, it would seem that their excessive and deficient knowledges are linked to the extent to which they respectively apprehend and disavow the Other. Taking the hypothesis further, it appears, then, that the Other is one who presages the Same's death. Emmanuel Levinas touches on this theme in Totality and Infinity; for Sartre (Levinas's unacknowledged master) it is a pre-occupation fundamentally shaping the way he represents the self-Other relation in Being and Nothingness. Levinas contends that death has traditionally been described as either a passage to an altered existence or a disappearance into a void. However, he claims that thinking of death as a disappearance entails thinking of it in terms of the deaths of other people: because somebody dies, because she goes away, never to return, I extrapolate that the same will happen to me when I die. To this acquired knowledge of death, Levinas opposes a 'knowledge' which he likens to 'an instinctive knowledge of death' (1979, 233). This 'knowledge' derives not from conjectures I make on the grounds of my worldly experience, but from an anxiety I have about my safety in the world, an anxiety undoing me as a subject of knowledge capable of making conjectures (an anxiety which is therefore inimical to, and more fundamental than, the knowledge I acquire about 'death' as a topic or matter I so happen to encounter on occasion). '[M]y relation with my own death', Levinas says, 'is not deduced from the death of the others by analogy; it is incised in the fear I can have for my being' (233, emphasis added). If I relate to death through fear for my being, rather than through knowledge of which I am in control, my fear is 'the fear of violence' liable to emanate from an invisible 'bad will that surprises and stalks [me]' (234-5). In short, this fear is a 'fear of the Other' (235). Levinas is close to Sartre in this account. Sartre observes that all fear originates in 'the fearful discovery of my pure and simple object-state in so far as it is surpassed and transcended by [the Other]' (1958, 288). Through fear, I learn of, or am reminded of, the primordial fact that I am 'a presence in the world' (288) -- a presence which can be harmed and which is hence not the world's

sole originator, but one object among many, a defined object vulnerable to the freedom of other subjects. Through fear, that is, I apprehend that I am an object for the Other, and thereby affectively experience 'being-for-others' (288). Being conscious of one's mortality -- one's limitedness, objectness and dispensability -- consequently entails being aware of one's existence for alterity.

However close Levinas is in this respect to Sartre's view that one's awareness of being-for-others is given in the apprehension of the world's hostility to one, he maintains (unlike Sartre) that relating to the Other as to a malevolent force does not exclude the possibility of peaceful co-existence between self and Other. In fact, Levinas goes so far (entirely unlike Sartre) as to make peace rather than war the fundamental nature of their relation. War, he announces, 'presupposes peace, the antecedent and non-allergic presence of the Other; it does not represent the first event of the encounter' (1979, 199). Ironically, Derrida takes this assumption, among others, to task in his essay on Levinas, 'Violence and Metaphysics' (1978, 79-153) -- ironically, because Derrida's counter-argument to this notion approaches Sartre's position, the same Sartre who had been ousted from his post-war eminence by the very intellectual movements of the 60s and 70s that had swept Derrida to fame.<sup>3</sup> While we shall examine Derrida's essay later, we shall also provide an overview of the route Sartre takes in presenting the self-Other relation as essentially a warring encounter in which the Other is a lethal nemesis. In particular, we shall attend to the way in which the Same (or being-for-itself, in Sartrean terminology), when con-fronted by the Other, undergoes the simultaneous yet apparently contradictory process of having its world both dissolved and fixed under the Other's gaze. To use Scarry's vocabulary, it is as though, on the one hand, the appearance or assertion of the Other's world within that of the Same displaces, contracts, and vitiates the Same's world, while -- on the other hand -- the Other circumscribes the Same as an object, or being-in-itself. That is, the Other erases the Same's being-for-itself, its lived reality, and fills that void at the same time with its own impositions: a twin process of negating

and positing, destabilizing and stabilizing. The Other thus appears to the Same as a world-shattering eruptive force and a world-encasing compressive force assigning an identity and meaning to the Same. This is the 'fundamental relation with an Other [as other]' (1958, 361). Next, Sartre superimposes on the 'fundamental relation' a series of possible 'concrete relations' (363) which the Same can assume with regard to the Other. These fall into two broad categories. In the first category the Same adapts itself variously to the Other's freedom, meaning that it adjusts itself to what it is for the Other (Sartre lists love, language, and masochism as possible options). As such, the Same-as-victim may elect to become for itself that which it is for the Other-as-aggressor and thus identify itself with the Other's designations to the exclusion of its own capacity for autonomous self-assertion -- as the aggressor says he is, so the victim imagines himself to be, and his selfhood perishes as a result. Knowing 'too much' about death (Dove, 11), knowing too fixedly that he is an expendable and execrable object for the Other, knowing how tenuous his life is before the Other's indomitable freedom, and hence knowing, rigid with terror before the Other-as-death, how precious this life is which he stands to lose, the oppressed victim surrenders to the terms offered him by the aggressor and preserves his life: his dead life. As the fishermen (and the security policemen) point out in An Act of Terror, the crayfish 'get used to' their victimisation and living death (371).

However, the second category of 'concrete relations' assumed by the Same with regard to the Other involves the contrary strategy of negating, or suspending, the Other's upsurge, such that the Same remains inviolate from the Other's threatened dissolution and objectification of its world. These relations entail desire, sadism, hatred -- and indifference. Sartre describes indifference as 'a sort of factual solipsism' in which, at ease and feeling untouchable (or bodiless, in Scarry's language), 'I act as if I were alone in the world' (1958, 380) and view others as objects arrayed beneath my transcendent subjecthood as bothersome obstacles or as tools I can learn about and use for my own designs. Rather than be objectified by the



Other's gaze, I make myself the agent of the gaze which theorizes the Other, which looks at a thing and changes it into an object of knowledge. Yet the indifferent subject's triumphant gaze is at the same time a 'kind of blindness with respect to others' (380), Sartre observes. (One recalls Mynhardt in Rumours of Rain: visual clarity is the condition of his power but it is nevertheless troubled by blind spots -- as on the windscreen of his car -- relating to his subjugation of others.)<sup>4</sup> Indeed, Sartre claims that the paradoxical situation in which visual (or theoretical) acuity is a form of blindness, arises from the subject's anxiety about his being an object exposed <sup>to</sup> the Other's freedom. His ~~trans~~scendence over the Other is a refusal of being-for-others, a refusal which nonetheless reiterates the the very condition which he flees. That is, indifference, confidence, and apparent mastery are ambivalent signifiers apophantically signifying their opposite numbers -- discomfiture, unease, servility. If the victim 'knows too much' about mortality, the aggressor 'knows too little' thanks to his having neutralized the alterity which impresses upon him the knowledge of his vulnerable being-for-others; but 'too little' knowledge indicates, at the same time, that a prior excess of such knowledge has been foreclosed. Indifference is anxiety, the master is a slave: enantiadromia. To recount an earlier discussion of indifference and numbness,<sup>5</sup> the condition is one simultaneously providing multiple yet contradictory subject-positions. It can, in other words, be seen as a subjectivity which, at one and the same time, emphasises and disavows the fearful experience of being-for-others. In the situation in which the subject is met with violence, with hostile otherness, with the Other-as-death, there are three general metaphorical systems available to represent his consequent disintegration: he suffers a sensory overload and deluge which dissolves him as a cognizing agency, he goes blind (he cannot theorize), and he is interned and emplaced in a spatial contraction. Translating these metaphors into terms commensurate with Sartre's depiction of the Other's upsurge into the Same's phenomenal field, the Same undergoes a world-dissolution into nothingness (the Other is a disruptive force), it is deprived of its theoretical gaze (the Other commands the look), and it is de-

limited as an embodied object (the Other is a compressive force). On all three counts, the numb subject denies his being-for-others. He is not disrupted, but cool and at ease; he is clear-sighted, and looks at others calculatingly through his sights; nor is he vulnerably embodied or transfixed, but advances almost frictionlessly out into spaces emptied of resistances ('I brush against "people" as I brush against a wall,' Sartre says, 'I avoid them as I avoid obstacles'; 380). But the Other, thrice denied, is thrice affirmed. Blindness to the Other, Sartre stresses, is a symptom of anxiety, and hence 'includes an implicit comprehension of being-for-others' (380).

To disavow alterity is to ignore mortality; crucially, it is also to renounce morality, not only in the sense that the negation of alterity is a violent, appropriative act, but in the sense as well that this very act cancels out the conditions required for the subject to gain consciousness of himself as a being who is murderously disposed towards the Other. That is to say, ignorance of mortality, and its concomitant repudiation of the Other, prohibits 'the commencement of moral consciousness, which calls in question my freedom', 'calls in question the naïve right of my powers, my glorious spontaneity as a living being' (Levinas, 1979, 84). If this twin action of negating the Other as a being for-itself and positing him as an object of instrumental calculation leaves one immured in an unreflective, naïve, and self-mystified state, then undergoing the upsurge of the Other in his capacity as a subject would, conversely, inaugurate the passage to self-consciousness and facilitate one's change from indifferent blindness to a remorseful self-recognition, or anagnorisis.<sup>6</sup> In the Other's upsurge I feel shame at my conduct and realize 'I am not innocent spontaneity but usurper and murderer': thus, says Levinas, the point at which the subject feels his freedom to be 'arbitrary and violent' in relation to the Other, is the point at which '[m]orality begins' (1979, 84). It begins in shame and guilt before the Other,<sup>7</sup> and it is by way of shame that the subject's unreflective self-conception is put in crisis. As Sartre pointedly notes, the Other 'teaches me who I am' (1986, 311), while the self-presentations I construct for myself are unsubstantiated illusions until they have been

ratified -- or refuted -- by an independent Other. 'The Other looks at me and as such, he knows the secret of my being, he knows what I am,' Sartre maintains (1958, 363). Solely through the Other do 'I gain my objectness' (1986, 307); solely by the Other can I be seen from outside myself and so appear as I am 'objectively'. By contrast, the private self-conception I entertain about myself, the mirror image or object I pose before myself, is only a 'quasi-object' (315), as it is one I myself construct, from the inside, and without outside validation from the Other. Crucially, Sartre says that 'the impulse of this consciousness is to ... becom[e] conscious of itself in all respects ... by giving itself objectivity' and by making 'its own existence for itself appear[...] to it as an independent object' (285). In his reference to 'this consciousness' Sartre is alluding to the model of self-reflexive consciousness Hegel outlines in his Phenomenology of Spirit, a model in which consciousness (or the divine subject) is seen as the 'movement of becoming an other to itself, i.e., becoming an object to itself, and of suspending this otherness' (Hegel, 1986, 79). According to Hegel, the subject is defined as a movement toward self-consciousness; in his gloss, Sartre says that the subject is informed by an 'impulse' to make itself an object of cognition, while Heidegger describes the subject as 'self-knowing-itself' (in Taylor, 1987, 38). In a word, the subject at issue is the Cartesian subject 'looking for his certainty' (Lacan, 1977b, 129), and, as such, moved and impelled to see himself as an object posed before himself in the Vorstellung which assures him of the certainty and indubitability, the realness, of his being. Since the subject appears as an authentic object (as compared to a 'quasi-object'; Sartre, 1986, 315) only outside himself in the Other's gaze, his impulsion to certainty-of-self can be satisfied only by the mediation of the Other who teaches him what he in fact is; as I can 'be an object for myself only over there in the Other', being-for-others 'is a necessary stage of the development of self-consciousness' (Sartre, 1986, 286). Or as Taylor puts it, 'In order to establish the objective truth of its subjective certainty [and attain self-consciousness]', the subject has to elicit 'acknowledgement of [his] substantiality' from the Other

(1980, 192-3). Without the Other, however, the subject, in his self-identity, might have certitude about what he is, 'but this certitude still lacks truth' inasmuch his existence has not yet been placed before him as 'an independent object' (Sartre, 1986, 285). As Kojève points out, without exterior validation '[t]he value he attributes to himself could be illusory', and 'the idea that he has of himself could be false or mad' (1986, 105). By having negated the Other, the numbed and spuriously immortal subject thus labours in a state of self-mystification in which he lacks certitude of being (the world is unreal, and he himself fictive), and in which he is oblivious to the injustice of his violence.

It is through the Other's upsurge, then, that his self-mystification gives way to the awareness of his cruelty. In the appearance of the Other as other (rather than a reified object mapped into the Same), the subject experiences shame in which he apprehends the monstrous thing he is in his aggressive relation with the Other: he realizes the nature of his desire, which is no longer something he lives spontaneously and unthinkingly, but something taking him aback, back from himself, and 'presenting itself' to him across this distance from himself. As the narrator comments in States of Emergency, "guilt" is equated with "knowledge" (145), a remark which he makes in the context of a discussion of Melissa's loss of innocence as 'a state of mind' (144) when she weeps during an orgasm. One will recall<sup>8</sup> that her innocence is a defensive reaction to her having been raped, such that she mentally 'distan[ces] herself from whatever was happening to her body' (144). In particular, this imaginary bodilessness is a disavowal of being-for-others, that is, the condition of being an object vulnerable to the Other's freedom: innocence is a foreclosure of the Other. Conversely, by welcoming the Other (Philip, in this case) she assumes the historicity of her being-for-others and enters the mortal estate of susceptibility to being 'wounded to the quick' (145). But re-embodiment, she crosses the distance she had held between herself and her desire which now, as it were, re-appears to her after its repression. The arrival of the Other is concomitant with her regained knowledge of desire -- a concomitance which the

narrator underlines in a pun on the German word for 'guilt', Schuld, for this term suggests Schule, 'school', both in the sense of 'a place of learning' and 'a grouping, a multitude' (145). Guilt thus encompasses the knowledge of desire as well as 'that moment when one has to come to terms with the knowledge of others, of outsiders, of the masses' (145).

Likewise for Levinas, guilt occurs when the Other as other manifests himself to the Same and the Same's freedom 'discovers itself murderous in its very exercise' (1979, 84). Yet if, as Levinas says, the Other disarms the Same with its question, there is another question as to how the Other disarms the Same. How does the Other overcome the Same's violence: by way of pacific discourse or militancy? Levinas argues for the former while in 'Violence and Metaphysics' Derrida implicitly speaks for the latter case. At the risk of over-simplifying Derrida's extensive critical inhabitation of Levinas's writing for the purpose of a concise exposition, one may say that Derrida interrogates two related assumptions that underpin Levinas's exclusive endorsement of a pacifist or 'moral resistance' (Levinas, 1979, 225) in which the Other resists, '[n]ot by opposing me with another force in the world [that is, by retaliating against my manipulation of machines of war with his own strategic deployment of force], but by speaking to me ... from an other origin of the world [by approaching me from his private and incalculable difference from the realm of coercive engagement my acts create and tactically anticipate]' (Derrida, 1978, 104). The underpinning assumptions are that discourse constitutes 'pacific opposition', and that discourse, necessarily locating the aggressive Same in an intersubjective relation with the Other as other, restores the peacefulness Levinas holds to be fundamental or intrinsic to their relation: 'War presupposes peace, the antecedent and non-allergic presence of the Other [as the absolutely other]' (1979, 199), he notes. More pointedly, one may add that discourse (in Levinas's view) presupposes peace, that discourse is peace. In short, what these assumptions amount to is an assertion of an evidently mutually exclusive opposition between discourse and violence. Derrida's reading of Levinas may, as such, be characterised in part as a deconstruction of the latter binarism.

Without as yet entering into the argument's details, one can note that Derrida's deconstruction proceeds as a reductio ad absurdum in which the notion of an essentially nonviolent language is, even within Levinas's own theoretical terms, shown to be self-contradictory as such a language would (according to Derrida) be non-language. And since language and violence are inseparable, Derrida propounds that '[n]onviolence would be the telos, and not the essence of discourse' (1978, 116) -- that is, a permanently deferred destiny. Significantly, he states that language 'can only indefinitely tend toward justice [the telos or ideal of nonviolence] by acknowledging and practicing the violence within it [against silence, which is 'also the medium of violence']' (117, emphasis added). In other words, Derrida proposes that language-as-violence be mobilized to affirm the telos of language-as-nonviolence and 'to avoid the worst violence ... which precedes or represses discourse' (117). One may say, then, speaking schematically, that, in the context of this monograph on Levinas, Derrida describes language-as-violence as caught between two extremes: on the one hand is a futural telos in which discourse realizes its so-called eirenic essence, while on the other is the utter silence of violence 'preced[ing] or repressing discourse' (117, emphasis added). Language, 'practicing the violence within it' against tendencies to silence and hence 'indefinitely tend[ing] toward justice', is termed '[v]iolence against violence' (117): violence enacted against 'the worst violence' of absolute silence and for nonviolence. One ought to note the similarities between Derrida and Brink in this respect, particularly those relating to the implicit distinctions Brink makes in 'The dove in the grave' between violence which severs 'the word' from 'the sword' and entrenches an 'historical silence' between the oppressor and the oppressed, and violence serving 'the word' (an ideal of nonviolence) by fostering dialogue between them.<sup>9</sup> Brink and Derrida seem to suggest that, given the conflation of 'discourse' with 'violence', one can distinguish between discourse-as-violence which forecloses the Other, and discourse-as-violence by which the Other appears as other. Yet as one may suspect, the latter suggestion is anathema to Levinasian doctrine for he contends that it is only within

peace that the Other appears as other to the Same; violence necessarily involves the reduction and occlusion of alterity. War, Levinas declares, presupposes anterior peace. What Derrida does to this second assumption on Levinas's part, is to effect a sinister reversal in which, following the logic of Levinas's argument to an absurd conclusion, he turns the formula for peace into a formula for war. At the same time, Derrida counter-argues that it is their warring relation which allows the Same to regard the Other as the same-as-itself (an I), as well as to apprehend that it is the Other's other. That is to say, war creates the conditions for peace in which the Same perceives that it is the other for another-I, rather than a solipsist oblivious of its accountability to any other. (As we shall see in Chapter 3, Brink adduces similar arguments in defence of violence).

If this salutary violence affirms the telos of nonviolent discourse, its less-salutary counterpart stifles this projected 'groundswell towards understanding' (Dove, 11) between erstwhile oppressors and oppressed, and maintains the former's alienation and the latter's dehumanisation. In the silence, no-one can make themselves <sup>himself</sup> heard. Their stories vanish, and they lack acknowledgement of the realness of their sufferings and aspirations; if they are heard, it is at the cost of a misprision of their discourses, a mishearing which occurs in the official hearings hegemonic rule offers. They are witnesses to calamity, but they lack a Witness -- an addressable Other -- to whom they may confide their testimonies. In Brink's fictions, it is incumbent on these witnesses to calamity and oppression to maintain faith in an overarching metanarrative progression from their present site of mishearing to a futural communal topos or agora in which it is claimed their narratives will be witnessed -- that is, heard and authenticated as real, rather than spurious. Beyond this third silence given in the hiatus between the aggressor at the hilt and the victim at swordpoint, they must imaginatively recreate a prospective space of 'truly serene silence' free from 'confusion and incomprehension' (ADWS, 305): a space of unrestricted speech and unprejudiced audition. And to the person of the writer falls a further obligation. He or she must fulfill the role of a conservator, one who both preserves

these testimonies and sets them in active circulation, such that the narratives may survive their silencing by hegemony and have instead a continuing impact on the lives of those who come to read them. Where hegemony had sought to limit the meanings of the testimonies, they open themselves -- given their dissemination into intertextuality -- to a plurality of interpretation. The conservator, from the perspective of the witnesses, is an emissary of the agora; in turn, the text which he or she produces, prefigures, in its effusion of meaning, the rapturous discourse mythically occurring in the agora. The conservator is charged with nothing less than the task of repealing the death sentence to which the witnesses had been consigned.

Having outlined in detail the course to be taken, let us proceed to a consideration of the three silences imposed by language-as-violence.

## II. First silence: The victim's dehumanisation

`When the enemy is separated from you by a barrier of fire, you have to judge him as a whole, as the incarnation of evil; all war is form of Manicheism'

-- J.-P. Sartre<sup>10</sup>

`[T]hen we entered the trenches. ... And then the first shells fell near us. I was so innocent that in spite of our so-called training, of all the propaganda, I had never really been able to believe that someone might want to kill me'

--- John Fowles<sup>11</sup>

Terrified at swordpoint, the victim suffers a world-dissolution impairing his capacity for self-determination; while his own world is nullified, he is forced to validate the priority and substantiality of the aggressor's reality at the cost of his own bonds, loyalties and ideals (Scarry, 1985, 35-6). Violence, as Aristotle claims, is `that whose moving principle is outside, the person compelled contributing nothing' (in Degenaar, 1990, 70). Likewise for Levinas violence `does not consist so much in injuring and annihilating persons as in ... making them play roles in which they no longer recognise themselves, making them betray not only commitments but their own substance ...' (1979,



21). Losing his voice, his ability to posit himself as I, the victim can plead only from the position of the you into which he is locked for the benefit of the aggressor's I, a you having the status of an it separated from his lived identity, negated as 'a source of interests, claims and arguments' (Degenaar, 1990, 85), and cast in the role of a dispensable category. 'The Other, if he calls upon me, calls upon someone who is not I ... by no means the unique being I would like to be,' Blanchot declares (1982, 18): 'I am called upon to enter this separate, this other relation ... with my selfhood gangrened and eaten away' (23), reduced to 'a living corpse' (Kojève, 1986, 108).

In 'The dove in the grave', Brink argues that Nelson Mandela 'has come to represent an historical silence' (Dove, 11) in the clamour which followed Hani's assassination. Mandela assumes this role in his capacity as a figurehead for the 'dehumanised' oppressed and as a statesman whose political control was outstripped by the run of events in the aftermath of the murder. 'Mandela's contemplation of the grave into which Hani's coffin was lowered could not but evoke in spectators,' Brink conjectures, 'the speculation that he was watching the premonition of his own death' (11). According to Brink, what is critical in Mandela's silence is the apparent fact that he 'knows too much [about his death]; and in its own way this knowledge is paralysing' (11). Violence induces a consciousness of mortality which immobilizes and silences.

If consciousness of mortality is accentuated by an awareness of that which exceeds one's control and subjects one to an alien will, this is to say that the sense of mortality is related to the upsurge in one's sphere of activity of the Other, who presages death by divesting one of selfhood and maintaining one in the paralysed death-in-life of his impositions. In the association between alterity and mortality, subjection and abjection, one may say that death is apprehended as an Other while the Other is seen as a herald of one's death. The connection between alterity and mortality is developed by Sartre and Levinas from a set of shared premises (Levinas is in many ways the early Sartre's philosophical legatee). As we saw in a previous discussion, Levinas distinguishes between the knowledge

of death that one 'deduce[s] from the death of the others' and a 'knowledge' which he likens to pre-reflective 'instinctive knowledge of death' (1979, 233). His distinction seems to turn on the observation that, while I am in the process of thinking about the death of others and extrapolating the facts of dying, I maintain myself as a controlling subject of knowledge distant from the object of knowledge which I have made of death; but, he implies, I have a sharp sense of 'my own death' only through 'the fear I can have for my being' (233), a fear undoing me as a subject of knowledge. Levinas argues that 'the fear for my being which is my relation with death is ... the fear of violence -- and thus it extends into fear of the Other' (235). My relation with death, that is, situates me in a paranoid 'interpersonal order' in which death is a nemesis, a 'foreign will' (234). It is thus as though murder, 'rather than being one of the occasions of dying, were inseparable from the essence of death, as though the approach of death remained one of the modalities of the relation with the Other' (234).

While Levinas points out that such antagonism between self and Other is only 'one of the modalities of the relation with the Other' (234), and does not preclude the ethical, pacific quality which he believes to be an intrinsic element of their relation, in Sartre's Being and Nothingness it is the case, as Blanchot notes (1982, 22), that the Other is conceived as being, fundamentally, an enemy. In Levinas' view, if the subject is aware of his mortality, this is a sensibility he has not through a knowledge of the death of others, who are his analogues, but as a consequence of 'the fear I can have for my being' (1979, 233), that is to say, fear which is evoked at the prospect of violence striking him from an exterior source, a violence engineered by an unfathomable 'foreign will' (234). In short, Levinas locates the subject's apprehension of his mortality within what Sartre calls the affective experience of being-for-others. 'Fear in fact implies that I appear to myself as threatened by virtue of my being a presence in the world ...,' Sartre writes: 'It is the object which I am which is in danger in the world ...' (1958, 288), an object vulnerable to violence emanating from the Other's freedom. For Levinas, fear defines my awareness of mortality,

while for Sartre, it conditions the apprehension of alterity. '[T]he origin of all fear ... is the fearful discovery of my pure and simple object-state in so far as it is surpassed and transcended by possibles which are not my possibles [but the Other's]' (288), Sartre declares. To sense one's mortality is to fear violence; to fear violence is to discover one's 'being-as-object' (288) vulnerable to an alien will, which is simultaneously to discover the freedom of other subjects.

What conceptual route does Sartre follow in depicting the self-Other relation as the experience of dread before a foe? Broadly, his account of the relation attempts to subvert the 'logic of identity' prevalent in the tradition of Western philosophy. Descombes defines the 'logic' as a 'form of thought which cannot represent the other to itself without reducing it to the same, and thereby subordinating difference to identity' (1980, 75). A key example of this logic is the 'metaphysics of subjectivity',<sup>12</sup> which privileges subjectivity as the foundational principle of certainty from which all else is derived and to which everything is relative. As a result, other objects and subjects lose their unicity and are turned into elements of the subject's 'mediate self-relation' (Taylor, 1986, 3). The Other is conceived as a secondary category derived from and dependent on the originary subject who defines the Other in terms of its relationship to himself taken as a foundation: the Other is as the subject says it is. Sartre notes that in the logic of identity, it is as though 'I derive the concept of the Other from myself by reflecting on my own powers and by projection or analogy' (1986, 311). Thus, he claims that 'the problem of Others has generally been treated as if the primary relation by which the Other is discovered is object-ness' (300). In opposition to the tradition which views the Other as an object of knowledge constructed by a subject, Sartre contends that the Other, instead of appearing as an object for the subject, must be regarded as manifesting itself as an independent subject to the subject; and as one can be a subject only when one is in relation to an object, the Other's appearance as a subject implies that one is put in the position of an object. That is to say, in the Other's upsurge as a transcendence over the world constituted by

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the subject's cognitive acts, the subject disintegrates qua subject, and becomes instead an object for the Other-as-subject. To state it differently, '[i]t is in and through the revelation of my being-as-object for the Other that I must be able to apprehend the presence of his being-as-subject' (301). Since the logic of identity is subtended by an optical metaphoric<sup>13</sup> linking subjectivity to knowledge and vision, it is appropriate that the subject's descent into objecthood should involve the disablement of his gaze, while the Other's ascent into subjecthood should be manifested by a look which theorizes and 'photo-graph[s]' (Lacan, 1977b, 106) the subject as he moves into the cross-hairs of the Other's scopes. The Other, Sartre notes, is 'the one who looks at me and at whom I am not yet looking ...' (1986, 305) -- the one whom my own look has not reduced into an object of cognition by way of defence (305). Surprised in an embarrassing action by the appearance of the Other, 'I recognize that I am as the Other sees me' (281), a base object; correlatively, given that the Other commands the gaze and blinds the Same, the Other is described as 'the immense, invisible presence which supports this shame' (306). While I concentrate on the lecture I am delivering, the Other's presence similarly 'remains undifferentiated'; if 'I want to verify that my thought has been well understood and if in turn I look at the audience, then I shall suddenly see heads and eyes appear' (1958, 281-2). To be aware of the Other's look is not to see objects, but 'to be conscious of being looked at' (1986, 303). As such, 'the look will be given just as well on occasion when there is a rustling of branches, or the sound of a footstep followed by silence ...' (302).

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Sartre's account of the Other as a death-bearing enemy becomes clear when one examines the condition of being an object exposed to the look of the Other, since Sartre contends that endangerment defines 'the permanent structure of my being-for-others' (1986, 304). The Other's look manifests a transcendence 'beyond the world' (306) mediated by the subject, so that the Other upsurges im-mediately as a subject. Thus, the Other's 'immense, invisible presence' (306), provoking affective reactions like anxiety and shame, causes 'an immediate shudder which runs through me ... without any discursive preparation'

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(281). In this immediacy the 'subject' is without the self-extensive 'setting at a distance' (Buber, in Soja, 1989, 132) by which an object may be thrown and posed before it -- rather, it contracts into an engulfing bodiliness. Prefiguring the motifs in Scarry's The Body in Pain, Sartre suggests that the Other's trans-ascendence is an invasive opening up of subjectal borders and an imprisoning closing in. The Other, he says, 'denies my distances from objects and unfolds its own distances' (1986, 306): '[t]he world disintegrates in order to be reintegrated over there [in the Other] as a world' (309). Disintegration and reintegration: in this double process of destabilization and stabilization, the Other is manifested to the subject as a disruptive and compressive force. That is, the Other appears to the Same in a seizure of terror, for in the state of terror one has the simultaneous sense of being fixed (transfixed, frozen, petrified, reified as a pejorative category) and obliterated or un-fixed: describing the bondsman's dread before the lord, Hegel observes that the bondsman's consciousness 'has been quite unmanned, has trembled in every fibre of its being, and everything solid and stable has been shaken to its foundations' in this 'melting-away' (1978, 117). As Sartre remarks, I 'shudder' (1986, 281) before the Other, who 'determines an internal flow of the universe, an internal hemorrhage' (301), and a 'dissolution of my knowledge' (309). But at the same time, the Other's look is 'apprehended as spatializing' (303): under the gaze, 'my possibles ... [are] limited and fixed' (307). I am cast into nothingness and brought back into being as an heteronomous object determined by another subject's freedom. I am the object of value judgements; and 'in so far as I am the instrument of possibilities which are not my possibilities, ... and which deny my transcendence in order to constitute me as a means to an end of which I am ignorant -- I am in danger' (304), separated from my selfsame identity and turned into an element of the Other's world, at the expense of my own. 'What I apprehend immediately when I hear the branches crackling behind me is not that there is someone there,' Sartre says, 'it is that I am vulnerable, that I have a body which can be hurt, that I occupy a place ... in short, that I am seen' (303). It is this look which makes me

undergo 'the death of my possibilities' (307) before the Other-as-death.

Sartre argues that the 'fundamental relation with an Other' (1958, 361), in which the Other objectivates the subject, is implicated in a secondary set of 'concrete relations ... wholly governed by my attitudes with respect to the object which I am for the Other' (363). Do I accept or reject the being which the Other offers me? Descombes summarises the central issue in this respect: 'the other is a phenomenon for me, but I am no less a phenomenon for him; manifestly, one of us will have to renounce the role of subject and content himself with being for himself what he is for the other' (1980, 23). As such, one category of 'concrete relations' is characterised by the collapse of subjectivity before the Other, and the subject's identification with his being-as-object. Sartre explores this attitude at length in his Saint Genet. In their discussion of the work, Laing and Cooper indicate that Genet 'affirmed the priority of the object which he was in [the Other's] eyes over the subject which he was for himself' -- '[h]is being an object for the others had priority over his being a subject for himself and he experienced himself as being, in the depths of himself, a being other than himself' (1964, 73). That is to say, in this attitude the subject submits to the aggressor and accedes to the position of the victim. He plays a role betraying his substance, and although he speaks within the aggressor's discourse, he languishes in silence as 'a living corpse' (Kojève, 1986, 108) whose selfhood has been petrified/putrified.

### III. Second silence: The aggressor's alienation

'My ability to feel as a human being towards others has been damaged. At the time there's a numbing, an insensitivity, you feel nothing. I remember feeling a great distance from everything'

-- SADF conscript<sup>14</sup>

'[E]ach type of conquest is no doubt the deed of a man fleeing a threat'

-- Georges Bataille<sup>15</sup>

'How could I kill him -- he looked into my face

and I looked into his'

-- World War Two partisan<sup>16</sup>

(i) Indifference

At swordpoint, the victim experiences being-for-others, the paradigm of mortality, and acquiesces to being an object for the Other. Yet Sartre analyses a second set of 'concrete relations' premised on the collapse of the Other's subjectivity. In response to the upsurge of the Other's look, one can return the look and so objectify the Other -- a defence, he says, which frees one from one's 'being-for the Other' (1986, 305) and from the danger the Other presents. This strategy of indifference is 'a blindness with respect to others' (Sartre, 1958, 380). Like Mynhardt in Rumours of Rain, whose social dominance is connoted by his luxury car, particularly by the visual control its machinery is supposed to give to the captain of industry securely encased inside it, the one who is indifferent maintains himself as a triumphant gaze unsubjected to the look of the Other, which he neutralises. Like Mynhardt, who treats others as ~~as~~ a means to an end, the indifferent subject views them, if not simply as things blocking his path, then as 'functions'<sup>17</sup> whose knowledge of him 'does not touch [him]' (Sartre, 1958, 380) -- 'I am self-confident ... in no way conscious that the fact that the Other's look can fix my possibilities' (381). And like Mynhardt, whose vision is nonetheless disturbed by a blindspot impairing his technical and cognitive mastery, the subject's look is a 'blindness' which 'includes an implicit comprehension of being-for-others' (380), an anxiety given in 'the consciousness of a "wandering and inapprehensible" look' (382) whose challenge is glimpsed out of the corner of the eye. The subject's uneasiness before the Other's sensed independence is compounded by his lack of in-sight into himself. 'Why am I always confronted by the strangeness of others?' (RR, 68) Mynhardt wonders. His perplexity at the ruin of his marriage, his estrangement from his son brutalised by a tour of military duty in Angola, and the scandal of Franken's participation in the armed struggle, stems from the independence of others, their capacity to differ from the notions he

entertains about them. Mynhardt views their alterity as treachery, since his reductive knowledge of them reciprocally defines his own identity, while their excess over this knowledge disrupts his self-certitude and mastery over a familiar environment. For instance, in Mynhardt's discovery that Franken, whom he believed he knew best (that is, whom he made the privileged guarantor of his self-conception), was 'a total stranger', he laments, 'It felt as if he'd betrayed me by changing into someone other than the man I'd known' (RR, 68). Even more troubling, however, is that the Other's independence calls him to account by forcing him to ask, 'What is the reason or the cause of it all?' (68) and begin a self-examination. In 'the strangeness of others' he finds his strangeness to himself: to paraphrase Sartre, Mynhardt learns the truth about himself through his objectness for the Other rather than the 'quasi-object' which he alone devises, and with which he holds himself to be identical. Sartre stresses that, in indifference, I 'ignore the Other's subjectivity as the foundation of my being-in-itself and my being-for-others' (1958, 381).

It is Mynhardt's son, disenchanted by military service, who connects numbing and indifference to the broader context of political and economic domination in South Africa. 'All that matters,' he says,

is whether you can switch off all right. ... I realised that nothing could shock me anymore. Nothing. Death, wounds, filth, atrocities, I couldn't care less ... this whole country depends for its survival on the fact that you can shut off your conscience' (RR, 292).

In 'The dove in the grave', Brink's criticism of F. W. de Klerk's failure to draw 'the whole of South Africa into a communal act of contrition and concern' after Hani's murder, and his attack on De Klerk's obliviousness of 'the need to show remorse for apartheid' (11), brings to light similar forms of self-preservation through the disavowal of alterity. De Klerk's '"them-and-us"' (11) mindset 'shuts off' (RR, 292) any receptivity to the Other. Safe behind the 'bullet-proof windows' of an armoured vehicle he tours the townships, watching 'black rage' and objectifying the oppressed as 'dangerous and inferior' (11), instead of regarding



them as equivalent subjects. Thanks to this protected viewpoint, he can continue to believe 'that he is immortal' (11), in counterpoint to Mandela's consciousness of his mortality. Remorseless and immortal because indifferent to the Other, De Klerk evades acknowledging his culpability in the violence he sees: he can escape the obliterating knowledge of what he is for the Other when an I in his own right, and not merely the oppressor's object. Brink combines the themes of mortality, alterity, self-consciousness and the degradation of language-relations, with the claim that de Klerk's '[i]gnorance ... of his own -- that his, his regime's -- mortality' is precisely 'the core of the historical silence lurking in the heart of the present clamour' (11). In the absence of reciprocity, 'clamour' consists in the silences of the victim at swordpoint and the aggressor at the sword's hilt. Embroiled in escalating feats of cruelty directed at his slaves, Nicolaas describes the habituation by which he becomes numb to the nature of his violence -- 'It was such a simple discovery really: that revulsion diminishes; that only the first act in any series is important: the first time one forces oneself, in lust and loathing, upon a black woman; the first time one ties a man's hands to flog him ....' (CoV, 275). With the implementation of a social practice which habitually negates the Other as another-I, he says, one enters a solipsistic void in which both self and Other are alienated: 'All that remains is the agony of the silence surrounding every act -- a silence no longer penetrable from inside or out' (CoV, 275). Nicolaas is deprived of his 'shadow' (States, 130), the other-I who reveals to him an untenable aspect of his identity. Like the victim, the aggressor plays a role in which he cannot recognize himself -- operating in a fictive self-understanding, he does not know what he is in his terrible actions. After all, '[c]onsciousness of self,' Benveniste notes, 'is only possible if it is experienced by contrast': that is, 'I use I only when I am speaking to someone who will be a you in my address ... I posits another person, the one who, being ... completely exterior to "me," becomes my echo to whom I say you and who says you to me' (1971, 224-5). But the aggressor cannot be you for another I, since the victim is unable

to pronounce himself as an I, having been fixed as a you having the status of an it for both the aggressor and himself. The aggressor's dehumanisation of the victim thus alienates him from the victim's personhood and from the 'consciousness of self' afforded by the Other's I. Without this 'completely exterior' being capable of disqualifying his self-conception, the aggressor misrecognizes himself and is self-estranged. As Scarry says in relation to torture, the infliction of harm involves a 'negation of the [aggressor's] recognition of what is happening' (1985, 44) -- which in turn (as in Nicolaas's case) allows him to continue his destructive behaviour. By defensively negating the Other, he loses the means by which he may discover his guilt and thus be moved to desist from his actions.

(ii) Levinas

(a) Totality

This state of affairs pre-occupies Levinas, particularly in Totality and Infinity. Where Sartre presents the Other as a foe, for Levinas it is instead the Same, 'produced as egoism' (1979, 38), which is characterised by a tendency to in-difference, the domination of difference. He proffers that the Other is not an alter ego formed as an analogue or projection of the subject, clothed with the latter's attributions, but stands beyond an abyssal disjunction with the Same as an extra-worldly, 'unanticipatable' (1979, 34) being who is 'refractory to every typology, to every genus, to every characterology, to every classification' (73). Certainly it is true that the Other is 'present in a cultural whole and is illuminated by this whole, like a text by its context,' Levinas says, insisting, though, that the Other appears to the Same as other precisely by 'divesting himself of the form which ... manifests him' (1986, 351) within the phenomenal field of the Same. In Totality and Infinity, Levinas pursues this argument in a critique of the (Hegelian) philosophical tradition which regards being as determined by totality and which makes the I and the Other 'play the role of moments in a system, and not that of origin' (1979, 216). Totalization is intrinsic to war, Levinas indicates,

whether this be war in historical fact or war as it features in the conflictual models of philosophy. Being 'reveals itself as war to philosophical thought' since war is believed to expose the austere reality peace elides; at the same time, the 'visage of being that shows itself in war is fixed in the concept of totality, which dominates Western philosophy' (21). As a result, individuals 'are reduced to being bearers of forces that command them unbeknown to themselves', so that their meaning 'is derived from the totality' (21-2), in confirmation of Sartre's observation that '[w]hen the enemy is separated from you by a barrier of fire, you have to judge him as a whole, as the incarnation of evil; all war is a form of Manicheism' (1966, 53). Circumscribed by a totality, by the synoptic scheme which, as a synopsis, presupposes the objectifying gaze of the Same, the Other is reified by the Same as a concept in a scrutable and knowable configuration. 'Thematization and conceptualization ... are not peace with the other,' Levinas states, 'but suppression and possession of the other' (1979, 46). Although the Other 'does indeed retain a foreignness with respect to the thinker that embraces it', it is 'naturalized as soon as it commits itself with knowledge', with the consequence that the Other 'at once ceases to strike up against thought' (1986, 345).

#### (b) Infinity

To strike up against thought, to trouble the in-different absorption of otherness into sameness -- according to Levinas, totality 'breaks up' (1979, 24) with 'the opening of a new dimension' (197) constituted by the 'transcendence in the face of the Other' (24). Situated on a 'gradient of transcendence' (87) over the world founded upon the Same's cognition, the Other is Most-High, such that the relation between the Same and the Other is 'the face-to-face of the man with bent neck and eyes raised toward the God on high' (Derrida, 1978, 107). The Other's height is coupled with his radical exteriority to the Same's thinking. 'He is not wholly in my site' for he 'escapes my grasp by an essential dimension, even if I have him at my disposal' (1979, 39).<sup>18</sup> Moreover the Other appears to the Same as 'the idea of infinity' (25, emphasis added). Like infinity, 'overflow[ing] the

thought that thinks it' (25), exceeding all definitions which would match the infinite state with finite concepts, the Other is a 'surplus of being over the thought that claims to contain it' (27). He 'is infinitely other because by his essence,' Derrida notes, 'no enrichment of his profile can give me the subjective face of his experience from his perspective, such as he has lived it' (1978, 124). The Other, above all, is a face gleaming through a neutralising concept. Not only is the face seen, it sees, it is 'that which exchanges its glance' (Derrida, 1978, 98) in the face-to-face relation. The face is a doubling of immanence in and transcendence of the world -- 'still a thing amongst things, [it] breaks through the form that nevertheless delimits it' (Levinas, 1979, 98). Crucially, Levinas asserts that 'the face speaks' (1979, 66; 1986, 352), and that its dis/appearance 'is already discourse' (1979, 66). In the intersubjectivity of their face to face encounter, the 'relation between the same and the other [both are speakers] ... is primordially enacted as conversation, where the same ... leaves itself' (39).

#### (c) The Other's question and the Same's guilt

As the 'unity of glance and speech' the face 'pronounces its hunger' (Derrida, 1978, 100). The Other's expression is a supplication, an appeal or a solicitation which does not allow me to forget my responsibility for his 'wretchedness' (Levinas, 1986, 352). Indeed, Levinas is not concerned solely with arguing the Other's infinity over totality; a corresponding problematic examines how the Same is shamed in the Other's upsurge and so develops 'moral consciousness' (1979, 84). 'Whence comes to me this shock when I pass, indifferent, under the gaze of another?' he asks -- alterity 'puts me into question, empties me of myself' (1986, 350). Under the look of the Other, who surmounts attempts by the Same to nullify his reproach, the Same is guiltily aware that its freedom -- consisting in 'negating or possessing the non-me' (1979, 87), 'the determination of the other by the same' (85) -- is 'arbitrary and violent', 'murderous in its very exercise' (84). In fact, the movement towards alterity which Levinas espouses, that is, 'the welcoming of the other by the same ... is concretely produced as the calling into question of

the same by the other ...' (43). The welcome is 'the consciousness of my own injustice -- the shame that freedom feels for itself' (86). The Other's expression issues a commandment, 'you shall not commit murder' (216); while it presents a 'total question, a distress and denuding' (Derrida, 1978, 96) which 'arous[es] my goodness' (Levinas, 1979, 200) and thereby undoes 'my ability for power' (198), precipitating a salutary depotentiation of the Same. In consequence, '[t]he I loses its sovereign coincidence with itself' (1986, 353), its self-identity posited on its self-confirmatory reduction of alterity at swordpoint.

#### (d) Pacifism and discourse

But how is this alterity to appear and pronounce its question, given that the violent relation, structured upon the weapon, is one in which an Other-as-object is determined by the self-immured subject? Levinas argues that the aggressor's transport is interrupted by the Other's face, by his gaze and speech, which re-situates the aggressor in the intersubjectivity of discourse and a relation with the Most-High. It is as if the victim's speech brings the aggressor back to 'the ethical ... essence of language' (Levinas, 1979, 200), reminding him of what he had forgotten, namely that the Other is absolutely exterior. War, as Levinas announces, 'presupposes peace, the antecedent and non-allergic presence of the Other; it does not represent the first event of the encounter' (199). In response to war, he advocates 'the pacific opposition of discourse' (197) instead of forms of resistance in which alterity compromises itself by congealing into matter calculable and killable for the Same (197-201): it does not let itself be drawn into the aggressor's game. That is, in the 'moral resistance' (225) Levinas espouses, the Other does not resist the Same's exercise of force by opposing a counter-force of his own, since in so doing he would become a quantifiable and computable element -- precisely an object of knowledge -- in the Same's realm. Rather, the Other's resistance proceeds from his qualitative difference to, and infinitude over, the categories into which the Same consigns him. 'He thus opposes to me not a greater force ... but the very transcendence of his

being ... ; not some superlative of power, but precisely the infinity of his transcendence [of the world]' (Levinas, 1979, 199). The Other's resistance proceeds, then, from discourse, which 'relates with what remains essentially transcendent' (195). Putting this differently, what is 'essential' in language is 'the interpellation, the vocative' (69), such that language 'presupposes interlocutors', and thus 'maintains the other -- to whom it is addressed, whom it calls upon or invokes' (73); given this 'essential' dimension of language, conversation is a welcoming of the Other in which one's murderous freedom is placed in question and in which one consequently becomes conscious of the injustice of one's actions towards the Other. Discourse, necessarily addressing the Other, is, Levinas says, 'teaching received' (197), as he 'teaches me who I am' (Sartre, 1986, 311) and makes me shamefully aware of my cruelty. In 'the pacific opposition of discourse' (Levinas, 1979, 197), I address the Other, and the Other addresses me: my speech 'seems to contain the Other' but it is directed at the infinitely Other, who 'has quit the theme that encompassed him, and upsurges inevitably behind the said'; correlatively the Other's speech to me does not delimit him, but is a trace from which he has absented himself, a dis/appearance in which he upsurges behind the phenomenal form he offers of himself. In discourse, I am emplaced in the 'formal structure of language [which] announces the ethical inviolability of the Other' (195, emphasis added) -- an inviolability which foregrounds the injustice and futility of my attempts to grasp and possess the Other.

### (iii) Derrida

Levinas opposes discourse to violence, but he would not dispute, as Derrida remarks, 'that every historical language carries within it ... a certain violence' (1978, 148). For Levinas, it is rhetoric ('propaganda, flattery, diplomacy, etc.') which is 'preeminently violence' inasmuch as it 'appl[ies] a category' to another freedom (1979, 70). Nonetheless his concession in this respect does not alter the binarism between discourse and violence, since Levinas refers habitually to the 'essential', 'first' and 'primordial' (passim) pacific functions

of language, with the result that language's contamination by violence is seen as secondary, aberrant, and an historical contingency underlain by an a-temporal foundation. Yet Derrida argues that this opposition is ultimately incoherent. Performing a reductio ad absurdum, he says that nonviolent language would be a language expunged of rhetoric, which 'appl[ies] a category' to the Other; such a language would then necessarily lack predication, that is, verbs and common nouns: 'Would such a language still deserve its name?' (1979, 147), he wonders. The essentially nonviolent language would amount to a nonlanguage. Conversely, language is informed in its essence by violence, since 'there is no phrase which is indeterminate, that is, which does not pass through the violence of the concept' -- 'speech produced without the least violence would determine nothing, would say nothing' (147). Derrida consequently claims, 'Nonviolence would be the telos, and not the essence of discourse' (116). According to Levinas, discourse situates speakers in the peaceful intersubjectivity fundamental to the Same-Other relation, in which the Same apprehends the Other as absolutely exterior to itself. But Derrida shows that Levinas's theoretical formulations, particularly those concerning the Other's absolute exteriority to the Same, thwart his overt intentions when strictly understood, for they preclude the very alterity Levinas wishes to respect, and hence court 'the worst violence ... which precedes or represses discourse' (117).

Derrida's argument is that were the Same and Other to encounter one another only on the basis of an absolute disrelation, would this not mean -- literally -- that they would not encounter each other at all? When the unthinkable Other is unrecognized as being other-than, it returns to the placidity of the Same. For Derrida, 'the other is absolutely other only if he is an ego, that is, if in a certain way he is the same as I' (127), if he 'say[s] "ego" as I do' (125). But if alterity is defined as non-analogous to the Same and outside violent operations making it the same-as-the-Same, it cannot be acknowledged by the Same as another-I, as an 'other origin of the world' (104), and must be hence be assimilated as an aspect of the Same. Correlatively if the Other is not absolutely exterior

to the Same, the latter is 'not a totality closed in upon itself' (126); since the Same thus bears alterity 'in' it, the constitutive dimension of my being is that 'I know myself to be other for the other' (126). The infinitely Other implies the infinitely Same, with the result that 'pure nonviolence, the nonrelation of the same to the other ... is pure violence' (146). Speech is haunted by an archaic residue of an 'absolute violence' of 'prelogical silence' (130), which is an asymptote to which sameness tends as it expands towards infinity: as the Other is less and less regarded as another-I, and the Same is less and less exposed as another's other, the more monological its speech, and the more silenced the Other; the greater the clamour (and hence the silence), the more the Same's loss of perspective on itself, the closer to absolute becomes the violence. Significantly, the infinitely Same's domination of alterity is predicated on its ignorance of mortality: were the I 'unable to be the other's other, [it] would never be the victim of violence' (126), Derrida remarks.

In Derrida's hands, Levinas's description of peace thus inverts into a formula for 'pure violence' (Derrida, 1978, 146) and a silence in which the Other does not appear as other-than and the Same is not the other for another (the Other is entirely deadened, while the Same stays ignorant of its mortality). But although Derrida reads Levinas's 'peace' as 'war', he suggests that this 'peace', apparently foundational, in fact presupposes an anterior violence in which the Other is recognised as another-I by the Same by being subject to violence making it the same-as-I, while the Same knows itself as the other's other by realising its permanent possibility of being 'the victim of violence' (126). The anterior violence thus gives way an eirenic condition in which the Same apprehends the Other as other. In particular, this violence is '[v]iolence against violence' (117), that is, violence perpetrated against violence tending to the foreclosure of alterity and to 'prelogical silence' (130). Language-as-violence, Derrida notes, 'can only indefinitely tend toward justice [in other words, toward the telos of nonviolence] by practicing the violence within it' (117). As in Brink's case, Derrida appears to envisage activist opposition to forms of



violence entrenching an 'historical silence' between Same and Other -- opposition which thereby affirms the perpetually deferred telos of pure nonviolence.

#### IV. Third silence: Youtopia

'They are all listening to me .... It is an intense pleasure, physical, inexpressible, to be at home, among friendly people and to have so many things to recount: but I cannot help noticing that my listeners do not follow. In fact, they are completely indifferent: they speak confusedly of other things among themselves, as if I was not there. ... Why is the pain of every day translated so constantly into our dreams, in the ever-repeated scene of the unlistened-to story'

-- Primo Levi<sup>19</sup>

'And perhaps someone will hear us calling out, all these voices in the great silence, all of us together, all of us forever alone'

-- André Brink<sup>20</sup>

'Poems ... are always underway, they are making toward something.

Toward what? Toward something standing open, occupiable, perhaps toward a "thou" that can be addressed, an addressable reality'

-- Paul Celan<sup>21</sup>

'In analysis a subject offers himself as being capable of being understood ...'

-- Jacques Lacan<sup>22</sup>

#### (i) Deafness: destruction of the agora

Between the self-alienated silence of a victim who cannot be an I and that of an aggressor who lacks a you, is a third silence given in their lack of a common topos. In the tripartite configuration of the sword, this hiatus between self and Other is constituted by the sword's dis-connecting shaft across which their non-encounter is played out -- as Scarry says, the structure of the weapon may be regarded as 'a singular vertical line yet so radically different at its two ends that it can in the same moment be pictured as connecting the two realms and preserving their absolute difference' (1985, 38). To cite a metaphor which likewise suggests disrelation within relation, aggressor and victim can be said to be clapped in chains. The

slave Galant yearns to embark on action in which he can posit his autonomous identity so that he 'can know for sure: This is me, I, Galant' (CoV, 292), while Nicolaas, the isolated master, wishes he 'could break through to someone; to Galant' (181): although the chain binds them it also separates and casts them in a 'chain of voices', a clamorous 'talking and talking' (431) without reciprocity. Such 'talking' amounts to 'a silence of confusion and incomprehension' (ADWS, 305). Counterposed to the 'endless chain of voices, all together yet all apart' (CoV, 431), a system of slavery aptronymically represented by the farm Houd-den-Bek ('Shut-your-trap'), is the sunlit agora beyond Plato's cave, on 'the other side' of slavery where '[t]here will be a sun rising' (395). In this clearing (a stable site, a zone of interpersonal clarity), Galant says, 'we'll really know each other' (395), while discourse will realize its eirenic 'essence'. The agora is a space of mutual visibility which supersedes a volatized, claustrophobic zone of blindness; it is a mythical site of knowledge on 'the other side' of misprision. As Borch-Jacobsen writes in a commentary on Lacan's conception of 'the place of the Other', 'There is no truth, in the philosophical sense, that does not imply and exact an "opening", and "openness" into which it can unfold and where everything comes to light' (1991, 131). It is a settlement: a space of common occupation in which former enemies meet, a place of composure after the agitated movements of the maelstrom or deluge with which Brink equates violence, a forum in which agreement is reached, and a site where identities can be reciprocally manifested to each other. Thus, the polis is a haven of fellowship -- an amity on 'the other side' of the present, which, in An Act of Terror, is prefigured by the familial ebullience and comfort of the exiles who, '[l]ike long-lost relatives', 'talk about our beloved land, laughing, crying, laughing again' (56) and sing, 'tomorrow we're going home, tomorrow we're back in the land that is ours' (57). The communality of the polis gives the exiles an 'intense pleasure, physical, inexpressible' (Levi, in Felman and Laub, 1992, 68). They delight in their welcoming of the Other, who, like a long-lost relative, discloses to them their unsuspected affiliation to a realm beyond their privatised selves; they take pleasure in a

euphoric speech and an enthusiastic reception of it.

It is such a space, Brink argues in 'The dove in the grave', which Chris Hani's murder has jeopardised. What makes his assassination so excessively scandalous is a sense that an opportunity which was close to realization had been irresponsibly wasted by the 'mindless violence' (11) of a right-wing conspiracy which sought to deepen racial polarization and ruin the prospects for a political settlement at a moment when these were most propitious. 'The assassination's impact is so shattering because it happened at a time when, for the first time in many years,' Brink claims, 'South Africans across the political spectrum, from far right to extreme left, appeared at last to be emerging from a spiral of deepening violence towards negotiation, reconciliation and a cautious hope' (11). Invoking a characteristic motif of an irrepressible tidal force seeking to erupt and manifest its plenum in the light of day, Brink declares that Hani's death has stoppered an 'unstoppable basic groundswell towards understanding and the resolution of conflict through peaceful means' (11). He is baffled by the 'mindless violence' (11), the inscrutable Schadenfreude, of those who violate a nascent social bond by pitting sectional interests against each other and undermining the prospect for widespread mutual 'understanding'. Hani's assassins obstruct the unfolding of the topos of a communal parley and voluptuous convergence; instead, they entrench nonreciprocity between an alienated oppressor and the dehumanised oppressed, so reinforcing an 'historical silence' (11) alien to the rapturous speech and enraptured audition which obtains in the agora.

(ii) Despair: doubting 'the universal witness'

'[I]t was hard to resist the temptation of despair' (11), Brink thus confesses, disabled by the prospect of endemic violence, like many of the authorial surrogates found in his novels. Yet he guiltily recalls counsel which had sustained him during previous national crises. The Great Rabbi of Paris, in answer to Brink's despondency, had told him, '"To despair ... is an insult to the future"' (11). In the condition of despair, one yields to engulfment by the seemingly immutable clamour and

dereliction of the 'historical silence', believing that nothing can be done to alter what looks like an inescapable fate. Despair indicates the atrophy of sensibilities capable of envisioning different relations with others, and a fatigued resignation to an enslaving world which holds out no hope of satisfaction. Hopelessness: on his way to prison after the rebellion, Achilles echoes Alida's assertion of hegemony's unchangeable dominance in her way of life -- 'Not even death could make a difference' (CoV, 287) -- when he claims that since 'the hardest thing to live with is hope' (484), its loss finalises his adaptation to the strictures of oppression, and to his silencing by Houd-den-Bek, the institution of slavery. Despair is the misery of being consigned to an interminable dormancy. As Philip declares in reaction to the charge, 'Perhaps nobody will ever really know you,' it entails an 'unbearable awareness of my own solitude, the feeling of being "stuck" in myself' (States, 55). Significantly, his lovelessness is bound up with his embroilment in a society at war -- in war's loveless clamour, he is unrelated, unintegrated and unmanifested.

But why should despair be an 'insult to the future'? One may adduce two reasons. First, it doubts the indubitable -- it is a lapse of faith doubting the prospects for a transparent community, a 'future' that will manifest itself someday irrespective of single person's weakness. Borne forward by 'an unstoppable basic groundswell' (Dove, 11, emphasis added), the 'future' is the telos of an independent force which will inevitably debouch into the nation-space. Second, despair's over-concern with the unalterable present means that those who can turn what is potential into reality stay inactive instead. It is, in short, an immersion in sameness, prohibiting one from conceiving an outside to an all-dominating present.

Over and above its moral injunction, however, what is striking about the Great Rabbi's formulation is the way it personifies the 'future' -- 'the democratic future' (Dove, 11), according to Brink -- as a collective entity capable of taking offence; moreover, one is constrained to conduct oneself with fidelity towards this Leviathan, dolefully looking back over present waywardness from its indeterminate vantage point. That is

to say, the 'future' is a sentient Other in relation to whom one has to discharge certain ethical obligations. The Great Rabbi's apothegm may be read as an enjoinder for one to re-insert, in the chasm between the sword's hilt and point, the future topos of the assembled citizenry: more specifically, it is a summons for the one in despair imaginatively to re-create and invoke an Other outside the oppressive sameness in which he is trapped. So where the victim, overshadowed by the death-bearing Other, had resigned himself to being the object which he is for the Other, and had thus internalised the Other's perspectives, the reassertion of this topos -- or other-Other -- opens up a luminous site beyond the aggressor's frames of reference. Where the aggressor had encountered no alterity putting his freedom into doubt, the agora now appears in the questioning look of the Other. Where a specular doubling or symmetry had applied in the relation between self and Other, the dyadic enclosure must be fractured by invoking thirdness, as in States of Emergency, which demonstrates how the lovers' apparently selfsubsistent sanctuary intersects with public space such that each is, for the other, not a limit-point but a liminal figure opening up onto the agora. Love 'goes beyond the beloved,' Levinas claims, since 'through the face filters the obscure light coming from beyond the face, from what is not yet ...' (1979, 254). As Levinas explains elsewhere, 'Everything that takes place here "between us" concerns everyone' and occurs 'in the full light of the public order, even if I draw back from it to seek with the interlocutor the complicity of a private relation ...' (212). More simply he remarks, 'The third party looks at me in the eyes of the Other' (213). Who is this 'third party'? The 'third party' is, as Derrida glosses, 'the universal witness' (1978, 314); or as Levinas himself says, 'The presence of the face, the infinity of the other, is a presence of the third party (that is, of the whole of humanity which looks at us)' (1979, 213); even more directly, it is 'the whole of humanity, in the eyes that look at me' (213). Like the Great Rabbi's 'future' and Brink's 'democratic future', then, Levinas's Other is a nontotalizable collectivity, a suffering gaze which bears insults, and a being to which one is ethically obligated. In short, the Other-as-agora is a witness to one's actions, and

a witness to which these ~~must~~ actions must in turn bear witness. Depairing is, in this sense, a disconfirmation of the future/Other, and hence precisely not an instance of bearing witness to the latter's `reality'. Conversely, indeed to bear witness to and for a future Other-as-agora is not only to confirm though one's actions its nascent reality, however deferred; it is also to project oneself, by an act of faith, beyond an entrapping sameness toward a futural site in which the `intense pleasure' of communality can at last be enjoyed.

(iii) Witnessing as creation of an addressable Other

According to the psychoanalyst Dori Laub, the re-affirmation of such an exterior witness by the analysand is a pivotal moment in his treatment of Holocaust survivors and their children, while its absence threatens to precipitate the analysand's re-experiencing of the traumatic event by re-emplacing him or her in an enclosure which prevents access to an outside space in which he or she can gain authentic recognition from an addressee (1992, 67). The ghetto and the concentration camp frequently appear in Testimony, Laub's collaborative work with Felman, not solely as physical sites of incarceration, but also as paradigms for the structures of psychological and semiotic closure in which victims are trapped. Thus, the motif of testimony as `the breakage of a framework' (60), a `breaking out of Auschwitz' (62), or an `exploding' of containing conceptual frames (223), features prominently in their work. For instance, Laub discusses a survivor whose report of a revolt in Auschwitz, he maintains, constituted both a statement about an event, and an event in itself: the enactment of an escape from Auschwitz's `deadly timelessness' (59), its enduring grasp on her life. `[S]he is breaking out of Auschwitz,' he notes, `even by her very talking' (62). What gives this ek-static speech event its special importance in Laub's view is the fact that, while the Holocaust created a totally enclosing world in which `the very imagination of the Other was no longer possible' (81), the analysand's `breakage of the frame' (63) of Auschwitz implies that she re-asserts `an independent frame of reference' (81), an other-world, and the world of an Other `to which [she] could say "Thou" in the

hope of being heard' (82). However fleetingly, she succeeds in re-imagining an exterior witness to whom she can address herself: her act of witnessing presupposes the existence of such an Other. For Felman and Laub, this presupposition on the part of a speaker is a prerequisite for witnessing to take place -- without it, witnessing cannot be said to occur. Hence they can make the claim, startling in view of the empirical volume of first-person accounts of the Holocaust, that the latter was an event which 'produced no witnesses' (80). Their claim is intelligible in the brutally literal sense that the Holocaust tried to kill and entirely deceive all potential witnesses. Yet above all their astonishing argument should be taken in the philosophical sense that survivors felt inhibited in testifying to it -- primarily, they say, since the Holocaust effected a foreclosure of the Other, such that 'the very imagination of the Other was no longer possible' (81) for those locked inside it. As a result, one lacks 'an other to which one could say "Thou" in the hope of being heard, of being recognized as a subject [rather than being reified as an it], of being answered' (82). Without one's (imaginative or faith-ful) projection of an Other, and therefore without one's projection of oneself toward the Other's exteriority, and away from an enclosing space of sameness, one is immured in the master's definitions of the experience, and so cannot bear witness 'to the truth of an event' (80). Without the presupposition of 'a universal witness' (Derrida, 1978, 314), one lacks a witness -- a 'Thou' by whom one can be heard -- to whom one could indeed bear witness.

Let us proceed through these arguments in greater detail. Felman and Laub claim that the Holocaust 'produced no witnesses' (81), by which they mean that the two defining features of a witness -- the witness sees, the witness speaks -- were annulled by the Holocaust.

First, the witness is one who has seen at first-hand (207) and whose vision is held to imply an authoritative knowledge: she 'is a witness to the truth of an event' (80). But Felman indicates, however, that specific elements of the programme of genocide -- notably the systematic deception practised on victims -- broke the relationship between seeing and knowing (207-11). In

addition, Laub observes that generally trauma 'precludes its registration', since the psyche's 'observing and recording mechanisms are temporarily knocked out ...' (57).<sup>23</sup> His strongest argument concerning the destruction of witnessing is that no historical insider to the Holocaust could have remained 'a lucid, unaffected witness' to the 'truth of [the] event' (80) in the face of such a 'contaminating' atrocity (81). In terms reminiscent of Brink's metaphor<sup>24</sup> of the 'whirlpool that has sucked us in' (Act, 230) and plunged aggressors and victims into a vortex of misprision and disorientation, Laub says that no-one could 'be sufficiently detached from the inside, so as to stay entirely outside of the trapping roles ... either of the victim or of the executioner' (81). The disaster is without an outside as its closure is effectuated by an internal doubling in which the victim becomes the executioner's double or category, while the victim becomes for himself what he is for the aggressor (Laub notes that victims were 'convinced' of their inhumanity by the Nazis, so that they feel they have 'no right to speak up or protest'; 82). The consequence is that both aggressor and victim are locked inside sameness, that is, within dominant definitions of reality and allocations of identities: a world of despair, in which all hope of an 'outside' or a transcendent 'beyond' is lost.

While the witness is presumed to possess knowledge on the grounds of her personal experience and the im-mediacy of her seeing, the combination of doubling and enclosing which occurs between victim and aggressor means that 'her' knowledge is mediated by the master's discourse. But this lack of 'an independent frame of reference' (Laub, 1992, 81) also relates to a second defining feature of the witness -- her performance of a speech act called 'witnessing' or 'testifying'. 'To testify,' Felman writes, 'to vow to tell, to promise and produce one's own speech as material evidence for truth -- is to accomplish a speech act, rather than to simply formulate a statement' (1992, 5). For Felman the importance of witnessing lies not so much in the knowledge which it transmits as it does in the act of bearing witness, that is, in the saying which -- as an address to an interlocutor -- posits an Other to whom it is directed. The



saying is, in other words, an event taking place in the hearing of the Other. More specifically, it is an invocation of the Other-who-hears -- a summoning of a witness who, in turn, can witness (audit, verify) the witness's speech. And since the testimony does not constitute 'a completed statement' or 'a totalizable account' of events (5), but is part of a process (a judicial inquiry, for instance) rather than a final product, it is uttered as a contribution to a project larger than the testifying agent: that is to say, the Other for whom one labours is not a singular being but a liminal figure standing on the horizon between the nearness-to-hand of sameness, and the exteriority or alterity unfolding beyond the Same's line of sight (recalling Levinas, the Other is both singular and universal, another person as well as 'the whole of humanity which looks at us' from his or her eyes; 1979, 213). As Felman asserts, 'By virtue of the fact that the testimony is addressed to others, the witness, from within the solitude of his own stance [a field of sameness], is the vehicle of ... a dimension beyond himself' (3). And by postulating 'a dimension beyond himself' -- or a project greater than himself -- the witness invokes an Other, who in Felman's discourse takes on the civic forms of the polis. Bearing witness, she observes, involves offering discourse 'before a court of law or before the court of history and of the future ... before an audience of readers or spectators' (204).

Yet the Other for whose benefit the witness utters his testimony is at the same time the Other from whom he solicits recognition. By seeking 'to impress upon a listener, to appeal to a community' (204), the witness 'institutes the other as a subject of desire and, as such, a subject of response, of a called for answer' (32). Within his testimonial apostrophe to the Other in the agora, or -- as in Levinas -- the agora in the Other, the witness is a supplicant who desires from a desired Other an 'answer', or an intimation of his/her/their reciprocated desire for him. Testimony, in short, is more than a statement of historical record, more than an act located in an intersubjective register: it is a demand animated by desire for recognition from an Other-as-agora. 'It is only by being "recognised" by another, by many others, or -- in the extreme -- by all others, that a

human being is really human, for himself as well as for others,' declared Alexandre Kojève (1986, 103, emphasis added).

For the Holocaust survivor, whose consciousness is dominated by the doubling sameness of a master's discourse, witnessing is thus out of the question. She cannot discharge the witness's duty to speak the truth, as she speaks from her enslavement to a master's frames of reference, which Laub describes as a 'delusional ideology' (81) foisted on aggressors and victims alike. Correlative to her entrapment in this 'delusional' scheme is her despairing inability to conceive an Other-as-agora and thereby to situate herself in relation to an outside, independent space (or opening in sameness) into which 'truth' might unfold. Instead, she is constrained to reiterate the terms of the master's discourse, and, as such, is unable to satisfy the testimonial imperative to speak the 'truth' outside of 'a delusional ideology' (81). Moreover, she cannot pronounce -- or even hope to satisfy -- her desire for recognition since she remains enclosed in an aggressor's realm in which she lacks 'an addressable other, an other who can hear the anguish of ... [her] memories and recognise their realness': the result is that her potential testimony is silenced as an 'unlistened-to story' (Laub, 1992, 68) devoid of acknowledged realness. Her selfhood is thus left to petrify/putrify in the recesses of hegemonic discourse.

As we shall see, Brink's work demonstrates a structural and thematic pre-occupation with issues of witnessing, in particular with the notions, discussed above, that bearing witness involves the invocation of an Other or 'democratic future' (Dove, 11), and that the desire by the witness for his story to be heard by the Other implies a desire for redemption from a condition of non-being. Structurally, many of his novels are presented as compilations of testimonies. Most notably this is the case in A Chain of Voices, but the same is also true of A Dry White Season, which is offered as an authorial re-working and improvement of fragmentary testimony left in the narrator's care by a politically-active friend. Similarly, States of Emergency is a record of a period of civil upheaval and its impact on a writer struggling to make headway on his planned novel, while An Act of

Terror purports to be both Landman's third-person documentation of events he underwent (at the narrative's end he announces that he will be writing an account of these events, a declaration which retroactively defines the preceding narrative as the text he himself will have composed) as well as a collage of testimonies by individuals whose lives have been affected by Landman and whose attitudes to the South African problem have either been challenged or reinforced by him (in many ways, the collage is a sample of the diversity of ideological positions in South Africa, a 'poll' gathered for the benefit of posterity). Thematically, Brink's work has a recurring fascination with what I termed the doubling of the master's discourse, in which a master ascribes a category of his own devising to the slave while the latter in turn identifies with this ascription (a process akin to the dynamics described in Althusser's theory of interpellation, which I shall soon discuss). Brink's concern with this doubling is shown in his various critiques of the doxa instrumental to hegemony -- attacks directed at the way in which the doxa appropriates contending voices into terms consonant with itself and thereby deprives them of autonomous realness so that they are discarded as 'unlistened-to stor[ies]' (Felman and Laub, 1992, 68). A question arises: Given the doxa's deafness to these voices -- an irony as they are subjected to so-called official hearings -- who are they to call upon as the addressable Other capable of witnessing their witnessing? The answer Brink implicitly advances is that they must affirm their faith in the existence an encompassing metanarrative in which hegemony's deafness is a temporary delay in a progression toward an audition by 'the future'. This answer in turn points to the function the writer must fulfill, that of a conservator bridging present and future. A conservator is 'a person who conserves or keeps safe; a custodian, guardian, protector' (C. E. D.) and whose labour is therefore directed, on the one hand, to preservation, and, on the other, to facilitating the use and enjoyment of what he keeps in his custodial care. Said plainly, he preserves testimonies from their erasure by the doxa for the benefit both of the witnesses in question and of 'the future' itself. He does this with a double gesture of inscription (recording, citing, fabulating, and

retrieving archival documents) and of circulation (launching the inscribed sign into the polysemous play of the signifier, a play in which the signifier disperses into varying contexts, and thereby insinuates itself into the lives of those receiving it). The Text, inaugurating a polyphony or 'stereophony' (Barthes, 1988, 193), as opposed to the doxa's monologic reduction of meanings, hence anticipates the youtopia where no discourse dominates or deafens itself to an-other. Simultaneously inscribing the witness's text and liberating it into the prefigurative openness of the inter-text, the Conservator affirms faith in the futural agora (the site of rapturous speech and ardent audition), and ressurects the testimony of unlistened-to witnesses into the life of the polyphonic signifier. For the witness the Conservator is an emissary of the 'universal witness', a witness to his witnessing; for the witness he is a liminal being at the threshold between worlds. He is the Other.

But now let us expand on these claims.

(iv) Hegemony's deafness and unlistened-to stories

Brink's A Chain of Voices is composed of a collection of affidavits gathered for the scrutiny of a tribunal prosecuting the participants of a slave rebellion. Yet the official hearing, undertaken by a judiciary that enforces the legality of slavery and that thus serves hegemonic sectional interests rather than those of social unity, is in a crucial sense deaf to the testimonies before it. Nevertheless, the juridical commentaries prefacing and concluding the first-person narratives purport to be an authoritative interpretation having sole legitimacy to deliver a verdict -- or to speak the truth -- on secondary texts seen as replete with either outright lies or self-deceptions. Galant's complex ratiocinations and ambivalence about resorting to violence are ignored by the court, for instance; instead, he is demonised as a barbarian proferring spurious justifications for having bitten the hand that fed him. 'With respect to the other Prisoners,' says the court, summarily dismissing the nexus of motivations that led them to rebel, 'we do not need to say much' (506). Evidently unable to act upon motives any more complex than a wish to vent grievances and seek base

gratifications, and void of the wherewithal to think independently, the rebels were, states the court, merely 'seduced' (506) by Galant. The narratives are thus depleted of autonomous utterance by a juridical framework which extracts from them a single meaning presumed to have been dormant in them from the outset. Restating this, the voices are quoted as object-languages in a dominant syntax that asserts its own meaning through them, regardless of what they themselves may say. In short, the master's discourse utters their death sentence -- a penalty of incarceration, execution, and semiotic inscription. Case closed, 1825.

The court's reduction of the narratives into terms congruent with an official definition of reality is an example of the logic of identity, in which otherness is appropriated by sameness and its alterity discarded as an 'unlistened-to story'. As in States of Emergency, where the 'invasion' of the text by the literary and ideological codes narrows the imaginative possibilities available to the writer, the testimonies are converted into connotative signifiers necessarily tied (or so the verdict would have it) to a repertoire of hegemonic signifieds, or 'a smothering layer of received ideas' (Barthes, in Silverman, 1983, 31). For Barthes, these ideas -- and the semiotic practices entrenching them -- constitute the doxa functional to dominant sectional interests. As 'the Voice of Nature, the Violence of Prejudice' (Barthes, 1977, 47), the doxa assimilates social reality in an image of itself 'so that no social arrangement different from the present could even be imagined' (Eagleton, 1991, 157) and no contending voices be heard. Following one of the cardinal principles of ideological production identified by Althusser, 'ideology never says, "I am ideological"' (1971, 49), the doxa effaces its social specificity by presenting itself as that which is naturally given as a common-sensical dispensation. Thanks to its self-certitude, it rules out the spectre of any radical alteration of its determining social matrix and so cannot be put in question, that is, be called into question by the Other, whose silencing is the sacrificial debt on which hegemony's in-difference depends.

The processes by which the doxa supports the Apartheid state

and constitutes discourse as the violence of a s/word are key pre-occupations in Brink's work. His concern with these processes informs the structure of A Chain of Voices, in which the series of testimonies are imaged as links in a chain, as subordinate components within the master's doxa, while in States of Emergency semiotic emplacement is nothing less than the violence the writer undergoes so as to experience his death on his own terms; they are present in An Act of Terror in satirical jibes at 'a country choking in its own clichés' (132), doxa 'pronounced so many times that even the speakers had begun to believe them' (165). Such barbs highlight Brink's continual assault on a stultifying social order (whimsically likened to a cage of 'contented and pampered' (160) primates) the ideological insularity of which has evidently gone hand in hand with the existential decline of its subjects. This order is predicated on the exclusion of otherness: other itineraries, other discourses. Indeed, the dramatic tension between Thomas Landman and his politically conservative father centres upon a historiographical dispute in which their divergent positions in this regard are wedded to the broader life-choices each has made. Bearing out the claim that hegemony institutes itself 'by rewriting history, wiping out memory' (501), Thomas's father chronicles the history of the Landman family in terms of the state's founding myth of a racially and morally pure white elect who strove to impress Christian civilization on heathen soil. Whatever does not tally with his hagiography, he informs his revisionist son, is 'just not thinkable' (222); Thomas's own account, forming the supplement to 'An Act of Terror', is a dissident history, not only in the sense that it attempts to redress the lacunae in the official version, but also in its portrayal of his ancestors as people at variance precisely with the 'thinkable', struggling 'against the confines of their crude and unintelligible world' and trying 'to reconcile [their] passions with the demands of the "real" world' (692). Once again, the doxa of 'the "real" world' is associated with impoverishment, and seen as unresponsive to 'passions' not conforming to its paradigms.

(v) The doxa's nullification of being

Even from this brief overview it is evident that limiting meaning in accordance with what the doxa conceives as being thinkable is more than a question of privileging and excluding various modes of knowing the social real. Knowing is tied to being. What gives trenchancy to the relationship between the alienated oppressor and the dehumanised oppressed is that the sword mediating between them assigns being to the oppressor and non-being to the oppressed. The oppressor evades consciousness of mortality through an identification with the doxa, while the oppressed endures on condition that he become for himself what he is for the Other, and so accede to the terms of the doxa at the expense of his own 'selfhood'. This delimitation for oppressor and oppressed alike of what is thinkable is thus not solely an epistemological matter, but is linked to the entrenchment or rejection of different existential possibilities, to the consolidation or exclusion of various identities. As Althusser contends in his influential argument, 'Ideology interpellates individuals as subjects' (1971, 44), meaning that for ideology to pass itself off as common-sensical and obvious, it has to hail concrete individuals as self-determining agents who 'freely' endorse the ideology's codes and assumptions as verities which they have stumbled onto in their own experience, unencumbered by any ideological constructs: 'That's right! That's true!' (46) exclaim these subjects as they (freely) inhabit the perspectives from which ideology makes the real intelligible. Yet Eagleton is surely right in suggesting that Althusser shifts from the traditional 'cognitive' theory of ideology, in which the latter comprises 'distorting representations of reality', to an 'affective' theory dealing with the way it 'constitute[s] human beings as social subjects' who invest in social forms 'as a crucial part of what it is to be themselves' (1991, 18-19). The positions of knowledge which ideology makes available are, in short, positions of desire -- to desire to know is to desire to be (like) the one who knows (such matters, experiences, attitudes), to be a subject for whom the code is intelligible, to be an insider to specific meanings. For Althusser, ideological interpellation elicits the cry 'That's right!' as well as an exclamation of self-recognition, 'Yes, it really is me!' by which

it obtains from its addressees 'the recognition that they really do occupy the place it designates for them as theirs ...' (1971, 52). In the process of interpellation, the individual projects herself into the slot allocated her, and like the powerless infant described in Lacan's account of the mirror-stage -- vicariously enjoying mastery by identifying with its plenitudinous specular counterpart -- she escapes her fragmented condition, revelling in 'a consolingly coherent image of [herself] reflected back in the "mirror" of a dominant ideological discourse' (Eagleton, 1991, 142).

Hence, Thomas Landman's indignation at 'a country choking in its own clichés' (Act, 132), at the doxa espoused by representatives of the South African power élite at a braai at his brother's house, derives not simply from the perceived erroneousness of their views, from their inability to think beyond the platitudes of a discourse circulating autonomously of speakers (such was the conformity of the guest's discourses that 'after a while they all became interchangeable'; 133), and from their ready neutralisation of opposing viewpoints. Landman also derides their smug self-assurance and conviction in the military and moral strength of the dominant order -- an assurance, he points out, which disavows that this order is a 'decaying carcass' (136), already marked by mortality. More broadly, the narratorial critique in An Act of Terror is directed at an hegemonic structure in which its subjects have been alienated by their identification with, or, at best, despairing resignation to, its impoverishing conceptual framework and the identities it makes available.

Yet conversely Brink's novels reiterate that the cost of dissenting from the doubling between oppressor and oppressed is a fall into a zone in which one cannot make oneself heard or recognise oneself within hegemonic formations. That is to say, one's meaning will be misconstrued in the doxa, while one will be unable to obtain confirmation of one's identity. To speak the doxa is to assume the likeness of the authoritative one who knows, and thus to enjoy the social power or, at the very least, the provisional safety, of a mode of knowing and being that is sanctioned -- recognised -- by the sectional formation. On the



other hand, transgression (whether sexual or political) is significantly coupled with the transgressor's sense of having been displaced from dominant codes, and of no longer having an identity that is intelligible to others in his or her ideological bloc. Lacking an 'addressable other' (Laub, 1992, 68), she or he consequently founders in non-being, undesired and so unvalidated by 'a subject of response' (Felman, 1992, 32). For example, in the midst of his self-destructive resistance to the patriarchal order which decreed him to be a slave-master, Nicolaas finds that he cannot make sense of the Bible, whereas it had once been 'so clear, so reassuring, so self-evident' (CoV, 181); this estrangement from God is accompanied by a loss of identity, as his obedience to God's laws had structured his identity as a familiar set of habitual behaviours, now thrown in disarray. The illiterate Galant, on the other hand, importuning Nicolaas to teach him to read or tearing up a newspaper in frustration, wants to be recognised by the symbolic order -- literally to read news of the slaves' manumission -- but never is, and so embarks on a project of radical transgression.

In A Dry White Season, Ben du Toit's investigation into Gordon Ngubene's death at the hands of state security police causes him to run afoul of various hegemonic institutions until he himself is assassinated. Initially he believes that the security police fulfill a legitimate role but that they have quite simply detained the wrong man. With Ngubene's death, however, Ben comes into contact with a succession of black South Africans whose suffering brings him to a new consciousness that the notions he had accepted about the moral legitimacy and self-evident given-ness of the apartheid system conceal its brutality and provisionality from the ruling class. His perceived treachery to this class and his interrogations of the doxa which had regulated his identity turns him into an outcast lacking a language through which he can address his peers. 'Inside you is a manner of knowing which you cannot share with anyone else,' Ben writes: although '[y]ou can still see the other people' and 'exchange sounds' with them, '[y]ou're on the other side' (158), on the other side of the doxa' sameness. 'And how,' he asks, 'can I explain it in the words of "this side"?' (158). The language he

seeks is one which will not only convey a different knowledge but which will facilitate his recognition, rather than rejection, by his former compatriots: by 'explain[ing]' his knowledge to an 'addressable other' he 'explain[s]' himself, instead of languishing under the misattributions of an order wilfully deaf to the bad news he brings. Without such a language he is progressively stripped of identity, harried by scandal, pressurised from his job as a teacher, separated from his wife, renounced as a father by his daughter (she betrays him to the police), and finally murdered. It is nevertheless the case that his persistence in seeking redress from the the representatives of key state apparatuses -- the church, the Afrikaans Press, parliament, the cabinet, chambers of commerce -- underlines a wish to elicit recognition precisely from the sectional group which founds his identity. That is to say, his desire 'to "clean up" Gordon's name' (236), to make the events surrounding Gordon's death 'come into the open' (142), to challenge the ruling order, and to obtain recognition, are all closely interrelated inasmuch as the order's recognition of him as the speaker of a veracious discourse (rather than its misrecognition of him as a deviant whose personal aberration negates the truth-value of his speech) would give to his claims a greater power to shock orthodox views. If the bringer of bad tidings is not denounced but acknowledged to be acting in good faith, his message is more likely to be heard in all its critical force.

For Ben, it is the courts of law which, above all, have the standing to issue a verdict, that is, to pronounce on the truth of testimonies and put witnesses' good faith beyond dispute. For Ben, what 'come[s] into the open' (142) through the court's intercession in a conflict is not the resolution of an enigma or the unravelling of a murder mystery. It is 'already' known that Gordon has been killed by the Special Branch. The court's proceedings are hence, for Ben, not a continuation of an investigation, but a public opening in which the truth is authoritatively pronounced -- recognised -- to be as such, so that the 'world can know what happened' (181). The court is seen as a site of attestation and universal visibility, of commemoration and contrition: an agora. There is, needless to

say, a surprise in store for him. The Special Branch sets about defending its claims from refutation by discarding incriminating affidavits, and by killing or serving banning orders on witnesses for the prosecution; there are hints of collusion between the secret police and a judiciary inclined anyway to support the state. Amidst the silencing of testimonies inimical to hegemony's doxa, and the concomitant non-recognition of witnesses, Ben feels that with his efforts stymied they 'amount to nothing' and that any 'progress' he has made is illusory (266). He lacks, he says, something to 'show for [his] efforts' (270) -- an object capable of being seen, and so being acknowledged in its realness, by his peers, for whom this nonobject is instead invisible, unregistered in their ideological schema. Unable to be seen or audited in a legal hearing, his endeavours find no independent ratification, with the result that their value seems purely subjective to him, a delirium of altruism with no importance to anyone but himself. 'In weaker moments,' Ben confesses, 'I fear that Susan might have been right: am I losing my mind?' (266). Since Ben cannot obtain recognition from the forums underwriting hegemony's doxa as 'truth' and dismissing his charges as well-intended but misplaced concern, eccentricity, madness and finally malevolence, he wonders whether he is not 'totally alone' (163). Unrecognised, the dissident falls into non-being.

(vi) Faith: projecting a 'universal witness'

Yet in the logic of the narrative the very fact that his self-doubts and sense of isolation are available to a reader in a textually preserved form or novelistic record is proof that he has not passively succumbed to 'the temptation of despair' (Dove, 11) and resigned himself to the apparent inevitability of the clamorous non-meeting between oppressor and oppressed. Rather than surrender to a silence in which he cannot make his identity be recognised, Ben builds a false bottom in a cupboard, in which he will hide his journal from the Special Branch. The step is pivotal, as it signals Ben's shift from reformist criticism of the state, to a stance which is self-consciously adversarial: the subterfuge is 'a counter move, something positive and decisive, a new beginning' (ADWS, 157). Crucially, the 'new beginning', in

contrast to the closure the doxa seeks to impose and the despairing immersion in sameness it tries to perpetuate, projects a narrative trajectory which renews hope for (self-)manifestation. To use the terms employed in 'The dove in the grave', this negation of 'clamour' involves the re-affirmation of the 'unstoppable basic groundswell towards understanding' (11). That is to say, the 'new beginning' posits a metanarrative in which component narratives progress towards a site of a mutual 'understanding' in which all will be heard. What makes the journal an effective 'counter move' (157) is its capacity to survive silencing by sectional rule; correlatively, Ben presupposes that his writing will find an addressable Other, necessarily located beyond the present rule's deafness, which entails the additional presupposition that his writing is part of a metanarrative progression from sectional domination to a general polis. In his first journal entry, Ben ponders racial divisions between 'us' and 'them' (162). 'But who are "my people" today?' he asks: 'To whom do I owe my loyalty?' (163) -- that is, whom do I address through my actions, and from what social body do I seek confirmation of my identity? Ben's self-questioning is bound up with his attempts to posit a desired desiring subject through the very act of writing a journal. Since this addressee is equated with a nascent social collectivity, an Other-as-agora, his action of writing acquires a social importance lacking in 'ordinary' speech which routinely inhabits the doxa. His writing, that is, is a testimonial performance, in which he 'take[s] responsibility' for events going 'beyond the personal, in having general (nonpersonal) validity and consequences' (Felman, 1991, 204). Yet more pertinently, the act of testifying itself grants a valorised status to his writing. 'To testify,' Felman says, 'is always, metaphorically, to take the witness stand' (1991, 204): to testify is to locate oneself in a configuration of socially privileged discursive positions. The importance of Ben's act of testifying is that -- situated as he is within the dearth of hegemony -- he speaks in advance in the ceremonial and civic positions of a polity not yet in existence, constructing a witness stand where none had been available to redeem his speech with general recognition.

Ben's faith that his testimony will 'come into the open' (ADWS, 142) in a transcendent future realm is implicitly vindicated by the network of metaphorical correspondences which are invoked by the novel's ending. Ben places his notes and journals in the care of an old university friend, at present a magazine writer, and invites him to transform them into a novel once he (Ben) has been assassinated by the security police. The narrative which the friend then produces has a cyclical structure, opening with his primary diegetic first-person report of Ben's recent death, while closing with a diegetically embedded excerpt from Ben's final journal entry, made on the eve of his death. Is this, as the narrator wonders in an epilogue, a 'senseless circle' (313)? Evidently not, for his text is a transmission of testimony, and thus reduplicates Ben's speech act of testifying, which implies that <sup>the</sup> narrator has himself projected an agora beyond an enclosed doubling of sameness between oppressor and oppressed. The narrator, initially a cynic whose Weltschmerz cripples his writing, is at last moved by a 'feeling of responsibility towards something Ben might have believed in: something man is capable of being but which he isn't very often allow<sup>ed</sup> to be' (315). This change in attitude is significant, since it indicates the effects of his vocation as a witness. Vocation: practice, a calling (from vocare, to call; C. E. D.). In the same way as Brink is called on by the Great Rabbi of Paris to eschew despair and affirm a beneficent future (1993, 11), the narrator is called on by the Other to enter a covenant investing him with a special office and high purpose as a trustee of the future's memory and an emissary bridging present and future: invoked as an addressable Other, he discovers his vocation as one who invokes the Other-as-agora. According to Laub, in the psychoanalytic session the onset of testimonial speech -- qualitatively different from 'the routine of everyday quabble' (1991, 63) in which the analysand speaks from the specular doublings of the master's doxa -- is marked by such a moment of annunciation. As Brink's annunciation by the Great Rabbi is accomplished by the gift of an apothegm -- a divine seal calling him to assume an office -- the psychoanalytical annunciation is performed through the exchange of a secret password or tessera serving as token of

recognition between initiates of a certain order.<sup>25</sup> During the session, Laub writes, '[a] cue is dropped' by the analysand, while he, as the analyst, echoes it in his response, thereby 'mak[ing] myself known as one who knows' (63). The cue is a 'secret password' by means of which the patient 'names himself and asks ... for a reciprocal identification' from the analyst, who in turn identifies himself as one 'who can recognize ... the experience of the trauma' (63-4) and acknowledge it in its realness. This exchange of a password effects (or ratifies) a pact. Their 'mutual recognition of a shared knowledge' (Laub, 1991, 64) allows them to make themselves known to each other in their capacity as members triangulated in relation to an overarching community, a community offering a topos where their once-silenced 'humanity' may come to light: their dyadic interlocution is re-situated in relation to a 'third party' (Levinas, 1979, 213) which constitutes them as members of a larger whole.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, in A Dry White Season Ben's transmission of testimony to the writer institutes a pact between them which commits them to 'something man is capable of being but which he isn't very often allowed to be' (315): a condition in which 'humanity' may emerge. For Ben, the testimonial action projects an agora for whose benefit he labours; correlatively, it is from this agora that he seeks the recognition denied to him. For the narrator, Ben's transmission calls him to enter a web of obligations, both to the Other (the stranger his friend) and to the agora in the Other (what Ben is 'capable of being' in an un-limited openness). As such, the writer is not the singular addressee of Ben's testimony; he is a mediating point within a triangular structure, witnessing the witnessing of another on behalf of 'the universal witness' (Derrida, 1978, 314). In short, he is the site of a textual departure rather than an arrival, a termination, or a closing. Ben's final meditation, in which he claims to find himself utterly bereft in a drought-stricken landscape, consoled by his faith in 'God's infinite grace' (ADWS, 305), anticipates precisely such a departure:

In the beginning there is turmoil. Then it subsides, leaving a silence: but it is a silence of confusion and

incomprehension, not true stillness but an inability to hear properly .... And it is only when one ventures much more deeply into suffering, it seems to me, that one may learn to accept it as indispensable for the attainment of a truly serene silence. I have not reached it yet. But I think I am very close now. And that hope sustains me (305, emphasis added).

He is, of course, close to being murdered. But Brink does not trade in heavy irony. Instead, the novel's system of metaphors implies that Ben's textual preservation heralds a parousia in which he will accede after all to the 'serene silence' (305) of a transaudition unimpeded by the clamour of adversarial misprision. Chronologically, the meditation occurs shortly before the journal is passed on to the writer, and it may thus be read as a prefiguration of the testimony's dissemination in an unlimited range of signifying contexts unforeseen by its author, whose death quite literally is accompanied by the birth of textuality. No longer functioning as sign-signals bound to 'the regional limits' (Derrida, 1978, 12)<sup>27</sup> of a specific subjectal domain, Ben's journal is separated from its authorial guarantor and, dispatched beyond its borders into proliferating networks of textual scenarios, takes on testimonial efficacy 'in having general (nonpersonal) validity and consequences' (Felman, 1991, 204). Moreover, the 'desert' in which Ben dies reprises the novel's titular motif of white rule as a time of drought. The deluge which Ben's death foreshadows (as the speaker says in the Wally Serote poem cited as an epigraph, 'seasons come to pass') hence points to both the demise of apartheid and the discursive plenitude expected in the wake of the writer's block ('a vast apathy' in 'this arid present landscape'; ADWS, 11) associated with the state's impoverishing doxa. This flood of signification is a 'serene silence' (305), for the doxa's miscognising and reductive 'inability to hear properly' (305) is to be superseded by a polyphony or signifying excess in which 'everything signifies ceaselessly and several times' (Barthes, 1974, 12).

Similarly in A Chain of Voices, a contemporary narrator re-opens the case closed by hegemony in 1825 by transcribing its testimonies in a text dated 1979-81 (512) and so facilitating their disseminatory movement from a univocal meaning to a polyvocal overdetermination of meaning. Yet since the context in

which they are re-enunciated in 1979-81 is in key respects analogous to the oppressive circumstances in which they were 'originally' enunciated in 1825, their introduction into the present is not the advent of their semiotic plurality but merely the start of a process expected to realize itself fully only in a utopic future. The present, that is, being itself unable 'to hear properly' (ADWS, 305), cannot provide Ma-Rose with the hearing she solicits when, speaking 'out of the shadow of death', she asserts, '[P]erhaps someone will hear us calling out, all these voices in the great silence ...' (CoV, 431). As in the relationship between Ben and his friend the writer, the narratorial agency answering Ma-Rose's call is not himself the destination of her testimony but one whose function it is 'to take responsibility' for it by submitting it to a hearing 'before the court of history and of the future' (Felman, 1991, 204). If Ma-Rose calls to an addressable Other beyond the doxa's doublings, the narrator -- like the psychoanalyst in his or her role for the analysand -- comes to occupy this place solely as an emissary of the agora. To this 'someone' she thus entrusts the task of resurrecting her from 'the shadow of death' (431) to the luminous site of hearing.

(vii) Text as prefiguration of Utopia

The Conservator in turn transcribes the archival records, which, no more 'utilized as natural, biological or technical information' (Derrida, 1978, 12), enter into the intransitive 'practice of the symbol' (Barthes, 1988a, 168),<sup>28</sup> subsequently 'transmigrat[ing] into our life [and] ... writing fragments of our own daily lives' (Barthes, 1971, 7).<sup>29</sup> Lifting the death sentence of the doxa, the narrator affects a return of the dead to the life of the signifier and a re-emergence of what the court did not hear. His expanded inscription, for instance, includes testimony by those who died before and during the revolt. Besides such impossible testimony, it contains improved testimony expressed with a linguistic and conceptual articulacy inconsistent with rural illiteracy, as if the revised document were empowering speakers with an intellectual sophistication hegemony had sought to stifle. Themes outlawed by the doxa are



taken up, in particular that of inter-racial sexuality: for Galant, sexual intercourse with white Hester was his greatest transgression, yet the court's litany of his evil does not mention this diabolism at all, which indicates either that it is so unthinkable that its actual occurrence would necessarily be met with a baffled non-recognition, or that it is disavowed. Moreover, this revision offers the reader a synoptic perspective from which he or she can discern the various discrepancies and mutual misunderstandings between witnesses. While the speakers are compartmentalised and immured in their deafness to one another -- stoically aware that 'another man's mind remains sealed in its own mystery' (CoV, 281) -- the reader has access to every character's thoughts and motives, and can appreciate their dilemmas as the product of a dis-relating social structure ruling out a common meeting-place. By the same token, the reader's all-hearing position prefigures an era of social transparency arising ~~arising~~ once chain and sword are cast away. The Text is for Brink, as it is for Barthes, an anticipation of 'the openness, the open-endedness, the endlessness -- the silence ['a truly serene silence'; ADWS, 305] -- of a country for which the future is still possible ...' (States, 244). And for Roland Barthes, the Text 'participates in its own way in a social Utopia: before History (supposing the latter does not opt for barbarism), the Text achieves, if not the transparency of social relations, that at least of language relations: the Text is that space where no language has a hold over any other, where languages circulate ...' (1977, 164) free of domination.

\*

## ENDNOTES

1. In Felman and Laub, 1992, 81.
2. Cf. Chapter 1, 'IV. The subject and paranoid space'.
3. Of course, the irony is considerably blunted when one bears in mind that, whatever their differences, Sartre and Derrida share a pre-occupation with Hegel; who had presented the relation between Same and Other as a violent 'struggle for recognition' -- as war.
4. Cf. Chapter 1, 'III. The subject and defective vision'. This case is also discussed again in 'II. Second silence' of the present chapter.
5. Cf. Chapter 1, 'V. Numb'.
6. Anagnorisis is a 'term used by Aristotle in Poetics to describe the moment of recognition (of truth) when ignorance gives way to knowledge. ... The classic example is in Oedipus Rex when Oedipus discovers he himself has killed Laius' (Cuddon, 1979, 38).
7. Shame, Sartre writes, 'is in its primary structure shame before somebody. I have just made an awkward or vulgar gesture [for example]. This gesture clings to me: I neither judge it nor blame it. I simply live it. ... But suddenly I raise my head. Somebody was there and has seen me. Suddenly I realize the vulgarity of my gesture, and I am ashamed. ... [T]he Other is the indispensable mediator between myself and me [that is, between myself as I 'simply live' myself, and myself as a determinate object seen by the Other]. I am ashamed of myself as I appear to the Other.' (1986, 281).
8. Cf. Chapter 1, 'VI. Ecstasy (iii) The narrative: enantiodromia'.
9. Cf. Chapter 1, 'VII. Clamour'.
10. 19-- , 53.
11. 1966, 110.
12. Cf. Chapter 1, 'VI. Ecstasy (v) Death of the author'.
13. Cf. Chapter 1, 'III. The subject and defective vision'.
14. Cited in Cock, 1991, 66.
15. 1988, 43.
16. Cited in Felman and Laub, 1992, p.80. A partisan in the resistance is given the opportunity to take revenge on a captured German youth for all she has suffered at the hands of the Nazis; instead of killing him, she dresses his wounds.

17. '[T]he ticket-collector is only the function of collecting tickets; the café waiter is nothing but the function of serving the patrons' (1958, 381).

18. 'I can grasp the Other, grab hold of him, knock him down,' Sartre says. 'But everything happens as if I wished to get hold of a man who runs away and leaves only his coat in my hands. It is the coat, it is the outer shell which I possess' (1958, 393).

19. Cited in Felman and Laub, 1992, 67-8. Levi is relating a recurring dream he had while imprisoned in Auschwitz.

20. CoV, 431.

21. Cited in Felman and Laub, 1992, 38.

22. 1977a, 9.

23. For an extended discussion of this point, the reader is invited to return to Chapter 1, 'II. The subject and sensory overload'.

24. Cf. Chapter 1, 'III. The subject and defective vision: (iii) Agora' for a discussion of this image.

25. 'The tessera,' Lacan's translator explains, 'was used in the early mystery religions where fitting together again the two halves of a broken piece of pottery was used as a means of recognition by the initiates -- and in Greece the the tessera was called the sumbolon' (1977a, 107).

26. An example of the exchange of passwords: Vietnam: A Casebook describes a therapist's experience with a war veteran who, during imprisonment, had sent secret messages to a fellow POW. 'Tom asked what part of the country I was from,' the therapist says.

I had an accent, he said, and obviously wasn't from Ohio. He guessed that I probably came from the New York area. Later in that session he further described the fellow POW who lay close to him during much of the period of imprisonment. This man who shared much of his value system and with whom Tom first began to work through his horror was from Brooklyn (233, emphasis added).

Tom's comment about the accent, the therapist claims, was an unconscious reference to his inherited role in the treatment as the fellow POW from Brooklyn. Only the fellow POW knew what it was like to go through the ordeal, to survive it, and to try to process it (233, emphasis added).

27. Cf. Chapter 1, 'VII. Ecstasy (v) Death of the author'. Briefly to gloss this comment again, however, it will be remembered that Derrida claims that writing is an ekstasis of 'signalization'. 'Signalization', he says, 'is always enveloped within the regional limits of nature, life and the soul' (1978,

12). Derrida maintains that the inscription of speech frees meaning from the constraint of univocality and 'from the natural predicament in which everything refers to the disposition of a contingent situation' (12). He says that it is 'when that which is written is deceased as a sign-signal that it is born as language; for then it says what is, thereby referring only to itself, a sign without signification ... since it ceased to be utilized as natural, biological or technical information, or as the transition from ... a signifier to a signified' (12). Similarly, Barthes writes, 'As soon as a fact is narrated no longer with a view to acting directly on reality but intransitively, that is to say, finally outside of any function other than that of the practice of the symbol, this disconnection occurs, the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death, writing begins' (1988a, 168).

28. Cf. Chapter 1, 'VII. Ecstasy (v) Death of the author'.

29. Barthes writes, 'The bliss of the text is often only stylistic .... However, at times the pleasure of the Text is achieved more deeply (and then is when we can truly say there is a Text): whenever the "literary" text (the Book) transmigrates into our lives, whenever another writing (the Other's writing) succeeds in writing fragments of our own daily lives, in short, whenever a co-existence occurs' (1971, 7).

Similarly, Felman argues that the efficacy of testimony is to be gauged by its impact on the recipient, particularly the way in which it precipitates a crisis in the addressee or reader which is analogous to that underwent by the witness herself. 'A "life-testimony", she says, 'is not simply a testimony to a private life, but a point of conflation between text and life, a textual testimony which can penetrate us like an actual life' (1992, 2). Conflation, concomitance, contagion: Felman makes the point often enough that the addressee of testimony may become the medium for that testimony -- he or she may sustain it by being possessed by it.

### 3. THREE ECSTASIES

`And what's left of him, what still remains, is just one rage. That everywhere he'd stepped, he'd somehow stepped on someone else.

That everything he touched was always tainted by some loss. He couldn't help himself; it was desire itself that was at fault'  
-- Stephen Watson<sup>1</sup>

#### I. Silence and shattering

Too numb to achieve anything in the face of civil discord, the subject is dumbfounded by violence. Stuck in himself for fear of exposing himself to danger, withdrawn into an impenetrable silence after physical and psychic violation, paralysed by the death of a friend, and weary and inert at the prospect of an unconquerable challenge to the social system defining him, he is rendered mute by the approach of hostile otherness. The Other holds him at swordpoint where, cognitively and functionally disabled, his world disintegrates in its independent subsistence, only to be re-integrated in the signifying totality determined by the Other. In his brush with the Other-as-death, it is as though his dissolution as a subject of knowledge capable of interpreting events were metaphorically akin to a condition of visual impairment, to the destruction visited on channeling mechanisms by an intolerable overload (of data and excitations), and to the contraction of a territory, edifice or any other spatial field.

Yet like the crayfish which forgets it has received the death-blow and so obligingly spares the fisherman from the compunction of remorse by adjusting itself to its role in his project, the subject `get[s] used to' (Act, 371) this apprehension of mortality. What was an overpowering sense of finitude and endangerment is blunted and de-realised -- the subject becomes numb, resigning himself in a self-protective stupor to the place he is allocated by the Other, or identifying himself with a position of mastery from which he may deny his subjection to the Other, his being-for-others, and hence his mortality as well. Consequently, he re-asserts himself as the subject of knowledge. No longer is he blind but clear-sighted; no longer is he disrupted by excess over his assimilatory abilities

but cognitively adequate and self-present to what he undergoes; and no longer is he finitely delimited, but instead self-extensive.

In this state of indifference, the subject repudiates all menacing alterity and imagines himself to be innocent, a non-combatant denying that he is a perpetrator of violence implicated in an agon. The indifferent subject, that is, feels himself guiltless and hence disavows knowledge both of the Other as other and of his own monstrous desire. In the condition of numbness and apathy, an inherently ambivalent condition in which the subject ranges across an affective spectrum from (on the one hand) an acute sense of powerlessness to (on the other) a dullness blunting this sense, too great an awareness of mortality shifts precariously into too little an awareness of it, with the result that the disavowal of alterity and mortality is accompanied by the subject's self-mystified lack of morality. It is, in short, as though the subject, too terrified to speak through exposure to violence, came to occupy not only the silence of the dehumanised victim, but the silence of the alienated aggressor as well. Again, it is as if the sword's point and hilt, that is, their respective registers of subjectivity, were conflated in the numbed subject, such that the victim's lack of an autonomous voice were coupled with the aggressor's absence of self-consciousness regarding the destructiveness of his ecstatic desire.

In the numb subject's silence and self-mystification, his terror at endangerment from exterior violence and his terror at the threat to self-preservation posed by his desire, is 'internal-or-private and mute' (Kojève, 1986, 118). By contrast, were the subject to make terror external-or-public by speaking it, and necessarily invoking an addressable Other capable of witnessing (auditing, ratifying) his speech, he would autoenunciatively pose himself before himself in the signifiers underwritten by the addressable Other and obtain consciousness of himself as an object appearing outside himself in the Other. Yet it is the case that the benumbed subject's ennui stems from the lack of such an addressable Other. Situated within the internal doubling of aggressor and victim, or master and slave, that is,

in the subject-positions offered by the doxa which defines the limit of what is thinkable, the subject cannot make himself heard and recognized inside these constraints: his narrative trails off as an unlistened-to story, his quiddity goes unrecognised, and he is obliged to 'get used to' his entrapment in sameness and the absence of a witness to his desire. Thus Philip Malan, analogue for the impaired narrator of States of Emergency, stays defensively '"stuck" in [himself]' and his customary identity so long as he resists 'the terror that lies in exposing oneself totally, unreservedly, the readiness to risk everything' -- the upshot is that 'nobody will ever really know [him]' (States, 55). The corollary, however, is that were he to engage the terror of exploding his circumscribed identity and to project an Other-as-agora for whom this sacrificial self-opening could be performed, his 'internal-or-private and mute' quiddity would stand to be witnessed and recognised.

One might well say, then, that the numb subject, menaced by violence, not only conflates the silence at the sword's point (the terrified lack of autonomous voice) and the silence at its hilt (the absence of self-consciousness), but that in addition he is located in the silence across its shaft (the suspension of communality). To these three silences one can oppose three shatterings of silence -- shatterings in which the violence of un-saying is countered by the violence of saying, and in which 'violence' is transformed from an enervating nemesis to an energising resource of literary activity.

Shocked by violence, the writer is numb and unproductive. Yet how is the mutually exclusive opposition between 'violence' and 'writing' undone such that 'violence' loses the epithet of 'non-writing' and instead comes precisely to inform 'writing', while 'writing' sheds its characterisation as 'non-violence' to become the enactment of 'violence'? More simply, how is writing violent? In particular, how does the violence of writing enact the three shatterings of the numbed subject's three conflated silences?

I have argued that since Brink's novels frequently commence with an account of a narrator's incapacitation by violence, the writing which does follow upon this impairment testifies to the

existence of a struggle between the violence of unsaying and the violence of saying. Moreover, given that the fictions tend to draw attention to their conditions of articulation, they can be regarded as writings about writing -- as writings which reflect on the dynamics between violence and counter-violence implicit in the act of writing itself. And since the writing which ensues from the initial scene of traumatic disempowerment is haunted by the danger of lapsing back into aphasia, and indeed (given its typically cyclical narrative structure) is inclined compulsively to revisit this scene, it constitutes a commentary on the processes of surmounting speechlessness: as a result, the said can be read as providing insights into the problems of saying, and statements about violence (specifically the violence of political resistance) can be regarded as elaborations on the vicissitudes of utterance. Hence, once we have considered the question of how the violence of saying performs three shatterings of the subject's three silences, we shall amplify claims made in this respect by considering Brink's portrayal of resistance violence's alleged capacity to break the 'historical silence' (Dove, 11) between the oppressor and oppressed (that is, after having combined the sword's three silences in the person of the numbed subject, we shall separate them once more and discuss each in relative isolation as they are thematised within Brink's writing).

## II. Anagnorisis

`For this [servile] consciousness has been fearful, not of this or that particular thing or just at odd moments, but its whole being has been seized with dread. In that experience it has been quite unmanned, has trembled in every fibre of its being, and everything solid and stable has been shaken to its foundations. But this pure universal movement, the absolute melting-away of everything stable, is the simple, essential nature of self-consciousness, absolute negativity, pure being-for-self, which consequently is implicit in this consciousness'

-- G. W. F. Hegel<sup>2</sup>

### (i) Inwardising exterior disintegrative forces



The violence of saying effects three shatterings of silence inasmuch as it involves the assertion of an autonomous voice, the development of a consciousness-of-self, and the projection of communality. In general, one may say that, as much as the subject's disablement by dangerous otherness entails the disintegration of his world and its re-integration in schemes determined by the Other, his re-empowerment through the counter-violence of saying involves, conversely, his disintegration of the form imposed on him by the Other, and, consequently, his appropriation to himself of the disintegrative force previously exercised by the Other -- where the Other had appeared to the subject as an obliterating potency before whom he had 'shudder[ed]' (Sartre, 1986, 281) or 'trembled' (Hegel, 1978, 117), it is the subject who claims this power of shaking 'everything solid and stable ... to its foundations' (Hegel, 1978, 117) when he enacts the violence of saying against the Other's attempted silencing ('dehumanisation') of him. Indeed, the metaphoric of sensory overload -- in which subjectal collapse is described in terms of intolerable excesses over assimilatory functions -- implicitly carries the sense that such traumatic overload is caused by an external agency, an Other, which 'floods' or over-stimulates cognition and leads it to malfunction. In other words, the metaphoric appears to be free of interpersonal reference as it deals only with the distribution of quantitative volumes within a functional apparatus, but in its suggestion that these saturating volumes are destructive and arise from exteriority, it implies that this transfer of volume from outside to inside occurs in the context of conflict between two sites, and thus its 'objectivity' is belied by the presupposed intersubjectivity of struggle. So if the Other is a disruptive force traumatically overloading the subject's capacities to take cognitive account of experience, and if the subject's attempts at assertion entail his appropriation of the Other's obliterating potencies, then it follows that the subject's work of assimilating traumatic excess into a cognitive order -- of making sense out of the incomprehensible and shocking -- engages him in the project of incarnating in himself the same disruptive tendencies formerly located 'over there' in the Other.

Earlier I argued (following Blanchot and Derrida) that paradoxically the disaster is an experience in which no experience occurs, meaning that, although it is an event through which one suffers, its disablement of one's cognitive faculties erases one as a subject of knowledge capable of registering and receiving it, so that, in a certain sense, one can say that no experience of it takes place after all.<sup>3</sup> Given the disjunction between the cognising subject and the one-who-undergoes, the experience in which the subject is confronted by violence and its message of mortality constitutes a 'missed encounter' (Lacan, 1977b, 55) -- an encounter which the subject belatedly tries to experience through the psychic operations of deferred action. As such, the subject comprehends the disaster's full import and horror 'only after the event' (Freud, in Derrida, 1978, 214), when, like the crayfish, he has already received the death-blow. And like the crayfish which keeps active after death yet moves toward a belated knowledge of its death, the subject stays alive in his acts of saying (in defiance of the violence of unsaying), but moves to a consciousness of death through these very acts: as Derrida observes, it is through deferral, that is, through 'the agency of signs' (1973, 62) supplementary to an antecedent event, that the event is 'lived in its meaning' (1978, 214). In saying, then, what is 'lived in its meaning' is nothing less than the death and trauma which the subject missed; and if saying is informed by the principle of enantiodromia, such that discourse at first maintains itself in opposition to death yet comes to inwardise and replicate it in its own structures, then it is as though the subject of the saying recognised something of himself in the other of exterior violence -- as if he appropriated aspects of the Other-as-death, and made of the Other's obliterating appearance a mirror in which he can recognise the violence of his own desire.

An illustrative example of this process of self-recognition is found in Rumours of Rain, where Mynhardt's retrospective narrative, informed by a wish to 'clear... up whatever lies behind in order to catch up with [him]self' (12), is thematised as a car-trip in which his journey back in time is mirrored by what he imagines to be a sinister force correspondingly advancing

from past into the present: this force, apparently exterior, is no less than himself, or at least the displaced and unacknowledged image of his desire, a projection which must be introjected. One may extrapolate, hence, that the subject's wish to be on time for traumatic experience (rather than to miss it) is a desire for co-occurrence between the experiencing and cognising subject, a desire for self-presence in which he catches up with himself. In short, he seeks, as a self-reflexive Cartesian subject looking for certainty of self (that is to say, in his capacity as a 'self-knowing-itself'; Heidegger, in Taylor, 1987, 38), to pose himself before himself as the disruptive and ek-static dis-integrative force which he is.

If commencing to write in the midst of confusing turbulence involves more than the activity of 'making sense' of events and changing them into coherent objects of knowledge, but involves additionally the re-assertion of subjecthood through an agon between the violence of saying and that of unsaying, then this re-constitution can be described in terms of the very metaphors which represented the subject's impairment. Thus, in relation to the metaphoric of sensory overload, the violence of saying is situated in the process of deferred action by which the subject takes to himself a disintegrative power initially wielded by an external foe; with regard to the metaphoric of defective vision, violent saying entails the transition from a state of blindness (or of a numbed unawareness of one's desire) to a condition of self-consciousness of desire.

#### (ii) Spatial transgression

Yet it is to the metaphors of spatial limitation and transgression that Brink turns most insistently in his account of the violence of saying, violence which seeks to shatter the Other's heteronomous impositions on the subject. One will recall that in 'An act of violence: thoughts on the functions of literature',<sup>4</sup> Brink emphasises that in his characterisation of literary activity as 'a subtle and complex set of responses to, inter alia, the violence of "the world"' (34), 'what is important is not only the articulation of violence but the violence of

articulation' (37). The reader or writer's engagement with a text or constellation of pre-existing semiotic codes is a violent `action directed in the first instance against the very notion of "authority"' -- and as this authority is the Platonic `idea of authority' (39), a `deity' (36), the violence occurs in an interpersonal order, between a master and a slave. Crucially, the existence of the masterful Other implies `a body, an entity, a space, something whole and intact, established and set apart through the will and wish of this authority' (36, emphasis added). Hence, violence directed against the Other's imposed forms is `an action through which this body or space is broken into, opened up, defiled, profaned ... its integrity invaded, its freedom challenged' (36). In this agon between reader/writer and code, subject and Other, the latter attempts to delimit the former, while the former dis-places the latter's definitions.

What is significant is that the subject of the saying, by entering the agon, puts himself at risk of being `opened up' or `invaded' (36) by the Other -- of being called into question, plunged into crisis, and having his customary self-conception disintegrated. By engaging in the agon as a combatant who obliterates and exceeds the statutory frontiers of his being, the subject of saying suffers anguish at his desire, which impels him to violate the enclosure he would otherwise have safely inhabited. Where he could remain silently `"stuck" in himself' (States, 55), he instead breaks through his encapsulated identity into alterity and opens himself to terror. Anguish, that is to say, stems not only from the external danger which the subject countenances, but from his own obliterative tendencies, which, disrupting his compact self-identity, threaten to obliterate himself as well. Terror is inspired both by adverse otherness and the ek-static desire responding to it -- by eros, which `propels one towards the transgression of frontiers' (States, 231). As Bataille remarks in Eroticism, `[T]here subsists in man a movement which always exceeds the bounds' such that erotic or libidinal `exuberance of life ... is not alien to death' (1962, 40; 11), a point he makes repeatedly in relation to various kinds of erotic transgression. To respect a prohibition, Bataille suggests, is to maintain oneself within a juridically decreed

enclosure; to discard it is to dispose of the grounds needed for one to grasp transgression's psychic tenor. But to violate the taboo while simultaneously investing in it is to be torn between the wish to preserve life by adhering to a sanctioned form, and desire which takes one heedlessly and ek-statically outside of oneself. In this agon between closure and transgression, in short, the subject of saying apprehends his life-endangering desire through a species of vertigo. As Bataille claims, 'The inner experience of eroticism [intrinsically transgressive] demands from the subject a sensitiveness to the anguish at the heart of the taboo no less great than the desire which leads him to infringe it' (1962, 39). Should the subject know too much about death, that is, be too fearful and thus cling to life, he will exempt himself from the agon and acquiesce to the delimited ~~ed~~ forms specified for him by the masterful Other; but in so doing he will know too little about his mortality -- about his displacing and (self-)obliterating desire which intimates itself to him when he puts himself in crisis. Again: he will be numb.

After traumatic impairment, the subject re-asserts himself by way of an agon between the violence of saying and unsaying. In this struggle, he shatters his heteronomous spatial determination; since this determination guarantees his self-preservation (the victim surrenders to an aggressor's terms under pain of death), his ecstatic shattering of it leads him to an awareness of his mortality in two senses: he realizes that he is killable and that his world can be disintegrated, flung into Sartrean nothingness, both by the Other with whom he is embroiled in a struggle of saying, and by his own, definitionally transgressive desire. Through this shattering saying and the self-shattering danger into which it impels him, he thus incarnates in himself the obliterating force initially opposed to him in exteriority, in the Other-as-death: he lives the death he missed.

### (III) Writing as struggle

'The desire to go keeling helplessly over, that

assails the innermost depths of every human being is nevertheless different from the desire to die in that it is ambiguous. It may well be a desire to die, but it is at the same time a desire to live to the limits of the possible and the impossible with ever-increasing intensity. It is the desire to live while ceasing to live, or to die without ceasing to live'

-- Georges Bataille<sup>5</sup>

'If my son's death could be a turning point in the history of South Africa ... then I'll thank God for it'

-- Father of Richard Okill, victim of the St James Church massacre<sup>6</sup>

### (i) Overview

How are these processes evinced in Brink's fictions? How, that is to say, do his fictions enact the struggle to write, the agon between saying and unsaying, between violence which liberates writing and violence which inhibits it? I argued that both A Dry White Season and A Chain of Voices, for instance, represent the enantiodromia of deferred action, inasmuch as in each case an intrusive narrator or an archivist, faced with a friend's death or an insurrection, reconstructs the events and motivations leading up to the death of these others, and, by writing himself into their lives through empathetic re-invention of their subjectivities, tries to undergo their deaths from the inside rather than look on from the outside. In the case in particular of the narrator of A Dry White Season, this act grants narratable form to his obscure feeling of deadness and permits him to re-experience the death he at first failed to encounter. Moreover, he writes himself out of deadened numbness by conserving Ben du Toit's testimony -- by struggling against the pressures to silence imposed by hegemony, which seeks to negate that testimony and re-formulate it in accordance with the master's doxa. As in the instance of the archivist-narrator of A Chain of Voices, who broaches the doxa's silencing of and deafness to the range of depositions presented to it, the narrator replicates Ben's transgressive saying in which he (Ben) keeps a journal documenting what the state tries to censor: as such the narrator's discourse is 'a counter move, something

positive and decisive, and a new beginning' (157), a 'counter move' in an agon of saying and unsaying between the hegemonic master and a slave. Yet by writing himself out of numbed deadness -- in which an oppressive sense that he is 'no longer immortal' (11) is, however, derealized by apathetic detachment -- and by writing himself into Ben's life and death through an act of transgression against the doxa, he becomes conscious of mortality. That is, on having received Ben's documents in the mail, he is aware that he, too, is under surveillance by Ben's assassins and that a similar fate awaits him as befell his friend (315). By writing himself out of deadness and following his transgressive, agonistic desire, he writes himself into death -- the death which strikes him from outside forces, the death which desire, the 'exuberance of life' (Bataille, 1962, 11), leads him towards.

#### (ii) Risk and desire

But it is the overtly self-reflexive States of Emergency which best exemplifies the ways in which 'the violence of articulation' (AVTEFL, 37) effects a re-assertion of narratorial subjecthood and shatters the three silences determined by the sword, the emblem of the violence of unsaying. To recapitulate an earlier exposition, one may begin by attending to its narrator's important insight that language and art 'are directed towards countering, or negating, or rebelling against [the 'sense of an ending'] ... [e]ven if each of them ends up by confirming what it has set out to deny' (17-18): they are ap<sup>P</sup>hantic presencings of that which they have to suppress in order to constitute themselves. As such, 'masterful images', held up to the light, disclose 'the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart'; notes and sketches of a planned novel, although signalling an increasing textual productivity, attest in their deferral of production to a present inability to write. These multiple beginnings -- convulsive endeavours to write which rapidly meet their aporetic limits -- send a message: I can't go on, I must go on. Discourse, in short, is dialogically implicated with its aphasic other, with the result that its commodified availability to a reader and

listener, its existence in factuality, is belied by the latent menace of unsaying with which saying is always-already grappling. So like Scheherazade, the narrator of States is engaged in a struggle in which he 'negates' or 'rebels against' forces tending to end -- to close, enclose, to contract spatially and limit -- his self-extending, diastolic writing. In this rebellious, conflictual saying he ek-statically claims his space of writing in defiance of the Emergency's threatened constriction of it: this is the first shattering of silence.

If art and language confirm what they deny by alluding to a tension within them between saying and unsaying, there is an additional nuance to their apophantic qualities, namely that saying, antagonistically entwined with unsaying, replicates within itself the very ending it denies. As the narrator's notes accumulate (a volume suggesting incremental supersession of unsaying), the novel he plans to write slowly takes shape, and thus no longer exists as a plenum of unrestricted imaginative possibilities: that is, as he formulates it, the intended novel loses its utopian openness, to assume recognisable lineaments and conventional literary features that it shares with other texts. It is not fresh and unique, but assimilated into a system of cultural knowledge and customary interpretations, which makes it interchangeable with other texts, and so part of what 'has always been already read, seen, done' (Barthes, 1974, 20). As the narrator's rhetoric of invasion emphasises, it is as if an ecstatic space had been subjugated by codes or formulae which, by assigning habitual meanings to signifiers, seal its expansive potential under 'a smothering layer of received ideas' (Barthes, in Silverman, 1983, 31). His prospective world is vitiated and re-formulated according to the Other's codes; in a more dramatic phrase, he suffers death in the signifier, in the heteronomous encapsulation. To paraphrase Lacan,<sup>7</sup> in the narrator's saying, he appears in the signifier only to disappear there since he is taken out of himself to be dispersed<sup>in</sup> the Other's chains of signification. Given the novel's self-reflexivity, the narrator foregrounds this disappearance -- he heightens his awareness of dying by posing it before him, and thus lives through the death or the maximum violence which he could not properly encounter in



the Emergency. Within the foregrounded performance of his saying, he simulates a violent engagement between his diastolic ekstasis and systolic otherness, an agon which he missed in the Emergency. His is an art of dying: a commandeering of his own fate through an artistic practice which seeks to reproduce the experience of death.

Importantly, this movement towards dying is informed by desire. While the narrator at first opposes the desire to write a love story divorced from worldly violence with the duty to address the adverse and antagonistic, he redefines desire so that the 'exuberance of life ... is not alien to death' (Bataille, 1962, 11). His ek-static desire impels him into the agon between expansive and constrictive forces such that his dying/disappearance in the Other's signifiers is not simply a contingency which happens to befall him, but precisely an eventuality to which desire drives him -- desire drives him to self-obliteration. To paraphrase Lacan again, the subject's disappearance in the signifier is also an appearance of himself before himself. Self-reflexively posing his implication in the agon before him, he 'stands back' from his ecstatic utterances the better to 'see' them, and sees himself there as one who is prepared to go beyond every delimited form of himself, even if this spells death for his world, even if his world (the utopically open-ended novel he envisaged) would be erased and reintegrated by the Other; the narrator beholds himself as one who is willing to risk his life, to risk the Other's averaging-out and smothering of his sublime inner imaginative space, for the sake of an ecstatic self-assertion against forces confining him to silence. As such, by posing before himself the disappearance of his world in the signifiers of the Other, he sees the extremes to which his desire for self-assertion propels him, when he could, alternatively, have kept his life and 'novel' silently and protectively '"stuck" in himself' (States, 55); what he sees is the (self)obliterating force of his desire for recognition. So, if the ekstasis of reified form is the first counter-violence which shatters the sword's unsaying, this violence, autoenunciatively placed in front of the subject of the saying, makes him aware of mortal desire (the desire of a mortal

born to being-for-others, the desire bringing death) and effects a second shattering, that of the subject's alienation from his desire.

(iii) Agon and agora

(a) Towards something Other

There is a third dimension to the subject's depressive numbing which is also shattered in the commencement of an ecstatic struggle against his silencing by violence. This is the dimension of his ennui and his despair at the absence of a communal agora for the sake of which he could labour, and in which, welcomed by the Other, whom he likewise welcomes, he could speak and be heard; lacking such a youtopia which he could celebrate with his sacrificial gifts, and which would in turn invest his endeavours with significance and special purpose, the task of writing seems to be a study in futility. Like the narrator of A Dry White Season, an 'old hack' (11) who cynically deprecates what he regards as the inconsequentiality of the romantic fiction he writes and the public role he is called on to play (a guest speaker at literary clubs, a producer of commodities abiding by the doxa's stipulations), the subject languishes in a moribund social regime, a regime which, by defining the limits of the thinkable and by assigning the identities it considers alone worthy of recognition, is deaf to other cognitive and existential possibilities. The regime, then, does not prize the numbed subject's unorthodox speech, nor, indifferent to his quiddity, does it constitute a desirable site desirous of his opening up of himself and his self-manifestation. For the subject, this social formation is not 'a subject of desire' (Felman, 1992, 32) whom he cathects with sublimated libidinal investment, and is thus not a 'subject' for whom he labours and from whom he solicits a desiring response. Nevertheless, he is trapped in the estranging formation, and so consigned to dormancy -- in short, he is immersed in a circumscribed zone of sameness which excludes an Other whom he could address and by whom he could be heard and recognised.

Yet though the subject is confined in the specular doublings

between a master and a slave (the master constructs the slave in his image, while the slave identifies with this interpellation), in the ecstatic speech by which he shatters these determinations, his movement away from a specific encapsulation of himself and against a constraining force, is necessarily a movement outside of sameness, and towards something other. Breaking out of a silencing-by-encapsulation in which he is not heard by the doxa, the subject desires to make himself heard, so that -- beyond present deafness -- his speech presupposes and actively projects the existence of one-who-hears. The violence of this self-assertive saying thus has a negative and a positive aspect: it negates a contraction while positing an addressable Other beyond the underworld of 'the foul rag-and-bone-shop of the heart', and on 'the other side' (CoV, 395) of present entrapment. As Landman says in his appeal to victims of the bomb blast, 'It was to get us out of [the centripetal tug of a 'whirlpool' of violence] that we have done it' (Act, 230); his violence, by contrast, supposedly unleashes a reverse tendency of centrifugal movement towards the safety of the shore, or agora.

Brink likewise describes 'the violence of articulation' as 'a continuous act of transgression and transcendence' which involves 'the neverending crossing of boundaries (of meaning, of spaces, of fields of action)' (AVTFL, 42). The text, he claims, quoting Robert Boyers, is a 'movement toward a world not yet made' (40). Given Brink's prominent use of metaphors of extension and movement in relation to textual dissemination, it would seem that the subject's ecstatic utterance against silence, utterance in which he risks death in the signifier (that is, the finalisation or determination of his meanings), resonates beyond his limited being into an intertextual realm: the violence of his saying inaugurates a diastolic passage to a youtopia where 'no language has a hold over any other' (Barthes, 1977, 164), where no language subjugates, impoverishes, and deafens itself to, the polysemy of signifying possibilities in an-other language. One will recall from an earlier discussion<sup>8</sup> that, according to the idea of intertextuality, every text is always-already a text-between-texts, a text interpreted by way of the other texts into which it is contingently 'plugged' (Barthes, 1988b, 194);

conversely, texts do not signify as self-contained entities, but do so inasmuch as their boundaries overlap with other texts. Their meanings, Brink notes, are thus `never "here", never "present", never "final"' but dispersed across intertextuality and perpetually in process of becoming, which is why textuality involves `the neverending crossing of boundaries' (AVTFL, 42). Since meaning is `never "final"' -- that is, finalised by a dominant language having priority over another -- textuality prefigures the utopia of `a world not yet made', a world `not yet made' both in the sense that it is not in existence and that it is a permanently undefined site of open possibilities. (The narrator of States of Emergency stresses the prefigurative function of intertextuality when he uses the vocabulary of textual openness to describe the ideal national, public space: what he hopes for is `the openness, the open-endedness, the endlessness ... of a country for which the future is still possible', and which has therefore not had its future potential foreclosed and predetermined by contemporary strife; 244.)

To summarise, then, through the violence of his saying, the subject locates himself in an indefinite metanarrative progression from a coercively enclosed interiority into polymorphous exteriority, and from a state of affairs reducing signification, to one increasingly allowing all signifying possibilities to manifest themselves as the text circulates in `the speech of the People' (Barthes, 1977, 3). `Writing,' Brink observes, `does not cease at the end of a ... story -- it is inscribed as traces in the mind of the reader, where it continues to pursue its meanings in the world' (AVTFL, 42). Since the pursuit `involves the neverending crossing of boundaries' and mutual interpenetration of texts and readers, it is as though this transgressive crossing, while accentuating separation from a previous condition, instituted a proliferating network of bindings among language-users, a network which in principle tends asymptotically to take in all speakers (its crossing and binding is `neverending'). As such, the text's articulation presupposes -- aside from empirical contingencies -- its transmission into generality, and -- over and against the dereliction of the context of enunciation -- bears witness to a futural community.

Significantly the narrator of A Dry White Season breaks his numbness not only by entering an ecstatic agon against hegemony's silencing and by becoming conscious of his mortality and desire, but by affirming faith in 'something man is capable of being but which he isn't very often allowed to be' (316). That is to say, he writes in the name of this other destiny prohibited by sameness. His writing is an invocation of 'a world not yet made' (AVTEFL, 40), and it is hence an act of faith in the possibility of such a world coming into being. His writing, in short, is an action which bears witness to the (potential) reality of the agora surmounting present estrangement. By taking the witness stand and offering his saying 'before the court of history and of the future ... before an audience of readers and spectators', the narrator so becomes 'the vehicle of ... a dimension beyond himself' (Felman, 1992, 204; 3). Addressing the future and taking responsibility for preservation of past affairs, he is a conservator who assumes custody over the latter for the benefit of the former. Thus, the conservator is the 'vehicle' for relating narratives which the past wants to tell, the present order wishes to suppress, and which the future wants to hear.

Describing his feeling of loss at the death of Grandpa Ntshenge, Landman regrets the disappearance of the unrecorded oral archive which he had at his disposal: '[I]t seems to me a whole dimension of the country's memory has vanished' (Act, 242). While the phrase 'a country's memory' is commonplace enough, it is worthwhile examining its various assumptions in closer detail, for it suggests, first, that a collectivity has attributes of a sentient person, namely a 'memory', and second, that this collective subject seeks consciousness-of-self by reflecting on itself, by 'looking back' at itself, and by re-membering itself as a coherent totality posed before itself: the 'country' assimilates matters as component narratives in the metanarrative of its development, consolidation, and attainment of fully-fledged self-conscious existence. By re-membering itself out of its previous dis-memberment, it pleasures itself in reading the narrative of its coming-into-being, in seeing itself constitute itself from an initial fragmentation and dormancy, and, as such, it converts death, conflict and suffering into interruptions or

edifying, instructive moments within the 'unstoppable groundswell towards understanding' (Dove, 11) through which it emerges as a unified entity.<sup>9</sup> It is for this reason that one can claim that the future wants to receive the testimonies of the past, and that it invests the conservator's office and labours with special importance. The futural country is 'a subject of desire' (Felman, 1992, 32) -- a subject desired by the conservator, a subject desiring (itself) in the narratives he conserves.

Dovetailing into this configuration of desires is the desire of the past to tell itself, to make itself heard, and to be recognised in spite of circumstances mishearing and nullifying its realness. The conservator, whose ek-static summoning of the Other-as-agora simultaneously vests him with an office and hence with a set of duties towards the Other, is thus pledged as well to facilitate the past's desire for recognition from the Other-as-agora. One will recall that the narrator of A Dry White Season and Ben du Toit are bound in a pact to advance 'something man is capable of being but which he isn't very often allowed to be' (316). Through the pact, however, the narrator is called on not only to bear witness to the prospective post-apartheid agora, to the deluge expected to follow after the dry season (of white rule and a writer's block), but to be a witness to Ben's acts of witnessing, to 'reconstruct intricate events' from what is 'illegible or missing' (33) in Ben's notes (elisions metonymic of the doxa's censorship), and to '[r]eport [him] and [his] cause aright' (33). The novel is arranged as a chain of transmission in which testimonies are sent from one witness to the next 'like those flames carried by runners' (States, 195), messages which (it is hoped) will ultimately arrive at the imperial capitol: first, Gordon investigates his son's death in detention but is himself killed by agents of the state; second, Ben is possessed by Gordon's desire to make known 'the full story of what had happened' (51), and is killed; third, shortly before his death, Ben entrusts the project to the narrator, who is aware that he, too, is at risk from the security police. In each case, there is an ek-static desire to shatter an imposed silence surrounding an intimate's death; in each case, the desire to know the circumstances of that death gives the subject knowledge of

mortality, of his life-endangering desire; in each case, the subject risks his life so as to make 'the full story' known, and, inasmuch as this is achieved, to obtain from the agora a recognition of the validity (rather than the aberrancy or delusional nature) of his exertions.

To gain recognition of 'the full story', and to assert himself as an ek-static being who cannot be delimited by the social position into which the hegemony tries to fix him, Ben must expend himself to the limits of his resources. As he says, 'There would be no sense in it unless I'm prepared to pay the full price' (297). By not paying 'the full price', that is, by choosing life for fear of the dangerous consequences of his ek-stasis, he accomodates himself to the place allotted him by hegemony and thus does not broach his silencing or that of Gordon and the latter's son. Conversely, by being prepared 'to pay the full price' (297), and risk dying for the sake of self-assertion, Ben underlines the seriousness of his resolve, and substantiates, through a self-sacrificial act, his conviction in the value and the attainability of his social ideals: without such a readiness, he suggests, the goals he professes would be 'senseless', merely rhetorical affirmations which lack his ultimate endorsement (he would simply be 'bluffing himself' about his faith in his aspirations, and, shown to be 'bluffs', these would lose the over-riding significance he had believed they held for him). Nonetheless, this risk of life courts the obvious danger that his enterprise -- along with his life -- will soak without trace into the indifferent texture of things. 'As long as it doesn't end here,' Ben cautions the narrator, and emphasises how crucial it is that 'someone knows' about his endeavours: 'If they get that [if his journal is suppressed by the security police] there would have been no sense in it at all' (13). In short, by seeking a witness to his witnessing, Ben wants his negativity to be conserved.

#### (b) Dialectical conservation

What this means is as follows: by entering into a struggle with a constricting and silencing nemesis, the subject incarnates

in himself the obliterating force initially given in the Other's upsurge by ecstatically dis-placing, trans-gressing, ex-ploding, and negating the heteronomous form which this nemesis offers him in exchange for his life. This power of the subject to negate self and Other, to negate every given form of himself, defines his negativity, 'the capacity of mind to de-pose what actually is, or what it has itself judged "to be the case", in order to posit instead what is not (the possible, the future, the desirable)' (Descombes, 1980, 24). But if the power of negativity drives the subject to risk his life in a struggle against his negation by an enemy, '[t]o rush headlong into death pure and simple,' Derrida remarks, 'is thus to risk the absolute loss of meaning': Hegel, Derrida further remarks, 'called this mute and nonproductive death ... abstract negativity, in opposition to "the negation characteristic of [self-]consciousness, which cancels in such a way that it preserves and maintains what is sublated"' (1979, 255).

The reference is, of course, to Hegel's famous dialectic, or Aufhebung, and the distinction Derrida makes is between abstract and dialectical negativity, between that risk of life which is 'mute and nonproductive', and that producing a meaning shareable between the rivals inasmuch as each acquires self-consciousness by way of the agon. In the course of dialectical negation, a totality is challenged by its antithesis and loses its sole validity; however (and this is where the crux of the distinction lies), the negation it suffers is tempered in so far as it retains a limited validity by being conserved within the new synthesis as a component element participating in its constitution (Laing and Cooper, 1964, 102). That is, the dialectic comprises a double process of negation and negation of that negation such that it 'maintains what it suppresses' (Borch-Jacobsen, 1991, 208). According to Taylor, the result is that 'every loss is turned to profit for that which is negated is also preserved as a necessary moment in the self-realization of the totality of which it is an integral member' (1986, 9).

An example of the Aufhebung is found in biological reproduction, as Barthes notes. '[T]he particular dies for the satisfaction of the universal', he says, which in this case is



`the superior Life Force (the race, the species)': `after having been reproduced as other than himself [in his offspring], the individual dies, having thereby denied and transcended himself' (1982, 72), having negated himself as an in-dividual, but also having negated this negation by being preserved in the child and integrated into the `species' as a `necessary moment in [its] self-realization' (Taylor, 1986, 9). Yet Barthes himself, childless, in mourning for his mother, without a lineage through which he universalise his particularity, delivers the words: `From now on I could no more than await my total, undialectical death' (1982, 72). This death, `mute and nonproductive' in relation to the `Life Force', is a `pure and simple' negation and an issueless expenditure which is not compensated by any profit. In the case of dialectical negation, the negation of death is converted into a sacrificial expenditure, such that the person negated is preserved as a `necessary moment' in the development of that for which he is sacrificed. But in the case of abstract negation, death is `total': it is `the coldest and meanest of all deaths, with no more significance than cutting off a head of cabbage or swallowing a mouthful of water' (Hegel, 1978, 360). The dialectic, in short, puts death to work in the production of meaning. This is hardly surprising when one bears in mind that Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit is, as Borch-Jacobsen points out, a `speculative version of the Passion' (1991, 12). In other words, the triadic structure of the dialectic replicates the course followed by the trinitarian Spirit in its progression from self-subsistence to incarnation (and crucifixion) and finally to resurrection. Originally existing as an unmediated, simple self-identity, Spirit negates itself (it separates itself from itself by experiencing death on the cross), but negates the negation (it ressurects itself), and by `becoming an other to itself, i.e., becoming an object to itself' (Hegel, 1986, 79), puts death to a productive use as a `necessary moment' in its attainment of self-consciousness.

So, when Ben solicits the narrator to conserve the negativity of his risk of life, he is motivated by dread of a `total, undialectical death'. `It seems as if a sacrifice is impossible to avoid,' Ben remarks: `But at least one has the

choice between a wholly futile sacrifice and one that might, in the long run, open up a possibility ... of something better ... for our children' (ADWS, 305). The 'choice', that is, is between abstract or dialectical negativity, and the demand he makes on the narrator is for the latter to share his faith in the reality of a metanarrative movement towards a futural agora, a metanarrative in which the negativity of Ben's self-sacrificial expenditure is conserved as a 'necessary moment' in the evolvment of the agora. 'Once in one's life,' Ben says, 'one should have enough faith in something to risk everything for it' (272). He faithfully projects a metanarrative teleology in which his self-negation will itself be negated, and his lethal expenditure will be amortized. In other words, he risks death in order to break silence -- to continue Gordon's mission to have 'the full story' (51) heard and to assert himself as an ecstatic, unsilenceable being -- and he has faith that these ambitions will finally be realised.

Given Ben's death, however, it falls upon the conservator to facilitate their attainment by resurrecting Ben in the signifier and thus dispatching him towards the futural agora. As a link between the past and future, the writer has three inter-related duties, duties informed by and stemming from his violent, agonistic desire for ekstasis. He must project a youtopian Future, rather than 'insult' it by falling to 'the temptation of despair' (Dove, 11), and attempt to gratify its desire for remembering itself by conserving the past; in turn he must conserve the past in order to satisfy its desire to be heard and recognised by the agora; lastly, as a corollary to the latter, he must resist forces of unsaying which erase, repress, forget or consign past voices to a 'territory of oblivion' (Act, 659) and so ensure their 'total, undialectical death'. Surveying ruins of his childhood home, Landman declares, 'I must survive. Because I remember what was here before. And now the vanished house and garden ... depend on me, on my ability not to forget' (Act, 426).

If this combination of duty and dependency is presented in A Dry White Season as a testimonial chain, elsewhere in Brink's writings the bequeathing of historical legacies is imaged through the relationships between fathers and sons, ancestors and

descendants. Thomas Landman, for example, speaks of a 'curious symbiosis' between himself and his forebears, who are 'still alive inside me' (Act, 659). In their mutually supportive co-existence, his ancestors constitute him while, long after their deaths, they retain a dialectically conserved existence through him (recall Barthes' comment in this regard); moreover, it is he who, through the bomb attack and his chronicling of the family's history, raises them from death inasmuch as he lifts them into the light of self-consciousness. 'Blindly, through fierce or furtive copulations in the dark, they invented me,' he says, 'in return for this [the chronicle] their conscious if tentative reinvention by their offspring' (Act, 659). Since the father -- whether Ben du Toit, or Galant in Chain of Voices -- ecstatically negates himself through an act of faith in the attainment of 'something better ... for our children' (ADWS, 305), since he sacrifices himself in political resistance in order to be an inspirational model for others, it is, according to this ethical logic, incumbent on the child to commemorate the father through an act of transmission (that is to say, by emulating his example or by preserving and ceaselessly re-interpreting an archival record), an act which resurrects him and incrementally advances his project of obtaining self-consciousness via the recognition afforded him by the agora. (The negligent son, by contrast, breaks the testimonial chain and consequently relegates ancestral endeavour to a 'total' death: perplexed by his father, a history teacher, thus a bearer of historical consciousness, Mynhardt wonders, given his failure to have comprehended his late father, 'how accurately I would hand [the history of the tribe] on to Louis one day'; RR, 256.)

Keeping his ancestors alive, Landman also locates their desire-driven endeavours as 'necessary moments', whether of failure or success, in an epic metanarrative progression from a condition of exile and displacement from Africa, to an eventual re-integration with it in which one will 'be this continent' (Act, 637, emphasis added). Both through his re-writing of the Landman chronicle in these terms and in his terror attack (which he believes signals resolute commitment to Africa, a veritable homecoming), Landman commemorates and advances in the direction

taken by his ancestor's desires: he honours and continues their projects.

Crucially, in the metanarrative he postulates, his ancestors' enterprises are redeemed from their apparent insignificance and futility (their state of abstract negativity), such that 'the waste, the suffering ... will yet turn out in the end to have been worth while' (638). From the perspective of 'the end', that is, in relation to the 'completed' national narrative, violence and death will have been changed from seemingly pointless wastes of life into productive moments contributing to the overall evolvment of the self-consciousness national colossus.

Nowhere does Landman make this point with greater emphasis than in his anguished reverie at the funeral service for the victims of his explosion. In a bid to balance the scales by contextualising the victim's loss in a broader theater of conflict, he describes a funeral procession for activists in the liberation movement. At the head of the procession, the African National Congress flag is like 'the columns of fire or smoke leading the children of Israel through the desert in search of a promised land'; later, 'everything is transformed into the black and green and gold of the flags over the single deep grave into which three coffins are lowered' (230-1). The suggestion that these deaths have been negated through a 'transform[ing]' assimilation into the emblems of political liberation, and have been incorporated as sacrifices into the metanarrative quest for re-integration with Africa ('a promised land'), extends to Landman's victims, where it is reinforced by biblical quotations read at the service. 'Sorrow shall be turned into joy ... that a man is born into the world,' the mourners are exhorted: '[T]he trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible' (231-2). By thus turning the deaths into 'necessary moments' in the nation's 'birth', they apparently lose their scandalous senselessness and acquire significance; in addition, the lives which have been negated are conserved within this national totality, since death is dialectically 'swallowed up in victory' (232) and the victims are canonised as unwitting martyrs.

Both in his bomb attack and his family chronicle, Landman

preserves a testimonial chain by discharging a duty to seek the fulfillment of his ancestors' desires for integration with Africa and, like a runner taking the flame from his predecessor in order to dispatch it toward the future, to conserve their expenditures of effort for the benefit of the national agora gratifyingly looking back on its history of coming-into-being; and by discharging this duty, he saves his ancestors' endeavour from being a 'wholly futile sacrifice' (ADWS, 305) by situating them as narratives or a series of chain-links within an encompassing metanarrative passage.

The chronicle he writes is presented, significantly, as a 'supplement' to the account of the terror attack, and therefore, recalling Derrida's comments on the ambiguities of the term 'supplement', the chronicle is, on the one hand, an addition to a totality entire unto itself, but on the other, is a compensation for an anterior deficiency -- in which case it may be seen as a continuation of 'the act of terror' and therefore as being in itself the perpetration of violence. Thus, in the violent, ek-static act through which the subject breaks his silencing, the legacy entrusted to him comes to light and is projected toward the future -- the outside, the beyond -- which saying presupposes and invokes. Whether or not the subject has been the recipient of actual testimony is, for Brink, besides the point -- as he has Landman say, 'It's not only the dead who enter your existence and become part of you: it's every single person who travels a part of the journey with you: each one rubs off on you ...' (Act, 257). That is, each subject retains the traces of the Other. Brink approvingly quotes Wolfe's description of the self as 'a transitory composite of materials borrowed from the environment', so that it is 'like a cave ... in which the entire village dwells' (AVTFL, 42). By risking death and broaching his condition of being 'stuck' in himself, it is not only the subject who emerges from the cave towards the luminous plain of the agora: it is the 'village' as well, the constitutive dimension of his historicity, which issues forth. As the narrator of States of Emergency notes, 'What assumes the form, at the moment [of composition], of an agglomeration of citations [that is to say, of traces and residues of the Other's discourse] will eventually

... be absorbed by that text to exist only ... as "mirages" (205). Although having been negated (or 'absorbed'), these traces and residues are still conserved as 'mirages', as ghostly forms through which the Other and the 'village' continue to live and, indeed, to thrive, since they ramify into diverse signifying contexts. Through the violence of saying, the subject becomes the 'vehicle' (Felman, 1992, 3), the oracular mouthpiece, for the coming-into-being of an entire world.

#### (iv) Analepsis

Let us briefly survey the path we have followed. I suggested, at the outset of the chapter, that the numbness and incapacitation caused by the violence of unsaying could be conceptualised as a conflation of the three silences of the sword. In this view, numbness arises from the lack of an autonomous voice, the absence of self-consciousness, and the collapse of a sense of communality. By contrast, the violence of saying shatters the silence through a re-assertion of subjecthood against an imposed destiny of objecthood, through a facilitation of self-consciousness, and through a positing of a realm beyond an enclosing framework of oppression. Thus, I went on to explain how these shatterings could be discerned within the violence of writing, and argued that, in general terms, the affirmation of subjecthood involves appropriating for oneself the world-obliterating power located in hostile otherness; that is, it entails the re-assertion of ek-static, ex-plosive, trans-gressive negativity in opposition to the Other's negativity. Through this re-assertion, the subject is made aware of mortality in spite of his self-protective disavowal of the menace the Other holds for him. In short, he suffers death in the signifiers of the Other. But more crucially, he acquires consciousness of mortality in the further sense that, risking death at the hands of the Other, he realises that his desire, his negativity, endangers his life -- in the signifiers before him, he poses himself as one who is ready to risk the destruction of his defensively insulated interiority for the sake of ek-static self-assertion against a masterful Other. Moreover, his shattering of a frame implies a

movement into a beyond and towards a futural world unbound by the constraints of present hegemonic orders; as an anticipatory appeal to such a future, and as a resurrection of the past from its quiescence, the violence of saying inaugurates the emergence of a world. Yet in order to lend greater cogency to these observations, one can turn again to one of the central themes in Brink's writing, namely the distinction between the violence of hegemony and that of political resistance. Having conflated the sword's silences, that is, we can separate them once more and examine how what is said in his writing illuminates the dynamics of its saying.

#### (IV) Brinkmanship

'I've never wanted to spare myself because I feel there are people around who died for this struggle. What right do I have to hold back, to rest, to preserve my health, to have time with my family, when there are other people who are no longer alive -- who have sacrificed what is precious, namely life itself? ... Most of our people knew that if they joined and became part of the struggle, the likelihood was always there to get killed. But we accepted that eventuality. We were ready to fight. But we also accepted that they would kill us'

-- Chris Hani<sup>10</sup>

##### (i) Violence as questioning

If the writing subject opposes the ecstatic violence of articulation to the numbing violence of unsaying, and the former violence involves the shattering of heteronomous forms, the acquisition of awareness concerning mortality and desire, and the projection of a dimension exceeding present oppression, Brink's account of the violence of political resistance draws attention to similar processes. Where Brink sees one category of violence separating 'sword' from 'word', degrading relations between speakers, and entrenching an 'historical silence' (Dove, 11) in which a reified victim and a self-alienated aggressor lack a shared topos where they could know each other and themselves, he points to another category of violence that combines 'sword' and 'word', promotes relations between the speakers, and breaks the 'historical silence' by fostering the victim's self-assertion,

piercing the aggressor's solipsism, and underscoring the possibility of a meeting-place in which they may be reconciled to one another.

Criticising the notion that 'violence is invariably, and exclusively, destructive and negative' (AVTFL, 36), Landman argues for violence's oft-ignored creative potential, observing '[h]ow closely related are destruction and creation, how thin the membrane that separate our different kinds of violence', and how violence which 'spells life' can easily be confused with other forms of it 'which threaten life' (Act, 426). 'What can be more violent than a question?' he asks:

She [Lisa] spoke about questions; never stops speaking about them. Her very existence is a question mark. Her questions about violence -- any question, all questions -- determine our limits, define the periphery of what is admissible, of what has so far been thinkable. And it is our search for answers to these questions which prompt us to transcend limits. This is the core of the violence which defines our humanity (426).

By conceptualising violence as a question, Landman implies that violence is an intersubjective exchange, and that 'the core of the violence which defines our humanity' (426, emphasis added) is a dialogue, in contrast to the monological nature of the violence which instead corrupts 'humanity'. Since violence is a question, and a question is violent, Lisa's incessant speech, her unrelenting interrogation of Landman's self-understanding, is a violent act through which she shows both him to be other than he thinks he is, and herself as other-than the notions he entertains about her. Her existence, as Landman says, is 'a question mark' (426) -- it is a violent questioning in which she calls his freedom into question and in which she reveals herself, through a violent ek-stasis of his preconceptions, to be permanently irreducible to his knowledge of her. In Levinasian terms, she is infinitely in excess of his appropriating cognitions.

Her assertion of alterity is coupled with Landman's realization of his delimitation, which in Brink's metaphors features as a trope for mortal finitude. When one is 'confronted with the other,' says the narrator of States of Emergency, the experience 'suddenly and violently' 'illuminates both the freedom and the boundaries of the self' (22); he goes on to quote



Certeau, who claims (during an interview on Levinas's thought), 'Because they are what I am not, others bring to me the tidings of my own frontiers, my inadequacies, in the final analysis of my death' (165, emphases added). So, in contrast to silence of 'mindless violence' -- 'the core' of which is determined by the oppressor's nullification of the Other, and his consequent 'ignorance of his own mortality' (Dove, 11) -- in the dialogic exchange at 'the core of the violence which defines our humanity' (Act, 426), the Other negates the Same's reductions, and, by affirming herself as another-I in relation to the Same, brings him the mortal knowledge that he is the Other's other and that he is thus vulnerable to the freedom of other subjects. Violence heralds death, and so provides the Same with consciousness-of-self.

In An Act of Terror, the bomb attack is intended precisely to bring hegemony to such an anagnorisis, and thereby to resume the dialogue between oppressor and oppressed which had been suspended by the former's monologue. Given, as Brink sees it, that 'the heart of a totalitarian regime' is 'that the despot forgets about, ignores, his own mortality', 'the mere attempt at an assault implies a transition ... from untouchability to vulnerability' (18-19). Thanks to the attack, his 'confrontation with this most basic of truths ... signals the beginning of the dictator's end' (19). Not only is the violent upsurge of alterity linked to awareness of mortality -- it is also supposed to induce morality within hegemony. Explaining the premises of the terror attack, Landman notes, 'It was ... a matter ... of using as a starting-point the situation of the whites in the country, the class of owners, of rulers, ensconced in their prosperous and secure existence ... and consequently supporting the system that offered them their material benefits; the need to shock them out of this syndrome of "the good life" and to open their eyes,' he says, 'if not to its injustice, at least to its precariousness' (50-1, emphases added). That is, the attack seeks to make hegemony sensible of its being-for-others and its guilt -- its lack of innocence, harmlessness and 'natural' given-ness, and its implication instead in a violent struggle for domination. The argument is made clear when Landman, quarreling with his brother

about the attack's legitimacy, asks,

Isn't all this simply a sign of how far things have gone, Frans? Of how close to the abyss we have all come? I mean, the very fact that people can be driven to something like that -- (111, emphasis added).

What Landman suggests is nothing short of the claim that it is precisely the apartheid hegemony which is ultimately responsible for the blast, for its oppression, leaving little recourse to the peaceful resolution of the conflict, constitutes the driving force behind the explosion. In addition Landman implies that the violence hegemony beholds emanating from outside itself in the Other's exertions is the outcome of its own violence and so represents a Dorian Grey mirror-image in which repressed knowledge of its violence rounds back on it with thunderous impact: the terrifying nemesis posed before itself is no less than the displaced image of its monstrous, negating, and obliterating desire. As Levinas declares, in the upsurge of the Other, the Same discovers its freedom of negativity to be 'arbitrary and violent', 'murderous in its very exercise' (1979, 84). Violence is an interrogation of the Same by the Other, a questioning in which the Same, 'search[ing] for answers to these questions' (Act, 426), commences with a moral self-examination -- a point which Brink underscores with the series of confessional narratives to which Landman's actions give rise among the various relatives and strangers he meets. By inserting 'the unthinkable' in 'the framework of the possible' (18), he challenges the self-evidence of the doxa and opens the way to the imaginative anticipation of modes of being lying beyond hegemony's ideological horizons.

#### (ii) Precautions

If this salutary violence of political resistance is presented as a dialogue in which the oppressed asserts his autonomy of the reifications imposed by the oppressor and in which the oppressor gains consciousness-of-self, then a number of special precautions have to be taken to ensure that such violence does not merely re-instate the monologue it strives to undo and replace one tyranny with another. Rather than reverse the roles

by oppressing the former oppressor (a move which would stunt his capacity to attain self-consciousness), the agent of violence must -- according to the ethics enounced in Brink's fictions -- scrupulously renounce impulses to instal himself as a new master. He must prohibit himself from enjoying the material and ideal rewards which flow from the success of his violent acts, and he does so by following a policy of temperance, self-sacrifice, service, discipline, symbolic mediation, and (finally) self-negation. One may somewhat cynically object at the outset, however, that these policies and precautions are largely redundant when one takes into account the sad record of innumerable defeats which Brink's portrayal of activism offers. In Rumours of Rain Franken, the leader of a militant cell, is imprisoned, in A Dry White Season Ben is murdered, in A Chain of Voices the revolt is quashed, while in An Act of Terror the State President survives the bomb blast and Landman's cell makes it across the country's border only with a heavy loss of life. Why even bother, then, with precautions about mastery when agents of resistance violence are never in a position to eschew it, let alone revel in it?

Brink's response to the futility he evokes is to shift focus from an intervention's practical success and to point out instead that 'there are situations where doing nothing may be worse than exploding a bomb' (Act, 402). It is better to have acted than not. 'If I act, I cannot but lose,' Ben du Toit says: 'But if I do not act, it is a different kind of defeat' (ADWS, 304). Why is this so? One has 'to do what one has to do,' he says, 'because you're you, because you're there ... I have to do it because no one else in the world is Ben du Toit' (161-2). His thesis becomes clearer if one reverses its terms to read as follows -- I can do what I must only if I am someone else, that is, if I transfer responsibility to institutions or people who are better empowered than I am and if I abdicate agency to others; yet my passivity amounts to acquiescence in the intolerable, and an alienation of my unique potential. 'Surely, if I were to consider what I might "achieve" in a practical sense I couldn't even hope to begin,' he remarks (161). Similarly, Nina is beset with self-doubt on the eve of the terror attack. Watching a vagrant rootling in a bin,

she asks if the blast will ameliorate his lot. If it does not, 'what would it all have availed, all their sacrifices and suffering ...?' (Act, 35). Or as Galant's warder says to him, 'With this murder [of Nicolaas] you haven't gained or earned anything' (CoV, 437). Again Brink's answer to this poser is the same: not to have acted is worse than having attempted and failed, since by leaving matters to the 'proper' authorities (as Ben is counselled to do by friend and foe alike), one elects to be passive in respect of a master, and thus risks perpetuating an oppressive order.

Yet from Brink's perspective there is an even more suspicious aspect to any renunciation of action on the grounds that it will inevitably lead to failure. Ben is told that there are two kinds of madness: 'One is the belief that we can do everything. The other is the belief that we can do nothing' (ADWS, 244). This warning highlights Brink's suspicion about the renunciation of activism -- that the subject abdicates in advance through fear that his wish for omnipotent mastery in which he 'can do everything' and overthrow the existing order at a stroke will not be satisfied. Where action is motivated by such a wish for the preservation and enrichment of egocentric life, what the subject cannot countenance is precisely risk to his narcissistic self-attachment.

Brink elaborates on these ideas nowhere more deftly than in the character of Campher, who crystallises tendencies found elsewhere in Brink's writing only in dispersed and implicit forms. Having traded as a frontier gun-runner and mountebank, Campher turns into a demagogue and self-styled revolutionary intent on leading the slaves of Houd-den-Bek ever onwards towards the apotheosis of revolution. However, true to the contradictory implications of his name, which suggests both a fighter (or Kampfer) and camphor liniment, he deserts the rebellion. The crisis eventuating in his desertion turns about two antithetical images. In his minds-eye Campher sees the triumphant accomplishment of collective emancipation. Ascending to the pinnacle of fame and superhuman power, the army of which he is the revered leader receives tribute from the grateful populace: 'I saw us marching through ~~the streets of Cape~~ the streets of Cape

Town, cheered by the multitudes, and sweeping up the side of the Mountain like an enormous wave that nothing could stop anymore' (CoV, 412). But he is troubled by 'another image -- the image of failed rebellion', in which 'corpses litter the earth, and maimed men crawl like spiders with broken legs; ... I saw a handful of survivors rounded up, wretched and tattered' (412). What makes the latter tableau so frightening, is the trenchancy of its contrast with the voluptuous narcissistic transport, or the glory, of the former. Campher is not prepared to hazard his life for the sake of an ek-static self-assertion, and, betraying the revolt, opts for inactivity: he decides it is better not to act, lest he forfeit hope (413) of gaining the mastery he desires, or worse, that he endanger himself.

He represents the profiteer, a recurring figure in Brink's fictions, who stands in opposition to the martyr. Dan Levinson, Ben's attorney who skips the country and dines out on his spurious reputation as a dedicated anti-apartheid activist, is another incarnation of the profiteer, as is, more pertinently, Kat Bester in An Act of Terror. As the police agent in charge of the investigation into the bomb blast, Bester is remorseless in his exercise of violence. Yet unlike Landman and the members of his cell, Bester's violence serves purely sectional interests: in the first place, those of hegemony, and in the second, his own, since he seeks advancement in his career. By contrast, Landman and his fellow saboteurs are said to serve the cause of the national collective and to renounce personal gain in their practice of violence. This nexus of positions stands in greater relief when one uses a contrary set of attitudes as a foil. In that case, what is their violence not?

According to Brink, it is not action committed 'in anger or passion' (Act, 64), or 'out of revenge or rage' (297); nor does it follow from 'a personal grudge, a private grief to avenge' (438). It is not, apparently, primarily 'about winning or losing, about taking our freedom' (CoV, 497), nor is it (and this is an approach Galant is quick to repudiate) aimed at 'running free through the world, and tak[ing] whatever we want' (418). If the violence of resistance is not inspired by hyperaffectivity, it is not the case either that one kills others 'in cold blood' (Act,

89). It seems that the problem with rage, vengefulness and anger is that they stem from a sense of slighted pride and, as such, motivate attempts to regain one's self-esteem by subjugating the rival who has offended one. Yet aside from this chief difficulty that vengeance is goaded by an ambition to displace a foe from his position of mastery over one and instead to instal oneself in his place, there are adjacent difficulties Brink has with it. That is, the volatility of rage is a transient efferescence boiling over from 'a personal grudge' (Act, 438); intrinsically self-limited, it represents an expenditure the significance of which ends with the coming to term of the individual's life, and therefore does not pass beyond these boundaries to acquire enduring significance in the affairs of others (it is an instance of abstract negativity). Moreover, since perpetrating resistance violence that one be 'clear-headed' and know 'exactly what is at stake' (Act, 64), it stands in contrast to the loss of self-possession occurring in acts of rage.

But why, then, is self-control so important? If resistance violence 'demands reflection, calm, dedication, faith' (Act, 297) -- in short, all the virtues of the monastery -- it does so because, unlike anger or other forms of affective transport, which (as with Campher) conceal a wish for mastery and self-aggrandizement, it necessitates a lucid apprehension of the prospect of failure and death. To know 'exactly what is at stake' is to know the imminent death to which one's actions lead one; but enraged, one loses sight of 'what is at stake' and thus one's resolve may weaken, as it does with Campher, when one does indeed realise precisely what is at issue in one's course of action. 'Any man who builds himself up into a rage can commit [murder],' Galant remarks: 'But to choose, with open eyes ... willingly to bind oneself to that tomorrow which does not yet exist, but which is brought into being by the choice itself: that is perhaps the most difficult thing I've ever done in my life' (CoV, 497).

Needless to say, Brink would not deny that acts of violence are informed by rage. As Landman recalls from his military training, 'To throw a bomb ... demands more than [revenge or rage]' (Act, 297, emphasis added), that is, it does not preclude rage but requires its sublimation into socially constructive

goals. Specifically, he claims, throwing a bomb demands 'hard, thankless, unremitting work' (297). Work has two broad functions. It is a denial, or at least a postponement, of enjoyment, for these monastic soldiers labour 'without the presumption of expectation' (297). Do not take unto yourself the products of your own labour: that is the operative injunction. 'This isn't your fight, Thomas,' he is told: 'It is the people's fight' (573). The allusion is to the second function of work, namely that it amounts to a sacrificial substantiation of a totality which appropriates the fruits of labour. In other words, it is the totality -- or 'the Organization' -- which enjoys, while its workers faithfully hope to obtain their deferred reward through their dialectical conservation in this totality (that is, the totality negates their deaths so that they pleasure themselves at a remove in the totality's future enjoyment). In addition, by sublimating their rage into this totality, the agents of violence not only renounce personal mastery but also transfer to it the power of authorship over the significance of their activities. In this way, the meaning of their deeds extends beyond their privatised selves to be determined by the Other-as-agora. It is the case, after all, that these agents, having taken their sacrificial course towards death, hope to be dialectically conserved as signifiers maintained in circulation in the field of the Other. Whether it be Ben du Toit striving to survive against hegemony to 'prove' (ADWS, 238) to others that such effort is possible, or Galant 'think[ing] of my son looking back at me one day to see if his father chose to be a slave or not' (CoV, ) they wish to be preserved as exemplary models exercising a lasting influence on the lives of others. 'It has become imperative ... to keep alive in the minds of the people, through dangerous and daring acts, an outrageous thought,' Franken says: 'the idea that the system is vulnerable, that freedom exists' (RR, 135).

### (iii) Risk of life

Although Brink's account of resistance violence typically shows how its agents do not immediately succeed in enjoying the material and ideal rewards of their actions, it seems evident

that these scenes of apparent futility are to be explained not only as representations of the strength of hegemonic rule. Indeed, it appears that the flight of these activists headlong into calamity is an intrinsic dimension of what Brink considers the violence of resistance to be, rather than a result contingent on the relative historical strength or weakness of the contending forces. To do something about hegemony, as opposed to doing nothing, is to wager one's life and run the probable and unprofitable risk of non-enjoyment. While Brink situates this expenditure-of-self as sacrificial work performed in the service of a totality, one should not regard the agent of violence's renunciation of life and personal mastery as a confirmation instead of a servile abasement before the authority of this totality or a willingness to put his life in the hands of master who can do with it as he pleases. When Nina says that she is sustained by the fact that 'I am not sending, in cold blood, others ... to their deaths, but that I am prepared, if I must, to give up my own life' (Act, 89), her preparedness to die is not a pious afterthought to a decision to murder (as though she would atone for the enjoyment of 'cold' mastery by a later act of self-abnegation) but it is, perhaps, the essence of the decision, namely the desire ek-statically to transgress and exceed every given form of herself, in spite of a self-preservative attachment to herself. To do nothing about hegemony is to be weighed down beneath its strictures; to do something is to wager death by shattering those strictures.

#### (iv) Kojève on desire

This risk of life occupies a critical place in Hegel's philosophical allegory<sup>11</sup> of the struggle for recognition and the subsequent dialectic of master and slave. As one will recall,<sup>12</sup> Hegel's thought operates within a model of self-reflexive consciousness in which the subject seeks to pose himself in front of his gaze as an independent object. 'The satisfaction of Desire,' as he asserts, 'is the reflection of self-consciousness into itself', for 'self-consciousness is Desire in general' (1978, 110; 105); thus, satisfaction, 'for Hegel, is not the



banal fulfillment of pleasure but is the subject's communion with itself in the object' (Taylor, 1980, 192). In Sartre's account, 'the impulse of this consciousness is to ... become conscious of itself in all respects by giving itself objectivity' (1986, 285) and by so turning subjective certainty into objective truth. That is, the subject requires the mediation of an independent Other, who teaches him what he is. The desire for self-consciousness is consequently a desire for recognition from the Other, since through acknowledgement by the Other, the subject poses him before himself 'over there' in alterity, where he receives an independent validation of who he is. 'Man's desire,' as Lacan frequently (and equivocally) says, 'is the desire of the Other': the desire for self-consciousness is a desire for recognition, which is a desire for the desire of the Other. In his Introduction to the Reading of Hegel, Kojève says that 'to desire the Desire of another is in the final analysis to desire that the value that I am or that I "represent" be the value desired by the other' (1986, 101). Crucially, he adds, 'I want him to "recognise" me as an autonomous value' (101). This comment is crucial because it emphasises (as Borch-Jacobsen cautions) that '"desiring to be desired" does not mean at all [contrary to what one may expect] desiring to be the object of the other's desire' (1991, 203).

Let us clarify this important yet puzzling emphasis. The subject desires self-consciousness, necessarily through the mediation of the Other; his desire for the desire of the Other is hence a desire to be recognised -- and pose himself -- as a self-conscious being, that is, as a subject, rather than an object in the Other's cognitions. He desires to dis-close himself to the Other, and so to himself, as an other 'origin of the world' (Derrida, 1978, 125), as a consciousness autonomous of and transcendent over the world constituted by the Other, and as an 'unrest' (Hegel, 1986, 72) shaking the conceptual latticework in which the Other would enclose him. He desires recognition, not as a thing defined by the Other, but as a 'melting-away of everything stable' (Hegel, 1979, 117) in the Other's field of reference, a 'question mark' (Act, 426) ek-statically untethered by the Other's attributions. If he desires, then, to be desired

as a self-conscious subject, according to Kojève this means that he desires to be desired as (a) Desire. 'It is in and by -- or better still, as -- "his" Desire,' Kojève says, 'that man is formed and is revealed -- to himself and to others -- as an I, as the I that is essentially different from, and radically opposed to, the non-I' (1986, 98-9, emphasis added), opposed, that is, to the non-subject which he is for the Other.

To explain what is at issue, one may begin by noting that Kojève capitalises 'Desire', granting it an eminence and singularity irreducible to the contingent plurality of lower-case desires: Desire, he suggests, unlike desire(s), is an abiding force. It is, in plainer terms, insatiable. And because Desire is 'essentially different from the desired thing, something other than a thing' (99), its insatiability implies that it ceaselessly points to the non-adequation between itself and the things which purport to satisfy it. Ceaselessly it says, that's not it, being in perennial excess of the objects it negates by 'destroying, transforming, and "assimilating"' (99) them to itself. Having assimilated these objects to itself, it is not bound to them, and does not extinguish itself in the merging of them with itself, and itself with them. Instead, it posits its difference and otherness in relation to the objects, its quality of being more-than and other-than its apparently contented immersion in objects of gratification. The I of (or as) Desire is hence 'the act of transcending the given that is given to it and that it itself is [that is constituted and supported by its assimilation of objects]' (100). As a perpetual 'act of transcending the given', Desire is a process of negating: specifically it is 'negating-negativity' (100).

The latter term can be understood more clearly if one examines its components separately. First, negation: 'The being that eats, for example,' Kojève remarks, 'creates and preserves its own reality by the overcoming [the negation] of a reality other than its own, by the "transformation" of an alien reality [the object's] into its own reality' (99). But Desire asserts a further negation of the negation which led to the consolidation of this 'own reality': it says, that's not it, and in its insatiability, negates this 'reality'. Negating-negativity ought

not to be confused with dialectical negation in which a negation is negated to yield a new synthesis or positivity; instead, it gives rise to a spiralling action of negation, an endless perturbation. The I as Desire seeks 'not to be what it is (as static and given being, as natural being, ...) and to be (that is, to become) what it is not' (100).

This reference to 'natural being' points to a crucial feature of Kojève's thought -- the distinction between animal and human Desire. Animal desire, he observes, is 'in the final analysis a function of its desire to preserve its life' (101, emphasis added), such that natural being seeks 'to remain the same, to preserve identity' (Descombes, 1980, 34). In contrast, human Desire -- animated by 'negating-negativity' -- 'consists in not remaining the same, in will to difference' (Descombes, 1980, 35), in will to be ek-statically other-than every delimited form of itself, in spite of the situation that these forms safeguard life. By implication, Desire intrinsically involves risk of life and self-endangerment, such that the 'exuberance of life ... is not alien to death' (Bataille, 1962, 11). Consequently, to be desired as a subject -- as Desire -- is to desire recognition as an ek-stasis not tied to life and the forms given to it.

#### (v) The struggle for prestige

But, at the start of the struggle for 'pure prestige' (Kojève, 1986, 101), an allegorical tableau in which two equals confront each other, it is precisely the case that neither of them recognises the other to be as such. Each is for the other a mere thing, a 'common object' ... submerged in the given-being of animal-life' (104). However, each is driven to seek recognition from the Other of the reality of his self-conscious existence as the supersession of the objectal form manifesting him to the Other. As such, they engage in a fight to the death in which each seeks to impress on the other the over-riding realness (rather than inconsequentiality) of his subjective world. By dint of not simply submitting to the categories imposed by the other and instead entering into combat, each puts his life at risk, the life which he could have protected by refusing the prompting of

desire to bring his human realness into view. 'The manifestation of the human-individual,' Kojève says, 'consists in showing itself as being the pure negation of its objective-or-thingish mode-of-being -- or, in other words, in showing that to be for oneself, or to be a [hu]man, is not to be bound to any determined existence ... not to be bound to life' (105).

What, then, seems to be the 'fight of animals', as Hester refers to her resistance against her husband's attempts to dominate her sexually, hides 'the true struggle: to keep desire and the dream alive' (CoV, 133), that is, to assert herself against his efforts to negate her world and replace it with one of his own devising. The risk to life entailed by an apparent 'fight of animals' goes in (Kojévian) fact, 'against nature', as Mynhardt counters when Franken, tacitly alluding to his plan to engage in militant acts, speaks of the readiness 'to risk everything one normally associates with the "good life"' (RR, 163). Going against animal nature, 'violence, and the courage to risk it,' claims a member of the Organization, 'is the only way in which one can still affirm one's humanity' (Act, 438), namely one's independence of the 'objective-or-thingish mode-of-being' (Kojève, 1986, 105) which one has from the perspective of hegemony. Resisting the latter's heteronomous impositions by asserting radical autonomy, Raymond leaves the country to join a liberation army: he does this, he says, 'to meet myself' (Act, 186), rather than passively derive his substance from another. In a similar vein, Galant's insurrection is precipitated by the question, 'Who are you?' (CoV, 292). '[T]alking and talking, telling her [his questioner] about Ma-Rose and Nicolaas and everybody', he remarks at last, 'But those are other people, they're not I' (292). He realises that his identity is heteronomously defined, and, 'search[ing] for answers to [this] question', he is prompted to 'transcend [these] limits' (Act, 426) and assert his independence of given-being by risking death in a revolt, so that he and his questioner 'can know for sure: This is me, I, Galant' (CoV, 292).

In the struggle for recognition, the combatants show each other that they are not 'bound to life' (Kojève, 1986, 105). Nevertheless, according to Hegel, one of the combatants,

terrified by the other's endangerment of his life, and (implicitly) anguished by the perilous extremes to which he is taken by his desire for recognition, chooses not to 'go all the way in risking his life' and 'accept[s] life granted to him by another' since he 'prefer[s] slavery to death' (Kojève, 1986, 109). Knowing too much about death and (looking from a different angle) the worth of life, he becomes for himself what he is for the Other, but having forefeited his ek-static 'selfhood', turns into 'a living corpse' (108) -- or, as Melanie puts it in her description of servility, into 'something white and maggot-like, not really a human being, just a thing' (ADWS, 129). On the other hand, the victor -- now become master -- enjoys the recognition and the labour of his former rival.

#### (vi) Reversals

##### (a) Exteriorizing terror

'But at this point,' Jameson notes, 'two distinct and dialectically ironic reversals take place' (1991, 101). First, since 'only the Master is genuinely human, ... "recognition", by this henceforth sub-human form of life which is the slave, evaporates at the moment of its attainment, and can offer no genuine satisfaction' (101). The master is 'recognised', not by an independent subject whom he reciprocally acknowledges, but by a dependent consciousness, and thus lacks an Other who could teach him what he is. This self-mystified state is compounded by the fact that while the slave works, the master is (for Hegel) an idle consumer who forgets what 'reality and the resistance of matter are'; as a result, 'any consciousness of his own concrete situation flees like a dream, like a ... nagging doubt which the puzzled mind is unable to formulate' (Jameson, 1991, 102). And since 'the truth of the independent consciousness is ... the servile consciousness of the bondsman' (Hegel, 1978, 117), that is, since the slave's servility is what underwrites the master's independence, this autonomy is, in fact, precisely dependent on the slave.

The second dialectical reversal is that the slave, in the servility of labour, asserts his independence, or, what amounts

to the same thing, his 'negating-negativity' (Kojève, 1986, 100). At first, 'negating-negativity' stands outside the slave in the figure of the master, while he himself apparently lacks it, having surrendered his desire to negate his 'objective-orthogonous mode-of-being' (105) for fear of his life. It is in the master that he recognises this world-shattering power to go beyond given-being: the master has it, the slave, not. Hegel, however, undoes this mutually exclusive opposition by arguing that in the slave's experience of terror in the agon, during which 'everything solid and stable has been shaken to its foundations', the slave experiences not so much something emanating from the nemesis as he does something related to his desire, since the 'absolute melting-away of everything stable, is the ... essential nature of self-consciousness, absolute negativity ... , which consequently is implicit in this consciousness' (1978, 117). In the slave's labour, the implicit becomes explicit, and what was 'internal-or-private and mute' (Kojève, 1986, 118) assumes an objectively shareable -- and hence recognisable -- form, since he directs this negativity into a transformative labour performed on the givenness of the real. And since, moreover, the subject negates and fashions the object into his 'own self-image' (Taylor, 1980, 194) in his labour, he poses his negativity before himself in an exterior form available for the Other's recognition of its realness. 'But in transforming the World by this work,' Kojève says, 'the Slave transforms himself, too, and thus creates new objective conditions that permit him to take up once more the liberating Fight for recognition that he refused in the beginning for fear of death' (1986, 120). In other words, through his work on the real the slave raises himself from servile objecthood as a result of having inwardised outside terror as a displaced image of his own desire; by incarnating in himself the obliterating power previously located in the masterful Other, he re-creates conditions which allow him to re-embark on a self-shattering shattering of the reification imposed on him. But as Galant makes clear in his revolt against Nicolaas, what is primarily at issue is not so much the master's delimitations per se, as it is his (Galant's) acceptance of them, an acquiescence based on a surrender of desire and a fearful

attachment to life at any price. 'His wall is nothing to me,' Galant says of Nicolaas: 'It's my own wall I got to face' (CoV, 195). Landman's sister Maria similarly highlights the role of her acquiescence in the perpetuation of enslavement when she says, 'I wasn't just ... a pitiful sacrificing spouse who'd given up her life to be used by others[:] I was, I am, an accomplice' (Act, 175).

(b) The Other's assertion and self-recognition

While the slave surrenders this capacity of negating-negativity, the master remains ignorant of it, thanks to the self-mystification attendant on his disavowal of being-for-others and the Other's independence. In the slave's re-engagement of the struggle for recognition, then, the latter's self-assertion as a 'question mark' (Act, 426) troubling all the master's attributions simultaneously interrogates the legitimacy of the power that he exercises. That is to say, the 'slave' calls the master into question, and, calling him to account, makes him acknowledge the nature of his own desire where before he had remained at best peripherally aware of it, as a 'nagging doubt which the puzzled mind is unable to formulate' (Jameson, 1991, 102). In An Act of Terror, Erik, a national serviceman deployed in the SADF as a medical doctor, notes that after prolonged exposure to the consequences of violence, 'I do not really see or feel anything anymore: it all happens at arm's length' (Act, 535). Reducing the violated bodies before him to the status solely of objects of instrumental manipulation, violence, as a result, 'does not involve me' and 'happens outside myself' (535). What Erik does not 'really see' in the disorder is himself in his capacity as a practitioner of violence indeed 'involve[d]' in what seems to stand 'outside' and in opposition to himself. Crucially, this lack of self-recognition hinges upon the fact that 'I have looked at them [those victims who have passed through my hands] from one side only' (536), from the perspective of the Same. Realising that terror 'need not be linked to a frontier dividing "this side" from "the other side", "them" and "us"' (536), a logic in which terror arrives exclusively from

`the other side', Erik perceives that his surgical penetration is, from the patient's view, an act of terror. More generally, though, by looking at his patients from `one side only' (536) and thereby believing that violence is the preserve solely of the enemy, he neglects to take account of his own production of terror for the Other; it is, conversely, by apprehending the Other in his independence (as a subject rather than an object or a `them' different to `us') and by considering the enemies' casualties as being `their "victims of terror"' (536) that he gains awareness of the horror he is responsible for inflicting. Through an apprehension of the Other-as-subject, he gains a guilty consciousness of the negating-negativity informing desire, which `consists in negating or possessing the non-me' (Levinas, 1979, 87). Like the detective in certain murder mysteries in which the anonymous criminal under pursuit turns out to be none other than the detective himself, Erik is brought face to face with his unwitting complicity as an agent of terror. Landman's own itinerary in An Act of Terror, his flight across South African space and his temporal journey exploring the historicity of these spaces, may be described similarly as a quest of self-recovery in which a subject of knowledge (a detective) investigatively pursues a criminal who is the subject himself. Having exploded the bomb, and inadvertently given away Nina's identity to the authorities (an error resulting in her murder by the police), Landman boards a plane where, like `a body stored in ice' (Act, 81), he is insulated from news of the blast. He is thus caught in a `petrifying moment of not knowing' (81) -- a frozen, petrified, benumbed moment in which he has not yet registered the blast's traumatic reality. And `as long as he did not know about it ... he was not yet involved, it had not happened yet' (81). As such, the explosion constitutes a `missed encounter' (Lacan, 1977b, 55) in which the cognizing-subject is disjunct from the undergoing-subject, and can `catch up' (RR, 12) with the latter only through deferred action. For Landman to resume `a real and conscious existence' (Act, 81) beyond this numbed torpor, he would have to know the event. He would have to assimilate it rather than, like Erik, keep it `at a remove' (535), and in so doing he would have to become conscious of his



`involve[ment]` (81) and complicity in it. Later after Nina has been shot dead, Landman -- detective, subject of knowledge -- `followed the tracks of the day's events: whence this feeling that something was eluding him, something he had to discover, a key, a clue, something without which he would never be at peace with himself?' (120). This imperative to know, to capture an elusive quantity, is not simply an injunction to know for the sake of knowing: it is bound up with a wish to resolve a troubling state of self-dissonance. In other words, Landman wants to know himself in the objects of his knowledge and thereby restore `peace' between himself as a cognizing and an experiencing subject. Although he subsequently remembers his disclosure of Nina's identity, and thus confronts his culpability for her death, the realization does not represent the resolution of his state of self-division, but only a first station in his progress towards guilty awareness of the destructiveness of his desire.

Having fled to the north, he journeys south again to attend the funeral held for his victims and to `return to the city where it had all begun a week before' (234). He seeks to `round off ... what had been left so agonisingly incomplete' (234) in the bomb blast and its aftermath. The geographical pattern of his journey recalls the cyclical novelistic structure found so frequently in Brink's writing, a structure in which initially mutually exclusive oppositions -- such as that between violence emanating from outside and violence arising from the inside -- are turned into each other; but, in this case, Landman is unable to inwardise violence `happen[ing] outside [him]self' (535). He discovers instead `that there are circles which cannot be completed', and that, in the absence of circularity and a gratifying restoration of self-unity, there are only spirals `moving irredeemably onward, inward' (234). If the real cannot accommodate the circular re-visitation of an `original' event and a concomitant unification of cognizing and undergoing subjects, then perhaps the fictive can provide tentative approximations of such an aim.

This is the route Landman takes when he slaughters a springbok in a later hunting expedition. `This was what had

always eluded me -- even in Cape Town, that wretched day of the funeral,' he says of the experience: 'Something of myself was restored to me in [the springbok's] dead weight' (583). Through a dramatic re-enactment of the event, he obtains deferred understanding of it, and undergoes its full resonance in a way which was, initially, not available to him; it is through a fiction that he is able to experience the event in its reality. Specifically, he puts himself in relation to the tangible consequences of his actions. Having gutted the animal and hoisted it on his shoulders, the bomb blast 'was no longer an abstraction, a thought, an idea, dream or nightmare, not an ideology, but the reality of a body that slowly became cold against my own as it tensed into rigor mortis': Landman feels as though he were 'walking back through time', and simultaneously 'gathering as I went on ... all the accumulated blood and violence and death' (583). By beholding the consequences of his actions, Landman takes responsibility for them -- he acknowledges that he is the agent or cause of them, and thus recognises in them the effects of his desire: anagnorisis.

In a crucial meditation, Landman argues indeed that his very reason for participating in the terror attack was to assert his responsibility, in the sense of positing himself as a self-determining, independent agent rather than the heteronomous object of another's will, and in the related sense of accepting responsibility for the actions he performs as an agent affirming his autonomy. In other words, he desires to assert his autonomy against institutions which attempt to deprive him of it, and, at the same time, he wishes to pose his ek-static being before himself by recognising himself in the consequences of his deeds. Landman says,

The very organisation of society, of government, makes it possible -- inevitable -- that all decisions are taken at a remove, that all information is filtered through innumerable membranes. No one is ever directly involved anymore. No one need feel guilty or responsible. In earlier times people had to wage their wars through physical combat; the hunter had to gore his prey, or cut its throat, with his own hand. Today we live in a time of increasing distance, space, between the actor and his actions. Even your achievements as a hunter, Frans: your rifles and

telescopic sights and God knows what else: it is no longer a simple, direct relationship between yourself and some animal. An entire science has interposed itself between you. Everything has become abstract, disembodied. ... The very finger that presses the red button in an ultimate war has been absolved of responsibility in advance, as all it does is execute some anonymous decision or instruction, unleashing a war that takes place at a distance. ... Which makes ever-increasing violence possible, even, ironically, indispensable, as a kind of scream against abstraction and distancing. No one is present anymore.

I wonder whether you will ever understand, Frans, if you were to find out what I have done? That this was the reason for it, the explanation for my involvement? I had to be present, I had to be there (122).

One may isolate two thematic concerns in this passage. The first is with the notion of distance, division, and separation between the subject and the objects of his manipulation -- between the hunter and prey a science has interposed itself. Significantly, this schism is depicted not only as one existing between the subject and object, but between the subject and himself, between 'the actor and his actions' (122). As a result, he lacks responsibility in the sense of a guilty awareness of his accountability for his actions; like Erik, he can hold the violence he perpetrates 'at a remove' (535) and thus disavow his destructiveness, leaving him self-alienated and without consciousness-of-self.

But the subject is alienated in a further sense, and at this point one touches on the second aspect of Landman's meditation, namely that the distance intervening between 'the actor and his actions' also involves a transfer, or deferral, of agency from the subject to another determining site: thus the finger pressing the mythical button merely 'executes some anonymous decision or instruction' (122). So where violence is a 'scream against abstraction and distancing' (122), it seeks a recovery of voice through the commencement of a struggle against distancing's attrition of autonomy, and therefore against heteronomous forces. The explosion is a privileged manifestation of the subject's independence of delimitation -- indeed, Landman's express desire 'to be there' (122) at the explosion can be construed as a desire to be this ex-plosive, ek-static force. However, his desire 'to be there', and thus to reclaim agency from institutions in which

it had been alienated, is a desire for self-presence in relation to the ek-static self-assertion. That is, Landman desires unity between the undergoing-subject and the cognizing-subject; he wants, in short, both to be the explosion and to see himself being it.

If resistance against heteronomy entails the subject's reclaiming of responsibility formerly alienated to another will, it involves as well a 'gathering [of] ... the accumulated blood and violence' (Act, 583) which had been distanced and dispersed from the subject. In A Dry White Season, Ben is told that Gordon's death 'really has nothing do to with [him]' and that matters 'will get sorted out' (56) by the proper authorities in good time. Yet not only does Ben refuse to relinquish responsibility and adopt a passive stance towards masterful authority, which would exercise agency in his place, he also refuses to evade knowledge of his own complicity in Gordon's death -- he refuses, that is, the gesture of the accomplice, who 'turn[s] a blind eye just because it was "our people" who committed the crimes' (ADWS, 291). The accomplice diffuses his responsibility within a collectivity such as 'our people', and says of its crimes, as Ben admits shamefacedly, they 'didn't seem to directly concern me' (96). Protesting his innocence, harmlessness, and non-involvement in a field of agonistic forces, the accomplice 'turn[s] a blind eye' (291), both to the 'crimes' and to his desire, which 'consists in negating or possessing the non-me' (Levinas, 1979, 87).

Nowhere in Brink's work is the motif of the 'blind eye' and its correlative self-blindness delineated more emphatically than in Rumours of Rain, where (as I have already indicated<sup>13</sup>) the opacity on Mynhardt's windscreen represents a blindspot in his theoretical gaze, a blindspot associated with the unacknowledged consequences of his desire to negate or possess the Other and thereby to construct a world in which he finds only an untroubling, narcissistically-gratifying confirmation of his mastery. Yet structured around his car journey to and from the family farm, the novel is arranged as a progression from self-blindness to self-recognition, for on the return trip, Mynhardt has the 'curious impression of driving in against myself, against

my own past', and believes that 'if only I could see more clearly ... I would be able to see myself coming on ahead on my way down to the farm' (415). In the novel's set of metaphors, the storm -- the explosion -- into which Mynhardt drives represents both the beginning of the Soweto uprisings of 1976, and the fulfillment of his expectation that he would soon witness himself 'emerge from the obscurity ahead' (415). What he sees, in short, is the return of the repressed: the return to ecstatic self-affirmation on the part of the oppressed, and the return to theoretical view of (the consequences of) his desire, which has driven the oppressed to resort to militancy. Rumours of Rain thus reveals in its structural movement a progressive 'gathering' around Mynhardt of 'the accumulated blood and violence and death' (Act, 583) associated with his historical insertion as a member of an hegemonic order, a 'gathering' which takes place in opposition to a tendency to 'distance' this violence from his consciousness and keep it 'at a remove' (Act, 535) from himself. Recounting his sinister ability to precipitate calamity around him by his mere presence, Mynhardt says that, thanks to this demonic 'gift', he acts 'as a catalyst for violence which breaks out all around me yet leaves me unscarred' (28). He wields, that is, a destructive influence in spite of himself and without conscious knowledge of it, such that 'I am surrounded by violence, yet untouched by it' (28), unscathed and indifferent. His is a psychical strategy disavowing responsibility -- denying culpable agency and maintaining him in opposition to the terror of desire, which appears to him (at first) dis-placed as a nemesis looming in exteriority.

#### (vii) Apocalypse

Yet the distanced, disavowed violence returns in spectacular fashion to Mynhardt at the conclusion of the text in the image of the apocalyptic storm. That is to say, the deluge is an apocalypse both in the sense that it is an event of massive destructiveness, and that it discloses what had previously been concealed ('apocalypse' derives 'from Greek apokalupsis, from apokaluptein, to disclose, from AP0 + kaluptein to hide'; C. E.

D.). Inasmuch as Mynhardt is depicted as more than a private individual but as the representative of an entire social order, the repressed violence that returns to him has implications which transcend him alone since it brings news of the occluded mortality and cruelty of a whole way of life, in the same way as Landman's desire for proximity to the explosion brings him to a confrontation with 'the accumulated blood and violence and death' (Act, 583) associated with the determining socio-political historicity of his identity. Through the violence of the Other, then, Mynhardt becomes aware of the violence of the Same, with the result that the Other's violence is nothing less than a shattering of the oppressor's self-alienated silence.

If the oppressed's insurrectionary violence clearly shatters the silence to which it had been consigned by the oppressor, in Brink's writings this violence has an apocalyptic dimension not only in the sense that it shows an oppressing class an unacknowledged aspect of itself, but in the sense, too, that it brings to light a formerly suppressed world, an alternative realm of social possibilities regarded as unthinkable by the hegemony. To use the terms laid out in 'The dove in the grave', resistance violence -- inasmuch as it deploys the 'sword' in order to affirm 'the word' and thus projects a future social condition enshrining 'the nobler achievements of the human spirit' -- furthers a 'basic groundswell towards understanding' (11). The violence of resistance, in other words, advances an indefinite metanarrative progression towards the agora standing on 'the other side' (CoV, 395) of the 'historical silence' (Dove, 11) which hegemony sets up between master and slave.

In its apocalyptic aspect, resistance violence shatters hegemony's enclosing structural framework: hence, the explosion in which Landman (in his capacity as a member of an hegemonic order) sees his guilt after having been unconscious of it, is equally portrayed as a gathering of diverse efforts into a metanarrative movement, as 'a single irrepressible sound, a timeless shofar resounding over the tumbling walls of Jericho' (Act, 31; emphases added). Moreover, resistance violence, in its apocalyptic dimension, advances a metanarrative which is specifically described as the coming-to-consciousness of a

nation-space: at the outset of his rebellion, for instance, Galant proclaims, 'There's a whole world struggling inside me', and says that the range of memories and incidents constituting his historical particularity are 'all there ... growing and swelling like a thing wanting to be born' (CoV, 374). As in the writer's violence of saying, an entire world seeks to manifest itself against the counter-tendencies of repression and forgetting. Or as Landman declares in anticipation of an apocalyptic apotheosis, 'On that resplendent future day [of the explosion] all the history and prehistory of Africa would converge, beams of light bent inward through a burning-glass to a single searing point where it erupts in fire' (Act, 31). For Brink, therefore, the piercing of the master's self-mystified solipsism is coupled with the slave's ek-static shattering of his objectification by the master, which, in turn, precipitates the colossal movement of a nation's emergence into the light of consciousness. The sword and its three silences are broken, to return as the sword of the Apocalypse.

\*

## ENDNOTES

1. 'The Old Man's Protest' ll 11-14; in In This City, 1986.
2. 1978, 117.
3. Cf. Chapter 1, 'II. The subject and sensory overload'. 3.22
4. Cf. Chapter 1, 'VI. Ecstasy (iv) The narration: apophasis'.
5. 1962, 239.
6. Weekly Mail & Guardian, vol 9, no. 30, July 29 to August 5, 1993; p.1.
7. Cf. Chapter 1, 'VI. Ecstasy (iv) The narration: apophasis'. Cf. also Lacan, 1977b, 207-8.
8. Cf. Chapter 1 'VI. Ecstasy (v) Death of the author'.
9. Thus in Imagined Communities Anderson speaks of 'the reassurance of fratricide' (1991, 199) in relation to nationalism, by which he refers to a key strategy of nationalist historiography to re-write past conflicts between disparate groups as 'fratricidal' encounters occurring on the ground of familial bonds always implicitly in existence and serving as the basis for the development of the later 'imagined community' which the historiographical practice in question seeks to promote. One might add that these 'fratricidal' conflicts may then be putatively subsumed as 'episodes' profiting the growth of the nation-as-family.
10. Weekly Mail & Guardian, 16 April 1993, p.7.
11. As Taylor notes, 'Hegel's purpose in this context is not to describe actual historical events, though history amply illustrates the dialectic he identifies. He intends to analyze the significance of the generic experience of struggling for recognition and of mastery and servitude for the education of the self' (1980, 194).
12. Cf. Chapter 2, 'I. Introduction: the death sentence'.
13. Cf. Chapter 1 'II. The subject and defective vision (i) Dark mirrors'.



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