Re-inscribing the author: an approach to the pragmatics of reading and interpretation in Sol Plaatjie's *Native Life in South Africa* and *Luke's Book of Acts*

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DECLARATION

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Promoter	:	Dr H O Garuba
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I declare that:

Re-inscribing the author: an approach to the pragmatics of reading and interpretation in Sol Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa* and Luke's *Book of Acts*

represents original work by the author and has not been submitted in any form for any degree or diploma to any university. Where use has been made of the work of others, it is duly acknowledged in the text.

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to affirm the presence of the intentional consciousness / stance in texts which purport to depict reality or real events. Intentionality, in the context of this thesis, is not conceived as a pre-existing thought or idea, which precedes the text, but as something, which inheres in the text and is produced in it. The Cartesian split between consciousness and being which the former conception enacts is here elided and authorial intention is read and produced in the process of writing itself.

This distinction is significant because the main argument of this thesis is that authorial intention in texts that purport to depict real events and intervene in a particular socio-historical process for mobilizational purposes, leads to the production of a certain kind of text which deploys specific narrative strategies that consolidate its reading and rendering of events and re-inforce narrative closures. These intentionally motivated closures are embedded in narrative strategies, which are seen as both necessary and imperative for the consolidation and legitimation of the message and to foreclose other readings. Authorially motivated closures are predominant in classic realist texts in which as Roger Webster (1990:70) argues "there is a clear hierarchy of discourses controlled by a privileged central voice or narrator". This narrative voice or, to quote MacCabe, this "authorial and authoritarian 'metalanguage' judges and controls all other discourses in the text". And in classic realist texts in which the author does not seek to mask his presence by using other narrators and overtly seeks to move his audience in a specified direction, these closures become even more evident within the texture of the text. Texts of this nature are seen as means of achieving particular ends rather than as autonomous, independent units existing in a self-referential world of significance.

Much of contemporary critical theory has unfortunately tried to efface the author from the text and/ or tried to marginalize the role of the author in the text. This thesis, however, seeks to re-inscribe the agency of the author in his / her intentional stance with regard to the text, more specifically in texts which depict real events and seek to impact upon the real world and the target audience. This thesis shows how this agency is enacted within the world of the text. Very briefly, this agency, I argue, is reproduced in narrative strategies which revolve around the twin poles of authority and legitimation; and these strategies operate at two levels within the text and these are the levels of the real events depicted in the narrative and then the prevailing discursive paradigms of the times. A narrative dialectic is thus erected between these two levels in the texts and this is mediated at every point by the active presence of the authorial engagement.

The first chapter, which is largely introductory, serves as the theoretical clearing ground for the thesis. In it, I argue the case for intentionality by reviewing various critical positions in contemporary theory in relation to the author and the interpretation of texts. Thereafter I move on to spell out the ways in which authorial intention is embedded in realist narratives of the kind I have described. In my argument, I draw upon the critical practices and theoretical positions of postcolonial, feminist and Third World writers and critics whose work constitute an alternative tradition in which is inscribed specifically overt socio-political

agencies. In the chapters that follow, I adopt the strategy of sketching out the historical and discursive context of the text. Thus chapter two focuses on the historical and discursive context of Luke's *Book of Acts* while chapter three focuses on the analysis of *Acts*. In the same manner, chapter four focuses on the historical and discursive context of Sol Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa* while chapter five focuses on the analysis of the text (*Native Life in South Africa*). A brief conclusion sums up the argument of the thesis.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Writing is by its very nature purposive and tendentious. This purposive nature implies that there is always an authorial intention in setting pen to paper in the first instance. Very few, if any, will deny this originating intention. And this authorial intention is even more compelling in the realist text in which, as Roger Webster (1990:40) argues, "there is a clear hierarchy of discourses controlled by a privileged central voice or narrator whereas the Modernist text has no such centralised voice but rather allows for a more open free-playing of voices none of which is clearly privileged". The privileging of a dominant, central and controlling voice to which all others are subordinated shows that there is, from the point of view of the author, a careful prodding of the reader towards a particular realisation of the tale, which conforms to his/her intention. This intention is often foregrounded when the author sees his/her text first and foremost as an instrument for achieving a particular goal, or as a means to an end. Colin MacCabe who formulated the concept of the "classic realist text", defines it "as that in which an authorial and authoritarian "metalanguage" judges and controls all the other discourses in the text - a practice which the experimental modernist text subverts" (MacCabe in Lodge, edit, 1988:431). In this thesis, I argue the validity of the authorial intention as a legitimate interpretative strategy especially in the reading and interpretation of classic realist texts in which intention is so foregrounded.

The authorial intention is, of course, the author's personal perspective and purpose in writing the text but this intention must not be divorced from the social, cultural, historical and other circumstances of the author's time and place. All writing is **situated** and writers are **located** within real human communities in which contending values and discourses are forever battling for ascendancy. The author as part of this process inscribes his/her voice within this milieu as part of a historical and discursive community, and his/her writing is necessarily an intervention within that particular history and that discursive community. Hodge's (1990:48) assertion that "writers normally write for some kind of readership, whose presumed interests as real readers affect that writing" bears out this relationship. The fundamental claim advanced by Hodge is that there is no impartiality in writing. Hodge (1990:48) further argues that "writing and reading occur within logonomic systems which constrain and determine meanings". And Lemke (1995:8) advocates the same view in his assertion that "a theory of meaning must be essentially social, historical, cultural and political, because the unit of meaning is a human action "addressed" to real and potential others. It is an act-in-community, a material and social process that helps to constitute the community as community". With specific reference to the South African context, this contention is further re-enforced by the assumption, by Ashcroft et al, that "in effect, all writing in [apartheid] South Africa is by definition a form of protest or 'a form of acquiescence'. Which it is depends on how it situates itself within the political realities of the daily struggle" (1989:84). It is for this reason, namely, the **situatedness** of all writing that I do not conceive of reading and interpretation as

"disinterested" events, but as events which are value-laden and aimed at satisfying particular interests. The position adopted in this thesis to the reading of realist texts is informed first by the mimetic perspective and the conventional view of texts as "things" that have "meanings" (Waugh, 1989:207); and second, the pragmatic perspective and the view of the text "as something made in order to effect requisite responses in its readers" (Abrams, 1991:15). It is worth remembering that "literary studies has traditionally been concerned with the interpretation of texts, with revealing the "meaning" behind the text (be that meaning the author's intention or the "truth" of the human condition)" (Waugh, 1989:148).

It must be conceded from the beginning that distrust of the author and authorial intention has been one of the motive forces of literary studies and critical theory. From the founding moments in Plato, a profound scepticism about the author has often played a major role in orienting critical studies away from the author's intention towards other critical criteria. Contemporary theories about "the death of the author" following upon the "intentional fallacy" dictum propagated by Wimsatt and Beardsley at the height of the tidal wave of *New Criticism* have made author-centred approaches to criticism and interpretation highly suspect in critical circles. Apart from the famous pontifical gesture of banning poets from his ideal republic, Plato may be said to have laid the foundations on which distrust of the author has thrived in literary criticism. In a dialogue between *Ion*, the rhapsode, and Socrates, the philosopher questions the rhapsode about the nature and

sources of poetry and the poet's knowledge of the subjects about which he sings/writes. Through a series of questions, *Socrates* gets *Ion* to admit that the poet does not really know as much about the subjects on which he writes as the experts in those particular fields. *Socrates* then presses home his point by saying:

> *For the poet is a light and winged and holy thing, and there is no invention in him until he has been inspired and is out of his senses,* ***and reason is no longer in him: no man, while he retains that faculty, has the oracular gift of poetry.*** (Ion: 14-15,emphasis added)

By taking away the poet's reasoning faculty, *Plato* lays the grounds for employing ethical reasons to advocate a strict censorship of writing in his ideal republic ruled over by wise philosopher kings.

> *Then the first thing will be to establish a censorship of the writers of fiction, and let the censors receive any tale of fiction which is good, and reject the bad; and we will persuade mothers and nurses to tell their children the authorised ones only. Let them fashion the mind with such tales, even more fondly than they mold the body with their hands; but most of those, which are now in use, must be discarded.*
>
> (***Republic***: 19-20)

Even though Plato's strictures against poets were not shared by Aristotle, who rejected the master's extreme ethical orientation and was later to lay down the aesthetic principles of criticism, the Platonic foundation was to have lasting influence, surfacing in other guises in the history of critical theory. In a historical chronicle of the major orientations of critical theories, M.H. Abrams, in *The Mirror and the lamp: romantic theory and the critical tradition*, asserts that:

> *To pose and answer aesthetic questions in terms of the relation of art to the artist, rather than to external nature, or to the audience, or to the internal requirements of the work itself, was the characteristic tendency of modern criticism up to a few decades ago, and it continues to be the propensity of a great many – perhaps the majority – of critics today. This point of view is very young measured against the twenty-five-hundred-year history of the Western theory of art, for its emergence as a comprehensive approach to art, shared by a large number of critics, dates back not much more than a century and a half (1952:3).*

Abrams's basic contention is that the "radical shift to the artist in the alignment of aesthetic thinking" (3), dates back only to the early nineteenth century and was a product of the evolution and triumph of romanticism and romantic critical theories. Employing the images of the mirror and the lamp which serve as the title of his book, Abrams characterises this shift as a moment away from seeing art as the mirror of nature (to use Richard Rorty's phrase in relation to philosophy) to viewing it as a lamp which shines forth from the mind of the artist. This new perspective may be said to have been launched in Wordsworth's Preface to the ***Lyrical Ballads*** where he describes poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (cf. Adams, edit, 1971). This famous statement, according to Abrams, became the "ground-idea" on which the romantic poets and theorists founded their expressive theories of art in which the artist became a key figure in critical equations. This rehabilitation of the artist, so to speak, was to last only a brief while when placed beside other theories in the history of criticism. T.S. Eliot's essay "*Tradition and the Individual Talent*" inaugurated a new reaction against the romantic emphasis on the artist and his Impersonal theory of poetry was to have a major influence on critics. His call for the depersonalisation of poetry was echoed by the various schools of criticism which, began to hold sway from the early part of this century. The *Formalists* and the *New Critics*, for

example, treated texts as autonomous entities to be studied independently of the artist. Their critical creed effaced the author and his/her socio-historical context and focussed almost exclusively on the text as an isolated unit of meaning. And with the rise of structuralism, the fate of the author was, for critical purposes, effectively sealed. Structuralist poetics, following upon the aspirations of structural linguistics, sought to uncover the "general laws" which govern the operations of art. These laws were said to be dependent on a system of binary differentiation that constitutes the underlying code of all narrative. A syntagmatic and paradigmatic model of analysis was developed and metaphor and metonymy were deployed as the basis of representation. At the height of the structuralist enterprise, Levi-Strauss, its principal theorist in the area of mythology, was to say in the "*Overture*" to his book ***The Raw and the Cooked*** that his principal purpose was to show how myths "think themselves in men" (cf. Levi-Strauss in Adams, edit, 1971) and not how men think through myths. This statement which incidentally echoes Plato's earlier dismissal of the author at the embryonic stage of the history of criticism, shows that the status of the author in relation to his work has not been dominant in critical thought, except perhaps for the brief period of romantic criticism.

In contemporary post-structuralist and post-modernist theories, language – the process of signification itself – and discourse become the focus and the author is confined to insignificance. Speaking of the French writer Mallarme' in "*The Death of the Author*", Roland Barthes states that:

> *In France, Mallarme was doubtless the first to see and to foresee in its full extent the necessity to substitute language itself for the person who until then had been supposed to be its owner. For him, for us too, it is language which speaks, not the author; to write is, through a prerequisite impersonality (not to be confused with the castrating objectivity of the realist novelist), to reach that point where only language acts, 'performs', and not 'me'. Mallarme's entire poetics consists in suppressing the author in the interests of writing (which is, as will be seen, to restore the place of the reader)* (168).

In spite of Barthes's much-touted proclamation of the death of the author, we must remember that earlier in the same piece he provides an important qualification.

> *As soon as a fact is narrated no longer with a view of acting directly on reality but intransitively, that is to say, finally outside of any function other than that of the very practice of the symbol itself, this disconnection occurs, the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death, writing begins. (168)*

This proviso excludes the authors and texts with which this thesis is concerned. The authors and texts that I focus upon here intended their narratives to "act directly on reality" and bring about a desired change. The texts are seen as the means to an end, which is the very purpose of the narrative. In these texts therefore a contract of action, so to speak, is established between the author and the audience because the author intends that the audience act upon the information provided. In this respect, the "very practice of the symbol itself" becomes only one among the several co ordinates of the narrative.

The issue of acting directly on reality and influencing events is a central pillar of my argument in this thesis and it has also been a major focus of much of Third

World writing and criticism and other minority and marginalised discourses. In these discourses the question of who speaks, the location and positioning of the speaker, the intentions and ideologies which motivate the narrator and the narrative have been constant issues of contention. Much of the criticism of African literature, colonial discourse analyses and postcolonial theory, feminist criticism and theory, and other ethnic discourses developed in direct relation to these issues. This may have been based on the recognition that texts are not neutral entities but are connected in many complex and complicated ways to issues of power and authority, imperial domination and subjugation, and the construction of the various discourses of subordination and *othering*. In these discourses, the author is never allowed to enter into his own death once writing begins because his presence is written all over the narrative in covert and overt ways. Thus while post-structuralist and postmodernist critics may emphasise the free play of signification and the death of the author, postcolonial and feminist theorists, on the other hand, never forget the presence of the author, even while recognising the power of discourse. This is, of course, a highly simplified reading of a much more complex phenomenon but the basic outline of this difference is valid. Critics and theorists, such as Anthony Appiah (1992), Simon During (1987), Stephen Slemon (1989) among others, have highlighted the differences between postmodernism and post-colonialism, but this is hardly the place to rehearse these arguments. Suffice it to say that Linda Hutcheon (1989:150) argues that though there are many points of similarity and continuity between postmodernism and post-colonialism there is also a major difference.

> *While I want to argue here that the links between the post-colonial and the post-modern are strong and clear ones, I also want to underline from the start the major difference, a difference post-colonial art and criticism share with various forms of feminism. Both have distinct political agendas and often a theory of agency that allows them to go beyond the post-modern limits of deconstructing existing orthodoxies into the realm of social and political action.*

The emphasis on a strong social and political agenda and a vibrant theory of agency presents this as a critical orientation in which the objective that the author seeks to achieve is an important part of the critical and theoretical enterprise. In this undertaking therefore, the announcement of the "death of the author" would appear to be rather premature. For these critical theories, the alignment of the author with the text and the social and discursive community of its production are crucial.

What I have sought to underline in the above is that while, what I refer to as distrust of the author has played a dominant role in the history of Western critical theory, there has also developed an-*other* tradition largely through feminist, postcolonial and other minority discourses in which the author, his/her intentions, location and identity have become legitimate sites of critical interrogation. It is also of some interest to observe that within the mainstream history of western critical theory, the romantics led the first movement that focussed attention on the author. The reason for this may well lie in the fact that the romantics emphasised the imagination over reason and glorified those traits which today we associate with otherness. But be that as it may, the point I wish to make in this study is that

authorial intention is reproduced in several ways in classic realist texts which purport to depict reality and to intervene in that reality in specified ways.

Now I want to focus the discussion on the terms and concepts that are frequently used in this thesis.

A **Text** (literary work) is a linguistically coded device that serves as a vehicle for the mediation of communication. In the case of Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa* the text is put to work for substantial political ends. Its characteristic strategy is to expose and attack the assumptions and values of racial exclusivity (specifically of the Boers). Plaatje's text as a discourse of social engagement has strong affinities with the classic realist text. As a matter of fact discourses are not hermetically sealed from each other. The discourse of social engagement can be present in classic realist texts and others as discourses function in alliance with or in opposition to each other. In the nineteenth century, for example, the discourses of religion and science were remarkably opposed to each other in a variety of ways. Again, the discourses of gender and race have always operated in ways that privilege certain groups and naturalise the inferiorization of others. It is apparent in *Native Life in South Africa* that in writing the text Plaatje borrowed from and weaved together very diverse ranges of discourses. Literary texts incorporate many other forms of discourse. A good example of this is the nineteenth century novel in which strands of economic, scientific, religious, family moral and other discourse intertwine. In Luke's *Book*

of Acts the text is put to work for substantial theological ends. Its characteristic strategy is to expose and attack the assumptions and values of Jewish exclusiveness as a chosen nation (race).

A **Realist text** is that which approximates reality. But given the ideological positioning of the author in relation to the events narrated, he/she does not presume disinterested pretensions with regard to authorial agency in the text. It stands to reason that texts are constructed from within ideology and that the reality they articulate is dependent on the historical culture that surrounds them.

A **classic realist text** as defined by MacCabe (1988) is that in which an authorial intention and authoritarian 'metalanguage' judges and controls all the other discourses in the text. In a classic realist text readers are invited to share the insights of central characters or the narrator so that the sense they make of the text as reading subjects is mirrored in the way that characters or narrators make sense out of the events they experience (cf. Webster, 1990:83).

A **narrative** is an account of events occurring over time. Thus a narrative takes as its ostensive reference particular happenings whose narration is inherently ideological. And the ideological dimension of the narrative is its narrative closure. The concept of closure refers to the ways in which a text persuades a reader to understand and accept a particular "truth" or form of knowledge, to accept a certain view of the world as valid or natural (cf. Webster, 1990). Closure is inherent in the text's form and the writing strategies and reading expectations.

A **deliberative discourse** is that in which we seek to persuade someone to do something or to accept our point of view. In such a discourse the figure that narrates is synonymous with the figure in the text from whose perspective the events are seen.

Authorial intention: In this thesis, I define authorial intention not simply as what the author had in mind since this will create the Cartesian split I earlier disavowed. Intention here is not derived from statements made outside the text by the author but from statements within the text itself. Therefore, the split between intention and performance, between the cognitive and performative dimensions of the text is elided in favour of a definition that conceives of intention as *intention-as-produced-in-the-text*. This conception of intention avoids the binarism of mind / matter and sees intention as a *flow* that moves between author and text.

Native: in the context of this thesis I use native to refer to the black indigenous people of South Africa. I am aware of the more currently used word "indigenous" which is of course more politically correct than native. Nonetheless I have decided to retain native as it is the word used by Plaatje in his text *Native Life in South Africa*.

Contract of action between writer and audience: In writing the text the writer obligates himself or herself to present it in such a way that the intended message is so clearly foregrounded and the action required of the audience so clearly stated as to allow for no equivocation. The author and the readers sign into this

thus establish a narrative contract, so to speak, by identifying with the narrative position adopted by the author.

In this study I use Sol Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa* and the *Book of Acts* as texts for analysis. Clearly these two texts by Plaatje and Luke respectively are non-imaginative works. Although the cited theories in this thesis are in the main amenable to imaginative works they are nonetheless also applicable to non-imaginative works. I am arguing that central to both imaginative and non-imaginative works is the use of narrative modes, characters and themes as literary devices in the mediation of meaning by the text. There also obtains in both works the foregrounding of both literary forms and linguistic modes in their narratives. Needless to say that the writer's literary response to the world does not derive from an isolated or independent consciousness but he/she writes within or consciously against a framework laid down by genre and the wider framework of the current practice of "literature". Even in the area of historiography, historians now recognise that the writing of history is encoded in language and thus employs the usual conventions of narrative to give order and coherence to what would otherwise be a chaotic flow of events. Post-modern historians like Hayden White have broken with disciplinary conventions and applied elements of literary theory to historiographical texts. In such works as *Meta-History* White argues that all historical representations even though they seem to be reports of objective facts are subject to the normal rules of narrative representation. White's underlying argument is that history and fiction have

much in common, employing narrative devices and systems of rhetoric to construct a verbal image of "reality". I am therefore in agreement with White's argument that literary and historiographical texts should be viewed as forms of writing and not mutually exclusive in terms of their supposed respective qualities of imagination and fact. What distinguishes the literary from the historical is not fiction versus fact, but different textual properties (cf. Webter, 1990:107).

In both texts authorial intention is processed through the narrative and rhetorical strategies employed by the authors. The strategies foreground the goals which the authors seek to achieve and the texts are seen as means to these stated ends. As Bruner (1990:104) points out:

> *Now obviously, research on anything will yield findings that mirror its procedures for observing or measuring. Science always invents a conforming reality in just that way. When we "confirm" our theory by "observations", we device procedures that will favour the theory's plausibility. Anyone who objects can poach on our theory by devising variants of our own procedures to demonstrate exceptions and "disproofs".*

The above quotation by Bruner sheds light in regard to my selection of *Native Life in South Africa* and the *Book of Acts*, which are characteristically involved texts. In this thesis therefore the end justifies the means as I argue the validity of the authorial intention as a legitimate interpretative strategy in the reading and interpretation of classic realist texts in which intention is so foregrounded. In the analysis of the texts in question I will be arguing that the denial of the text's (and implicitly the author's) power to mean and the notion of the unavailability of determinate meanings render texts such as these vulnerable to all forms of

manipulation. I will be contending in this study that texts, which are historically situated and overtly intended to achieve specific objectives, as is the case with the *Book of Acts* and Sol Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa*, have an underlined truth, meaning and significance. My choice of these two texts is partly informed by what seems to me to be common ground between them, namely, that they both give a narrative account of past events and experiences. In other words they present themselves as narratives of actual occurrences, notwithstanding the possibility of fictional elements having been inserted in their narration. In these two texts one is presented with an instance of historical narration which, according to Rusen, "has the general function of orienting practical life in time by mobilising the memory of temporary experience, by developing a concept of continuity and stabilising identity" (Rusen, 1993:6). The *Book of Acts* and Sol Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa*, in Aune's terms, "attempt to dramatise and interpret the memorable actions of people in time" (Aune, 1987:86).

These texts also share the similarity of having author-narrators who do not seek to mask their presence in their narratives. Authors generally employ all kinds of devices to mask and/or distance themselves from their narratives. Indeed James Joyce's aesthetic theory as enunciated in ***A Portrait of The Artist As A Young Man*** uses the distance between the author and his/her material to categorise the differences between various forms of poetry, with the lyric being the genre in which the poet is most closely identified with the poem and drama being that in which the artist completely hides behind the masks of characters. In prose,

authors create narrators and characters through which the story unfolds. More subtle masks are employed by modernist writers, which sometimes create the bewildering effect of uncertainty through the use of plural focalisations. Joseph Conrad's ***Heart of Darkness*** is one tame example of this while postmodernist texts occupy the other extreme. However, in Sol Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa* and Luke's *Book of Acts* the narrator and the author are one and there is no effort to hide this nor is there an attempt to mask this identity. This relationship of identity between the narrator and the author, even when the author is not a character in the narrative, becomes a major authenticating device for the purpose of the narrative.

Hodge's assertion that "narrative retains a potent link between knowing and telling which is central to its ideological effectiveness, since it seems to guarantee a transparent form of telling in which the form of speech closely matches its object" (1990:141) is worth noting. But Hodge's assertion is challenged by Marwick's argument that "the belief in a hard core of historical facts existing objectively and independently of the interpretation of the historian is a preposterous fallacy" (1989). This objection notwithstanding, it is simply not possible to argue that **real events** did not take place in **real places** at **real historical times**. What Marwick is contending is that the historian's 'interpretation' is inevitably carried over into his narrative of these events. This argument unwittingly supports my contention that in realist texts the author's intention (what Marwick describes as the historian's 'interpretation') underwrites

the narrative in compelling ways which the literary critic only ignores to his/her own peril. In advancing this claim, I will be using Sol Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa* and the *Book of Acts* to substantiate my claims on the priority of the authorial intention in the interpretation of classic realist texts, especially those in which the intention and objective are so clearly stated.

I am aware of the differences between the *Book of Acts* and Sol Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa*, for the former is a sacred text whereas the latter is a secular 'protest' text. The *Book of Acts* presents itself as actual case history and as such cannot be seen as a fictional construct. Aune asserts that the author of *Acts* "wants to provide his patron with 'exact information' about the historical and theological basis for the Christian faith" (136). Aune further argues that "*Acts* provided historical definition and identity as well as theological legitimation for the author's conception of normative Christianity" (137). The same view is advocated by Esler (1987) in his assertion that "*Acts* should be attributed to Luke's desire to explain and justify, to "legitimate" Christianity to his Christian contemporaries, in other words, that his main objective is one of "legitimation" (16). Sol Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa* is an account of the origins of the "Natives' Land Act" of 1913 and its immediate effects on the lives of black South Africans. Brian Willan describes *Native Life in South Africa* as "the product of a particular stage in the struggle for black political rights in South Africa. It was a period where great hope was placed in the due process of law, in the presentation of grievances through reasoned statement and debate, appeal and

petition" (Willan in Plaatje, 1982:2). He continues: *Native Life in South Africa* "was first and foremost a response to the *Natives' Land Act* of 1913, and has a unique importance as a political statement and testimony" (1). So, these two texts under discussion are classic examples of historical discourse which "lays claim to a sense of 'pastness', to a past time which has existed and is independent of the language used to describe it" (Webster, 1990:106). Webster (1990) further argues that "historical writing is very involved with ascertaining facts, motives and explanations, establishing forms of historical 'truth' " (106).

As the objective of this study is to affirm the presence of an intentional consciousness in realist texts, it will be necessary to probe into the historical reliability of these texts and the factual reality they purport to depict. This probing is essential in view of the fact that "all messages are constructed.

In the rest of this chapter therefore I will first provide a background to the issue of intention and intentionality in texts and then proceed to provide a justification of the aim against the background of post-structuralist and post-modern perspectives on the nature of texts. The justification will seek to re-open the debate on agency, and the nature of textuality in Third World / Feminist and minority discourses which emphasise the significance of these issues.

Every representation distorts, and every one who uses representation can manipulate or be manipulated, and we learn to guard against deception by any means" (Hodge, 1990:141). The constructedness of meaning does not in itself invalidate the argument that meaning is reproduced in texts as a consequence of authorial intention. The Christian faith is premised on the fact that way back in history, as asserted in the *Book of Acts*, a community of believers was founded. Its consequent impact resulted in many espousing this faith. The existence and continuity of contemporary Christian Churches, notwithstanding the wide diversity of opinion that exists among them, was enabled by this founding community of believers and therefore has to be defined in relation to it. Christian identity and distinctiveness is informed by the depiction in the *Book of Acts* of the believers's socio-political positioning in relation to the status quo. I would in fact argue that contemporary believers only acquire meaningful Christian identity by identifying with or claiming descent from the community of believers of biblical times. Acts of identity often involve the construction of mobilizational ideologies in which singular meanings are privileged. These singular meanings tend to erase or occlude other possible meanings and create **closures**, which preclude infinite semiosis and plurality of meanings. The view that "meaning is never singular and uncontested but rather plural and contested" is as alien to Christianity as it is to all other mobilizational ideologies, be they sacred or secular. The doctrinal hold of these ideologies on adherents in fact arises from these closures. And these closures are written into the texts as the *raison d'être* for the production of the texts in the first instance.

Supposing that the view about the plurality of meaning in any given text were admissible in this context, it is my contention that there would be no grounds for "biblical meaning" in its primary points of sin and salvation to be perceived as unique and universal. This view would in fact undermine the divine attributes ascribed to the production of biblical texts and unravel the entire tapestry of the Christian faith. The notion of the absence of any transcendental meaning questions and challenges one of the very foundations of sacred texts such as the Bible which was written with the specific purpose of regulating human activities or behaviour (particularly of those who espouse the Christian faith). Once we concede that the meaning of the text is indeterminate, "then there are virtually no limits to interpretation, and no constraints on what can either be relevantly or usefully said" (Butler, 1984:81). But Eco's argument that "...the notion of unlimited semiosis does not lead to the conclusion that interpretation has no criteria" (1992:7) serves as an illuminating response to the foregoing concern with regard to the indeterminacy of meaning. As asserted by Eco (1992) "To say that a text has potentially no end does not mean that every act of interpretation can have a happy end" (23). This would necessitate that any would-be reader of the text be scrupulous when selecting and adopting a theoretical position from which to read the text. The concern about being scrupulous should be observed in consideration of the impact that theoretical presuppositions and assumptions have on the meaning and significance of the text. For purposes of clarity and precision, the reader has to spell out whether he/she views interpretation "as a

process of getting at, revealing, or communicating a pre-existing meaning" or views interpretation "as a process of creating something new and personal to the interpreter as an extension of a pre-existing text" (Hawthorn, 1994:24). My view is in favour of the former, which sees meaning as intrinsic in the text.

Plurality of meaning and indeterminacy is to a very large extent congruent with the theory of Intertextuality. Hawthorn (1994:99) defines Intertextuality as "a relation between two or more texts which has an effect upon the way in which the inter text is read". Similarly, Still et al (1990:1) argue that "the theory of Intertextuality insists that a text cannot exist as a hermitic or self-sufficient whole, and so does not function as a closed system". Lemke advances the same view in his assertion that "all meaning is intertextual. No text is complete or autonomous in itself, it needs to be read, and it is read, in relation to other texts" (1985:41). The text's characteristic features as enunciated by the theory of intertextuality are true (as will be shown in this study) for both the *Book of Acts* and Sol Plaatje's *Native life in South Africa*. Notwithstanding the seemingly persuasive implications of the theory of Intertextuality I would still maintain that although all discourse are inherently dialogical/inter-textual, there are "monologues" which on one level succeed in suppressing dialogism.

Intertextuality does not necessarily invalidate the argument that in realist texts one can detect a theme, an idea or underlying argument that runs through the narration and is maintained in the author's narration. This being the case, it

seems to me fairly logical to claim with particular reference to the *Book of Acts* and Sol Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa*, that in realist texts such as these meaning is determinable and that the author's intention often serves as a reliable guide to this determination. The same view of meaning in texts is also implied in Thiselton's (1992:50) assertion that "without the constraints imposed on meaning by the text's context or situation and the directness of the author's utterance, meaning becomes infinitely variable and polyvalent". But Thiselton observes that Reader-response theorists "would claim that this notion of "constraints" is arbitrary, artificial, and illusory, whether they are perceived as textual constraints or as socio-critical constraints which offer a critique of the interests of a particular community of readers" (1992:50).

The conception of texts as "processes that move us on, but never end, because any 'final' meaning is called into question by the never-ending network of Intertextuality which surrounds all texts and places them within new signifying systems" (Thiselton, 1992:51) is a perspective that does not take into account that contract of action between writer and audience on which certain kinds of texts are built. Intertextuality, it is well to remember, focuses on the connections between texts and may downplay the role of the author, but it does not refute the fact that writing is by its very nature purposive and tendentious and that some texts place a demand of direct action upon its target audience. As argued by Foster (1993:137) "no one writes simply for oneself. There is always an Other". Writing with an audience in mind implies that meaning cannot be entirely

independent of authorial intention. Hirsch's assertion that "one cannot be meaningful, unless one has an intention to refer to something, so all meaning is bound up with reference to reality" (Hirsch in Jefferson, edit, 1982:135) is particularly meaningful in this regard. In contradistinction to this view, Thiselton (1992:15) argues that "texts are neither complete nor fully given until the community of readers creates for them a particular working currency". Similar sentiments are expressed by Ricoeur that "the need for interpretation arises from the fact that in written texts, meanings have broken free from their authors and from their intended receivers" (Ricoeur in Jefferson, edit, 1982:137).

At this juncture, it is necessary to conduct a brief survey of the views of scholars, critics and literary artists on authorial intention and the determination of meaning in realist texts which seek to intervene in particular **histories** or **realities**. According to Ashcroft et al "the central issue of a literary work is the strategic value of its literary content and the effectiveness of its intervention in the struggle to liberate...societies from economic injustice, social backwardness and political reaction" (1989:130). But one should not lose sight of the fact that the "written word", that is, the text, is capable of assuming particular roles depending on the purpose that informed its production. The text may serve to foster an enslaving mentality instead of assuming an emancipatory potential. This view is substantiated by Boehmer's argument that "colonial settlement ...was expressed textually. Writing in the form of treaties was used to claim territory. The text, a vehicle of imperial authority symbolised and in some cases indeed performed the

act of possession" (1995:13). Again, Boehmer (1995) asserts that resistance to imperial domination "assumed textual form...in the written word, in histories and epic recreations of the past, early nationalists found a compelling medium to counter colonialism's self-representations" (13). Texts, in other words, are not simply free floating signifiers but are linked through the process of their production to intentions, the intentions of their authors, and more significantly to power, the power to impose these intentions.

Achebe is of the view that "the principal feature which differentiated African artists from their European counterparts was that they privileged the social function of writing over its function as a tool of individual expression". It is further asserted by Achebe (in Ashcroft et al, 1989) that African artists "created their myths and legends and told their stories for a human purpose" (126). Mafika Gwala (in Daymond et al, 1984) conceives of writing as a cultural weapon and argues that "we cannot write out of our experience in a society where social deprivation is taken for granted" (47). Gwala goes on to assert that "our language often answers to immediate needs and much African literature has answered to the boredom and the deprivation of those who are not free" (51). The underlying argument Gwala maintains is that "writing by blacks acquires political significance precisely because whatever they publish gains wide scrutiny from the State and from white academics" (51). Daniel P Kunene writes, "I see my task as that of a writer actively contributing to the overall movement of liberation through the awakening of consciousness" (Kunene in Daymond et al,

1984:291). But Karel Schoeman advocates an opposite stance to Kunene's view of the task of a writer. Schoeman emphatically asserts that "you do not set about writing with the conscious purpose of protesting, or attacking; the end-product of such a purpose could only be expostulation or propaganda" (Schoeman in Daymond et al, 1984:99). But Schoeman's subsequent argument, "if the writer remains responsive to what is happening around him and feels real concern, it will manifest itself in his work, no matter how obliquely", implicitly contradicts his earlier assertion that "you do not set about writing with the conscious purpose". Alan Paton shares Schoeman's sentiments. Paton writes: I am not making the book with any intention that it might be an instrument of change" (Paton in Daymond et al, 1984:89). Paton further asserts that "if it teaches any lesson, if it spurs men and women to greater endeavour in pursuit of goals that they believe to be good, if it cries out and protests; that will be because I am that kind of a person" (89). The latter part of Paton's argument again very subtly contradicts his earlier pronouncement; "I am not making this book with any intention".

Unlike Paton, Patrick Cullinan (in Daymond et al, 1984) unequivocally states his writing position and his expectations of the reader. He writes: "I feel that what I do write the majority of the oppressed who read, understand...The militancy in my lines should be understood...What I am writing about is the vileness of oppression based mainly on racism" (74). Cullinan's writing stance is shared by Es'kia Mphahlele in his argument that "it would be a comforting thought to share fully the transcendental view of art, but I am preoccupied with grassroots

responses to literature, and I am often cynical to my mind to dwell on those possibilities that only live in the intellect" (Mphahlele in Daymond et al, 1984:81). Mbulelo Mzamane expresses the same sentiments when he writes; "perhaps a time will come when we shall sit back and review one another's work primarily as literary creations. For me, we have very pressing problems to which we must harness all our resources, physical and spiritual" (Mzamane in Daymond et al, 1984:304). Need we be reminded at this point that what all of these writers and critics are putting forward no matter how covertly in these quotations are statements of **intentions, social positioning** and **contexts** in relation to literary works?

I am arguing that the social positioning of individuals in relation to their context or situation has a bearing on their artistic biases and disposition and that impacts on the writing that the individual produces. This claim is substantiated by Richard Rive's argument that "if one of the objects of literature is to record and interpret experience then the literature of the 'have-nots' must differ in theme and texture from the literature of the 'haves' (Rive in Daymond et al, 1984:92). Bessie Head, commenting on Sol Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa*, writes: "This book may have failed to appeal to human justice in its own time, but there is in its tears, anguish and humility, an appeal to a day of retribution" (Head in Plaatje, 1982:xiii).

It becomes imperative therefore to foreground the text's intelligibility in relation to the society/context or situation that produced it. Boehmer (1995:8) holds the view that "any piece of writing is a product of its time". It is for this reason that the material conditions of the production and consumption of the text be taken into account in order to avoid or minimise the misuse and manipulation of the text. In the context of this study it is assumed that consciousness and consciousness-raising can be better effected when the text's meaning is considered determinate. It should also be noted that in this study I am confining the determinacy of meaning to classic realist texts of the kind I have outlined, for it is in their nature to be highly logocentric and monologic. Logocentrism, which is a Derridean concept, is explicated by Hawthorn (1994:108) as "referring to systems of thought or habits of mind which are reliant upon the metaphysics of presence, that is a belief in an extra-systemic validating presence which underwrites and fixes linguistic meaning but is itself beyond scrutiny or challenge". It is beyond the scope of this thesis to dwell on the problems attendant to Hawthorn's explication of logocentrism.

My underlying argument is that the thematic elements, ideas and issues discernible or identifiable in the analysis of a text will more often than not make a strong case for the rehabilitation of authorial intention (notwithstanding the plausibility of recognising or discerning "other" meanings). But these other meanings should be perceived as having been subjected to repression by the "monologues". It is worth noting that by its very nature monologism "denies that

there exists outside of it another consciousness, with the same rights, capable of responding on an equal footing, another and equal I (thou). The monologue is accomplished and deaf to the other's response" (Quoted in Todorov, 1984:107).

Ricoeur asserts (in Thiselton, 1992:56) that "writing renders the text autonomous with respect to the intention of the author. What the text signifies no longer coincides with what the author meant". This may perhaps be true of "the dialogic or multivoiced narrative" which "gives vivid expression to theories of the 'open', indeterminate text, or of transgressive, non-authoritative reading" (Boehmer, 1995:243). But the propensity to make texts (on which reading formations are grounded) relevant or congruent with current theoretical trends without taking into cognisance the kind of text that one is presented with is problematic. For instance, "post-modern notions of meaning as arbitrary or identity as provisional, are hardly relevant to the lives of those for whom self-determination remains a political imperative" (Boehmer, 1995:248). It is in this respect that Webster's (1990) claim that "a more profitable approach to adopt is to see all forms of writing, all texts, as employing various devices of language and narrative which seek to establish certain kinds of knowledge and validity" becomes more tenable. Again, Webster rightly asserts that one has to be "aware of the kinds of language in circulation at the moments of production and consumption of texts and to be able to 'read' these according to their historical significance" (1990:45).

It is my contention that attempts should be made to ascertain whether the language in the text in question displays a high index of dialogism or is a highly monologic authoritarian discourse which suppresses other discourses. A dialogic discourse or narrative would arguably, make a case for the "many-voicedness or heteroglossia which reveals the full play of meanings available in language" (Webster, 1990:40). The argument I would like to maintain is that the classic realist text, defined as "that in which an authorial and authoritarian 'metalanguage' judges and controls all the other discourses in the text" is characterised by an inherent privileged voice which, according to Webster (1990) "seeks to establish certain 'truths' as a result of which "other readings are closed off" (41).

Writing is an act of communication, which, as I said earlier, is both purposive and tendentious. Communication is triggered by a specific need, which has to be realised. When engaging in communication, the intent is to have the need in question realised. As asserted by Hymes (1961: 1972) "...the functions of communications are directly related to the particular purposes and needs" (14). I am arguing that writing, as an intentioned act is functional in a number of ways. Depending on the situation in question the intent could be aimed at encouraging, dissuading, persuading, raising-consciousness, imparting information, giving condolences and exposing that which needs to be exposed, as would befit the situation. Consequently, intentioned communication is not without envisaged results or outcomes.

Now I want to focus on an explication of the relationship between realist texts and the critical difference as enunciated by *Frelimo* to the effect that:

> *While in colonialism culture and poetry were amusements for the idle hours of the rich, our poetry of today is a necessity, a song that goes out of our heart to raise our spirit, guide our will, reinforce our determination and broaden our perspective* (***Frelimo in Gugelberger, 1986***).

This explication, I hope, will both illuminate and strengthen my position that the argument against intentionality cannot apply to classic realist texts. I will first of all embark upon a discussion of the realist mode of writing so as to put the argument for intentionality in its historical perspective. Subsequent to this will be a discussion of the modernist mode of writing, which to all intents and purposes contrasts the former mode of writing in its orientation. I will then sum up the discussion with the relevance and applicability of each mode of writing to particular historical moments and contexts or situations.

According to Lodge "realist writing is metonymic" (Lodge in Bradbury et al, 1976:483). Jakobson advocates the same view in his assertion that "language oscillates between the axis of metaphor and metonymy" (Jakobson in Tambling, 1988:42). It should be noted that "metonymy is a technique to make irony possible...where one thing is said and something contiguous meant" (Tambling, 1988:46). Tambling further argues that "the realist novel assumes that there can

be a way of mirroring the world" (27) and that "the nineteenth - century novel is the voice of a dominant class, the bourgeoisie" (35). Thus, I would argue that the metonymic mode is closely associated with traditional literary mimesis. As defined by Tambling (1988) "Mimesis means 'imitation' - the representation of reality" (51). What has been discussed thus far amounts to the fact that 'realistic writing' attempts to represent reality however distorted or flawed this representation might be. This claim pertaining to the representation of reality in 'realistic writing' is substantiated by Tambling's argument that "Marxist theories assume that by one means or another, literature is bound to social and political reality" (16). It is worth reiterating that McGann expresses the same sentiments when he asserts that "every work of art is the product of an interaction between the artist, on the one hand, and a variety of social determinants on the other" (295).

In contradistinction to the project of the realist mode of writing and its attendant "world of mimetic representation" the modernist mode of writing gives rise to the narratives of modernisation inherent in which is the propensity to undermine the "world of mimetic representation". According to Lodge "modern fiction is... regarded as having a symbolist bias and as being in reaction against traditional realism" (Lodge in Nicholls, 1995:484). Again, in modern fiction, "directness of representation is seen to be both delusory and undesirable" (Nicholls, 1995:36). It has to be recognised therefore that in modernist writing there is no attempt to presuppose that there is "some relation between the text and reality" (Nicholls,

1995:179). The refutation of a possible relation between the text and reality is premised on the fact that "the object of art is not reality as such but the 'pure notion', which invests it. The techniques needed to evoke the 'Ideal' are therefore those of indirection and suggestiveness" (Nicholls, 1995:35). It is further argued that "words ...do not offer a transparent passage to referents outside of language, there is no 'immaculate language' unspotted by human particularity and its interests" (Nicholls, 1995:37). In modernist writing, "the artist is seen as one who has 'turned away' from the immediate world" (Nicholls, 1995:179).

So, in the light of the above discussion it can be asserted emphatically that the two modes of writing under discussion are incompatible with one another. This incompatibility between these two modes of writing arises from the fact that "the realist novel assumes that there can be a way of simply mirroring the world" (Tambling, 1988:27) whereas the modernist novel "is sceptical about the ability to pass from the world to a clear referent; to make the transition from language to the real world, from the 'signifier to the signified' " (Tambling, 1988:35). It is against this background therefore that language, in Tambling's terms, "1988) "cannot be thought of ahistorically, statically: its condition is that it is an activity, used competitively by different dominant interests'" (40). It is further contended by Tambling (1988) that "language may be used to maintain conventional thought: to serve, specifically, the interests of the bourgeoisie, or it may be so twisted, so used to 'defamiliarize' " (35). The apparent tension or conflict

between these two modes of writing is typical of the 'tension between contemporary literary theory and the tradition of literary studies' as they manifest a 'conflict between two modes of thought'. Each particular mode of writing is therefore more amenable to particular reading formations as informed by their respective theoretical persuasions. This assertion is rendered more intelligible and tenable by the fact that 'modern literary theory is anything but monolithic: rather it consists of a multiplicity of competing theories, which frequently contradict each other'.

It is my contention that when dealing with written texts, it is incumbent upon the reader to ascertain whether the production of the text in question has been informed by "a static aesthetics of reflection inherent to which are 'notions of enjoyment' or a dynamic aesthetics of resistance and social commitment" (Gugelberger, 1986:7). A committed aesthetics will more often than not culminate in the production of a text that has both an 'instigative and admonitory potential'. Texts, whose production has been informed by a dynamic aesthetics, serve to mobilise consciousness on the part of the target readers. Thus, mobilizational texts have an inherent authorial intention, which has to be 'realised'. Again, these texts aspire to interpretative closures in that they use certain strategies to further the cause of these closures. It can therefore be inferred that the text as "the printed word" can assume different roles depending on the purposes that occasioned its production. The persuasiveness of the

"printed word" is best exemplified by the poetry of Mzwakhe Mbuli (one of Mbuli's poems will be analysed hereunder) written during the apartheid era. But before I engage in this brief analysis of one of Mbuli's poems which is presented here as an example of that contract of action between author and audience, I would like to cite some of the comments that have been advanced by Fr Smangaliso Mkhatshwa in regard to Mbuli's poetry anthology, ***Before Dawn***. Fr Mkhatshwa (in Mbuli, 1989:8) asserts that:

> ***Before Dawn*** *is a unique work of art, coming out as it does at a time when South Africa is standing on the threshold of a precarious new era. Only a Mzwakhe could capture the mood of these hectic, dangerous but hopeful times. Unlike the much publicised works of the eminent poet-laureates who pandered to the whims and moods of the princes, presidents and nobility of this world, Mzwakhe Mbuli's anthology is honest to the point of defiance.*

From the above citation, it can be inferred that for Mbuli the individual's choice or decision not to engage with the external world is a purposeful disinterestedness. It can also be deduced that Mbuli's poetry is to all intents and purposes creatively geared towards a particular purpose. His poetry, in Onoge's terms, offers "resistance against the assimilationist programmes of the colonial establishment" (Onoge in Gugelberger, 1986:28). By so doing Mbuli shows his 'responsibility' or 'commitment' as a writer to his society. I would argue that Mbuli is well aware of "the political implications of being a black artist" and that "the artist's legitimacy resides in the wholehearted participation in the people's struggle for freedom"

(Onoge in Gugelberger, 1986:27). Mbuli's aesthetics of commitment is best accounted for by Onoge's argument that "from the standpoint of the revolutionary, the political criterion of excellent art is art which serves the struggle of the people against their oppressors" (Onoge in Gugelberger, 1986:44).

Fr Mkhatshwa further asserts that ***Before Dawn*** "is more than just another protest literary work. Like any language Mzwakhe's poetry is a well-organised system of signposts which reflect our people's historical consciousness of their struggle over the decades. It serves as a memory bank of their collective struggles" (Mkhatshwa in Mbuli, 1989:8). Fr Mkhatshwa's assertion is reminiscent of Rusen's argument that "historical consciousness functions as a specific orientational mode in actual situations of life in the present: it functions to aid us in comprehending past actuality in order to grasp present actuality" (Rusen, 1993:66). Rusen (1993:67) further contends that "historical consciousness has a practical function: it bestows upon actuality a temporal direction, an orientation that can guide action intentionally by the agency of historical memory". Thus, Mbuli's stance with regard to the compatibility of art and social praxis concurs with Mao Tse-Tung's assertion that "In the world today all culture, all literature and art belong to definite classes and are geared to definite political lines. There is in fact no such thing as art for art's sake, art that is detached from or independent of politics" (***Mao Tse-Tung***, *Talks at the Yenan Forum*, in Gugelberger, 1986).

Ogaga Ifowodo's poem *For Art's sake* which is reproduced hereunder, is a telling ironic repudiation of the notion of art for art's sake:

We shall shun pain
and write lyrics of the ear.

We shall write only
- *the redness of setting suns*
  on wonders of rolling seas
- *the greatness of forest leaves*
  and the songs of dwelling birds
- *the sweetness of women's eyes*
  and the adventures of stubborn loves.

We shall roam the full earth
and see no pain on our paths
and no evil in men's hearts.

For art's sake, we shall shun
pain, and write lyrics of the ear.

14 October, 1987

Ifowodo's poem unequivocally rejects modernist notions of art as "independent of or else transcending the humanistic, the material and the real" (Bradbury in Bradbury et al, 1976:25). Again, Ifowodo's poem questions, in Bradbury's (1976) terms, "the belief that art has few consequences other than that of being itself" (28). This then brings me to an analysis of Mbuli's poem, *Crocodiles*, which is reproduced:

I am the product of hunger,
I am the product of social injustice,
I represent the insulted majority,
I represent victims of tyranny,
I come from apartheid land.

I *represent a nation,*
I recite for a nation,
A peace loving nation,
A nation that never enjoyed freedom,
Since conquest my land is blood stained,
From time immemorial,
Human corpses have replaced pockets of cement,
In building the future of post apartheid land,
Nevertheless no oppressive Kingdom is eternal.

How hard and tormenting it is,
To write about slavery and not freedom,
How hard and tormenting it is,
To write about pain and not joy,
When shall I write about daffodils?
How can I write about the beauty of nature?
When the ground is daily soaked,
With blood of the innocent,
Nevertheless Agostinho Neto the late Poet-President,
Used both the pen and the machine,
To achieve the liberation of Angola.

The land is the key to social order,
The people are like crocodiles in the river,
And no one can fight crocodiles inside the river,
South Africa why therefore buy time?
When crocodiles are against you,
Why give chase to lizards?
When crocodiles are against you.

The minority cannot rule over the majority forever,
When the world is for justice and peace,
South Africa is for reforms,
When ancient slavery was abolished,
The slaves were not free,
When pass law was declared abolished,
Freedom loving South Africans remained in bondage.

Nevertheless the dove of peace,
Also belongs to us in the South,
No regime can press over a hot lid,
Of a boiling pot forever,
The land is the key to social order,
And the tradition of no surrender,
Is the name of the game to total emancipation,
The tradition of no give up,

Is the name of the game to total emancipation.

The " speaker's pronouncement I am..." is an affirmation of his/her socially constructed identity and as such cannot be perceived as innately acquired. The first stanza of the poem is an attestation to the dehumanisation of the speaker and those he/she represents. The suffering visited upon the victims is a direct consequence of the decadent socio-political environment.

In the second stanza the claims, "I represent a nation" and "I recite for a nation" serve to highlight the representational status of the speaker and thus render this representation legitimate and authentic. As a matter of fact the speaker is to be seen as rendering a social service to the nation. This is indeed indisputable social responsibility. I am arguing that Mbuli the artist, in Lukacs's terms, "regards it as the vocation of art to predict, among other things, social and moral degeneration in human relationships" (Lukacs in Daichies, 1981:367). Again, as argued by Lukacs, "art, precisely if taken in its most perfect purity, is saturated with social and moral humanistic problems" (367). The argument advanced by Lukacs is given substance and acceptability by the poem's reference to the fact that the said nation "never enjoyed freedom"; the land "since conquest...is blood stained" and that "human corpses have replaced pockets of cement, in building the future of post apartheid land". These cited lines of the poem (which are reflective of the past) are meant to appeal to the historical consciousness of the target audience and thus serve as an enabling means to evoke that consciousness. This view is substantiated by Rusen's assertion that "historical

consciousness evokes the past as a mirror of experience within which life in the present is reflected" (Rusen, 1993:66-67).

The third stanza of the poem expresses the same sentiments as those found in Ifowodo's poem, *For Art's sake*. The first four lines of the stanza make a case for the artist's social obligation. The speaker does not derive pleasure from the activity of writing "about slavery and not freedom". But he/she is obliged by the immediate material conditions to engage in this necessary task. It is as though the speaker has heeded the indictment of the Brotherhood Song of Liberty, "They are slaves who fear to speak - for the fallen and weak". The following questions posed by the speaker: "When shall I write about daffodils? How can I write about the beauty of nature? When the ground is daily soaked, with the blood of the innocent," are meant to refute the erroneous notion that "poetry is by convention detached from immediate circumstances of utterance" (Culler in Daichies, 1981:378). Taken to its logical conclusion, this notion implies that poetry has no pragmatic function in social contexts.

In the fourth stanza of the poem the reference to the people in the land as being "like crocodiles in the river" signifies the indomitability of the oppressed in the same way, as it is difficult if not impossible to subdue crocodiles in the river. The land, which from time immemorial has been inhabited by the people who are now deprived of its full use, is a terrain of contestation. Thus, the land cannot be relinquished for the exclusive ownership by the powers that-be who, in the

context of this poem, constitute a minority. Again, this indomitability of the oppressed is attested to by the speaker's optimistic question, "South Africa why therefore buy time? ". In the context of the poem 'South Africa' refers to the apartheid regime which discriminates against (to be more specific) the oppressed black people. The buying of time conveniently (but exclusively for the beneficiaries of the system) amounts to delaying the people's emancipation. But this buying of time is seen by the speaker as a transient delay for "the minority cannot rule over the majority forever" (line 1, stanza 5).

In the fifth stanza of the poem the speaker pronounces the indispensability of the enactment of transformative measures (which are of course long overdue) in South Africa. The need for real and genuine transformative measures is succinctly put by the assertion that "when pass law was declared abolished, freedom loving South Africans remained in bondage". But the sixth stanza of the poem convincingly carries a message of hope. The optimism is foregrounded by the words; "No regime can press over a hot lid, / of a boiling pot forever ". The 'boiling pot' signifies the unflagging fighting spirit of the people for their long-awaited liberation. The indefatigability of the people toward emancipation is sustained and made possible by "the tradition of no surrender".

My underlying argument is that in Mbuli's poem one encounters a poem in which the "dynamic aesthetics" is at play; a poem in which the broad intention is to mobilise the people against an oppressive regime. This intention colours every

act of the poem creating an "authorial and authoritarian 'metalanguage', which judges and controls all other discourses in the text". The language of political protest employed is a consequence of its political intent. This language of political protest stands opposed to "pure eidetic forms of language, purged of any very determinative semantic substance" (Eagleton, 1990:86). In this poem *Crocodiles*, Mbuli, in Winkler's terms, is "choosing the language which records most literally and exactly the quality of the experience described, and thus enabling the reader to re-live it" (Winkler in Ford, 1982:225-226). What one encounters in this poem is a deliberate eschewing of figurative language (though one may detect vestiges of it) and a using of directness of statement. I would therefore argue that in Mbuli's writing there is a sense of purposiveness, centeredness and significance. Moreover, Mbuli's writing is without the use of "tropes of artistic withdrawal which tend to escape the bounds of mimetic desire" (Nicholls, 1995:49) as is the case in Symbolism. The favoured postmodernist tropes of irony and parody, the detached stance and the luxury of suggestiveness and plurality of meanings are deliberately foreclosed.

It is worth reiterating at this stage of the discussion that in modernist art as asserted by Nicholls (1995) "the object of art is not reality as such but the 'pure notion' which invests it" and that "the techniques needed to evoke the 'Idea' are those of indirection and suggestiveness" (35). Again, "directness of representation is seen to be both delusory and undesirable" (36). It is apparent from this modernist conception of the object of art that such an 'object' is

supposed to be "unspotted by human particularity and human interests" (37). I am arguing therefore that although in modernist art "the use of language...works to a very different end and is oriented towards a writing which abolishes voice" (36), this is not the case with classic realist texts as evidenced in Mbuli's poem.

The social and historical origins of modernism are worth remarking upon, if only briefly, to clarify the different contexts, in which texts, which aspire to a representational status and seek to intervene in real historical circumstances operate. According to Bradbury (1976:14) "modernism was an art of an age of growing cultural relativism and improving communications". It was "a new era of high aesthetic self-consciousness and non-representationalism, in which art turns from realism and humanistic representation towards style, technique, and spatial form in pursuit of a deeper penetration of life" (Bradbury, 1976:25). The same sentiments are advocated by Nicholls (1995:10) in his assertion that "in the wake of 1848, a disillusioned avant-garde tended to conceive of humanity as neither perfectible nor evolutionary, but as flawed and corrupt, a shift in perspective which was bound up with a thorough loss of faith in any kind of political action". Consequently, "the only way forward for art seemed, to some, to lie in the deliberate cultivation of an anti-social stance" (Nicholls, 1995:12). Subsequently, this culminated in the "substitution of the aesthetic for 'the lost terrain of social representation' " (11). There was therefore "a new sense of the incompatibility between artistic vocation and social obligation" (13). It is against this background

that "a new conception of poetic language as something quite distinct from a shared language of communication " (13) was adopted.

The argument for art's autonomy, which essentially refers to social functionlessness, is clearly at odds with Mbuli's language of political protest. Mbuli's language of political protest is oriented towards purposive 'rational action' within the context of the immediate historical moment. Mbuli's foregrounding of historical consciousness is reminiscent of Duvenage's assertion that "history must reassert itself as an intentional and organised process of identity formation that remembers the past in order to understand the present and anticipate the future" (Duvenage in Rusen, 1993:1). Similarly, Rusen argues that "historical understanding is guided fundamentally by basic human interests: as such, it is addressed to an audience and plays an important role in the political culture of the history's society" (Rusen, 1993:188). It needs mentioning though that the role assigned to art is not the same in different epochs and that this is regulated by the socio-political needs of the time. This claim is substantiated by Eagleton's (1990) assertion that "the call for an aesthetics in eighteenth-century Germany is among other things a response to the problem of political absolutism" (14) and that "aesthetics is born at the moment of art's effective demise as a political force" (368).

The social functionlessness of poetry is advocated by Coleridge, to mention but one, in his argument that "the immediate object of a poem is pleasure, not truth; the immediate object of poetry in the larger sense may be truth or it may be pleasure" (Coleridge in Daichies, 1981:108). Similarly, as alleged by Daichies (1981) Longinus argues that "the ultimate function of literature, and its ultimate justification, is to be sublime and to have on its readers the effect of ecstasy or transport that sublimity has" (46). But a reading of Mbuli's poem *Crocodiles* which foregrounds the poem's intelligibility on the historical context of its production will not fail to discern the contrary view. As argued by Daichies (1981) "the worth of an art work depends on the intentions and purposes of its user- and is far from a justification of poetry for its own sake. One can only begin to justify poetry for its own sake if one can isolate its differentiating qualities and consider what unique function poetry serves" (53). It is also worth noting Daichies' s observation that "there is a need to differentiate between different ways of handling language by asking what each seeks to achieve and how that aim determines its nature" (101).

As argued by Fr Mkhatshwa "poetry communicates, chastises, consoles, castigates, comforts, caresses, and explodes into a tirade of condemnation against injustice and oppression, where necessary" (8). Fr Mkhatshwa goes on to assert that "from his work one feels that Mzwakhe wants to articulate his people's anger, anxiety, suffering as well as their determination to break the chains of oppression and slavery" (8). Fr Mkhatshwa's argument is rendered

more intelligible by the speaker's sense of confidence and optimism as enunciated in the statement "Nevertheless Agostinho Neto the late Poet-President, used both the pen and the machine, to achieve the liberation of Angola".

The writer's (Mbuli) social identity occasioned by his social origin and participation in the conflict of interests is discernible in the themes or issues addressed by the poem. The same sentiments are expressed by Nadine Godimer in her assertion that "the social situation has a far more profound influence over the kind of writing produced" (Godimer in Watts, 1989: 23). What Mbuli does in his poetry is, among other things, an affirmation of "the traditional role of the artist in African society" (Watts, 1989:21). By the same token in Mozambique "during the years of the armed struggle, poetry was a weapon" (Searle in Gugelberger, 1986:150). Searle further asserts that "in 1962, after the foundation of *Frelimo*, a national language had to be adopted that was capable of linguistically uniting all the people of Mozambique" (151). It should be noted that this language helped in the "development of a new form of writing with a new intention" (152) and "this was to raise the consciousness of the fighting cadres, to mobilise their determination and inspire them to future victories" (152). This was indeed the 'mobilisation of words'. The preface of the pamphlet in which *Frelimo* published their *Poems of Combat* in 1971 had, among other things, the following to say:

> *This poetry collection we publish here is one of the first fruits of our revolution. They are all poems by* ***Frelimo*** *militants, all of whom are directly involved in the armed struggle for national liberation. For this is the essential characteristic of today's Mozambican poetry: there is an absolute identification of the poet's sensitivity with revolutionary practice. This poetry does not speak of myths, of abstract things, but speaks of our life of struggle, of our hopes and certainties, our determination, our love for our comrades, of nature and for our country. And when the poet writes "Forward Comrades!" he goes forward himself. He is pleased to have a gun and grasp it truly, as truly as his hands are calloused from using the hoe and his feet are exhausted from long marches. And because of this our poetry is also a slogan. Like a slogan, it is born out of necessity, out of reality. While in colonialism and capitalism, culture and poetry were amusements for the idle hours of the rich, our poetry of today is a necessity, a song which goes out of our heart to raise our spirit, guide our will, re-inforce our determination and broaden our perspective.*

The above quotation is a classic case of art committed to the social service of liberation. As argued by Onoge, "the social realist artist...shows the world as changeable" (Onoge in Gegelberger, 1986:36). Thus, art in class societies has a political intent and as such is hardly replete with notions of 'aesthetic enjoyment'. The outcry for "pure art" informed solely by the 'private' and 'particular' is relevant to those who have ample scope (as determined by their socio-political positioning) to dwell on the imaginative dimension of human life. This yearning for 'pure art' is best exemplified by the case of an English critic who, "in the very first conference of African literature held in Kampala in 1962...recommended the repudiation of the tradition of Negritude commitment because it was preoccupied with 'public gesture rather than with private and particular observation' " (Onoge in Gugelberger, 1986:31). This position has strong affinities with the capitalist proclivity to elevate the individual or private far above the communal. The

propriety of such a propensity which favours the private should be weighed against the social positioning of its exponents for its disinterestedness is very much suspect. It is worth reiterating at this stage of the discussion that in Modernism art "is conveniently sequestered from all other social practices, to become an isolated enclave" (Eagleton, 1990:9). Similarly, Kettle asserts that in the nineteenth-century theory of 'art for art's sake' "the artist is seen not primarily in terms of contributing to the life and knowledge of the community but in terms of some almost act of 'self-expression' or in direct relation to some absolute abstraction" (1989:8). In conclusion, when dealing with any kind of writing it is imperative not to avoid asking the question: what specific circumstances prompted the writing and what is the writing's orientation? Asking this question will help the reader identify a reading formation that is amenable to both the production and reception of the text. Again, asking this question should be done in view of the fact that "language is never autonomous and context-free. It is a means, an instrument, an enabling device for some of the actions of human beings" (Walhout et al, 1985:43). Moreover, as asserted by Daichies (1981), "the worth of art depends on the intentions and purposes of its user" (53).

I have used these examples to focus upon another tradition of writing and criticism in which the intention of the author in relation to his/her audience and the objectives he/she wishes to achieve are paramount. In this tradition which has largely thrived in the postcolonial societies of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and in the discourses of racial others and feminism, the authors' intentions and objectives are frequently recurrent concerns. These concerns crystallised into the

term 'commitment' which has since become a buzzword in the critical vocabulary of African literature, to use one example. Debates about 'commitment' raged so frequently that it became a major issue to which most African writers have had to respond or state their positions in one way or another. However, for the purpose of further clarifying the critical orientation of this thesis and to place in perspective the pragmatic approach adopted here, we need to go back very briefly to the western origins of the pragmatic approach to criticism. Although Aristotle in his *Poetics* identifies terror and pity as effects, which a good tragic play must elicit in its audience, pragmatic criticism often traces its origins from the classical theory of rhetoric. According to M.H. Abrams (1952: 15-16):

> *The perspective, much of the basic vocabulary, and many of the characteristic topics of pragmatic criticism originated in the classical theory of rhetoric. For rhetoric had been universally regarded as an instrument for achieving persuasion in an audience, and most theorists agreed with Cicero that in order to persuade, the orator must conciliate, inform, and move the minds of the auditors. The great classical exemplar of the application of the rhetorical point of view to poetry was, of course, the* ***Ars Poetica*** *of Horace.*

In concentrating largely on instructing the poet on how to **move** the audience, Horace had introduced a third element into the traditional functions of instructing and delighting. Apart from *prodesse* and *delectare*, to teach and to please, the term from rhetoric, *movere*, to move, added a third dimension to the effects that a work of art could have on its audience. Again according to Abrams (1952:16); "Looking upon the poem as a 'making', a contrivance, the typical pragmatic critic is engrossed with formulating the methods – the 'skill, or Crafte of making' as Ben Jonson called it – for achieving the effects desired". Within the context of

this thesis, "the effects desired" correspond to the intention of the author and this investigation is geared towards identifying the means through which these authors seek to achieve these effects in their texts.

The basic procedure adopted in the subsequent chapters is to first establish the historical and discursive context of the period and the production of each of the texts and this will then be followed by an analysis of the text in the light of this pragmatic approach. Chapters Two and Three will therefore deal with the first text while chapters Four and Five will treat the second. Thereafter, I sum up the argument of the thesis with a concluding chapter.

CHAPTER 2

> *Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eye-witnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been thought.*
>
> *(Luke 1:1-4).*

This chapter addresses Luke's writing (both as historian and theologian) and the character of his text, *Acts*. In the context of this discussion it is assumed that the writer of both *Luke* and *Acts* is one and the same person, whose writing is a product of an intentional action intended to bring about specific effects on the part of the targeted reader. As asserted by Thiselton (1992) "to write with an intention is to write in a way that is directed towards a goal" (560). Furthermore Thiselton (1992) asserts that "many (not all) biblical texts address a directed goal which may rightly be identified as its author's intention" and that "this is not an example of the 'intentional fallacy'" (560). This "directed goal" in *Acts* has to do with Theophilus "knowing the certainty of the things he has been taught". The fundamental claim advanced in the above quoted narrative is that the events narrated are to be conceived of as a fulfillment of prophecies which many people, presumably, have been awaiting to realize. The accounts of the events narrated are by no means to be doubted. This indubitability of the accounts of the events is premised on the fact that "they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eye-witnesses". The pronouncement "so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught" is an unequivocal assertion of intent. Thus the writing of the "orderly account" is to all intents and purposes

tendentious, which is that, it is aimed at procuring a specific effect or outcome. The use of the phrase "orderly account", I argue, is significant because the author's intention is to bring order and purpose to a host of historical data which may have been experienced as a disorderly chaos of events. To bring order to this "chaos" thus involves an intention of clarifying or highlighting the organizing principle, which makes them intelligible as an organic whole. Again, I would argue that this pronouncement "so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught" attests to the undisguised presence of an intention on the part of the writer.

> *In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.*
>
> *(Acts 1:1-2)*

The writer's assertion, "In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and teach" substantiates the claim that the writer of both *Acts* and *Luke* is one and the same person addressing his writing to a specific individual, namely, Theophilus. Properly understood, the *Book of Acts* is a continuation of the "former book", namely, *Luke*. Thus it is logical to infer that the writing of the *Book of Acts*, as is the case with *Luke* is not without intended outcomes. This assertion will be qualified in due course in this discussion.

Luke's act of writing in Scholes' et al (1996) terms is premised on "investigation rather than any immediacy of observation" (243). The investigatory mode in Luke's act of writing is unequivocally asserted by him (Luke) in his first book.

Luke emphatically asserts, "since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning". This assertion confers on Luke the requisite credentials for the task of writing. Again, Luke's assertion in respect of the investigatory mode he adopts in his writing of *Acts* does not necessarily bespeak a disinterested point of view whose aim is solely to present events as they happened. On the contrary, this assertion attests to Luke's historical impulse which accounts for his "pervasive desire to set Christianity within the history and traditions of Israel" (Esler, 1987:68). Gabel et al (1990) argue that "*Acts* is not an impartial record of events, such as we now expect history books to be, but a deliberately constructed narrative designed, even to the smallest detail, for the sake of making certain didactic points" (204). Gabel et al (1990) further argue that "to this end Luke has chosen which things to record and which to ignore, ordered their sequence...and in general seen to it that everything in his book contributes to its overall design" (204). Gabel et al's illuminating argument should not be conceived of as refuting the historicity of Luke's writing. As argued by Marshall (1979) "a historian records what he considers to be significant and memorable. Historical facts are precisely those facts, which a historian thought worthy of being recorded. Historians are not disinterested" (47).

The underlying argument I advance and maintain in this discussion is that Acts is a tendentious text whose primary intention is theological. In Acts "what is recorded is fact, yet it is actually proclamation - how God set to work to carry out his plan of salvation or his will for mankind...Acts recounts how Christ's

witnesses, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, carried this message as far as Rome" (de Villiers in Du Toit, edit, 1996:211). The theological character of *Acts* attests to the fact that Luke:

> *Writes from a particular standpoint which traces the activity of God in historical events. Consequently, he not only records...events in his narrative, but he also sees the general course of history as the effect of divine activity. This means that he gives a particular interpretation to historical events which would not be shared by a secular historian. (Marshall, 1979:56).*

Similarly de Villiers in accounting for the theocratic character of all the history in *Acts* asserts that:

> *On various occasions the exalted Christ of God intervenes demonstrably, to steer history in the direction he wills for it in terms of his plan. So he allows Pentecost to happen, when the Holy Spirit comes as the eschatological gift of Joel's prophecy, and through his coming a new era dawns, the last phase of salvation history. In Acts we have first and foremost to do with God, Christ, and the Spirit, and only thereafter with those people who act as their instruments or witnesses (de Villiers in Du Toit, edit, 1996:217).*

As observed by Marshall (1979) Luke "was not a mere reproducer of tradition, but he has given us his own interpretation of what is significant in it" and that "it is right that he should be regarded as theologian and historian" (218). This is substantiated by du Plessis's assertion that "Luke tries to present his material practically and theologically" (du Plessis in Du Toit, edit, 1996:199). In accounting for Luke's practical and theological presentation of his material, du Plessis (in Du Toit, edit, 1996) avers that:

> *In the first part of [Luke's] narrative, where he was not an eye-witness, his book is understandably less graphic or precise. But in the second part, where he makes much use of eyewitness reports, he offers more precise, chronological information...He uses speeches as sermons to illustrate his whole theological design and aim...In writing Acts he follows the same*

> *historically trustworthy method, but in the process he continues to strive to express the theological insight that it is God who is engaged in his saving work - the same God who from Christ's advent was active, is active still in the expansion of the Church (199).*

Luke's historical and theological ingenuity is best attested to by du Plessis's assertion in which he concedes, in respect of the speeches in *Acts*, that they (the speeches) "do not represent the *ipsissima verba* of the speakers, that Luke may well have reproduced them in his own words but he did so without impairing their accuracy. They fit so well into the historical situations in which they are set that it seems highly improbable that he created them *de novo*" (du Plessis in Du Toit, edit, 1996:198). According to Marshall (1979) Luke in his capacity as an evangelist,

> *Claims that theology rests upon history in the sense that the salvation of God is revealed in historical events; theology reflects upon those events and establishes their significance. Consequently theology cannot be separated from history, although this is not to say that the establishment of the historical facts is necessarily the same thing as the acceptance of their theological import (216).*

It needs mentioning at this stage of the discussion that different theoretical understandings with regard to the writing of history have been propounded. Thus differentiation has to be made between the exponents of a positivistic understanding of history as consisting solely of brute facts and those who advocate an existential approach to history in which the historian himself/herself is involved. Luke, as a matter of fact, subscribes to the existential approach (very relevant to the question of biblical history) which has as its characteristic feature "an understanding of history centering in the profound intentions, stances,

and concepts of existence held by persons...as the well-springs of their outward actions" (Marshall, 1979:27). Marshall (1979) is also of the view that "history must not restrict its interest to the 'outside' of events, but must also consider their 'inside' quality" (27). This is demonstrated in Luke's act of ascribing theological significance to historical events that bear witness to God's involvement in human affairs. Luke's resolve to consider the "inside" quality of historical events does not necessarily amount to a compromise of enquiry into the objective facts. It is as though Marshall anticipates potential objections against his assertion when he cogently admonishes that "what must be resisted...is any suggestion that thereby history becomes less a matter of enquiry into the objective facts and more an expression of the subjective impressions of the historian" (27). In engaging in a historical reminiscence Luke is not merely "collecting and checking every fact purely out of a disinterested passion for researching into the past" (Marshall, 1979:47). On the contrary he ascribes theological importance to the historical events he is narrating. Thus Marshall (1979) says of him:

> *Luke writes to tell again the story of Jesus, based on the accounts of eye-witnesses and ministers of the word", to substantiate what was taught about Jesus in the preaching and teaching heard by Theophilus; he narrates the story of the foundational period of the early church to show how the mission took place in accordance with prophecy and at the direction of the Lord, and to confirm that the establishment of the church of believers both Jewish and Gentile was part of the divine plan; thus he demonstrates that the gospel really brings salvation (231).*

I am in full agreement with Marshall's (1979) view that "the provision of a new, orderly narrative would act as further confirmation of what was already known. Luke thus wished to stress the accuracy of the historical facts which formed part

of early Christian teaching" (39). Gabel et al (1990) affirm that, "Acts, is chiefly given over to the doings of ordinary humans; it has a straightforward chronological order with specific indications of time and place; it records travels and meetings and speeches; it takes us to major cosmopolitan centers of the pagan world and it places many known historical figures on its stage" (203-204). It can therefore be emphatically stated that "Luke purports to write history" (Moessner, 1989:293). But it should be noted, as Moessner (1989) observes that "Luke writes...a history from a specific theological vantage point, or what we call a theological history...Israel's history is primarily a succession of messengers divinely sent in real time, to carry out specific events resulting in specific consequences" (308). The same sentiments are alluded to in Gabel et al's (1990) opinion that "the raw materials of history exist behind the book of Acts, but what the reader sees is always Luke's conception of the materials" (204). This is accounted for by the fact that "for ancient historians...the need to instruct and edify was at least as important as the need to inform, and facts, merely as such, had no particular virtue" (Gabel et al, 1989:204). It is against this background that Marshall's (1988) assertion that "Luke is both historian and theologian, and that the best term to describe him is evangelist" (18) is rendered more intelligible. Put differently, in Marshall's (1988) terms, Luke "can be properly appreciated as a theologian only when it is recognized that he is also an historian" (18). Marshall (1988) further contends that "as a theologian Luke was concerned that his message about Jesus and the early church should be based upon reliable history. His theology was based upon tradition, which he evaluated to the best of

his ability. He used his history in the service of his theology" (18). Luke's conception of history is premised on the understanding that:

> *History is not the story of humanity's submission to arbitrary fates and faceless fortunes or of the tragic plight of man seeking to live with character under the dominion of relentless powers. Rather, humanity is dealing and contending with a God who has elected to be involved with a people, a God whose will to shape history according to justice is tempered by a divine pathos and compassion for this people...History is where God is defied, where His judgement is enacted, and where His kingship is to be established (Tiede, 1980:31).*

The above rendition of the objective of theological history by Tiede is typical of the history in Luke's narrative in the *Book of Acts* in which the occurrence of human events is ascribed to the law(s) of cause and effect. Again, Tiede's explication of history has as its underlying argument the centrality of intentional action and agency in historical events. One cannot therefore ascribe human destiny to "arbitrary fates and faceless fortunes". Notwithstanding Henry's (1979) overriding argument (which is typical of Ricoeur's theoretical persuasion) that "the intention of the author remains forever a theoretical construct, since we know nothing of the author apart from the text", I would still argue that Luke's act of writing the *Book of Acts* is aimed at achieving particular goals. The fact that the narrative discourse in *Acts* is entirely predicated on exclusively human experiences of significant historical events has a bearing on Luke's conception of historical phenomena occasioned by human agency. As argued by Schwantes (1970) "an event is significant for the historian if it clarifies subsequent events which in turn are significant" (7). Schwantes's argument is confirmed in the *Book of Acts* in Luke's act of foregrounding Pentecost subsequent to which the commissioned disciples then embark on the mission to which they were called.

According to Schwantes (1970), "a sense of perspective is a necessary requisite for the historian for the simple reason that an event is understandable only in the context of what preceded and what followed" (5). This is made evident at Pentecost by the granting of the Holy Spirit to the disciples which then serves as an enabling means in the advancement of the Word of God as commissioned by Jesus. One would therefore not fail to discern that the book's primary intention is theological and that "Luke's historical details (or narrative) subserve his theological aims" (de Villiers in Du Toit, edit, 1979:170). In the context of the *Book of Acts*, "history is not concerned with events in the world of nature unless they affect or are affected by events in the world of man. Nor is history concerned with all the events in which man plays a role; it deals only with events which have significance in the overall drama" (Schwantes, 1970:7). Thus de Villiers's assertion that "Luke has pastoral concerns" and that "he does not recount his story as a disinterested or neutral narrator; he tells of these things that have happened in order to evoke reaction from his readers" is rendered more tenable (de Villiers in Du Toit, edit, 1979:181). In the *Book of Acts* the question of the author's positioning in respect of the events narrated is eminently manifested. Again, in the *Book of Acts* Luke does not appraise the past with detachment as would be expected of a staunch positivist historian. Luke's perspective confirms the providential or Christian view of history which "is concerned not only with the process of history but with its goals" (Schwantes, 1970:5). It can therefore be concluded that for Luke as for Schwantes:

There is no such thing as a totally objective historian. No one studies the sources

> *without any bias whatsoever. Like everyone else, the historian is steeped in the stream of history and can no more escape the prejudices of his generation than he can escape the air he breathes. He observes the past through the glasses of current philosophical outlook. Every new generation must rewrite past history to make it intelligible to itself (Schwantes, 1970:9).*

It would seem (from what has been said thus far in this discussion) that Luke's handling of historical facts, questions his reliability as a historian. But if "measured by the historiographical requirements of the Hellenistic era, Luke's reliability as a historian is attested by many" (de Villiers in Du Toit, edit, 1996:169). As argued by Marshall (1979) "many of the Hellenistic historians were more concerned with the rhetorical qualities of their writings than their historical verisimilitude. They wrote to produce a literary effect, and were perfectly capable of adjusting the facts to suit their literary requirements" (26). By the same token Luke "made use of the common literary pattern of his time to express his own particular sentiments. The point in the adoption of the conventional form is that Luke was claiming for his work a place in contemporary literature and thereby commending it to the attention of readers" (Marshall, 1979:38). It needs mentioning in Schwates's (1970) terms, that in any given situation "to deserve consideration, history must of necessity involve facts and interpretation" (11). In view of this, Luke's writing, "may certainly be characterized as the writing of history according to the standards of his time" (Marshall, 1979:38). It is also worth noting that the *Book of Acts* "is not an ordinary historical work, seeing that it lacks various typical characteristics of such a writing" (du Plessis in Du Toit, edit, 1996:197). Luke, writing from a Christian view of history cannot help "introducing meaning where other views see only

chaos" (Schwantes, 1970:5). So, "Luke's account depends not only on the traditional material available to him and the facts he had himself gathered, but on his own aims in writing" (du Plessis in Du Toit, edit, 1996:198). According to Trimmer (1989) "writing is both a solitary and a social act" (4) and "in every writing situation, a writer is trying to communicate a subject to an audience for a purpose" (7). Thus Luke's text is congenial to the needs that Theophilus (and possibly others as well) has; and these are expressed in the text as having to do with him knowing the certainty of the things he has been taught. Similarly, Jenkins (1993) argues that history should be conceived of "as a vehicle for the delivery of a specific position for persuasive purposes" and that "history is never for itself; it is always for someone" (17). In *Acts*, Luke presents us with a historical discourse that is predicated on his understanding of historical phenomena. It is evident in Luke's narration of the events that his "historical knowledge is constituted by specific interests, and these interests can be explicated as interpreted needs for...orientation" (Rusen, 1993:53). In Luke's narrative one discerns a predominant theological or religious orientation which, I would argue, is tacitly occasioned by his understanding and interpretation of the historical events as prompted by divine will. This understanding and interpretation are arguably reflective of his positioning in relation to the events he narrates in the text. What is manifested here is best accounted for by Jenkins's (1993) assertion that there is "no presuppositionless interpretation of the past" (40). Thus the individual's presuppositions are brought to bear on his /her interpretations of the past. History then becomes, in Jenkins (1993) terms, "a

series of readings all of which are positioned" (37). The positioning of these "readings" is accounted for, as asserted by Jenkins (1993), by the fact that "history per se is an ideological construct" (17) and that it is "written by forces and pressures way beyond its ostensible object of enquiry - the past" (57). It is evident in *Acts* that Luke's "ostensible object of enquiry" as is expected of historians is overtaken by the theological interests and values that are brought to bear on his understanding and interpretation of the historical events. Again, in *Acts*, history is depicted as asserting itself as "an intentional and organized process of identity formation that remembers the past in order to understand the present and anticipate the future" (Duvenage in Rusen, 1993:1).

It thus bears repeating in the words of Jenkins (1993:56) that "history is intersubjective and ideologically positioned; that objectivity and being unbiased are chimeras". Admittedly, this conception of history may lead towards cynicism and negativity. But as argued by White, "this should allow us to entertain seriously those creative distortions offered by minds capable of looking at the past with the same seriousness as ourselves but with different ...orientations" (White in Jenkins, 1993:56-57). Luke's writing of *Acts* was prompted by a theological orientation that found recourse to historical events as the material resource upon which theological significance and meanings might be constructed. What Luke does in *Acts* exemplifies the kind of writing advocated by (some) historians who believe that the writing of history must serve an identifiable purpose. This attests to the fact that historians cannot be

disinterested in their narration of events in which the agency of historical memory is indispensable. According to Jenkins,

> *Historians have ambitions, wishing to discover not only what happened but how and why and what these things meant and mean...So it is never really a matter of the facts per se but the weight, position, combination and significance they carry Vis-à-vis each other in the construction of explanations that is at issue... historians transform the events of the past into patterns of meaning that any literal representation of them as facts could never produce (1993:32-33).*

In *Acts* Luke does not seem to have the choice to be "unreflectingly liberal" as is the case in liberal discourse. Jenkins (1993:69) again avers that:

> *In liberal discourse there is always posited, somewhere and somehow, a sort of neutral ground from which it looks precisely as if you can choose or not. This neutral ground is not seen as another position one already occupies, but is considered rather as a disinterested site from which one can sit back and objectively make unbiased choices and judgements.*

In contradistinction to the disinterested stance advocated in liberal discourse, he argues convincingly that "there is no such thing as an 'unpositioned center'; no possibility of an unpositional site. The only choice is between a history that is aware of what it is doing and a history that is not" (69). To quote him once more,

> *History is a field of force; a series of ways of organizing the past by and for interested parties which always comes from somewhere and for some purpose and which, in their direction, would like to carry you with them...It is a field that variously includes and excludes, which centres and marginalises views of the past in ways and in degrees that refract the powers of those forwarding them... History is never itself, is never said or read (articulated, expressed, discoursed) innocently, but that it is always for someone (71).*

Luke's positioning in relation to the events he narrates in his text cogently exemplifies Jenkins' position. In *Acts*, Luke, in Abrams's terms, "has exploited the possibilities and norms of his inherited language to say something determinate, and assumed that competent readers, in so far as these shared his own linguistic skills, would be able to understand what he said" (Abrams in Lodge, ed. 1988:266). Luke's desire to say "something determinate" implies that history as "a discourse, has within it 'truth' and similar expressions" which are used as "devices to open, regulate and shut down interpretations" (Jenkins, 1993:32). This is characteristic of, and is indeed, interpretive closure. It is evident from the foregoing discussion that "history is a shifting, problematic discourse, ostensibly about an aspect of the world, the past, ideologically and practically positioned and whose products...are subject to a series of uses" (Jenkins, 1993:26).

The underlying argument I have been advancing is that Luke is not writing from a disinterested position, but that his purpose which, characteristically informs the character of his text, is derived from a calculated intent. This being the case means that Luke cannot help being subjective in his narration. Narration, as defined by Rusen (1993) "is a procedure by which human consciousness makes sense of the experience of time" (213). Notwithstanding the negative connotations of subjectivity, Luke's text is congenial to the theological needs of those he addresses (with specific reference to Theophilus). And though the question of subjectivity has the potential to lead to cynicism and negativity, I find

Rusen's explication of subjectivity potentially illuminating as regards Luke's dual purpose in *Acts* as both historian and theologian. Rusen (1993:54) asserts that:

> *Subjectivity means involvement in the current affairs of practical life. Subjectivity is muddling in it, to be involved, and of course it is always the case that we are involved and this involvement is rooted in historical thinking and practical life. It takes the form of viewpoints on current affairs, from which historians look at the past. These standpoints are conditioned, but not definitely determined by the pregiven circumstances of the historian's life; for instance, by his belonging to a class, a specific culture or any other form of society or group. Such circumstances generate needs for orientation in the present life, and thus they become effective in historical thinking, as practical interests, relating them to situations and problems in the life-world of historians and their audiences. So it is the subjectivity of the historian which brings his standpoint into practical life...It opens up the significance of the past in understanding present time and moulding the future perspective of human affairs. Subjectivity generates questions out of the experience of present times, which lead to the past and its treasures of experience. Subjectivity brings the experience of the past into the eyes of the historians. Thus it leads to the primary sources and makes the objectivity of source information possible. So there is a strict and positive relationship between the degree of being involved in and attached to topical affairs and the depths of historical insights.*

It is apparent from Rusen's explication of subjectivity that the fundamental issues it addresses are affirming the argument that "there is no such thing as a totally objective historian. No one studies the sources without any bias whatsoever" (Schwantes, 1970:9). This clearly explains Luke's orientation towards the historical events narrated in his text. Despite this subjectivity, it is worth recalling at this stage of the discussion that "in historical discourse, the existence of the referent is not questioned" (Attwell, 1993:17). And in Luke's Acts, there is reference to **real people, real places and real events**.

In contradistinction to the unquestioned existence of the referent in historical discourse, in postmodernism for example:

> *We are left in a world of radically empty signifiers. No classes. No history. Just a ceaseless procession of simulacra; the past is played and replayed as an amusing range of styles, genres, signifying practices to be combined and re-combined at will...The only history that exists here is the history of the signifier and that is no history at all (Widdowson in Jenkins, 1993:67).*

Having said this, I will conclude by reasserting that in *Acts* one discerns the foregrounding of the writer's own positionality and interest in the writing. Luke's point of view, that is, the salvational perspective from which he writes attests to the argument that his text, as a classic realist text, is intended for a specific audience with specific, expected outcomes. In order to bring about the desired effects Luke makes use of the language of predestination that advocates the view that all events that occur in human affairs are foreordained, regardless of their nature and attendant effects. So in Luke's writing history subserves the theological interests that are manifested in the depiction of human agency as occasioned and dependent on divine will. The salvational or redemptive perspective from which Luke writes is best accounted for by Harris' (1995) aversion that "where an individual speaks from affects both the meaning and truth of what he/she says and thus he/she cannot assume an ability to transcend her/his location" and that "a speaker's location has an epistemically significant impact on that speaker's claims and can serve either to authorize or de-authorize his/her speech" (98).

In this chapter therefore I have tried to discuss the historical and discursive context that relates to Luke's writing of *Acts*. In the next chapter I move on to analyze the *Book of Act*.

CHAPTER 3

In this chapter I focus the discussion on the position that Luke's writing of *Acts* is a communicative act with an overt indication of intention, an intention which the text then reproduces in the structure of the narrative and the strategies of consolidation employed. The following discussion therefore is premised on the fact that writing as is the case in *Acts* is a social activity which culminates in the production of a text which is not an autonomous presentation of information but is a 'social tool' used to effect specific outcomes. Hence I will argue that the impetus for Luke's writing of *Acts* is a functional one. Given the fact that Luke is writing within socially recognised conventions and expectations of his time his writing of *Acts* cannot be seen as isolated from the social world of interaction. It is in this respect therefore that Luke's cognitive activities as a writer are to be seen as arising from a reflexive awareness of writing as a process which "takes account of the potential audiences for the finished textual products" (Saville-Troike, 1995:258).

Luke's text assumes a functional view of language as the medium through which meaning is realised whereby language is not separate from content or context. This is reminiscent of Webster' (1990) assertion that "language is never neutral or ideologically innocent but is designed to convey particular kinds of knowledge to achieve certain effects" (63).

Words in Luke's narrative are 'transparent' and fulfil a referential function as opposed to assuming a playful signification where reference and meaning are continuously deferred as is the case with the use of language in modern/postmodernist texts (cf. Bar-Efrat, 1989:198). In *Acts* the referential use of language contributes to the characterisation of the protagonists in terms of what they say and do. As Tiede (1980) points out Luke's characterisation of the protagonists Peter and Paul 'portrays their actions and words against the background of the accomplishment of inscrutable and incomprehensible divine purposes through means of even the most hostile and blind human agents" (111).

Luke's mode of argumentation uses language as a vehicle in the transmission of the argument and is informed and legitimised by his strategic use of scriptural historical reminiscences in which historical events are interpreted to account for present occurrences. In his depiction of the role, plight and tragic consequences of the actions of the characters Luke deploys a referential language to achieve the desired effects. In *Acts* portrayal of the "human predicament in the face of the powers that apparently or actually determine the course of events" is made possible by Luke's referential use of language. In Luke's text language is used to determine the nature of the world of the narrative including that of the characters populating it. Hence all the meanings embodied in the narrative of Luke are dependent upon that linguistic design (cf. Bar-Efrat, 1989:197). Thus Luke deploys the necessary linguistic resources with which to deal with the content of

Acts all the while keeping in focus the message which he aspires to confirm and disseminate. As Painter (1989:21) notes "language is a functional resource in that the language system as a whole can be viewed as having the form it does because of what it is called upon to do". I am arguing that in *Acts* the written language and writing serve as mediums and the linguistic features reflect some functional purpose in the writing. In *Acts* there obtains identifiable formal properties and a complete structure (that is, a beginning, middle and an end). *Acts*'s narrative is characterised by two distinguishable forms, namely a primary and a secondary form. Notably both of these forms constitute an apostolic quest mediated by the hero's act of agency. In the primary form the hero is depicted as undertaking a metaphorical journey which culminates in a manifest destiny whilst in the secondary form, through the hero's agency the message of the gospel gets disseminated as occasioned by divine will. In Luke's text the plot of the narrative is made up of scenes that are arranged as a chain and develops from an initial situation the Pentecost that contains the enabling means upon which the activities of the characters are dependent. The plot in *Acts* not only serves to organise events but also significantly imbues the events in the narrative with meaning which arouses the reader's interest and emotional involvement in what is being narrated (cf. Bar-Efrat, 1989:93).

Luke's text has two identifiable central figures Peter and Paul who assume the role of heroes in pursuit of a specific quest that is discernible in the narrative. Again in Luke's text the views and values embodied in the narrative are

expressed through the characters' speech and actions, their fate (more specifically in the case of Paul) and the general course of events. These characters Peter and Paul transmit the significance and values of the narrative to the reader since they constitute the focal point of interest (cf. Bar-Efrat, 1989:47; 197). Peter's heroic acts are manifested in the first part of Luke's narrative and are confined to an exclusive Jewish audience whilst Paul's heroic acts occupy the second and remaining part of the narrative and are targeted to a predominantly Gentile audience. Each hero is assigned to communicate the redemptive message of the gospel to a specific audience thereby reaching out to and encompassing an inclusive community of would-be believers. In Acts Luke presents Peter and Paul as primary actors and appointed witnesses who expedite the message of messianic salvation to the ends of the earth. Peter and Paul are conceived of as exceptional individuals whose function as characters in Webster's (1990) terms "is to bestow an acceptable identity on human subjects" (90). Luke depicts the protagonists Peter and Paul respectively in ways that characteristically position and call upon the reader to identify with these heroes and espouse their world-view. The reader's identification with the hero's world-view in which ideological assumptions are inherently embedded not only positions him/her but also constructs him/her after the hero's image. In classic realist texts as is the case with *Acts* readers are invited to share the insights of central characters or the narrator so that the sense they make of the text as reading subjects is mirrored in the way characters make sense of the events they 'experience'" (cf. Webster, 1990:83). According to Webster this positioning of

individuals as reading subjects is synonymous with Foucault's notion of interpellation, a concept derived from Althusser which is the process of recognition and identification whereby individuals are 'hailed' or addressed in ways which position them. So the text's forms of communication, codes and strategies in effect manipulate and restrict the reader's sense of freedom to interpret the text as he/she wants thus denying him/her a recognition of different reading positions and the play of the sign in the text (cf. Webster, 1990:27). In Luke's text the reading subject is thus positioned and constructed in ways that guide him/her towards discerning the purpose or underlying intention of the writing. Luke's *Acts* belongs to the group of biblical texts which address a directed goal which may rightly be identified as its author's intention (cf. Thiselton, 1992:560). As Thiselton (1992) points out *Acts* "serves primarily as transmissive and communicative vehicle to express the thought of an author towards a given directness" (561).

It is apparent from what has been said thus far that *Acts* as a classic realist text locates the author as the focal point of literary production as he (the author) has the leeway to manipulate both the linguistic and literary devices to serve his purpose. Thus *Acts* can be conceived in Webster's (1990) terms as a "control system, in terms of narrative methods, character construction and positioning, and the arrangement of the various discourses present" (91). What is manifested in *Acts* as a historical narrative is in sharp contrast to what is discernible in certain kinds of texts that displace the author and intentionality. Notably

displacing the author and intentionality (in texts other than classic realist ones) consequentially relegates the text's central figure or abolishes the hero. The relegation of the hero or his/her abolishment is in essence a negation of the notion of the presence and privileging of the author's consciousness in the text's narrative that is often realised only through the hero's act and agency. But in *Acts* the hero's presence and agency are affirmed.

Having said this I want now to focus the following part of the discussion on how Luke through the act and agency of Peter the apostle makes a case for Christianity's **authority** and **legitimation** in a situation fraught with hostility towards it.

In justifying Christianity's authority and legitimation Luke convincingly presents the new religion (Christianity) as having a relationship with Judaism from which it emerged. This relationship is both one of **continuity** and **rupture**. In the context of this study continuity refers, to mention but a few, to the Old Testament scriptures about God's plan for man, the sending of a messiah and the covenants. The concept of rupture refers to a new beginning based on the **Spirit** rather than the **letter** of the law. As Henry (1979) points out "the history of Christianity in the first and second centuries is in large measure the story of attempts to establish and explain the continuity between Israel and the Church (Jewish-Christianity) " (44). It is ironical as Henry (1979) observes that the Jewish-Christians "had not been conscious of a decisive rupture with the Jewish

past or even with the Jewish present. There was not for them as there was in the Gentile mission need for a cultural translation of the gospel" (44). Luke's point of view in respect of **continuity** and **rupture** is that the Jewish-Christian community (that is the messianic community) has as yet failed though it is depicted as "striving to survive as viable testimony to the possibility of achieving a practical blending of Judaism and Christianity" (cf. Henry, 1979:44). The tension that obtains within the messianic community is demonstrated by the controversy regarding issues such as circumcision, food, inclusion of Gentiles as authentic proponents of the messianic community and other debates about Jewish customs which were seen to be incompatible with the demands of the new faith or religion.

Similarly Kee (1983) notes that some Jewish-Christians "stressed continuity with Judaism especially in conformity to the ritual laws about food and circumcision" (6). It is apparent that Luke portrays the Jewish-Christian community as emphasising either the moral or the ritual dimension of the Jewish law. Notably the situation confronting the Jewish-Christians is presented as an interregnum, that is, an intermediate phase between the old and the new, a moment when the old is not yet completely obliterated and the new is not yet fully born. In such a situation tension is inevitable. Again in *Acts* Luke portrays the Jews as in general having forfeited their distinct identity as God's elect people and that this has come about as a result of their obstinacy and hard-heartedness as ancient prophets had prophesied and predicted that they would continue to be (cf. Henry,

1979:45). It is against this background that in *Acts* Luke depicts Peter as rendering a messianic interpretation of the events which were unfolding at the time. A case in point is Peter's response to the bewilderment of the Jewish rulers and elders as regards the healing of a crippled man. It is in relation to this divine spectacle (and many other spectacles as well) that Peter declares Jesus as the central figure of the new covenant thus nullifying the Mosaic laws with their attendant prohibitions. Peter boldly proclaims:

> Rulers and elders of the people! If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, then know this, you all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. He is 'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone'.

Luke conceives of the messianic interpretation as a method of explaining and maintaining continuity between the heritage of Israel and the Christian community. Luke's view of Jesus as the central figure of the new covenant is foregrounded by the new covenant's prophecy alluded to in Jeremiah's prophetic proclamation (Jer.31) to the effect that,

> 31 "The time is coming, "
> declares the Lord,
> "When I will make a new covenant
> with the house of Israel
> and with the house of Judah.
> 32 It will not be like the covenant
> I made with their forefathers
> When I took them by the hand
> to lead them out of Egypt,
> because they broke my covenant,
> though I was a husband to them,
> declares the Lord.

33 "This is the covenant I will make
with the house of Israel
after that time, "
declares the Lord.
"I will put my law in their minds
and write it on their hearts.
I will be their God,
and they will be my people.

Tiede (1980) correctly observes that Luke's Theo-centric narrative "belongs more in the Jewish scriptural tradition of contemplating the wonder of God's awesome yet intentionally gracious involvement with the people" (104). Luke's narrative is to be conceived of as offering pastoral assurances of the continuity of the Christian faith which deriving its authenticity and legitimacy from authoritative tradition (the above quotation from Jeremiah is a case in point) is refined and integrated into an interpretation of the times. As a matter of fact Jewish tradition is replete with God's promises to the elect people. This is in large measure alluded to in the pronouncement "The promise is for you and your children and all who are far-off – for all whom the Lord God will call". Luke views this pronouncement as a sign of continuing divine intention to bestow the promises on Israel. But the reference "and all who are far off- for all whom the Lord God will call" is presented as a critique of an exclusivist and constitutive understanding of Israel's election. Again Tiede (1980) points out that "Luke's narrative also manifests the adaptability of living traditions...through restaging of the speeches in *Acts* to parade a cast of authoritative spokesman for credibly familiar yet recognisably Lucan views" (119). I would therefore argue that Luke's act of adapting living traditions in his writing of the *Book of Acts* is

characteristically purposive and tendentious as these traditions form the basis of his own particular views on the subject being explicated in the text.

In *Acts* Luke's writing is to be conceived of as the expression of a subject which in Gabel et al's terms "is not something "out there" but something "in here". It exists in the author's consciousness; it is a conception of what the author wishes to express (1990:5). This point of view accounts for Luke's purposive stance towards the events narrated in his text. Luke is of the view that Christians discovered a new identity in the context of the covenant community. Consequentially espousal of the new covenant outrightly relegates the Mosaic covenant to a position of insignificance. Put differently the Mosaic covenant no longer holds any promise for the Jews for Christ has appropriated the role once executed by the letter of the law. With Jesus as the cornerstone "salvation is found in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" save his (Jesus) name. So in Luke's narrative Jesus is presented as the Messiah and as the fulfilment of Jewish prophetic expectations. Luke's point of view is that the Spirit rather than the letter of the law as enunciated in the Mosaic tradition is accorded the central role in expediting the emergence of the messianic community. I am arguing therefore that *Acts* demonstrates how the Church came to wrestle with the place of Gentiles in the fledgling messianic community, faced the problem of the relation between the Mosaic covenant of law and the gospel of grace in Christ Jesus and learned to adapt its presentation of the good news to new contexts" (cf. Carson, 1984:131).

Clearly Luke's depiction of the conversion of Cornelius the first Gentile convert accounts for the positive stance he adopts in respect of the inclusion of Gentiles into the messianic community. Cornelius's conversion is presented as a precursor of the conversion of Gentiles into the Christian faith and his conversion sets a scene for the subsequent establishment of an inclusive Christian community. Cornelius' conversion breaks the long-standing barrier between Jews and Gentiles occasioned by the Mosaic laws which had denied Gentiles access of fellowship with God's elect people. In making a case for the inclusion of Gentiles into the new covenant Luke strategically portrays Peter who is in large measure a conservative as drastically undergoing transformation that culminates in his adoption of a liberal stance in respect of impartiality towards putative Others. The acquisition of a new consciousness on the part of Peter prepares him to assume agency of the transformative process geared towards the inclusion of Gentiles in God's plan of salvation. Affirming his acceptance of the rupture as occasioned and sanctioned by divine will Peter declares to Cornelius "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure and unclean" (10:28). Luke's characterisation of Peter exemplified by the foregrounding of his (Peter) conciliatory position is meant to shed light on the kind of attitude (certainly impartial) expected of adherents of the fledgling messianic community. Luke's view here is that God's intervention has significantly moulded the understanding of Peter with regard to how members of the new Christian community should relate to the putative Other. Hence he

(Peter) is portrayed as showing positive responsiveness by way of assuming agency and thereby championing the divine cause that would culminate in the realisation of the envisioned inclusive messianic community.

Luke's positive stance as regards the inclusion of Gentiles notwithstanding he views this inclusion as constituting the central offence and controversy especially to those who regard ritual practices such as circumcision as a distinctive sign of the Jews as God's people. The irony of the controversy as to whether non-Jewish Christians be circumcised or not is that it is advocated by the very same people who constitute the messianic community and their advocacy in this regard presupposes that they did not fully comprehend the consequences of the rupture. Hence their (the Jewish-Christians) position that "it is necessary to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep the law of Moses" (15:5). Be that as it may Luke's dominant view is that the Gentiles are counted worthy of God's promises as enshrined in the new covenant. Luke makes use of Peter as a mouthpiece to represent and propagate the view that Gentiles through faith in Jesus are within reach of God's promises as regards salvation. Luke is of the view that the demand by Jewish Christians that Gentile Christians should observe Jewish ritual practices such as circumcision which had become the distinctive sign of the Jews as God's people is tantamount to asserting Jewish cultural values and superiority to the detriment of Gentile culture. The Jewish Christians' act of asserting their cultural superiority is in Luke's view decisive because as against the spirit of the new covenant it advocates the assimilation of the Other (the Gentile Christian)

into the cultural values of the Self (the Jew). Clearly the subtlety of the process of assimilation contributes profoundly to the denigration and subsequent relegation of the Other's cultural values and identity to a position of insignificance and oblivion. Notably assimilation results in the deculturation of the Other and is a process that is at variance with the humanising dimensions of the gospel as it involves among other things cultural domination of the Other by the Self. Thus I am arguing that in *Acts* Luke writes not only from the salvational or redemptive perspective but also from the liberationist perspective which he (Luke) deploys strategically in the narrative to counteract the advancement of Jewish claims to continuity of an exclusive identity that sets them apart as God's elect people.

Luke's attitude in respect of Jewish Christians' hold and attachment to the Mosaic covenant is one of disapprobation. Luke views the act of striving to observe the Mosaic laws to the letter as having been nullified and substituted by the gospel of grace which affords individuals salvation indiscriminately as enunciated in the new covenant. But as Tiede points out the affirmation that Gentiles are to be included as Gentiles without having to undergo circumcision provides grounds for the charge of apostasy levelled against the messianists by other Jews (cf. Tiede, 1980:53). The charge of apostasy specifically directed at Peter is vividly expressed by the circumcised believers' criticism that Peter "went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them" (*Acts*, 11:3). This charge on the part of the circumcised believers shows notable aspects of Jewish values and racial relations rooted in the Mosaic covenant. From Luke's point of

view Peter's association with the Gentiles is typically symbolic of the envisioned identity characterised by **inclusiveness** and **affirmation** to be accorded all members of the messianic community irrespective of racial origin and affiliation. But from the point of view of the circumcised Jewish Christians Peter is identified as a person who deserves the status of a deviant. Peter's association with the Gentiles who are pejoratively labelled "outsiders" is seen by the Jewish Christians as discreditable conduct and consequently gives rise to his stigmatisation.

Luke depicts Peter as assuming a new role and status of a suffering mediator and as a consequence he endures the human tragedy of rejection and misunderstanding with dignity as he denounces outrightly the "legitimate order". This point of view is accounted for by the fact that in the process of this denunciation the agent's (Peter) former identity is virtually destroyed and a totally new identity established (cf. Maling et al, in Neyrey, edit, 1991:107). As a result of his (the agent Peter) newly acquired identity he is presented as of now as characteristically averse to the categorisation and differentiation of human subjects on the basis of cultural practices, racial origin and affiliation. It is against this background that Luke strategically portrays Peter a Jew by racial definition as having been subjected to character reconstruction prior to his becoming an agent of identity transformation and an advocate of the core values of the messianic community.

Having thus acquired a new identity Peter then enters into a new social relationship with the Gentile Christians. Luke's view in McVann's terms is that God occasioned Peter's "crossing of a line that cannot be crossed again" and that "with that crossing he has assumed a new identity with new rights and obligations". Consequently a "fundamental life boundary has been crossed and its mark on personal and communal experience is virtually indelible" (cf. McVann in Neyrey, edit, 1991: 333). With the designation of a new identity Peter cannot sustain his old identity. Clearly it is on the basis of his newly acquired identity that Peter is now invested with the right to speak in the name of core values that bestow upon the messianic community its distinctive character and identity. It is evident therefore that Luke negatively portrays a Jewish community obsessed with boundaries of racial/social identity intent on the discrimination of the putative Others (cf. Malina et al, in Neyrey, edit, 1991:113). Through the agency of Peter Luke challenges the dominant system of Jewish purity as informed by the Mosaic covenant or tradition. So in *Acts* Luke celebrates diversity in its manifestation of both divine will and triumph over against human will. It is worth remarking therefore that Peter as portrayed by Luke is subjected by God's design to identity transformation and is in consequence equipped to meet the inevitable challenges of being an agent in this regard. The event of identity transformation and deliverance from prejudice against the Gentiles is an important marker not only for the character of Peter but also for the character of the emergent community of believers. Luke presents Peter's subjection to the riddance of prejudice as occasioned and precipitated by the vision, in which the Lord exhorted him saying,

"Do not call anything impure that God has made clean" (*Acts* 11:9). Luke's view is that in terms of the new covenant as enunciated by the gospel of grace the Gentiles are worthy of God's salvation. Peter's question "So if God gave them the same gift as he gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ who was I to think that I could oppose God?" (*Acts* 11:17) is meant to give **legitimacy** and **authority** to the present impartial stance he advocates towards Gentiles. Therefore Luke's characterisation of and reconstitution of the character of Peter (who embodies and disseminates the core values of the messianic community) is reflective of his (Luke) positive stance as regards the inclusion of Gentiles in God's plan of salvation.

I have thus far endeavoured to underscore the fact that in *Acts* Luke adopts a salvational or redemptive perspective that accounts for the activities of the apostles in propagating the gospel. The strategic value of the salvational perspective lies in its enabling potential as its espousal by the apostles confers on them the requisite power to execute the mission entrusted upon them. No sooner had the apostles received "power from on high" than they assert in no uncertain terms that "salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (*Acts* 4:12). Luke strategically begins the *Book of Acts* by embarking on a historical reminiscence in respect of what God had promised. The events narrated in *Acts* are presented as having been prompted, sanctioned, ordained and purposed by divine will. This is attested to by the prophetic citation:

17 "In the last days, " God says,
I will pour out my Spirit
on all people.
Your sons and daughters
will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
your old men
will dream dreams.
18 Even on my servants,
both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit
In those days,
and they will prophesy.
19 I will show wonders
in the heaven above
and signs on the earth below,
blood and fire
and billows of smoke.
20 The sun will be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood
before the coming of the great
and glorious day of the Lord.
21 And everyone who calls
on the name of the Lord
will be saved.

It is evident from the above citation that God's bestowal of divine power would as a future event be executed indiscriminately. This indiscriminate bestowal of divine power I would argue signals the coming into being of an inclusive community of believers whose distinct character and identity is derived from their identification with and submission to God's mission. God's pronouncement "I will pour out my Spirit on all people" is validated by the events at Pentecost where the believers had gathered for purposes of worshipping and subsequently received the Holy Spirit that had been promise "from on high". Thus bestowal of the Holy Spirit is a fulfilment of the promise "I am going to send you what my Father has promised, but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high", Jesus had made earlier to the disciples. Jesus' assuring pronouncement "I am going to send you what my Father has promised" (Luke

24:49) is a cogent attestation to the fact that God has initiated and will accomplish (through the disciples) the mission He has entrusted upon them. Thus it is by design that the disciples should "stay in the city" until their empowerment for the impending mission has been effected.

It needs mentioning though that bestowal of the Holy Spirit on the disciples does not impact on their human identity. They still remain ordinary human subjects who are endowed with all human qualities. Hence they are not immune to socio-political realities with all attendant constraints. The point I am trying to make here is that as ordinary human subjects the apostles are still subjected to besetting straits and all forms of human failure that one may think of. But since the mission in which they are involved is God's initiative the "power from on high" with which they are "clothed" enables them to transcend their human limitations and thus emerge as victors in all trying circumstances or situations.

For purposes of clarity and precision I shall examine specific incidents or events which I believe constitute the bedrock on which Luke's underlying arguments or assertions about divine Will and intervention in human activities are premised.

Luke presents Pentecost as affording the apostles the requisite power, that is, the enabling power to do even the seemingly impossible: when the day of Pentecost came, all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them" (*Acts* 2:1). The apostles' ability to

"speak in other tongues" is not an innate quality but is occasioned by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. Those who had known the apostles as their contemporaries prior to Pentecost are astounded by the divine spectacle. Hence they ask: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? (*Acts* 2:7-8). These questions are showing that the apostles' activities are not derived from their human potentialities for these activities do not seem to belong to the humanly possible. The language barrier, which is a characteristic feature among people who have diverse linguistic orientations, does not obtain where the Holy Spirit reigns supreme. Notably bestowal of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles affords them the opportunity not only to witness for Christ but also to heal those who could not be healed by ordinary human means. Peter's act of healing "a man crippled from birth" who by virtue of his unfortunate situation was then reduced to be a beggar provides the first instance of miraculous healing by the apostles. The incident of this man's healing is presented as having been confirmed by some onlookers who "recognised him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple" (*Acts* 3:10). The close proximity of the onlookers to the scene of the crippled man's healing brings them to recognising that they are witnessing a divine spectacle. The ensuing bewilderment on the part of the onlookers in Jameson's (1981) terms "marks them as spectators surprised by the supernatural act...into which they are unwittingly drawn...without ever having quite been aware of what was at stake in the first place" (113). In response to all the people who "were astonished" by this supernatural act Peter ventures to ask:

"Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?" (*Acts* 3:12). As Jesus had promised that they would be his witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (*Acts*, 1:18); and this promise, I would argue, served to allay fears and doubts on the part of the apostles as regards their strength both to execute the mission entrusted upon them and to withstand the trying times that were bound to beset them. Peter's question "Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?" is in effect a confirmation of the fact that the apostles conceived of themselves as mere functionaries acting on a mandatory commission. Thus the apostles' act and its attendant effects or outcomes can only be attributed to the divine mandatory commission. Hence " by faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus's name and the faith that comes through him that has given complete healing to him, as you can all see" (*Acts* 3:16).

The performance of the said divine spectacle by the apostles bewilders not only the ordinary onlookers but also causes a furore for the Sanhedrin, that is, the highest court of justice and the supreme council in Jerusalem with seventy one members. On hearing what the apostles had done the Sanhedrin unwittingly finds itself having to uncover the enigma behind the apostles' act of healing the "crippled man". Hence they ask "By what power or what name did you do this?" (*Acts* 4:10). This question from the Sanhedrin inadvertently affords the apostles

the opportunity to witness for Christ and thereby exalt his name. Jesus' exaltation is eminently evident in Peter's reply "it is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed... Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (*Acts* 4:10; 12).

Peter's assertion serves to foreground the apostles' act of healing the crippled man within the nascent Christian tradition of miraculous healing bequeathed by Jesus. By thus foregrounding their act of healing the crippled man the apostles are in essence legitimating the Christian faith from which they derive the power to do the seemingly impossible by establishing the continuity between this act and the miraculous interventions in human affairs which Christ had begun. Inevitably the apostles' many actions evoke opposition and resistance from those who would like to maintain the status quo as regards religious affiliation and practices and they (the apostles) are consequentially commanded "not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus" (*Acts* 4:18). In response to the attempt to silence them the apostles unequivocally declare their loyalty by stating quite emphatically that they "cannot help speaking about what they have seen and heard" (*Acts* 4:20). In so responding it is as though the apostles seem to confirm Alcoff's (1995) illuminating assertion that "speaking should always carry with it an accountability and responsibility for what an individual says. To whom we are accountable is a political / epistemological choice contestable, contingent, and ...constructed

through the process of discursive action" (112-113). So even though restraining straits inevitably besets the advancement of the gospel of Jesus Christ the necessity to speak and thus take discursive action within a contested terrain is affirmed. The restraints to which the apostles are subjected serve among other things to test the distinctive character of their Christian identity and thereby attest to the indomitability of Christ' mission as it prevails against all oppositional forces.

Mindful of their human limitations the apostles are without doubt to have recourse to Providence when confronted with trying times that are potentially dangerous and life threatening. The apostles' reliance on Providence is demonstrated by their beseeching prayer to God from whom the requisite enabling means to withstand tribulations can be acquired. The formidable command given by the Sanhedrin to the effect that the apostles should forgo their activity and "not speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus" is aimed at curbing the influence of the apostles. Instead of taking fright and succumbing to the imposition of the Sanhedrin the apostles full-heartedly opt to render the prayer: "Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus" (*Acts* 4:29-30). Clearly to the apostles fortitude is characteristic of apostleship. As a confirmation of divine intervention in their precarious situation the apostles' prayer is responded to forthwith: "after they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly"

(*Acts* 4:31). It is evident therefore that the apostles' act of propagating the message of the gospel and its accompanying acts of healing is not fortuitous but is occasioned by God's initiative and sustained through the bestowal of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles who serve as functionaries in God's mission. Notably the positive responsiveness of the apostles to the mission entrusted upon them plays a decisive role in the realisation of the desired outcomes. Given the centrality of divine presence in the activities of the apostles the apostles are to all intents and purposes destined to triumph in all hazardous circumstances as long as they are championing the cause of Jesus Christ. And Luke's narrative foregrounds this by foreclosing other possible interpretations by his selection of the material presented and the use of an authorial metalanguage which controls the entire narrative. Apart from Peter the other major character in this narrative is Paul. To qualify for this role Paul who was not initially a disciple of Christ and was not present at the Pentecost had to undergo a character transformation depicted in an event as miraculous as the empowering received by the disciples at Pentecost. Peter's two stage "conversion" first by the Holy Spirit and later by the vision from God in which he is told to call nothing made by God unclean is mimed in Paul's conversion in the bolt of lightening that blinds him and then later again the scales that fall off his eyes and the changing of his name. Character transformation of this sort has always been an important part of Judaic traditions from the time of Moses and within the context of the culture and that it served as an instrument of identity formation. After transformation comes a new role. And for Saul who becomes Paul God's initiative is also manifested in his calling: "This

man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name" (*Acts* 9:15-16). So it is foreordained that Paul should serve in the advancement of the Word and thereby incur the wrath of those who are opposed to the espousal of the new faith, namely, Christianity. Paul is destined to suffer as sanctioned by divine Will. In other words the subsequent dire straits he encounters in the course of his preaching have a divine purpose. I would therefore argue that making it known beforehand that would-be preachers of the Word would be victimised forestalls despair that would normally ensue as a result of subjection to relatively unprecedented tribulation. Paul just like all other human subjects was potentially vulnerable to persecution and all forms of human predicament. Thus Luke presents the forestalling of despair as effected by the Lord's giving of assurance that divine intervention is readily available to provide the requisite spiritual support that would in effect see Paul through all the precarious situations he was bound to come across and come to terms with. It is in this respect therefore that the Lord at the moment when divine support was not only a necessity but was a must, said to Paul "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you because I have many people in this city" (*Acts* 18:9-10). The Lord's preponderate pronouncement "I have many people in this city" is indicative of the fact that Paul's activities are informed by God's design and purpose to bring about salvation to all human subjects.

It is evident from this pronouncement that Paul is conceived of as a mere functionary (and this is attested to by the pronouncement "This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name") expediting the advancement of the gospel to which he himself had been called. As Moessner (1989) points out "Luke presents Paul as following in the footsteps of his master in his journey-calling to witness to the Kingdom of God in suffering and affliction as he is rejected by an intractable people" (299). Notably the success of God's project to bring salvation to all rests not only on his (God) initiative but also on the positive responsiveness of the agents (with specific reference to Peter and Paul) to the divine calling. Thus for Luke the agency of Paul and his unswerving commitment are central to the fulfilment of Jesus' demands. From Luke's point of view, as already alluded to, Paul is seen as a "messenger, divinely sent in real historical time and concrete situations to carry out specific events resulting in specific consequences (cf. Moessner, 1989:308). It can therefore be asserted that Luke writes the 'story of Christianity' with distinctive theological themes employing characters who act as agents of divine will and imbuing their experiences and actions with a recognisable pattern in terms of Judaic traditions.

Luke presents Paul as having fully understood the cost of his calling. This understanding is shown in his encouraging and exhortatory address to the disciples when he points out "we must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God" (*Acts* 14:22). Paul is depicted as not only exhorting others to "remain true to the faith" but as being himself exemplary in this regard. Paul's

foreknowledge of the potential tribulations that await him does not in anyway distract him from pursuing the goals of the God-initiated enterprise, which is the propagation of the gospel. This is demonstrated in his resolute commitment to face hardships with humility and dignity. Luke depicts Paul's positive responsiveness to the divine enterprise as both informed and constituted by a sense of self-denial and a readiness to become a suffering-servant. The sense of self-denial or self-sacrifice is manifested by Paul's unequivocal proclamation when he says:

> And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace (Acts 20:22-24).

It is evident from the above quotation that Luke presents Paul as an agent who embraces God's cause (the task of testifying to the gospel of grace) without circumspection. In spite of the Holy Spirit' disclosure about the 'hardships' that are destined to befall him Paul resolves not to circumvent his destiny as sanctioned by divine will. The Lord had declared: "This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name" (Acts 9:15-16). Clearly Luke depicts Paul as a quester championing the Lord's cause and having it brought to its logical end. Luke's view in this regard is that the realisation (that is seeing the end in sight) of God's plan of salvation depends not only on God's initiative and concomitant sustained involvement in the said

initiative but also on the agency of those (with specific reference to Paul) who have been 'chosen' to be his (God) "instrument". Notably Luke portrays Paul's quest as a metaphorical journey (as designated by 'race') occasioned and sustained by providential power. Luke's point of view therefore is that Paul's characteristic fixation and committal stance to the task entrusted upon him is accounted for by his (Paul's) certitude of God's unfailing presence and guaranteed divine intervention when the opportune moment for such intervention arrives. Paul's divinely directed journeys as regards the propagation of God's messianic mission in the world to save an 'intractable' people, are to be accounted for by the fact that he (Paul) became an apostle by divine appointment. In other words Luke presents Paul's apostleship and the attendant suffering as divine occurrences. There is therefore a providential design and a providential purpose in the hands of God to bring about a **redemptive rupture** which encompasses all people and that this will be achieved through **purposive human agency**. I would argue for the central role-played by agency in the transmission of the gospel of grace. Luke presents the Lord's declared will and Paul's obligation with respect to it as the basis for divine covenants with human subjects. But divine covenants between God and humanity can only materialise once obedience and submission to sovereign will have been inculcated on the part of God's agents. This is clearly manifested in Luke's portrayal of Paul (and Peter as well) as someone who positively responded to the Lord's call. And as a consequence of his positive responsiveness to the calling Paul subsequently had vicarious authority devolved on him and also obligations in respect of expediting

God's mission of salvation. The bestowal of vicarious authority on both Peter and Paul serves as a positive divine confirmation of the covenantal principle between God and humanity. This vicarious or divine authority devolved on the agents (Peter and Paul) gives both ideological and theological legitimacy to the agents' act of questioning the Jewish impulse to self-preservation against infiltration by uncircumcised Gentiles who had become Christians. Luke therefore depicts Peter and Paul as agents fostering a new consciousness on the part of the Jews who up until then had been under the illusion of being still a distinct and exclusive community destined to enjoy the privilege of being God's elect people. But, in contradistinction to the Jewish Christians' obsession with upholding the prevalent conviction, as regards their supposedly distinct identity (as occasioned by the Mosaic law) Luke presents Peter and Paul as harbingers expediting the coming-into-being of a new dispensation (the messianic community) characterised by the extension of God's grace of salvation to all humanity.

In *Acts* Luke's foregrounding of the sign-referent in his narration of the events, his use of the authorial metalanguage which privileges a central voice, and his employment of narrative strategies which control and direct the narrative in purposive ways towards a target audience, restricts, if it does not totally forestall the free-play of signification thereby imposing a closure in one's reading and interpretation of the text. Thus in *Acts* the authorial intention processed through Luke's presentation of the apostles' activities as occasioned and sustained by

providential power is presented to Theophilus as the legitimisation of God's plan of salvation for all humanity. It is apparent therefore that Luke's presentation of the narrated events is not done perfunctorily as his writing is not disinterested. Instead his (Luke) presentation serves to represent and validate his understanding and interpretation of both historical and contemporary events as congruent with God's new plan of salvation and that this must filter down to Theophilus so that he may 'know the certainty of the things' he had been 'taught'. Thus it can be asserted emphatically that since Luke's writing is not disinterested but is oriented towards the realisation of particular goals, authorial intention cannot be elided in interpretation as it already inheres in the text.

CHAPTER 4

> *African lands were expropriated with the advent and spread of white colonialism. First in the Cape, then in Natal, the Orange Free State and the Transvaal, whites helped themselves to African lands with abandon, and in total disregard to any rights the Africans might have. The golden rule of colonialism was that Africans have no rights and whites have every right.*
>
> *(Moleah, 1993)*

The facts of South African history are too well known and too often rehearsed before a worldwide audience not to appear as stale. But these truisms are necessary to paint the background of the historical and discursive conditions, which prompted the text. In this chapter therefore I want to focus the discussion on both the socio-political circumstances that prevailed in South Africa prior to and during the writing of *Native Life in South Africa* and the writing trend and the use of language that Plaatje adopts in this politically oriented text.

According to the HSRC (1987) "from 1652 European rule (white) colonial rule was established at the Cape and was gradually extended to the interior until the whole of South Africa was under colonial control" (16). The HSRC (1987) further asserts that "colonial control was extended to include all indigenous inhabitants so that all the groups in the region were subjected to the government at the Cape and the colonial rulers used their power and influence to try and regulate intergroup relations" (16). After taking over political control the next step was to integrate the subjected peoples into the colonial economy and this involved a gradual process of land dispossession which reached its height in the

promulgation of the *Natives' Land Act* of 1913. The consolidation of colonial control involved the twin-process of making the indigenous peoples colonial subjects by way of political administration and then turning them into paid labourers within the colonial economy by dispossessing them of land the major economic resource which guaranteed them a certain degree of economic independence. According to Moleah (1993) "the ultimate colonial aim and purpose was proletarianization through impoverishment. Africans were to be reduced to a nation of servants working for the white colonial settlers. By being so absorbed into the colonial economy they were to lose their independence, their identity, their very being, and be labour appendages to the colonial order" (228). I would argue that the forced relegation of the indigenous people to the status of labourers attests to Young's (1995) argument that "the demands for labour...involved the commodification of bodies" (173). By the same token Moleah (1993) argues that "dispossessed of their lands, Africans were everywhere pressed into service for whites, and were being subjected to the proletarianization process, whereby they would only subsist by selling their labour power on the open market" (223). Thus in colonialism "we often have a conflict between societies that do and do not conceive of land as a form of private property, at one level indeed, colonialism involves the introduction of a new notion of land as property, and with it inevitably the appropriation and enclosure of land" (Young, 1995:172). It can therefore be stated emphatically that the colonial situation is among other things characterised by "social processes relating to the struggle between groups for relative power, status,

superiority and material advantage" (Abrams et al, 1990:2). Similar sentiments are expressed by du Preez (1980) in his argument that "social agents compete for recognition, acclaim, social position, material necessities and all the other goods of different ways of life" (21). By the year 1834 the Cape Province in particular had become populated by different racial groupings that were inevitably hostile to each other. Each group attributes this hostility to the quest of each racial group to attain 'self-determination', which would presumably culminate in the attainment of a unique and distinct identity. The struggle for exclusive identity is best exemplified by Jan van Riebeeck's act of planting the bitter-almond hedge which had both literal and symbolic effects of keeping the indigenous people at a distance thereby denying them affirmation and human dignity due to them (cf. Sparks, 1990:xv-xvi). But self-determination could not be realised in a situation where one racial group dominated the others as was the case in the Cape Province where the colonisers did not entertain the idea of "a harmonious and equitable co-existence" (Prozesky, edit, 1990:3). The historical epoch in question was characterised by British rule and British influence. It is worth noting therefore that all the different racial groupings at this time were British subjects as Britain had conquered and humiliated each of them and thereby emerged as the new colonial power. According to Moleah (1993) "the British brought about many changes which put to an end the world the Afrikaners had known. Their discomfort, and in many instances bewilderment, turned into a deep sense of dissatisfaction with British rule" (143) and "it was quite obvious that they could not successfully resist these changes, thus, the only viable option

was to leave the Cape colony and escape British rule" (143). Given this state of affairs the Afrikaners then decided in 1834 and 1841 to embark on a massive emigration, which has become known as the *Afrikaner Great Trek*. This is substantiated by the HSRC's (1987) assertion that "a specific group, the Afrikaners, developed from the colonist population, developed a unique national consciousness. It was the Afrikaners...who opposed the colonial authorities and for various reasons moved away from British rule in the Cape colony to found independent states in the interior" (17). Similarly Curtin et al (1995) assert that "the emigrants (voortrekkers or pioneers) were determined to establish new homes for themselves beyond limits of British control" (280). Consequentially the pioneers had to secure land both for human habitation as well as an indispensable economic resource. It should be noted as observed by the HSRC (1987) that "the whites, in the process of expansion into the interior, came into contact with the indigenous people. This contact was typified by competition for land and water, and a struggle for supremacy" (17). It is further asserted by the HSRC that "as the whites established their authority over the indigenous communities the latter lost their land and became subject to whites' control" (17). According to Curtin et al (1995) "by 1838...the majority of the Voortrekkers had decided to settle in Natal because its coastline provided an opportunity for trade with continental Europe and the United States" (282). The dream of the voortrekkers to "trade with continental Europe and the United States" would materialise (as it did) once the indigenous people had been "dispossessed of their land which is the basic means of all production and subsistence as well as a

source of power" (Mofokeng in Prozesky, edit, 1990:40). As asserted by Bundy (1988) "the demands made by the trek community on its leaders were limited and simple enough: they called for plenty of land, for security and labour" (167). Similarly Moleah (1993) argues that "an abiding complaint of eastern frontier farmers which they took with them into the interior of South Africa was the cry for black labour" (145). It is further argued by Moleah (1993) that "to the Boers any African not in the employ of a white man was a vagrant –an un-natural phenomenon not to be allowed" as they (the Boers) "felt that they had a God-given right to the labour of others" (145).

The Afrikaners' assumed "God-given right to the labour of others" was tacitly premised on their understanding and interpretation of the unfolding history as occasioned by the Great Trek. The Great Trek was driven among other things by a religious impetus as most if not all of those who journeyed in this exodus were professed advocates of the Calvinist Christian faith. Calvinist theology in its explication of God's dealings with human subjects foregrounds the theory of absolute predestination, which accounts for the Afrikaners' strong belief in Providence. Again this foregrounding of the theory of absolute predestination accounts for the Afrikaners' act of ascribing theological significance to the Great Trek. The history of the Afrikaners as partly constituted by the Great Trek took on a sacred character and any opposition to the realisation of this unfolding history would in essence be an opposition to divine Will. At this point in time the Afrikaners identified their plight and vicissitude with the plight of ancient Israel as

it sought liberation from the Egyptian yoke. In the context of their circumstances the Afrikaners conceived of themselves as the Israelites, the British as the Egyptians and the Africans as the Canaanites whose land had to be expropriated as they (Afrikaners) conceived of the history of subjugation as God's will. As de Gruchy (1979) points out "a defeated people need an interpretation of their history, a mythos which can enable them to discover what has happened to them. The continuity of the Afrikaner demanded such a world-view which would provide coherence to their shattered hopes" (30). Calvinism as a form of Orthodox Christianity deems the entire bible to be authoritative as it assumed to be "divinely authored". Moreover it does not condemn the politics of dominance and exclusion since the history of subjugation as depicted in the stories of ancient Israel defeating the people of Jericho and taking forcible possession of their land are sanctioned (cf. De Gruchy, 1979:130). Thus for the Afrikaners who were professed Calvinists the bible was normative and had a "legitimating significance" in their own struggle for survival as a supposedly distinct racial group. But as a corrective to what has been said about Calvinism thus far it needs mentioning that Calvinism in its undiluted form stresses the equality of all people before God thus rendering the notion of racial inequality untenable. It must be said though that the Afrikaners undertaking the Great Trek were influenced by "wayward schools of Calvinist theology" advocating ultra-Calvinist theology in which elements of denigration and subjugation are not only sanctioned but also legitimated. Notably ultra-Calvinist theology is of the view that some people are born to be masters while others are born to be servants.

This conceptualisation of human subjects is indeed at variance with the original Dutch Calvinism at the Cape, which was affected by liberalism.

It is worth noting though that the initial encounter between the Afrikaners and the Zulu natives in Natal was amicable. The amicability of the encounter might of course be conceived as having been a strategy of containment on the part of the Afrikaners. Conceivably the Afrikaners having no land of their own had "one of their leaders Piet Retief entering into negotiations with Shaka's successor Dingane for a grant of land South of the Tugela" (Curtin et al, 1995:282). The Afrikaners' act of entering into negotiations with the natives in order to secure land was an acknowledgement of the fact that they (Afrikaners) were sojourners and the natives had an inalienable right to the land.

The Afrikaners' amity with the natives in all territorial areas they came to occupy was transient as they subsequently subjugated them. The subjugation of the natives culminated in the formation of the Afrikaner Republics in 1870. Notably two of the republics "adopted constitutions that confined citizenship to white men" and a document issued by the Transvaal republic bluntly declared that "the people" (referring categorically to the Afrikaners) "are not prepared to allow any equality of the non-white with the inhabitants, either in Church or State" (Curtin et al, 1995:285). This is reminiscent of the HSRC's (1987) opinion that "one of the group's primary identities", in this instances the Afrikaners, "is consciously politicised at a greater or lesser extent...this politicising is aimed at giving the

particular ethnic group an advantage in the rivalry for scarce resources" (58-59). What is depicted here is a classic example of notional binary oppositions that are premised on the visible marks of racial difference whose function is to permit a society to discriminate against the Others in its midst. The Self assumes, I would argue, that there obtains a significant racial 'difference' between the in-group and the out-group that warrants differentiation which then culminates in the creation of an undesirable social hierarchy. As argued by Abrams et al (1990) "the in-group is perceived as both different and better than the out-group thereby achieving positive distinctiveness" (3). This state of affairs is best accounted for by the fact that "individuals desire for positive self-evaluation which provides a motivational basis for differentiation between social groups" (Abrams et al, 1990:3). Thus the subjugation of the natives signalled among other things the imminent cessation of their freedom as a distinct racial group endowed with the right to seek and attain self-determination.

Although the Afrikaners did not affirm the full humanity of the natives they nevertheless conceived of them as indispensable or rather invaluable assets. Curtin et al's (1995) affirmation that "the voortrekkers never contemplated living without the control of dark-skinned people as domestic servants and herdsmen" (286) confirms this opinion of the Afrikaners' conception of the necessity of retaining the natives in a subservient capacity. Similarly as Bryant points out, at the time when the *Natives' Land Act* of 1913 was enacted "white farmers used the Act not to evict tenants who were potential labourers, but to transform them,

to force them to render service" (Bryant in Bundy, 1988:189). So as averred by Bundy (1988) "the *Act* brought about a substantial increase of labour tenancies...peasants became serfs" (190). The voortrekkers conceived of themselves as an emerging nation with a unique and distinct racial identity. But the realisation of the Afrikaners' nationalistic aspirations hinged so much on their espousal of a 'racially defined ideology of nationalism'. As argued by Kinghorn "the racially defined ideology of nationalism is inherently incapable of affirming an equal and inclusive humanity. It can only affirm one's humanity by stressing other people's inferiority" (Kinghorn in Prozesky, edit, 1990:62). Thus the voortrekkers' expropriation of the land involved "conspicuous disadvantages for the native people of the land in a long process of subjugation" (Prozesky, 1990:1) as they (the natives) were relegated to a position of insignificance. The voortrekkers' act of denigrating the natives and legitimising their subjugation was in accord with the British colonial legacy, that is, "the belief in the superiority of the Western European (for which in South Africa, read: white) which was then given some constitutional legitimacy by the British by excluding blacks from the voters' roll when the constitution of the Union of South Africa was drawn up in 1909" (Kinghorn in Prozesky, edit, 1990:62).

It needs mentioning at this stage of the discussion that "in the period of the interregnum leading up to Union in 1910 the betrayal of the Africans by Britain was consolidated" and that "the common opposition of Boer and Briton to African rights and welfare was also confirmed" (Moleah, 1993:296). De Gruchy (1979)

states that "during the period 1903-1909 the pleas and petitions of black leaders for the political rights of their people fell on deaf ears for most of the time" (47). Earlier on Africans had played a major role in support of the British cause during the Anglo-Boer war in the hope that the supposedly more liberal British would support the struggle for African rights at the end of the war. The discovery of gold in 1886 on the Witwatersrand in the South African Republic had resulted in the Anglo-Boer war as Britain annexed the territory, which the Afrikaners had laid a claim to.

According to Moleah (1993) "Africans embraced the British cause with enthusiasm and high expectations. Their help and participation contributed to the Boer defeat and the British victory. Africans suffered greatly, and contributed in no small measure to the British victory" (290). Moreover "Africans were led to believe that the British cause was their cause; and that a British victory would ameliorate their condition, and in the end serve their interests" (Moleah, 1993:290). But contrary to these lofty ideals the Africans cherished and believed would come to be implemented the British adopted a conciliatory attitude towards the defeated Boers and thereby compromised the political rights of Africans as regards having unrestricted access to the land and its economic resources. As Moleah (1993) puts it, "the British were magnanimous in victory and largely conceded to the Afrikaner worldview as regards the 'native question' " (367).

The formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910 conferred self-governing status on South Africa but the country continued thereafter to have the king of Imperial Britain as her king. Hence, the indigenous people together with the whites of the Union of South Africa were in political terms regarded as British subjects. The formation of the Union resulted in the Afrikaners forming two camps. Some were "seeking white reconciliation and unity in order to dominate the African majority" whilst others sought Afrikaner political control and dominance so as to reshape South Africa after the Afrikaner image" (Moleah, 1993:367). It would seem, given the subsequent developments that transformed the native peasants into serfs, that the latter group (of the Afrikaners) gained the approval of many who espoused Nationalist aspirations. Thus, in 1913 the *Natives Land Act* was both promulgated and enacted as a way of "reshaping South Africa after the Afrikaner image".

As argued by de Gruchy (1979) the Act "denied the natives of basic rights regarding the acquisition of land and the freedom to sell their labor through bargaining in the open market, and thus severely limited all opportunities for their economic improvement and independence" (48). Similarly, Bundy (1988) asserts that:

> *The 1913 Land Act sought to arrest the tendency towards a bipolar stratification (farmers and workers) and to preserve instead an underdeveloped peasantry , a peasantry whose productive capacity had been so inhibited, whose access to land so confined, whose access to markets rendered so unfavorable, that its members must have recourse to labor for white employers even at the very low wage levels prevailing (242).*

The enactment of the *Natives Land Act* had serious repercussions on the Africans. Having been dispossessed "Africans remained on their alienated land as tributary tenants, labour tenants or sharecroppers. As tributary tenants they paid rent. As labour tenants they rendered service to the white "owner" for a specified period... As sharecroppers they gave a portion of their produce or crop to the white 'owner'" (224). It is worth remarking that the response of the indigenous people to the *Natives' Land Act* of 1913 was resistance and this resistance was sustained in various ways even when it became clear that the *Act* was not likely to be changed or amended. Moleah (1993) believes that "resilient is the word that best describes the character of Africans in South Africa. In spite of overwhelming odds, and constantly suffering setbacks, they refused to give up and simply succumb. They proved quite ingenious in devising ways of resisting to either avoid complete defeat or to mitigate defeat where unavoidable" (224).

Despite these historical circumstances a different set of ideas were also in circulation at this time. These ideas emanating from the evangelical liberalism of the missionaries had taken root in the minds of the people through the process of missionary education. Plaatje as a missionary educated African was no exception in this regard. Not only was Plaatje a product of missionary education, he was also an avowed exponent of the Christian faith attendant to which is the cardinal principle of universal love from which an egalitarian view of human existence is set forth. The message of universal, egalitarian benevolence

became relevant to the natives as they were groaning under arbitrary rule and were thereby a nation in bondage to a conquering race. The liberal tradition fostered in the mind of Plaatje (not to the exclusion of most of the missionary-educated Africans) a resistant attitude, however moderate, with regard to their being relegated to the margins of society. Plaatje's resistant attitude manifested itself in his active involvement in the political cause of his people towards attaining the much sought for liberty and equality. Plaatje construes liberty and equality as natural rights derived from the natural order that is expressive of God's will. For Plaatje, in any given society, the liberty and equality of all human subjects must not be contravened or abrogated by the "artificial" laws of men. It is in the light of this construing of humanity's inalienable liberty and equality that "an established tradition of liberalism could on occasion be utilised to enable Africans of Plaatje's class and background to resist being treated simply as units of labour" (Willan, 1984:49). Given the strong religious content of the education he received Plaatje was brought up to accept the values and beliefs of the liberal Christian tradition (cf. Willan, 1984:26). Missionary education inculcated in Plaatje an optimistic vision that sought to reconcile faith and the human world and thereby facilitate commitment in all spheres of human existence. The holistic approach to humanity's existential needs accounts for the salient political considerations that spurred Plaatje in his later political activities as a spokesman for his people. Plaatje's initiation into political activism was occasioned by his imposed marginal location that involved a grim struggle for political liberation from the oppressive structures of the status quo. These oppressive structures

hindered the natives from living with dignity and assuming their identity, as is the case with free citizens who are accorded indiscriminate liberty and equality before the law.

Having attained only a Standard 3 (three) education Plaatje could not help accepting an offer of a job as a telegram messenger at Kimberley Post Office in 1894. No sooner had he (Plaatje) arrived in Kimberley than he identified and associated with the town's mission-educated Africans who constituted Kimberley's African community. Most of these Africans were committed Christians who uncompromisingly advocated the notion of equality before the law which is tacitly enshrined in the cardinal principle of universal love. Advocacy of the notion of equality before the law is best exemplified by Plaatje's editorial comments in the column of *Koranta ea Becoana*, a newspaper he edited when he later got employed as its editor in 1902. In *Koranta ea Becoana* Plaatje renders a potentially polemical proclamation in respect of the political rights of Africans as British subjects. Plaatje proclaims:

> *All we claim is our political dues; we ask for our political recognition as loyal British subjects. Under the Union Jack every person is his neighbour's equal. There are certain regulations for which one should qualify before his legal status is recognised as such: to this qualification race or colour is no bar, and we hope, in the near future, to be able to record that one's sex will no longer debar her from exercising a privilege hitherto enjoyed by the sterner sex only. Presently under the British constitution every MAN so qualified is his neighbour's political equal, therefore anyone who argues to the contrary, or imagines himself the political superior of his fellow subject, is a rebel at heart.*

The above proclamation is to all intents and purposes a political creed unequivocally advocating the natives' entitlement to political rights. This proclamation is a product of a set of beliefs formed and instilled in Plaatje's mind during his long-standing identification and association with Kimberley's African community whose advancement was in accord with the Christian "progressive" lines. In the context of the quoted proclamation one can discern an **authorial consciousness of purpose within the discourse** of Plaatje's newspaper. It is evident that Plaatje conceived of the role of his newspaper as that of providing a forum for the expression of "native opinion" and the means of conveying aspirations and grievances to the authorities. I would argue that Plaatje's proclamation is an outright refutation of the natives' perceived Otherness that marks them as alien, different and strange and thus not entitled to political rights. This state of affairs is best accounted for by the fact that the stigmatised position of the putative Other renders him/her vulnerable to differential treatment (cf. Jameson, 1981:117).

In 1898 Plaatje secured the rare position of being a court-interpreter at the magistrate court at Mafikeng. Due to his outstanding knowledge of languages Plaatje could speak and write English, Dutch, German, Sesuto and Sechuana. Plaatje was yet to gain an invaluable exposure to the judicial system. Without being unduly exaggerative it can be asserted that Plaatje's high degree of linguistic competence put him in good stead as a court-interpreter. Again as a court-interpreter Plaatje was strategically positioned (although this was not necessarily of his own making) to acquire the requisite insight and experience in

respect of the natives' political positioning in relation to the law. It goes without saying that whilst working at the court Plaatje enjoyed a privileged access to the local representative of the colonial government and his people (the Barolong) benefited from the said privileged access. Put differently, as a court-interpreter Plaatje was in an ideal position to give guidance to the Barolong chief and headman on how best to deal with issues that were occasioned by their relations with the local authorities. As would be expected Plaatje's position inadvertently Placed him in a somewhat delicate situation given his obligation of loyalty to his employers and also his obligation of loyalty and unswerving commitment to his own people. The potential conflict of interests notwithstanding it would seem from the friendly relations Plaatje had with his employers and from the trust his own people had in him that he managed to reconcile these potentially conflicting loyalties.

In 1902 Plaatje secured a new career as an editor of the newspaper *Koranta ea Becoana* already cited earlier in this discussion. Subsequent to *Koranta ea Becoana* Plaatje also became editor of a newspaper called Tsala ea Becoana. Notably Plaatje was not a newspaper editor for the sake of the job. Plaatje used his leeway as editor to assume the role of political spokesman, albeit of a somewhat ill defined African political constituency. Plaatje's assumption of this role was necessitated by the fact that the natives were denied the means of direct political representation. Plaatje's empathetic stance as discernible in the themes of his committed editorial comments is indicative of his advocacy of

universalistic values and beliefs that were believed to be in accord with notions of equality before the law for all subjects of the British empire. Given the absence of any means of direct political representation for the indigenous people Plaatje was of the view that the African people needed a 'mouthpiece' to serve as an ideological vehicle for the interests of the natives. The African press was therefore conceived of as a useful agency serving among other things an intermediary role between government and the subjects. Thus *Koranta ea Becoana* assumed multifarious roles ranging from informing, educating and criticising. Plaatje's strictures in the press were directed much more specifically, against the discriminatory practices that were enacted to maintain white economic and political domination that was detrimental to the natives. So Plaatje's editorial comments were far from being disinterested as they **assumed an interventionist role** in the affairs of the natives. This is clearly demonstrated by his (Plaatje's) editorial comment reproduced hereunder in response to the enactment of the *Pass Law* restraining the movement of Africans in certain designated areas. In this particular editorial Plaatje argues that:

> *The benefit of the Pass Law is that thousands of useful unoffending black men, than whom His Majesty has no more law abiding subjects, are daily sent to prison, without having done harm to anybody, and they die as regular gaolbirds even though they had never, during their lifetime, dipped the tips of their fingers in the cup of criminality. It is revolting to anyone who comes from districts like Mafikeng, for instance, where the jailer has no such snare and where revenue is raised through honest and lawful means. The writer met an inhabitant of this place in Johannesburg last month, who at one of the "blessings" of the Pass Law, and said: 'Well, if this is British, then our colony is certainly not'. Here, no such horrors are licensed, and in no spot on earth do whites and blacks live as peacefully as they do in Mafikeng. And we are sure that if there is any Native unrest in existence it is the outcome of the callous and oppressive administration of the Pass Law.*

It is worth restating once again at this stage of the discussion that the discovery of gold in 1886 resulted in a war between the British and the Boer republics as both of them claimed entitlement to the said mineral. And as I said earlier the Africans as British subjects who had not only identified with the British cause in the war but had actively participated to further and realise this cause felt betrayed by the British who then sought rapprochement with the defeated Boers. The Africans' contribution towards the victory of the British was not accorded due political recognition. The resultant rapprochement between the British and the Boers had serious repercussions for the indigenous people as it laid the ground for the formation of the Union of South Africa. And with the formation of the Union in 1910 the already precarious situation of the natives was exacerbated to almost unbearable proportions. No sooner had the Union been formed than Afrikaner nationalism grew in strength resulting in the political outlook looking gravely inauspicious. The consolidation of Afrikaner nationalism found expression in discriminatory practices against Africans particularly in the civil service. This was achieved through the enactment of the *Native Labour Regulation Act* whose aim was to tighten control over African labour and thereby reserve certain categories of work for whites (cf. Willan, 1984:150). As things were developing along these lines politically conscious Africans in all parts of the Union realised the need to engage in collective action irrespective of their different political orientations and affiliations. It is against this background that the South African Native National Congress (currently known as the ANC) was

formed in 1912 and Plaatje was appointed its General-Secretary. As Willan (1984) points out,

> *the movement was conceived as an attempt to provide a truly united forum for the representation of African opinion and interests, a response to the coming together of Boer and Briton in the Act of Union, and a reaction to their own exclusion from any effective representation in the new political structure that had been created (150).*

Given the Afrikaners' quest for self-determination and the desire to attain an exclusive racial identity it becomes intelligible why the Union government was driven by deeply embedded nationalistic aspirations in its dealings with the natives. Consequentially such nationalistic aspirations culminated in the Union government committing itself to serving the economic interests of white business with particular reference to farmers and miners. These farmers and mine owners depended on a cheap supply of labour in order to thrive economically. It is in this respect that a legislative proposal known as the *Natives' Land Bill* which duly became the *Natives' Land Act* of 1913 was adopted and promulgated. The *Natives' Land Act* was designed to regulate the acquisition of land with its objective being to deny black people access to the land. And in its operation the *Act* turned the native peasants into serfs in the employ of whites. Plaatje's editorial comments in his later newspaper *Tsala ea Becoana* ('*The Friend of the People*') in respect of the *Natives' Land Bill* graphically depicts the precariousness of the natives' situation as regards their political rights. In *Tsala ea Becoana* Plaatje declares:

We are standing on the brink of the precipice. We appealed to certain Members of Parliament against the suspension clause in Mr Sauer's Land Bill, and the result of our appeal has been an agreement between Sir Thomas Smartt and the Minister to the effect that the first part of the Bill only be proceeded with. The effect of this agreement is infinitely worse than the whole Bill. In its entirety, there were saving clauses, one of them practically excluding the Cape Province from the operation of the Bill. Under the Sauer-Smartt agreement, all these clauses are dropped, and Section 1 of the Bill, which prohibits the sale of land between Europeans and Natives is applicable to all parts of the Union, including the Cape Province. Now, then, if this suspension clause becomes law, what is going to happen? It is simply this: That the whole land policy of the Union of South Africa is the land policy of the Orange Free State – that misnamed Province which is virtually the Orange Slave State – the blackest spot of the Empire and it will be as difficult to abrogate that suspension as it is difficult to recall a bullet, once fired through someone's head, and resuscitate the victim. Our object then should be to prevent the pistol being fired off, as prevention is infinitely better than cure. The days of the present Parliament are numbered. Supposing the Boers send Gen. Botha about his business with this suspension among the Statutes of the country, do you think they will allow Gen. Hertzog to repeal the suspension? His Cabinet Members will each have "3,000 solid reasons" to keep it there. Our business is to prevent its getting there.

(31 May 1913)

It is evident from Plaatje's editorial comments above that the natives would not concede to this subjugation and marginalization lying down without attempting to counter-act the move that portended their impending annihilation. The colonial conquest had by this time significantly denied the indigenous people an independent existence, and the colonial authorities had thereby taken upon themselves the right to act as political custodians for the natives. This sad reality notwithstanding, the natives stood their ground and turned their marginal positionality into a terrain of contestation.

It is worth reiterating at this stage of the discussion that the *Natives' Land Bill* duly became the *Natives' Land Act*. This took effect barely three weeks after Plaatje's somewhat prophetic editorial comment "We are standing on the brink of the precipice" in *Tsala ea Batho*, 31 May 1913. The *Natives' Land Act* as

observed by Willan (1984) "introduced into the legislation of the Union the principle of territorial segregation" (159). Notably the principle of territorial segregation was informed by a segregationist ideology and as such was essentially racist in its practical utility.

These political developments elicited justifiable gut feelings on the part of the natives and something had to be done to mitigate if not entirely eradicate the detrimental effects of the *Natives' Land Act* by appealing for its rescission. It is against this background that the *South African Natives National Congress* (SANNC), presently known as the *African National Congress* (ANC), notwithstanding its nascency then resolved to send a deputation to England to appeal to the British Imperial government for the immediate abrogation of the *Natives' Land Act*. It comes as no surprise that Plaatje was one of the members of the deputation given his outstanding political astuteness which had by then come of age. The deputation to England, representing the African people of South Africa against the *Natives' Land Act* of 1913 left on 15 May 1914 almost a year after the *Natives' Land Act* came into effect.

During the voyage to England Plaatje began writing *Native Life in South* and had the following to say about it:

> *I am compiling a little book on the Native's Land Act and its operation which I hope to put through the press immediately after landing in England. It keeps me busy typewriting in the dining room all forenoons and evenings; the afternoons I spend on deck, making notes, etc. With such a regular daily programme I can afford to sympathise with our fellow passengers who are always very busy doing nothing. Their inertia must*

be well-nigh maddening and, as I see the heavy loads of time hanging down their weary necks, it is to me strange that they can stand it so long. I think that the reason why three of them got fainting fits is that they have nothing else to do; but I will be sorrier for them when after landing, they endeavour to re-attune themselves with the normal life of toil
(Plaatje in Willan, 1984:174).

I would argue therefore that Plaatje has to be seen as assuming the role of a recognisable protagonist endowed with the attributes of **Agency** and **Act** and who undertakes a protracted literal and metaphorical journey driven by a specific quest. The said quest is for deliverance from oppressive laws and recognition of due political rights of Africans. The realisation of the protagonist's quest depends on the protagonist's act of agency and its mediatory function towards the attainment of the protagonist' "objects" of desire. It can therefore be asserted in no uncertain terms that both in the newspaper editorial comments and in *Native Life in South Africa*, Plaatje's writing registers a determinate presence of authorial intention, which is overtly political in intent and as such fosters a conscious "**closure**" of other possibilities.

It is apparent from the foregoing discussion that the socio-political circumstances that prevailed in South Africa prior to and during the writing of *Native Life in South Africa* relegated the indigenous people to the margins of society and denied them citizenship. The poem, ***But we are to have the Land Again***, written in response to that event and reproduced hereunder is reflective of the Africans' predicament.

"But we are to have the Land Again"

It was bequeathed to us by our ancestors
To hold, nurture and make productive
For their progeny, to continue them
They will live forever if we do.

You came out of the sea on to our land
Like a serpent you emerged from the water
You were pale, white or colorless
You had names we did not know.

Who you are and were, we did not know
What you came for, we again knew not
You did not bother to say, explain or speak
Besides you had no tongue or speech for us.

We waited for you to come and greet
We waited to hear why you had come
Instead, we heard you were settling in
Taking possession of the land.

But this is our land, our patrimony
You do not know this land, us.
You cannot take what you do not know
From those you do not know or even see.

We were like the darkness, there not seen.
We were there without being there
You made us vanish, not exist
Our land is us, we are our land.

You took the land, and took more and more
From the sea you had no cattle
Now you had many cows and sheep
From us you took them all.

War you made to possess
War you made to deny and drive away
Blood you spilled to take even more
War like we had never seen before.

We cannot give up, we cannot rest.
Without land we cannot be
From our ancestors we got the land
But we are to have the land again.
The promise to Nkosi Maqoma.

Chief Maqoma to Colonel T.Wade

The sentiments of the poem are succinctly expressed by Moleah's (1993) aversion that "the whole history of whites in South Africa is a history of

dispossession of the Africans of their lands, possessions, cattle in particular; and their labour" (153). These then are the socio-political circumstances that inform Plaatje's writing of *Native Life in South Africa*. It is in response to the marginalization of the Africans that Plaatje addresses his polemical text. In so doing it is as though the liberal Plaatje heeded the message of the potentially seditious "*Brotherhood Song of Liberty*" by F.R. Lowell.

Men whose boast it is that ye
Come of fathers brave and free,
If there breathe on earth a slave,
Are ye truly free and brave?
If ye do not feel the chain
When it works a brother's pain,
Are ye not base slaves indeed –
Slaves unworthy to be freed?

Is true freedom but to break
Fetters for your own dear sake,
And with leathern hearts forget
That we owe mankind a debt?
No! true freedom is to share
All the chains our brothers wear,
And with heart and hand to be
Earnest to make others free.

They are slaves who fear to speak
For the fallen and weak;
They are slaves who will not choose
Hatred, scoffing, and abuse,
Rather than in silence shrink
From the truth they needs must think:
They are slaves who dare not be
In the right with two or three.

Liberal thinkers and activists from Plaatje through Mahatma Ghandi to Martin Luther King, Jr. have always subscribed to the creed that it is an obligation to speak out against injustice wherever it rears its head. In pursuing this creed they have often acted as the **voice** of the oppressed and marginalized because more

often than not the oppressed are consciously silenced by the mechanisms of oppression. The issue of **voice** and **agency** thus becomes central to their activities as they see themselves as representatives of a vast constituency of those who have been disenfranchised by power. And this song, more than most, captures the motivations of their compulsive urge to **speak**.

The first part of the *Song*, that is, verse one, poses a challenge to the complacency of those who do not identify with the plight of those who are suffering under the said circumstances. The content of the second verse implies an obligation on the part of the "free" to render service to the unfortunate. The assertion "No! true freedom is to share / All the chains our brothers wear" is aimed at refuting what **is** in respect of **what ought to be**. Again the emphatic statement "They are slaves who fear to speak for the fallen and the weak" seems to me to be geared towards consciousness-raising on the part of the complacent. It is a call to individuals to position themselves in relation to the precarious situation in which the unfortunate are subjected. Again it is discernible that the pronouncement is replete with exhortatory sentiments. I would further argue that these sentiments have inherent didactic elements, which teach against obsequiousness. One would have missed the intended outcome of the Song's content if one were not consequently persuaded into engaging in some kind of emancipatory action both for oneself and for those to whom one is socially accountable. The ultimate intent of the *Song* seems to me to be a call to empower the disempowered who are held in inferior subject positions as alluded to by the "fallen and the weak".

Following is a discussion of the writing trend and use of language adopted by Plaatje in *Native Life in South Africa*. Writing within the conventions of traditional historicist discourse Plaatje engages in a realistic political representation of the plight of the natives in the emerging apartheid era already showing signs of negating the humanity of the natives. In *Native Life in South Africa* Plaatje is making assertions about actual world and he presents an account of verifiable historical events. It can therefore be pointed out that *Native Life in South Africa* is an interventionist text in which the "use of language ...entails a particular political positioning of the user in relation to the world" and that this, as asserted by Hutcheon (1988) renders "all language ...politically contaminated" (193) and also bears out the old rhetorical dictum which involves **moving** the audience. It is worth taking into cognisance the fact that the particular demands and constraints of his situation determine Plaatje's act of writing where language cannot be abstracted from material circumstances. Thus in Plaatje's text "language is ...shown to be a social practice, an instrument as much for manipulation and control as for humanist self-expression" (Hutcheon, 1988:186). Plaatje is writing within a domain where language unequivocally assumes a referential character. As argued by Yule (1996) reference is "an act in which a writer uses linguistic forms to enable a ...reader to identify something" (17) and this referential index is significant for the purpose of my argument in this thesis.

Plaatje's referential use of language is typical of "the version of reference...in which there is a basic 'intention-to-identify' and a 'recognition-of-intention' collaboration at work" (Yule, 1996:19). Again in Plaatje's use of language there is, to use Yule's (1996) terms, a "pragmatic connection between proper names and objects that will be conventionally associated within a socio-culturally defined community with those names" (20). In Plaatje's text writing "as a social activity which takes place within a socio-political context" (Clark in Fairclough, ed., 1992:118) deploys a language which is amenable to social representation. The use of language in Plaatje's text "posits a relation of reference (however problematic) to the historical world both through its assertion of the social and institutional nature of all enunciative positions and through its grounding in the representational" (Hutcheon, 1988:141). Again the use of language in Plaatje's text "refuses...any formalist or deconstructive attempt to make language into the play of signifiers discontinuous with representation and with the external world" (Hutcheon, 1988:144). Thus the "playfulness of writing" and the "disinterested expressivity" which characterise modernist writing are hardly discernible in Plaatje's writing. It is worth reiterating Gasset's assertion that "one consequence of the modern novel's shift away from realism and humanised representation is that art tends to become a game or a delightful fraud" (Ortega y Gasset in Bradbury, 1976:410). It should also be remembered that the modernist mode has made the novel into "an art that does not report the world, but creates it" (396). Bradbury et al further argue that the modern novel "escapes the conventions of fact giving and story telling, it desubstantiates the material world –

and transcends the vulgar limitations and simplicities of realism" (408). Be that as it may Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa* as a typical realist text deploys language in a way that renders the reported content or narrated events unequivocally intelligible to the reader or interpreter. In contradistinction to this deployment of language in the realist text, in the modernist novel language assumes a protean character which "forces the reader to pass beyond the reported content of the novel, and enter into its form" (Bradbury in Bradbury et al, 1976:396). Thus *Native Life in South Africa* as a realist writing is without linguistic opacity. The substantial world that Plaatje inhabits and depicts in *Native Life in South Africa* is real enough by any realistic standards. Plaatje's art is not detached from the socio-political realities of the time. In Plaatje's writing one can hardly detect the disposal agency of language, as is the case with other modes of writing (especially the modernist mode). Plaatje does not treat language with iconoclastic freedom instead he passionately deploys language within the conventions of realistic writing. Plaatje' s act of adhering to conventions is accounted for by the fact that "the language which a writer uses is not his own creation but a selection from a system which is shaped by values and presuppositions shared or opposed by people" (Chapman, 1992:137).

Consequently I am inclined to view Plaatje as a social realist whose writing is addressed to a clearly defined constituency as opposed to "seeking to address himself to some abstract humanity" (Onoge in Gugelberger, 1986:38). Plaatje's act of writing cannot be conceived of as an instance of a freely individuated

authorial intention that seeks to impose itself upon language from "outside". Plaatje's act of writing has been precipitated by the pressure of a particular historical context and as such has an inherent "expressive function" (Lentricchia, 1980:192). It can be asserted emphatically that Plaatje is writing within a particular discursive practice that takes into account the factuality of the events narrated. His linguistic act is an act with practical implication as he writes with a definite vision inherent in which is a determinate genetic intention. It is worth noting though Daichies's assertion that "differences can be noted between the different kinds of language employed by writers of different kinds of literature" (24). *Native Life in South Africa* is written with "a real reader in mind and real consequences to their decisions" (Clarke in Fairclough, edit, 1992:124). Again *Native Life in South Africa* has the propensity toward realism and empirical detailing as Plaatje is not detached from the events he is narrating. It can therefore be asserted in no uncertain terms that Plaatje's writing privileges the role of ideology, language and discourse between writer and reader or audience. Plaatje is not writing within the conventions of Western literary tradition which "has seen the progressive withdrawal of the writer from communal and political involvement, the evolution of literary forms and linguistic modes increasingly introspective and arcane until art has been 'raised to the status of a solitary fetish'" (Watts, 1989:7). As argued by Watts "South African writers have long discerned the inappropriateness of such a convention for their circumstances and for their function within society" (7). So Plaatje's text is operating within the conventions of the traditional historicist discourse that ascribes authorial intention

in texts. Put differently, Plaatje retains the conventions and assumptions of traditional realism. This is in direct contrast to the view that "writing is radically indeterminate and must be excluded from the house of authorial intention if "meaning" is to be determinate, sharable, and reproducible" (Lentricchia, 1980:276).

In Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa* we are presented, in Powell's terms, with "an art that affirms the immediate and the everyday". Moreover, art in Plaatje "is no longer a social decoration but has important things to say" (Powell, 1993:56). Harris (1995) advocates the same view in his assertion that there are "non-fictional narratives which claim to tell the story of real people and limit themselves in the main to verifiable circumstances" (109). My underlying argument is that Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa* is an art of social protest as opposed to an art of capitulation. It is for this reason therefore that I view Plaatje not as a writer of decorum but as a potentially political and revolutionary writer with an overt political intent.

Although I do not entirely subscribe to the postmodernist project, I am extremely fascinated by its problematisation of history and the notion of reference in language. This problematisation has a bearing on the referential accuracy of historical detail in Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa*. In Postmodernism the empirical world of experience is not denied but its availability to us is contested. Postmodernism acknowledges that "the real exists (and existed) but our

understanding of it is always conditioned by discourses, by our different ways of talking about it" (Hutcheon, 1988:157). It is further asserted by Hutcheon (1988) that "history offers facts interpreted, signifying, discursive, textualized – made from brute facts" (153). It should be noted though as argued by Hutcheon (1988) that "to challenge history or its writing is not to deny either" (233). What postmodernism does is "merely to foreground the fact that we can only know the real, especially the past real, only through signs" (229-230). So the past (history) is real even if it is only knowable through signs.

With regard to the notion of reference in language "postmodernism suggests that the language in which realism or any other mode of representation operates cannot escape ideological contamination" (Hutcheon, 1988:180). Nevertheless " post-modern discourses do not 'liquidate referentials' so much as force a rethinking of the entire notion of reference that makes problematic both the traditional realist transparency and this newer reduction of reference to simulacrum" (Hutcheon, 1988:229). Thus I am arguing that the inadvertent ideological loadedness of language in Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa* is accounted for by the socio-political circumstances surrounding the writing at the time. It is worth reiterating at this stage of the discussion the argument that writing as an act of communication does not exists in a vacuum and that the writer (especially the realist writer) cannot write as though there is no context. Plaatje's empathetic stance in relation to the world of his text exemplifies the "classic conflict between the artist's autonomy and his political commitment"

(Verdonk, 1993:112). It is worth noting that Plaatje's empathetic stance in this regard is affirmed and complimented by postmodernism's "attempt to combat what has come to be seen as modernism's potential for hermitic, elitist isolationism that separated art from the world" (Hutcheon, 1988:140). In Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa* the projected world coincides with the actual world and here one also finds "a classic instance of the language which signifies something that must be believed" (Reilly, 1993:166). Plaatje's positioning in relation to his text is as though he heeded Montrose's admonishment, as asserted by Newton (1991), that "the concept of literature as an autonomous aesthetic order that transcends the shifting pressure and particularly of material needs be rejected" (18).

In attempting to delineate the historical and discursive context of Sol Plaatje's writing in this chapter, I have sought to place this work within the context of his time and to posit a direct relationship between the writer and his period. This relationship goes beyond the usual pale of painting a background but moves towards identifying the relationship between the writer and audience upon which a pragmatic interpretation can be built. By linking the author's intentions with the outcomes he seeks within the real world, I am reaching for an interpretive position in which the author is re-inscribed within the process of interpretation and the text becomes the **signifying medium** which links author and audience. In the next chapter I will focus on an analysis of the text *Native Life in South Africa* to complete this reading.

CHAPTER 5

Critical analysis of Plaatje and his works often adopt a variety of positions as their points of departure. Those who comment on his life, for instance Schalkwyk (1999) and Voss (1994) attempt to put his work in the context of his life commitment to the ideals of justice and the emancipation of the oppressed in South Africa. These commitments underline this text in which the author engages in a remarkable piece of social history to underscore the circumstances in which his people were forced to live as a result of the enactment of the *Natives' Land Act* of 1913. Schalkwyk (1999) is of the view that Plaatje's record of the immediate effects of the *Natives' Land Act* in the lived experience of the rural people in the terrible winter of 1913 is a remarkable act of writing "history from below" and as such is written in the "spirit of revolt" (15). Similarly Voss (1994) argues that *Native Life in South Africa* is an account of and an attack on the Union Parliament's *Native Land Act* of 1913. In Voss's view this account takes the rhetorical form of a plea to the British Imperial Government to intervene in South Africa and thereby reverse or repeal the provisions of the Act. In his writing Plaatje employs political and rhetorical presumption for a specific purpose, which is to provoke imperial action against a plethora of Acts which deprived blacks of civil liberty, land, and economic opportunity in the Union of South Africa (cf. Schalkwyk, 1999).

Voss (1994:235) contends that Plaatje's *Appeal for Imperial Protection* is based on an idea of "true imperialism" whose motive is true justice. It is against this idea of imperialism that Plaatje sets the condition of slavery, which is held out as the actual, or the potential condition of the natives of South Africa. And as a strategy of legitimation and authority Plaatje makes use of quotation that characteristically echoes eighteenth century ideas and its Enlightenment ideas of liberty. In Plaatje's use of quotation one can discern as argued by Voss his sense of identification with eighteenth century ideas. Quotation therefore underwrites the whole complex purpose of Plaatje's text: moral polemic, didacticism and self-definition (cf. Voss, 1994:63). Schalkwyk (1999:15) expresses the same view in his identification of Plaatje with multiple dimensions: journalist, translator, polemicist, diarist, historian, orthographer, linguist, pamphleteer, politician, anthropologist, orator and traveller. Schalkwyk argues convincingly that Plaatje's writings are embedded in and acutely respond to the contingencies of the moment. It stands to reason therefore that Plaatje's writing is characterised by **directness** and **purposiveness** especially in its rhetorical awareness of its audience. Notably general dissertations and theses have explored various aspects of his life and work and some book length biographies have also been produced on him (cf. Willan, 1984). Of these studies however none has explicitly deployed the sort of pragmatic approach adopted here in which authorial intention is directly linked to intended outcomes via the medium of the text. I use the word explicitly here because several critics have peremptorily discussed these issues but have not adopted this as a theoretical

approach to interpretation. This integrated approach has the added advantage of providing a holistic view rather than a singling out of elements for critical focus. Within this approach the purpose underwrites the entire activity beginning from the author and irradiated through the text to the audience. This underlying purposiveness in the economy of textual production, which was theoretically underlined in the first chapter, provides the lever so to speak for entering into the text.

In this chapter therefore I will be discussing Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa* as a deliberative discourse which seeks to persuade the targeted audience to support the cause of the natives. For Plaatje the occasion demands that the audience be "conditioned" by exposing to them the negative effects of the *Natives' Land Act*. Again for Plaatje the circumstances dictate that it is expedient to arouse the hostility of the targeted audience against the enactment of the *Natives' Land Act*. It is for this reason therefore, namely, that there is an audience to persuade to accept the truth of his narrative of events and act accordingly, that the narrative dictates its own rhetorical strategies of presentation. These time-honoured strategies have been the adopted techniques of rhetoricians from the classical period of Demosthene and Cicero through the present times. But before proceeding with these, let us first examine the nature of Plaatje's narrative.

The beginning of the narrative is fundamentally expository, by which I mean it informs the targeted audience of the circumstances of the natives that need to be known so that the audience can make informed decisions based on the stated facts. Plaatje rests the plausibility of his statements of facts on his direct involvement in the affairs of the natives. This direct involvement establishes the authoritative position from which he writes. In the first chapter of *Native Life in South Africa,* Plaatje presents the natives as squatters. Plaatje's definition of a squatter specifically in South Africa is that he/she "is a native who owns some livestock and, having no land of his own, hires a farm or grazing and ploughing rights from a landowner, to raise grain for his own use and feed his stock" (21-22). The landlessness of the natives is a direct consequence of the *Natives' Land Act.* It is regrettable, as Plaatje points out, that the natives were caught off guard with regard to the catastrophe that befell them. Ironically, some farmers (who were of course white) to whom the colonial government had been favourably disposed and were hand-in-glove with the government were "ignorant of the law" (22) until long after it had been in operation. Plaatje hastens to add that "nearly all the white lawyers in South Africa, to whom we spoke about this measure, had either not seen the *Act* at all, or had not read it carefully, so that in both cases they could not tell exactly for whose benefit it had been passed" (23). As Plaatje views, it the lawyers' uncertainty with regard to the beneficiaries of the *Act* is a serious indictment (however subtle it may be) of those who propounded and enacted this *Act.* Clearly, Plaatje's strictures in respect of the *Act* are directed at the colonial government without implicating the entire white populace

whose opinion in this matter was never solicited. In Plaatje's view, the colonial government adopted a strategy of omission if not exclusion by not subjecting the desirability of the *Act* to a referendum. Adopting the strategic position of not incriminating the entire white population, Plaatje avers that it was "politically incorrect" for the colonial government to unilaterally legislate without soliciting the opinions of subjects on such a crucial issue. A referendum as Plaatje insinuates would most likely have forestalled the enactment of the *Act* and thereby saved the natives from such unprecedented suffering. The critical point, in this respect is that the colonial government did not observe its accountability to its constituency and as such acted irresponsibly. Again Plaatje's assertion that even the white lawyers in South Africa "hardly knew what all the trouble was about" but "it was the native in the four provinces who knew about it, for he had not read it in books but had himself been through its mill" (23) is meant to predispose the audience favourably towards the plight of the natives. Plaatje makes a concerted effort not to alienate his audience by trying not to create the impression that his account of the state of affairs is significantly biased. To this effect he asserts: "it is true ...that numerically the Act was passed by the consent of a majority of both Houses of Parliament, but it is equally true that it was steamrolled into the statute book against the bitterest opposition of the best brains of both Houses" (24). I am therefore arguing that Plaatje's reference to the farmers who were "ignorant of the law" (22), the white lawyers of South Africa "who had either not seen the Act at all, or had not read it carefully" (23) and the "bitterest opposition of the best brains of both Houses of Parliament" (24) is

meant to accentuate the flaws of the Act and absolve his liberal audience from blame for its consequences. So Plaatje's rendering of his account of the natives' situation shows in no uncertain terms that he does not view the entire members of the colonial government as guilty of sanctioning the enactment of the *Natives' Land Act* of 1913. Plaatje underscores the irony in the fact that "a most curious aspect of this singular law is that even the minister...who introduced it, subsequently declared himself against it" (24). For him, what gave momentum to the "tyrannical enactment" of this Act is that the colonists, "as a rule are dominated by the Dutch Republican spirit" which advocated a repressive policy against the natives. From the point of view of the Dutch extremists "scarcely anyone else had any rights in South Africa, and least of all the man with a black skin" (30). The enactment of the *Act* was accomplished due to the Government's timidity as it "played up to the desires of the racial extremists" (30). As the *Natives Land Act* became an accomplished fact it became "unlawful for natives to buy or lease land, except in scheduled native areas" (31-32). The appropriation of the land by the colonists alienated the natives their right to the land. The natives' claim to the land is affirmed in various documents and poems which examine this era and focus on the justification and authenticity of these claims. For instance, Saayman asks: "the Kaffirs are charged with robbery and encroachment, but whose lands have they sought but the lands of their fathers? What soil have they claimed but the soil that gave them birth?" (Saayman in Prozesky, edit 1990:33). The inalienable entitlement of the natives to the land is also corroborated by such poems as, ***Africa: My* Native *Land***, by A.C Dube,

Gaur Radebe's ***An African to his Country*** and ***The Contraction and Enclosure of the Land*** by STJ Yako. These poems prove that these sentiments were not exclusive to the liberals but to the entire population of Africans who had suffered this dispossession. I shall briefly examine these poems to establish the pervasive passion that informs them.

Africa: My Native Land

How beautiful are thy hills and dales!
I love thy very atmosphere so sweet,
Thy trees adorn the landscape rough and steep –
No other country in the whole world could with thee compare.

It is here where noble ancestors,
Experienced joys of dear ones and of home;
Where great and glorious kingdoms rose and fell
Where blood was shed to save thee, thou dearest Land ever known.

But, Alas! their efforts were all in vain,
For today others claim thee as their own;
No longer can their offspring cherish thee
No land to call their own – but outcasts in their own country.

Despair of thee I never, never will,
Struggle I must for freedom – God's great gift –
Till every drop of blood within my veins
Shall dry upon my troubled bones, oh thou Dearest Native Land.
(1913).

In the first stanza of this poem the speaker declares his/her appreciation of the land's beauty as a prelude to the second stanza which recalls the socio-political situation in the country prior to the expropriation of the land by the colonisers. The pronouncement "it is here where noble ancestors, experienced joys of dear ones and of home" is eminently reminiscential. The homelessness of natives

cannot be conceived of as an inevitable consequence of an agency, which is beyond human intervention. This homelessness is a direct consequence of social engineering conscientiously executed.

In the third stanza the speaker laments the failure of the natives to successfully resist expropriation of the land by the "others". This failure is attested to by the speaker's direct address to the land: "today others claim thee as their own". Consequently, the ancestors' offspring's who arguably have a legitimate claim to the land are left with "no land to call their own but are outcasts in their own country". In the last stanza, the speaker resolves to be assiduously committed to reclaiming the lost inheritance. The speaker's asseveration "despair of thee I never, never will, struggle I must for freedom" attests to his/her resolution to embrace fortitude under those straits.

The second poem by Gaur Hadebe also echoes this resolution.

"An African to his Country"

Oh, land of my birth
Full of green everywhere, gold, silver and diamonds
Feed the children of other lands;
Mourn, you careless mother
Your breast is suckled by children not of your birth.

Take your sickle to mow down
Those who cheat us even of your worthy breast.
Cursed be your womb, for therein lay
Your cheated sons and daughters.

Aye you thieves, wherefore steal you
My mother's love from me?
Wherefore hurt you the hand that feeds?

Oh, land of my birth,

Full of green everywhere,
Your gold, silver and diamonds
Feed the children of other lands.

Your serene voice called,
Your house accommodated strangers-
I, your noble child, who fought your wars,
Am left to die of hunger and disease;
Mourn, you careless mother,
Your breast is suckled by children not of your birth.

Green mountains and rivers full of flowers,
They are my natural enjoyment,
But without accommodation my heart sticks to my ribs:
How can I have joy, you careless mother?
Curse the stranger, and give me your breast to suck,
Then I will enjoy again
Green mountains and rivers full of flowers.

I am your child, natural heir to your throne;
When will you give me my rights?

(Published in Democrat, 19 May 1945)

In this poem, the speaker asserts in no uncertain terms his rightful claim to the land. The pronouncement "Oh, land of my birth" makes explicit the fact that the sense of belonging and attachment to the land which the speaker expresses, is a birthright that derives from his origins. It is clear from this assertion that he has from time immemorial had his origins in this land, but is now estranged from it. The speaker feels alienated and marginalized as the land's economic resources are made the exclusive property of the white "race". Hence his assertion: "Your gold, silver and diamonds feed the children of other lands".

In the second stanza the speaker conceives of his precarious situation as characterised by both economic and political exploitation. This new situation, the consequence of economic and political oppression, demands resistance. Thus

the exhortation: "Take your sickle to mow down those who cheat us even of your worthy breast". The concern is not only with economic and political exploitation but is also concerned with the death of the "sons and daughters of the soil". Hence the damning pronouncement "Cursed be your womb, for therein lay your cheated sons and daughters".

The subsequent stanzas of the poem make repetitive reference to the country's richness in economic resources. But its gold, silver and diamonds "feed the children of other lands". The indigenous people face abject destitution whilst the country houses "accommodated strangers". Given the country's abundant natural resources and placing this beside the destitution of the natives serves to highlight the contrasts and ironies in the poem. The assertion "I am your child, natural heir to your throne," strengthens the claim to the land as well as emphasising the reality of dispossession. Thus he asks from the country, "When will you give me my rights? This question which ends the poem climaxes the argument by its implicit solicitation for redress.

The third poem also progresses along the same lines.

"The Contraction and Enclosure of the Land"

Thus spake the heirs of the land
Although it is no longer ours.
This land will be folded like a blanket
Till it is like a palm of the hand.
The racing ox will become entangled in the wire,
Too weak to dance free, it will be worn
Out by the dance of the yoke and the plough.

They will crowd us together like tadpoles
In a calabash ladle. Our girls will have their lobola paid with paper,
coins that come and go, come and go.
Blood should not be spilled, so they say
Nowadays, to unite the different peoples;
Until we no longer care for each other,
As a cow licks her calf, when love
And nature urges her to do so.
Can money bring people together?
Yes, a man may have words with his son's wife,
His son need no longer respect his mother.
Yes, we fold up our knees,
It's impossible to stretch out,
Because the land has been hedged in.

Yako's poem is permeated by concerns about the land, specifically with regard to its "contraction" and "enclosure". The first line foregrounds the legitimacy of entitlement to the land. This foregrounding is inscribed in the pronouncement "Thus spake the heirs of the land". But having made this pronouncement the poem is quick to concede in the second line that the land is "no longer theirs". The use of the possessive pronoun "ours" is suggestive of the once communal ownership of the land by the natives.

The subsequent lines of the poem anticipate the demarcation of the land since its appropriation has apparently been accomplished. The speaker then cites numerous but varying resultant effects, which will be precipitated by the said demarcation. The demarcation of the land is vividly depicted by the assertions, to mention but two, that "the racing ox will become entangled in the wire" and "they will crowd us together like tadpoles". The last lines of the poem lament the regrettable effects of the *Natives' Land Act*.

The three poems analysed above have strong affinities with Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa.* And indeed, they all focus on the theme of land and alienation to which he gives extended expository and analytical treatment in his text.

Plaatje's remarks that "under severe pains and penalties" the natives "were to be deprived of the bare human rights of living on the land except as servants in the employ of the whites" underscores his focus on the severity of the pains and penalties consequent upon this deprivation of the basic human rights to land and a decent living. *Native Life in South Africa* begins with a historical reconstruction of the events that constitute the nucleus of the narrative. Plaatje's historical reconstruction of the events narrated in his text, I would argue, provides an opening into the text for the author/narrator and foregrounds, for the critic, the manner in which the text should be read. *Native Life in South Africa* foregrounds the author as both narrator and eye witness and therefore puts the author's own life and the culture that nurtured him at the centre of the text. As witness and involved participant and as narrator and author, the text eschews that kind of detachment, which is the fore of texts in which the authors distance themselves by assuming various masks and persona. This then necessitates that the historical and cultural climate of Plaatje's times be foregrounded when engaging in textual interpretation of *Native Life in South Africa.* This foregrounding of the historical and cultural climate of the author's times should be noted in view of the fact that contemporary literary approaches to textual interpretation advocate a paradigm-shift which consists in the movement away from the real persons and

events behind the text. By focussing on the author's (Plaatje's) life and background as a legitimate mode of enquiry to the meaning of the text, I would argue that pluralistic tolerance (as regards meaning) in respect of Native Life in South Africa is clearly at variance with the text's determining context. *Native Life in South Africa* privileges a particular approach to meaning and interpretation.

Plaatje's opening remarks on the situation of the natives, "awaking on Friday morning, June 20, 1913, the South African native found himself, not actually a slave, but a pariah in the land of his birth" (21) overtly persuades and coerces by its terms of reference. The foregrounding of a date and a consequence, the shock of the native's realisation is duplicated in the effort to shock the reader, the attempt creates separation – a distinct chasm in history – before 1913 and after 1913. The placing of these at the very beginning of the text is significant. Plaatje's skilful narration in this regard is to all intents and purposes meant to predispose the targeted audience favourably towards the egregious situation of the natives. The turning of the natives into pariahs in the land of their birth is foregrounded as a "precipitating event" which both violates and negates the humanity of the natives.

Although Plaatje's narrative is presumably informed by verifiable historical events his (Plaatje's) own positioning in relation to the natives' situation renders him suspect of ideological biases which underpin his own ideological values in the narration of the said events. It is apparent therefore that the narrative does not

assume a disinterested position but has an intended effect (politically oriented) which is constantly reproduced in the text by the use of specific rhetorical devices. These rhetorical devices as noted earlier are the basic tools which orators have always **used to sway their audiences in favour of their arguments or positions**. These various devices can be summed under three broad categories, namely, the **ethical appeal, emotional appeal** and the **rational appeal.** Plaatje's discourse exerts an ethical appeal which pervades all parts of the narrative and this is meant to dispose the audience favourably towards the situation of the natives. The exertion of the ethical appeal in this narrative is best illustrated by this assertion in respect of the outrageous treatment of the natives by the colonial authorities during war times:

> black men are required by the Union Government to proceed to the front as Government wagon drivers, driving provisions and ammunition wagons, and acting as orderlies to the white burghers. In these capacities they are exposed to all the risks and horrors of the war, yet even if they are shot, they must not, under any circumstances, be mentioned in the casualty lists, nor must they carry arms lest their behaviour should merit recognition; their heroic deeds and acts of valour must, on account of their colour, not be recorded. These native drivers are classed with the transport mules, with this difference, that while the owner of a mule receives monetary compensation for each animal that falls on the battlefield, or is captured by the enemy, the Government interest in the black driver ceases when he is killed (307).

It is evident from the above quotation that the natives are not treated on the same basis of humanity as the white subjects. In Plaatje's view, the colonial authorities see the natives merely as functionaries to be exploited for the benefit of the supposedly superior race. Hence the "black men are required by the Union Government to proceed to the front as Government wagon drivers, driving

provision and ammunition wagons, and acting as orderlies to the white burghers". The colonial authorities' moral behaviour is not in accord with the demands of ethical propriety. The defenceless exposure of the natives "to all the risks and horrors of the war" while exercising duties for the whites is presented as ethically offensive. It follows logically therefore that the exposed cruelty of the white government towards the natives warrants intervention for such cruelty is portentous of a possible extinction of the natives in the land of their birth. Plaatje views the categorisation of the natives with "transport mules" as an outright negation of their humanity. This negation of the natives' humanity, it may be argued, is informed by deeply entrenched racial prejudice. As Anthias (1992) points out "racial prejudice is constitutive of racialized discourses and practices by which groups of people are inferiorized, excluded and subordinated" (1). The act of classifying "the native drivers with the transport mules" (307) may also be understood as reflecting the fact that the historical biases of the supposedly superior "race" have not been ameliorated. The act also points at cultural assumptions and their manifestations in social organisation. It is apparent here that "instruments of exclusion, legal, cultural or political are forged by subjects as they mould criteria for establishing racial Otherness" (Goldberg, 1992:307). In this context of Plaatje's depiction of the differential treatment of the natives by the colonial authorities, it can be seen that for the dominant group, the Boers, the racist discourse served to unify them as subjects of authority (cf. Goldberg, 1992:307). For the white colonialists, race becomes "essentialized" and "biologized". This depiction of this construction of racial identity reflects Winant's

argument that "the dynamics of racial signification are necessarily relational" (1990:280). That is to say, as Tafjel points out that "individuals are motivated to derive a positive social identity from their group membership. They do this by perceiving their own group as positively distinctive from other groups on salient dimensions" (1982:157). Tafjel (1982) further asserts that "the need to achieve positive group distinctiveness in order to protect or enhance social identity, causes people to differentiate themselves from others and to be biased in favour of their own group, even in the absence of any conflict between groups" (157). The white colonialists' categorisation of the "native drivers with the transport mules" attempts to reinforce the assumed distinctiveness of their racially defined group. The native drivers who are politically subjugated are now exposed to the problematic character of social difference. They are positioned as racialized Others. The otherness ascribed to the natives is premised on a notion of "difference" which consequentially gives rise to the erection of racial boundaries. As argued by Low (1996) "the language of difference ...enables the colonial authority both to survey and discriminate against its subjects" (199). Again the negation of the natives' humanity is best attested to by Low's (1996) assertion that:

> In the language of the civilising mission, the reformation of the native subject is the object of the colonial enterprise; but this reformation must also be continually in order to enforce the separation between coloniser and the colonised. Consequently, education, fluency and intellectual dexterity which mark the civilised man within the colonial space must also be disavowed in order to secure the continuation of colonial occupation. The 'educated' natives are only mimic men, mutations, bastards; they can never be the genuine article (199).

Low (1996) further avers that "racist discourse discriminates through the production of difference; its characteristic feature is the repetition of a fixed set of traits (which are said to be the properties of the racial or cultural group in question) across differing histories, cultures and geographies" (224). Racial boundaries in Low's (1996) terms "signal a differentiation and separation of Self from Other, of inside from the outside" (194). According to Hawthorn (1992) "to characterise a person, group or institution as "Other" is to place them outside the system of normality or convention to which one belongs. Such processes of exclusion by categorisation are thus central to certain ideological mechanisms" (124).

What is depicted here is Plaatje's censure of the "constructs of collectivity and belongingness postulated through notions of common origin or destiny, not in terms of cultures of difference but in terms of the specific positing of boundaries" (Anthias, 1992:2). The positing of boundaries "involve mechanisms of both inclusion and exclusion of individuals on the basis of the categorisation of human subjects into those that can belong and those that cannot" (Anthias, 1992:2). One of Plaatje's concerns in *Native Life in South Africa* is to convince his target readers (the British public to be more precise) that the constitution of racialized identities grounded on a notion of racial difference is flawed. For Plaatje "race" is an arbitrary signification wit no biological essence. Notwithstanding this fact use is made of certain characteristics, that is, the colour of the skin to identify collectivity and this makes possible the natives' othering in terms of which they

become racially stigmatised. As a consequence exclusionary and inclusionary practices serve as a mode for preserving privileges for the Self at the expense of the putative racial Other.

Admittedly, it cannot be refuted that there obtains a "visible difference" in terms of phenotypical features between blacks and whites. This visible difference is conspicuous in the contrasts in skin colour between blacks and whites. Be that as it may, Plaatje argues against the foregrounding of the colour of one's skin to signify fundamental "difference" on the basis of which racial differentiation and exclusivity can be championed to the detriment of the putative Other. For Plaatje, as evidenced in his depiction of the natives as deserving human dignity, the essence of one's humanity irrespective of racial origin and affiliation is constituted by the human soul. As argued by Low (1996) the use of "skin as a signifier of discrimination" (226) culminates in a "fixated form of representation" (224) which does not take into account the fluidity of identities. Although in this part of the discussion I am addressing the question of racial categorisation and its ethical impropriety I am nevertheless fascinated by the reciprocal affinities of racial categorisation with ethnic categorisation. As asserted by Marks et al (1987) "ethnic categories in South Africa are neither natural or immutable. The boundaries of ethnic identity are fluid, and have constantly shifted in response to political, social and economic circumstance" (61). By the same token the boundaries of racial categorisation are characterised by fluidity. Plaatje's underlying argument is, in Low's (1996) terms that "racial discrimination depends

on visible difference" and that this "visible difference" must of necessity be disavowed as it does not constitute the essence of one's humanity. The disavowal of difference, as insinuated by Plaatje, will place the natives at par with their white counterparts. By so doing, the natives will then be spared the discriminatory effects of racial categorisation.

It is necessary to assert once again that racial difference is characteristically based on a "differential projection". This projection as averred by Low (1996) "represents a casting-off of the unwanted aspect of Self onto another where it attains visibility" (226). To use Low's (1996) terms, "racial stereotyping...in its production of the colonised as a fixed reality which is at once an "other" and entirely knowable" (199) results in discriminatory practices. Hence the natives (as the colonised) "even if they are shot...must not, under any circumstances, be mentioned in the casualty lists, nor must they carry arms, lest their behaviour should merit recognition" (Plaatje, 1982:307). Again, Plaatje's assertion that the natives' "heroic deeds and acts of valour must, on account of their colour, not be recorded" (307) ironically refutes the perceived alterity between the coloniser and the colonised. Plaatje views the resolution of the colonial authorities not to record the "heroic deeds and acts of valour" of the natives as an attempt to efface any possible trace of the natives' inherent human potentialities in history. In this respect Plaatje depicts "the exercise of power and surveillance" by the colonial authorities as "existing alongside the fascination and desire for alterity" (Low, 1996:233). Thus the putative Other in Plaatje's representation is in Low's

(1996) terms "a product of a discriminatory gaze" (197) informed by "skin as a signifier of discrimination" (226).

It should be apparent at this stage of the discussion that Plaatje is uncompromisingly opposed to racialisation based on phenotypical features. Racialisation as defined by Miles (1989:76) may be glossed as "a dialectical process by which meaning is attributed to particular biological features of human beings as a result of which individuals may be assigned to a general category of persons which reproduces itself biologically". This definition of racialisation enhances one's understanding of the act of categorising the native drivers with the transport mules. By this act of categorisation the natives are to be seen as different from the rest. This perceived difference is then used as a valid ground to sanction and justify any differential treatment that is deemed necessary under the said circumstances. Miles further argues that "signification of phenotypical features is not an end in itself but is effected for particular purposes, ...its practical utility is not simply representational but is also a means to effect exclusionary practices, with the result that patterns and structures of material inequality between populations so differentiated are created in the context of class differentiation" (1989:72). The practical utility of this differentiation is attested to by Plaatje's assertion that "blacks are being turned off the land and have no where to go. The only course left for them is to hire themselves out as servants to the whites" (261). Moreover, "their sons and daughters can no longer settle in the Union except as serfs" (292). The white colonials' behaviour should

be understood in Miles's terms, as an "act of discrimination and exclusion premised on the need to allocate scarce resources and services and therefore involving decisions of worth or eligibility" (1989:77). The natives, because of their perceived otherness are not eligible to gain access to the land. Consequently, they are "ranked below in a hierarchy of acceptability" (Miles, 1989:78). In one sense, the natives are seen as constituting a problematic presence as their presence challenges the exclusive appropriation of both material and social resources by whites. It is evident in Plaatje's representation of the relations that obtain between the natives and the colonial authorities that "whiteness" as a projected transcendental signifier is interrogated and problematised. Plaatje's reminiscential account in respect of the "heroic deeds and acts of valour" of the natives attests to this interrogation and problematisation of "whiteness" thereby serving to disclaim the natives' imposed concealment by the colonial authorities. Plaatje's argument in respect of this wilful obliteration by the colonial authorities is accentuated by his poignant asseveration that "the Government's interest in the black driver ceases when he is killed" (307). The cessation of the Government's interest in the "black driver" once "he is killed" amounts to undisguised dehumanisation and is indeed dehumanisation of the natives. The natives have value, only as long as their labour is readily available for the benefit of the colonialists. Thus Plaatje laments the denigration of the natives in the face of racial discrimination by a government which they have loyally served.

In this part of the discussion, I have argued that Plaatje is of the view that the inhumane treatment of the natives by the colonial authorities is based on an illusion of difference which then serves as a primary ground for entitlements, of rights of accessibility, and conversely of denial, prohibition and alienation. Plaatje is also of the view that the enactment of prejudicial and othering practices as evidenced by the categorisation of the black drivers with the transport mules renders the natives vulnerable to the problematic of invisibility and namelessness. It is evident therefore that the exertion of an ethical appeal by Plaatje's discourse serves to accentuate the moral strength of the argument that he advances as regards the inhumane treatment of the natives by the colonial authorities. It is in this respect therefore that the natives' struggle for an affirming identity becomes a quest for validation and recognition against the problematic of invisibility and namelessness, which is essentially a condition of powerlessness. Clearly Plaatje's use of the ethical appeal as a mode of persuasion is meant to dispose the audience favourably towards the situation of the natives.

Plaatje's discourse also exerts an emotional appeal that serves as a mode of persuasion. For Plaatje it is expedient to resort to the emotional appeal for it makes an allowance for the underpinning of the narrator's ideological values thereby rendering the audience susceptible to the emotional-ideological substance of the narrative. As a mode of persuasion the emotional appeal will depend on the ability to arouse empathy in the audience. Plaatje's use of the emotional appeal is best illustrated by the following questions which in essence

make a case for the natives as deserving humane treatment from the colonial government. It is to this effect that Plaatje questions:

> What have our people done to these colonists...that is so utterly unforgivable, that this law should be passed as an unavoidable reprisal? Have we not delved in their mines, and are not a quarter of a million of us still labouring for them in the depths of the earth in such circumstances for the most niggardly pittance? Are not thousands of us still offering up our lives and our limbs in order that South Africa should satisfy the white man's greed...Have we not quarried the stones, mixed, moulded and carried the mortar which built the cities of South Africa? Have we not likewise prepared the material for building the railways? Have we not obsequiously and regularly paid taxation every year, and have we not supplied the treasury with money to provide free education for the Dutch children in the 'Free' state and Transvaal, while we had to find additional money to pay the school fees for our own children? Are not many of us toiling in the grain fields and fruit farms, with their wives and their children, for the white man's benefit? (146-147).

This probing question "What have our people done to these colonists, ...that is so utterly unforgivable, that this law should be passed as an unavoidable reprisal?" (146) is best answered by Aime Cesaire's illuminating insight on the nature of colonialism: "wherever there are colonisers and colonised face to face, I see force, brutality, cruelty, sadism, conflict, and the hasty manufacture of a thousand subordinate functionaries for the smooth operation of business" (Cesaire in Williams et al, 1993:177). Cesaire further contends that in the colonial arena there is "no human contact, but relations of domination and submission which turn the colonising man into a slave driver, and the indigenous man into a instrument of production" (177). Plaatje's dilemma in unravelling the mystery of the natives' offence confirms Mishra et al's aversion that "the colonised never know when the coloniser consider them for what they are, humans in full possession of a self, or merely objects" (Mishra et al in Williams, 1993:278). But the enigma that confronts Plaatje in respect of the natives' offence is resolved as soon as one gets to know that colonisers as allegedly

stated by Hitler "aspire not to equality but to domination. The country of a foreign race must become once again a country of serfs, of agricultural labourers, or industrial workers. It is not a question of eliminating the inequalities among men but of widening them and making them into law" (Cesaire in Williams et al, 1993:174). In the extract above from *Native Life in South Africa* Plaatje's questions are aimed at affirming the loyalty of the natives in rendering their unreserved service (given, of course, their political conditioning) to the colonial government. What transpires from the extract is the fact that the natives' labour is exploited for the sole benefit of the white man. In Plaatje's view the passing and subsequent enactment of the Natives' Land Act cannot be conceived as "an unavoidable reprisal". This Act is a measure put in place in order to secure for the white man "cheap labour". It is worth reiterating the fact that Plaatje writes at a time when the Act was raging like a plague, turning the natives into legal serfs through the appropriation of their land. And for Plaatje "no slavery could be worse than to be outlawed in your homes" (184). The dutifulness of the natives in paying taxation shows that they are law-abiding subjects. In Plaatje's view, it is indeed absurd that the natives have to "supply the treasury with money to provide free education for the Dutch children" whilst their own children are deprived of this privilege. This is a serious indictment of the colonisers' act of bluntly negating the humanity of the natives by treating them as nondescript entities. As if this were not enough, Plaatje further avers that "instead of the recognition for our voluntary services, the Union Government repays our loyalty by persecuting our widows and fatherless children with the cold-blooded

provisions of the Natives' Land Act" (246). But it is doubtful as Plaatje alleges that the natives rendered "voluntary service" to the Union Government given the socio-political constraints the natives were subjected to at the time. This portrayal which may only have been "politically correct" for Plaatje's purposes at the time is evidenced in Bessie Head's assertion that in *Native Life in South Africa* Sol Plaatje "unfolds the history of a mute and subdued black nation who had learned to call the white man 'baas' " (Head in Plaatje, 1982:x). So in view of the harassment and maltreat of the natives by the Union Government of South Africa, Plaatje is of the conviction that the Imperial Government (British) needs to "be induced to interfere" failing which "there will be horrible enactments in store for the blacks" (400). Hence Plaatje asks: "Is there nobody left on earth who is just enough to call on South Africa to put an end to this cowardly abuse of power?" (431). And again as a strategic device to further arouse empathy in the audience, Plaatje concludes his narrative of the socio-political circumstances of the natives by asking with great emotion: "shall we appeal to you in vain?" (404).

Now I want to focus the discussion on Plaatje's employment of the rational appeal, which will be predicated on the sway of reason. This mode of persuasion in Plaatje's writing strategy is best exemplified by the aversion:

> The Imperial Government by the obligations of its overlordship and plighted word to the natives, at the time of the federation, is in duty bound to free the unrepresented Natives from the shackles of these laws, or otherwise, declare its guardianship of the interests of the natives to have ceased, and counsel these weaker races to apply elsewhere for relief.

In Plaatje's view the Imperial Government is obligated to champion the cause of the natives and that this derives from the government's "overlordship and plighted word to the natives at the time of the federation". As of now the Imperial Government has abdicated its responsibility towards the natives. Plaatje presents this abdication of responsibility as though it has resulted from obliviousness, which then justifies his humble reminder in this regard. As a strategy to validate his argument Plaatje resolves to have recourse to a historical reminiscence of the federation, an event in which the Imperial Government pledged its dutifulness towards the "unrepresented natives". It would, arguably, be unthinkable of the Imperial Government not to consider vindicating itself of this charge of neglectfulness. Plaatje's ingenuity in using this mode of persuasion is also evident in his act of revoking past British achievements in terms of administering potentially volatile situations as alleged in the following proclamation:

> British pioneer officials, in Africa and elsewhere, have for generations been left in charge of mixed communities of white colonials and black natives and other immigrants. In spite of occasional human lapses, they have ruled these communities successfully throughout the past century, and maintained the high administrative reputation of the English in Africa, Asia and other parts of the globe.

Plaatje's acknowledgement of "the high administrative reputation of the English in Africa, Asia and other parts of the globe" attests to his faith in the British liberating potential and this provides the rationale for his appeal to the British to intervene on behalf of the natives. The call for the Imperial Government's intervention is grounded on the alleged failure of the colonial government to rule as is expected. Notably the competence of the colonial government to govern

the natives is strategically contrasted with the commendable administration of the English. By so doing Plaatje ingratiates himself with the British audience hoping that he would thereby earn for his native people the requisite political support. The Boers in Plaatjes view come short of matching the English in executing commendable governance, which is characteristically indiscriminate in its dealings with the subjects. It stands to reason therefore that on hearing such extolling expressions the English, as Plaatje would expect, should take pride in their successful administration as affirmed by one of their subjects. Correctly construed Plaatje's extolment of the English /British administration is a call on the British Imperial Government to observe its responsibility towards the natives. But as of now the Imperial Government as Plaatje insinuates has silently abdicated its responsibility and accountability to the natives. Plaatje is of the view that should the natives' plight not be ameliorated through the Imperial Government's intervention, then the British reputation or image faces the risk of being tarnished. In Plaatje's view the risk faced by the British can be averted even though this hinges on the positive responsiveness of the British Imperial Government towards the natives' cause. In an attempt to forestall complacency on the part of the British audience Plaatje asks: "What impression must be created in the minds of black converts who are subject to discriminations including prohibitions that were not in existence five years ago" (401). For Plaatje it is logical that "the black victims of the policy of repression, many of them converted to Christianity through your (*the English/British subjects –my addition*) efforts " should expect to find sanctuary in the British audience. Hence the question "Shall we appeal in

vain?" (404). This question I would argue imposes upon the audience the ideological substance of Plaatje's underlying argument through the psychological plausibility of the natives' case. And in the context of this question the audience is positioned so that the narrator's observations and insights come to form the dominant, natural way of interpreting the events represented in the text. This probing question is reminiscent of Althusser's concept of interpellation which is a process of recognition and identification whereby individuals are 'hailed' or addressed in ways which position them. Thus Plaatje's question is meant to render the audience susceptible to his appeal and thereby persuade them to identify with the natives' cause in their quest for humane treatment which is accorded other British subjects.

Under these colonial conditions of inhuman treatment, Plaatje is of the view that the church has to assume an interventionist role and act as an agent not only of the propagation of the gospel but also of social transformation. The church, as premised on the Christian faith, has to adopt an inclusive view of Christian identity, which does not lend itself to the ideology of racial exclusiveness. The ideology of racial exclusiveness is subversive of all Christian ethics. Hence his assertion that "one of the most astounding things in connection with the unjust treatment of the natives by the whites of South Africa is the profound silence of the Dutch Reformed Church" is a serious indictment on the Church. Plaatje views the Church's sanctioning of the natives' outrageous treatment by the colonial government not only as a gross libel on the Christian faith but also as

disfiguring the Christian character of the Boers. Thus the Dutch Reformed Church "owing to its silent consent to all these wrongs, will have a lot to answer for" (151). And in contrast to the Dutch Reformed Church Plaatje extols the English churches for having held the English colonists in check by imposing restraint upon them. So Plaatje's view is that the Dutch Reformed Church has ignored the essential Christian precepts. For Plaatje then the predikants must "tell their people that tyranny is tyrannical even though the natives are of a different race" (149). It stands to reason therefore that Plaatje envisions the coming-into-being of an inclusive community characterised by egalitarian human relations that affirm indiscriminately the humanity of its subjects.

In terms of its organisational structure, Plaatje's narrative is interspersed with documented speeches by prominent political leaders and editorial comments by leading journalists. Plaatje effects this interspersion of the documented speeches and editorial comments skilfully such that it coheres with the main thrust of the narrative. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to offer an exhaustive analysis of all the speeches and editorial comments gathered in the text. I will therefore confine myself to analysing briefly only one speech by Dr A Abdurahman, President of the Coloured Organisation, and one editorial comment by Dedney W. Drew, one of the leading South African journalists.

> Barely eighteen months have elapsed from the time when I made that prediction ere we find the Union Parliament pass the Natives' Land Act, which creates conditions, if not amounting to extermination, yet designed to enslave the natives of this country. That tyrannical mandate is scattering multitudes of natives from their homes. Mother earth is to them now only a step-dame. They may enter either into perpetual bondage on the farm, or spend 'a sunless life in the unwholesome mine'. Instead of kindly, humane treatment, we find barbarous cruelty and inhumanity. Instead of ameliorating

> our lot they endeavour to accentuate its bitterness. Instead of aiming at our upliftment they seek to degrade us. Instead of lending a helping hand to those struggling to improve themselves they thrust them back remorselessly and rigorously. Instead of making it possible for them to enjoy the blessings of an enlightened Christianity and a noble civilisation, they refuse them the right to live, unless they are content to slave for farmers or descend into the bowels of the earth to delve the gold which enslaves the world, and before whose charms all freedom flies. In short, the object of the white man's rule today is not to develop the facilities of the coloured races so that they may live a full life, but to keep them forever in a servile position. The spirit that underlies this view of governing coloured races spread into this colony with the Union, and is now universal throughout South Africa. The duty of Europeans is plain. Show the coloured people that the Government is for the good of all, not for the privileged class. Prove that the first aim is not to keep us as hewers of wood and drawers of water to men who have the power.

Dr A Abdurahman's parliamentary speech to the colonial authorities whose mandate enacted the Natives' Land Act was delivered at the time when the effects of the *Land Act* were at their worst. In his parliamentary speech, Dr Abdurahman focuses on the effects of the Act's measures on the natives. To this effect he avers that the Act "creates conditions, if not mounting to extermination, yet designed to enslave the natives of this country. That tyrannical mandate is scattering multitudes of natives from their homes...They may enter either into perpetual bondage on the farm, or spend a sunless life in the unwholesome mine" (159). In Abdurahman's view the colonial government is not only accountable to one racial grouping (specifically the Boers) but to all the inhabitants of the country irrespective of their racial origin and affiliation. It is in this respect therefore that Abdurahman regrets that "instead of kindly, humane treatment, we find barbarous cruelty and inhumanity" (161). And despite these failings of the colonial government to treat the coloured people impartially, Abdurahman is not as yet subjecting the colonial government to irrevocable damnation. The restraint Abdurahman exercises in this regard can perhaps be explained by the sense of optimism tacitly reflected in his daring call, "show that

the Government is for the good of all, not for the privileged class. Prove that the first aim is not to keep us as hewers of wood and drawers of water to men who have power" (161). Abdurahman's call upon the colonial government can best be construed as a challenge to the government to prove itself otherwise and thereby be vindicated of all charges of cruelty and inhumanity visited specifically on people of colour.

Dewdney Drew, one of the leading South African journalists, in his pamphlet on the native question made the following remarks:

> *Most Europeans adopt towards the natives the privilege of the aristocrat - not always with the manners of an aristocrat. Many whites expect as a matter of course obeisance and service from all natives, and think it perfectly natural to cuff and correct them when they make mistakes. Any resentment is apt to draw down severe punishment. In the law courts the natives do not get the same justice as the whites. A native convicted of an offence gets, in the first place, the punishment which a white man would get and something extra for the colour of his skin - often lashes. The bias of white juries in trying natives charged with offences against whites is such as to have brought the jury system into disrepute, and become a chief argument among lawyers for its entire abolition (169).*

It transpires from Drew's comments that differential power relations between whites and blacks have been "naturalized" thus disguising their ideological constructedness. As a matter of fact these differential power relations are a result of colonial subjugation with its attendant policy of repression whose object is to relegate the subjugated to subservient positions. Ironically even the law courts which are supposedly the custodians of justice are also charged with partiality.

It would perhaps be well to recapitulate that Plaatje's deliberative discourse sought to persuade the targeted audience to support the cause of the natives. In seeking to achieve the desired end Plaatje attacks the absurdity of denying the natives their political rights. Plaatje's text then can be seen as attempting to arouse hostility against the *Act* by discrediting the ethos of racial differentiation and the discriminating practices it sanctions.

Thus far I have concentrated on the rhetorical devices and narrative strategies. I will now proceed to a discussion of the socio-historical world which the text depicts. Plaatje's narrative is characterised by descriptions of numerous journeys he (and those who were accompanying him) undertook to the four provinces of South Africa. The object of these journeys was to survey and establish the severity of the Act's measures, which at the time were having serious repercussions on the natives. Plaatje's journeys assumed both a literal and a metaphorical sense.

For now I want to focus the discussion on the fact that *Native Life in South Africa* adopts the form of a journey through a landscape of deprivation and destitution. The journey in the literary imagination has always served as the avenue of a quest and as a means of arriving at some kind of revelation. In the orature of pre-literate societies and in Western literature from the classics to the contemporary periods the journey has become a major topos and trope for

exploring existential and social dilemmas of various kinds depending on the period and the context of exploration. Over time the journey has come to be a powerful metaphor in the colonial imagination and the imagination of the colonised. It is therefore historically and discursively important that Plaatje uses a literal journey cast in the form of a quest for freedom as the metaphorical framework on which to anchor his narrative. The literalness of the journeys is accounted for by the actual visits he makes to different parts of the country whereas the metaphorical sense is derived from the quest Plaatje and his constituency had as regards being accorded due political recognition and representation by the colonial authorities. In his journeys Plaatje had several encounters with victims of the Act (natives and coloureds) and some white farmers who were of course indirectly affected by the stipulations of the Act. From the point of view of white farmers who sympathise with the dispossessed natives "this law is blind and must be resisted" (106). But Plaatje attributes the farmers' identification with the masses of Africans to their (the farmers) realisation that with the enactment of the *Natives' Land Act* the mutual relations of landlord and tenant which they had had with the natives prior to the enactment of the *Act* had ceased. Given the economic benefit derived from the relation of landlord and tenant the farmers correctly construed the measures of the *Act* as imposing an undesirable curtailment on their economic advancement. Therefore the farmers' concerns in respect of the *Act* had more to do with their economic interest rather than with the welfare of the natives who also deserved humane treatment by the colonial authorities. Plaatje is certainly sceptical of the sincerity

of the farmers' empathy and feelings of disapproval as regards the unfortunate condition of the natives. To this effect, Plaatje asks: "Could he (referring to the white farmer) ever succeed in getting so much, with so little trouble, if poor whites tilled his lands instead of these natives?" (106). In his view, the white farmers understood the measures of the *Act* to be imposing economic restraint and thereby portending cessation of the economic viability which they had enjoyed thus far.

As Plaatje views it, the *Act* was indeed an impingement on the white farmers' economic pursuits. It comes as no surprise therefore that some of the landowners, in view of the economic loss, which the *Act* was exerting, resolved to connive with the natives and cheat the law. In circumventing the problem at hand they (landlord and tenant) represented themselves as master and servant (in accordance with the provisions of the Act) but continued their old relation of landlord and tenant. The connivance of the white landowners with the natives is an indictment of the colonial authorities who legislated an *Act* whose primary object was to prevent the natives from ever rising above the position of servants to the whites. Although Plaatje does not necessarily approve of the white landlords' conceptualisation of the relation that obtains between them and the native tenants, he is nonetheless convinced that the landlord-tenant relation leaves the natives much better-off when compared to their position under the Act. The Act basically decreed a slave system and a slave existence for the natives and this is nowhere better stated than in this picture of their lot painted by

Plaatje: "those who got tired of roaming about and losing nearly everything, had come in (into the farms) as serfs" (106).

In the midst of Plaatje's observation of the vicissitudes of the racially alienated, he does of course acknowledge the prevalence of acts of indiscriminate conferment of benevolence on and acceptance of the natives by some good-hearted white subjects. This reminiscential account depicts one such treatment, which is not premised on notions of racial exclusivity.

> After the harrowing experience of the previous week during which we were forced to see our fellow beings hounded out of their homes, and the homes broken up; their lifelong earnings fritted away by a law of the land, their only crime being the atrocious one of having the same colour of skin as our own, and finding ourselves suddenly landed on an oasis, the farm of a kind Dutchman and his wife, on whose property, and by whose leave, little black piccaninnies still played about in spite of the law, it can be easily understood with what comfort we sat down and did justice to the good things provided by Aunt Mietje (108).

By depicting the Boer-couple (Hannetjie and the Dutchman) as he does, Plaatje the writer-narrator insinuates that it is humanly possible for the different racial groupings to co-exist harmoniously. Plaatje's conception in this regard is informed, I would argue, by a liberal orientation, which serves to undercut the ideology of racial exclusiveness. The complimentary declaration "if my prayers are of any value, God will appoint in heaven a special place for her when she gets there...No, no, Hannetjie is not a Boervrou, she is an angel" attributed to aunt Mietje (a coloured by racial categorisation) highlight this vision of a racially integrated community characterised by reciprocal relations.

It is evident from the foregoing discussion that Plaatje is not "the good native who overlooks the difficulties of foreign domination" (Said, 1978:33). In *Native Life in South Africa,* Plaatje depicts the colonisers as employing measures geared towards the "preservation of power achieved by the discourse of discrimination" (Low, 1996:146). And this colonial condition, as enunciated in Plaatje's text, is a terrain of contestation characterised by "the racial politics of identification" (Low, 1996:191) by which the coloniser attempts to constitute himself as the Self. According to Bhabha "the question of identification is never the affirmation of a pre-given identity never a self-fulfilling prophesy – it is always the production of an "image" of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image" (Bhabha in Williams et al, 1993:117). In the context of this discussion on *Native Life in South Africa* the "the production of an image of identity" by the subject is evident in the white coloniser's act of constituting himself as the Self and ascribing racial Otherness to the black natives. Parry, as alleged by Chrisman suggests that the "Self is constituted through and against an Other" (Chrisman in Williams et al, 1993:499). In Plaatje's view, I would argue, the coloniser's act of ascribing racial difference and Otherness to the putative Other is a political act of self-legitimisation and self-affirmation on the part of the coloniser. Mishra et al' assertion that "there is certainly no essentialist meaning of race itself. It is what one does with the category and, more importantly, how it impinges on power relations in the colonial world" (Mishra et al, 1993:285) is certainly of great relevance in this discussion as it corroborates Plaatje's view of race as an arbitrary signification with no biological essence.

Plaatje's act of writing *Native Life in South Africa* is characteristically interventionist and this accounts for the purposiveness of the writing. The character of the text and its attendant intentional consciousness can be related to Said's assertion that "no production of knowledge in the human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim the author's involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances" (1978:11). Therefore the influence of socio-political circumstances in Plaatje's writing of *Native Life in South Africa* cannot be disclaimed. Given the inferior social positioning to which Plaatje (and those he represents in the text) was relegated, one can attribute to him the authority of "lived experience" on the margins. Hence, his text *Native Life in South Africa* speaks to the condition of the marginalised, dispossessed, dislocated, exploited, oppressed and alienated, that is, those who had to live under surveillance in compliance with the stipulations of the *Natives' Land Act*. And in attacking racist domination in the colonial arena it is as though Plaatje heeded and espoused Said's eye-opening assertion that:

> authority is irradiated, disseminated; it is instrumental, it is persuasive, it has status, it establishes canons of taste and value; it is virtually indistinguishable from certain ideas it dignifies as true, and from traditions, perceptions, and judgements it forms, transmits, and reproduces. Above all, authority can, indeed must, be analysed (1978:19-20)

Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa* in its uncovering of the material and ideological specificities that constitutes racist domination and its articulation of the natives' marginality has envisaged political effects. The political effects are

succinctly enunciated in Plaatje's optimistic assertion that "a consensus of British opinion will, in the Union interest, stay the hand of the South African Government, veto this iniquity and avert the nemesis that would surely follow its perpetration" (436). It is apparent therefore that Plaatje's text aims among other things to obviate political insurgence on the part of the natives. Thus, it is in the interest of both coloniser and the colonised "that we plead for some outside intervention to assist South Africa in recovering her lost senses" (436). South Africa's loss of senses can be explained by recourse to Cesaire's argument that "colonisation works to decivilize the coloniser, to brutalise him in the true sense of the word, to degrade him, awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence, race hatred and moral relativism" (Cesaire in Williams et al, 1993:173). Hence Plaatje, in view of his relatively privileged social position as a journalist, finds it obligatory on his part to assume an interventionist role by writing *Native Life in South Africa* for "without a renewed will to intervene in the unacceptable, we face being becalmed in an historically empty space in which our sole direction is found by gazing back, spellbound, at the epoch behind us, in a perpetual presence marked only as post" (McClintock in Williams et al, 1993:303).

Correctly construed Plaatje's narrative assumes a direct political role as opposed to being private, meditative and separated from important political functions (cf. Tambling, 1988:68). Thus, the narrative operates as an instrument in the historical reconstruction of the natives' reality. This is reminiscent of Bruner's

(1991) argument that "narratives are not 'unsponsored texts' to be taken as existing unintentionally as if cast by fate on a printed page" (10).

CHAPTER 6

In the foregoing chapters I have tried to affirm the presence and pervasiveness of the intentional consciousness / stance in texts (with specific reference to *Native Life in South Africa* and the *Book of Acts*) which purport to depict reality or real events and even more specifically in those texts which seek to **move** its target audience. I have argued that intentionality, in the context of this thesis, is not a pre-existing thought or idea which precedes the text but is something which inheres in the text and is produced in it. In its production in texts which seek to have a direct influence on the external world this intention, I have argued, 'flows' from the author through the text to its immediate envisioned audience.

In this thesis I have also argued that authorial intention in texts which purport to depict real events and intervene in a particular socio-historical process for mobilisational purposes leads to the production of a certain kind of text which deploys specific narrative strategies that consolidate its reading and rendering of events and re-enforce narrative closures. These intentionally motivated closures are embedded in narrative strategies, which are seen as both necessary, and imperative for the consolidation and legitimisation of the message and to foreclose other readings. Within the context of the pragmatic approach adopted in this thesis the author's mobilisational purpose is consciously linked with the effects it seeks to produce in its audience. In response to much of contemporary critical theory which has unfortunately tried to efface the author from the text and

/or tried to marginalise the role of the author in the text this thesis has sought to re-inscribe the agency of the author in his/her intentional stance with regard to the text and has shown that this agency is enacted within the text.

The differential treatment of natives and settlers and the highly politicised situation it occasioned was the genesis of Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa*. In my analysis of Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa* I have clearly demonstrated that Plaatje is neither an alienated writer in the modernist sense nor is he a writer for whom the text performs no other function than of symbolic signification. In *Native Life in South Africa* Plaatje adopts a committal stance with regard to his writing, a stance which as I have argued has been characteristic of most postcolonial, Third World and feminist writing. Awoonor's admonishment that "an African writer must be a person who has some kind of conception of the society in which he is living and the way he wants the society to go" (Awoonor in Achebe, 1975:16) appears to be a principle which he took to heart. Awoonor's sentiments are shared by other writers such as Achebe (1975) who believes that "most African writers write out of an African experience and of commitment to an African destiny. For them that destiny does not include a future European destiny for which the present is but an apprenticeship" (7) but "an African experience which dramatises the urgencies of identification" (1975). Notably in Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa* the precarious situation of the natives upon the enactment of the *Natives' Land Act* of 1913 necessitated the impulse to dramatise the urgencies of identification. In Plaatje's text art to use Achebe's

(1975) words is "intended to minister to a basic human need, to serve a down-to-earth necessity" (15). It is in this respect therefore that Plaatje needs to be seen as writing "within the traditional concept of an artist' role in society – using his art to control his environment" (Achebe, 1975:15). Thus Plaatje can be aligned with this tradition of writing in which the writer's positioning is an important parameter in the evaluation and interpretation of his work. As a committed writer, that is, a political interventionist who exhibits no break with traditional modes of representation in written texts Plaatje intended his text as a means to an end, an object for the realisation of specific purposes. The interventionist role of Plaatje's text is demonstrated by the fact that his narrative is constructed as a plea to the British public to act in defence of their ideals and on behalf of the dispossessed South African population.

To a very large extent Plaatje's text 'mirrors' the chronic circumstances of the natives best exemplified in the provisions of the *Act* and by their exclusion from the country's polity. The natives' exclusion is presented by Plaatje as a wilful human act aimed at denying the natives both their citizenship and reasonable access to the economy of the country thereby relegating them to the status of pariahs in the land of their birth. Du Preez's (1980) argument that "within the political entity there are identities which are more privileged than others" (1) confirms the thrust of Plaatje's text where whites are depicted as consolidating their identities by conferring privileges exclusively to those who belong to the in-group in terms of racial origin and affiliation. Given the marginality of his location

Plaatje writes with a political intention aimed at mobilising the consciousness of the British thereby hoping to win their sympathy and solidarity as regards the situation of the natives.

In reading *Native Life in South Africa* therefore I have focused upon this linkage between the author's mobilisational purpose; the narrative strategies employed in the text, its deconstruction of the dominant ideologies of subjugation, and the intended effects on the audience. Beginning with a reconstruction of the historical circumstances and the discursive context of the times I position Plaatje's text as an immediate response to a **real** act (the *Natives' Land Act*). In constructing this response the author also directs it at a particular audience and anticipates a response from it. These contextual parameters then provide the theoretical approach adopted.

In the *Book of Acts* I have argued that authorial intention and agency are unequivocally inscribed at the very beginning of the text and that these are also instantiated through the text by the use of various **strategies of authority and legitimisation.** I have also argued that Luke strategically begins by embarking on a historical reminiscence in respect of what God had promised. His narrative is conceived of as offering pastoral assurances of the continuity of the Christian faith which deriving its authenticity and legitimacy from authoritative tradition is refined and integrated into an interpretation of the times. Luke's act of adapting living traditions in his writing of the Book of Acts is characteristically purposive

and tendentious as these traditions form the basis of his own particular views on the subject being explicated in his text. Luke is of the view that Christians discovered a new identity in the context of the new covenant community. Consequentially espousal of the new covenant outrightly relegates the Mosaic covenant to a position of insignificance. Luke's point of view is that the Spirit rather than the letter of the law as enunciated in the Mosaic tradition is accorded the central role in expediting the emergence of the messianic community.

The underlying argument I have advanced and maintained in the foregoing discussion is that *Acts* is a tendentious text whose primary intention is theological. In *Acts* Luke presents us with a historical discourse that is predicated on his (Luke's) understanding of historical phenomena. It is evident in Luke's narration of the events that his "historical knowledge is constituted by specific interests, and these interests can be explicated as interpreted needs for...orientation" (Rusen, 1993:53).

In Luke's narrative one discerns a predominant theological or religious orientation which as I have argued is tacitly occasioned by his (Luke's) understanding and interpretation of the historical events as prompted by divine will. This understanding and interpretation are reflective of his positioning in relation to the events he narrates in the text. Thus for Luke history is "a vehicle for the delivery of a specific position for persuasive purposes" and that "history is never for itself, it is always for someone" (Jenkins, 1993:17). In order to effect the desired

outcomes Luke's text assumes a functional view of language as the medium through which meaning is realised; whereby language is not separate from content or context. Again Luke's mode of argumentation uses language as a vehicle in the transmission of the argument and is informed and legitimised by his strategic use of scriptural historical reminiscences in which historical events are interpreted to account for present occurrences.

I have also argued that Luke through the act and agency of both Peter and Paul the apostles makes a case for Christianity's **authority** and **legitimacy** in a situation fraught with hostility towards it. In justifying Christianity's authority and legitimacy Luke presents the new religion (Christianity) as having a relationship with Judaism from which it emerged. This relationship is both one of **continuity** and **rupture**. In making a case for the rupture Luke makes use of Peter (and Paul as well) as a mouthpiece to represent and propagate the view that Gentiles through faith in Jesus are within reach of God's promises as regards salvation.

I have argued that in *Acts* Luke writes not only from the salvational or redemptive perspective but also from the liberationist perspective which he (Luke) deploys strategically in the narrative to counteract the advancement of Jewish claims to continuity of an exclusive identity that sets them apart as God's elect people. From Luke's point of view Peter's association (in particular) with the Gentiles is typically symbolic of the envisioned identity characterised by inclusiveness and

affirmation to be accorded all members of the new messianic community irrespective of racial origin and affiliation.

Last but not least Luke presents the apostles (with specific reference to Peter and Paul) as mere functionaries acting on a mandatory commission with attendant effects or outcomes. Luke, writing from a Christian view of history could not help "introducing meaning where other views saw only chaos" (Schwantes, 1970:5). As argued by du Plessis "Luke's account depends, not only on the traditional material available to him and the facts he had himself gathered, but on his own aims in writing" (du Plessis in du Toit, edit, 1996:198). Luke's text is congenial to the needs that Theophilus (and possibly others as well) has; and these are expressed in the text as having to do with him knowing the certainties of the things he has been taught. It is in this regard therefore that Luke's text is not 'disinterested' but aimed at **moving his audience to achieve specific goals**.

Although the argument of this thesis does not necessarily concern itself with a comparative study of Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa* and Luke's *Book of Acts*, I will now briefly comment on what the two texts share in common. In both *Native Life in South Africa* and the *Book of Acts* ideas of a manifest destiny that is controlled and inspired by divine will permeate the narratives respectively. There also obtains in the two texts the idea that travails and tribulations accompany the movement towards this destiny in its historical progression. In

the *Book of Acts* the Jews conceive of themselves as a chosen people, unique and separate from the rest, that is, from the Gentiles and philistines. As a consequence they presume to be a closed nation with self-affirming ceremonies and rites of identity. The presumption of the Jews in this regard derives from their conviction that the Mosaic covenant is still intact. Similarly, the Afrikaners, upon embarking on the *Great Trek*, begin to construe this move as a precipitating event that would culminate in the founding of an Afrikaner state with its own ethos. For both the Jews and the Afrikaners identity is not seen as characterised by fluidity but is understood in terms of racial fixation. This conceptualisation of identity is then translated into practical utility by instilling a sense of uniqueness on the in-group. In *Native Life in South Africa* this binary trope of representation is racialized and this facilitates Plaatje's narrativization of the fate of a people sharing a common predicament. In the *Book of Acts* this binary trope of representation is best captured by Jewish symbolism characterised by purity of types. This is exemplified by Peter's vision in which the Lord says: "It is not for you to call profane what God counts clean". Peter immediately grasps that God has instructed him to break the taboo against associating with Gentiles. Clearly Plaatje's discourse is politically oriented whereas Luke's discourse is theologically oriented. Despite these different orientations both discourses foster a more open and egalitarian community. In all the argument of this thesis has been that in texts such as these authorial intention presents us with a pragmatic tool of interpretation which helps the critic to plot the course of the movement of meaning from author to audience through the utterance of the text.

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