

Translation, self-translation and apartheid-imposed conflict

Alet Kruger

Department of Linguistics (Translation Studies) University of South Africa

krugea@unisa.ac.za

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Abstract

Translated texts loom large in South African history and it is well known that Afrikaans and the nine African languages became established when the Bible and other significant literary texts were translated. Translation played a major role alongside original literature in each of the South African languages in aiding the construction of cultural and literary identities. Because of apartheid, Afrikaans carried a political burden and literary authors in this language were considered the protectors of Afrikaner cultural and national identity. The conflict caused by the banning of the first Afrikaans novel under the Publications and Entertainment Act in 1974 resulted in translation, and the practice of self-translation in particular, to be used as a tool to resist the ideology of apartheid. While the main focus of the paper is on the role played by translation and self-translation in Afrikaans literature during the apartheid era, an overview of already charted territory is inevitable and therefore the effects of apartheid-imposed conflict on other authors in the South African literary system and the role played by translation in these literatures are also taken into consideration. The paper provides a brief introduction to relevant aspects of South African history and apartheid before discussing different aspects of the literary misfortunes of three different groups of writers and reporting particularly on some individual cases. It ends with a final section on the current situation.

Key words:

translation; self-translation; literary translation; translation and conflict; South African politics; apartheid

1. Introduction

Although the imposition of the ideology of apartheid on the thoughts, actions and creations of the people of South Africa caused conflict, this ideology alone is not to blame. The diversity that defines the lives and literary products of South Africans in any period, may also be a source of conflict. Arguably, cultural diversity is not specific to South Africa, but the South African case is exceptional because even today it remains “a scene of largely unresolved difference” (De Kock 2004:1). According to De Kock (2004:1), arguments about the origins of a so-called South African literature still “shuttle between different languages, different nationalisms and different notions of culture, history, and belonging in mutually excluding series and genealogies”. Chapman (1996:xvii) believes that the field’s greatest unity lies in its history of division and that it is those moments of conflict and division that give the national literary system its special character. He illustrates this point by referring to the frontier clashes between colonisers and Xhosa peoples in 19th century Eastern Cape: “[t]he Xhosa bard and the settler journalist, though divided by language, literacy, race and probably sentiment, were both part of the same story – a story which remains open, of course, to different interpretations”. In a later period, for those writers, black and white, who were politically oppressed under apartheid, the South African literary scene remained “a site of struggle” (De

Kock 2004:5) and they used their literary products as weapons in the struggle to voice their resistance. Ebersohn (quoted in Daymond 1984:xiii) states:

My country is a battlefield, a place of conflict where the rewards differ depending on the group to which you belong ... It is in this culture ... that our literature seeks to grow. It would seem to be barren, infertile soil. I believe that the opposite is true. Times of conflict, wars, revolutions ... and decay, all may be tragedies to the normal and sane amongst us, but to the literary artist they are mother's milk.

Translated texts loom large in South African history and it is well known that Afrikaans and the nine African languages became established when the Bible and other significant literary texts were translated. Translation played a major role alongside original literature in each of the South African languages in aiding the construction of cultural and literary identities. Because of apartheid, Afrikaans carried a political burden and literary authors in this language were considered the protectors of Afrikaner cultural and national identity. The conflict caused by the banning of the first Afrikaans novel under the Publications and Entertainment Act in 1974 resulted in translation, and the practice of self-translation in particular, to be used as a tool to resist the ideology of apartheid. While the main focus of this paper is on the role played by translation and self-translation by some prominent Afrikaans authors, this phenomenon cannot be studied in isolation. The effects of apartheid-imposed conflict on other authors in the South African literary system and the role played by translation in these literatures need to be taken into consideration as well. The main body of the paper is structured into three sections based on writers' language preferences. Three groups of writers are discussed: whites who originally wrote in Afrikaans, whites who originally wrote in English and black writers who originally wrote in English. Each of these groups had a different relationship with the apartheid government as power structure and they also differed in how they dealt with government in terms of their cultural and political position in society. The three sections are unevenly weighted as translation played a far bigger role in the work of whites who wrote in Afrikaans than in the work of the other two groups. In order to provide the necessary background for the paper, a brief historical sketch and an explanation of relevant aspects of the ideology of apartheid, are provided below.

2. Afrikaner nationalism

The Afrikaans word *apartheid* literally means "apartness". The word was applied to the official policy of segregating different groups within South Africa on racial grounds and dictating where people could live, study, work, where and with whom they could socialise and whom they could marry. As is well known, this policy, forced upon South African citizens by the ruling National Party from 1948 to 1994, was a gross violation of human rights, not only of black people but of all races.

The election victory of the National Party in 1948 marked the official beginning of apartheid, but the seeds were sown much earlier. The foundations of apartheid emanated from policies of segregation between whites and blacks that had begun with Dutch colonisation in the mid-1600s, but separation between whites and blacks developed into the full-blown policy of apartheid during the 20th century. After the Union of South Africa was formed in 1910 from the two British colonies, the Cape and Natal, and the two former Boer Republics, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, the subjugation of black people was incrementally increased with a plethora of laws that curtailed the areas in which they might live, restricted their access to education, and relegated them to certain types of employment. The full-blown social engineering policies of apartheid consolidated after 1948 with the coming to power of

the National Party under Prime Minister D.F. Malan and this policy was finally only overthrown in 1994. Feeding into the history of 20th-century South Africa is the rise of two distinct nationalisms. The first was Afrikaner nationalism, a policy advocated by the National Party (founded 1914) and dedicated to improving the lot of Dutch- and Afrikaans-speaking whites who believed that they had been disadvantaged within the system of British rule. One of the tenets of Afrikaner nationalism was the adoption of Afrikaans as an official language. The second was African nationalism, a movement that began in 1912 with the establishment of the South African Native National Congress (later the African National Congress), a moderate organisation created to contest the omission of blacks from the Union constitution of 1910. After the Second World War the demands of the African National Congress and other allied organisations for racial equality and majority rule increased in urgency and violence until, with the help of the international community and with changes in attitudes within the sub-continent, South Africa became a full democracy in 1994 under President Nelson Mandela (cf. Davenport & Saunders 2000:267-291).

Afrikaner nationalism included the elevation of Afrikaans into a nationalist language. In 1875 a movement began to enhance the status of Afrikaans from *Hotnotstaal* (the language of the Hottentots) to *witmenstaal* (the language of whites) so that it might gain equality with Dutch and be useful in opposing British imperialism and developing an ethnic and national identity for (white) Afrikaners (Beukes 1993:121). With a change of government in 1924 and a growing South African national sentiment, Afrikaans replaced Dutch in 1925 as the second official language together with English. From then onwards the State Language Bureau actively recruited and involved so-called language engineers, i.e. translators, lexicographers, terminographers, ministers of religion, teachers, writers, journalists and publishers in a programme to promote and develop Afrikaans and to mobilise the Afrikaner politically (Beukes 1993:173-174). A leading Afrikaans linguist, Posthumus (quoted in Beukes 1993:186) hailed the 20th century as “the era of translation in Afrikaans”. Following the first full Afrikaans translation of the Bible 1933, the formal effort of developing and establishing Afrikaans as a literary and technical language continued until 1961, when the Republic of South Africa was established and Afrikaans and English were declared the two official languages. Nor did it end there: over the next 40 years or so, every official sign, name plate and document that was written in English was translated into Afrikaans and vice versa. In this way, the translation profession became firmly entrenched as a gatekeeper of Afrikaner nationalism and, in turn, of the ideology of apartheid, by controlling access to information in the two official languages.

3. Apartheid in South Africa: the ideology

It is difficult to summarise a complex history of apartheid succinctly. Apartheid became the central propaganda slogan of the National Party during the 1940s as it prepared to contest post-war elections (Davenport & Saunders 2000:373). As mentioned above, it was an elaboration of earlier segregationist ideas for a “vertical” separation of races and aimed to entrench white supremacy. Apartheid ideology rejected South African Indians as an *uitheemse* [alien] element and proposed to separate the coloured (mixed-race) people from the whites with respect to transport, education, amenities, residence and politics. As far as black Africans were concerned, it aimed to convert the reserves into self-governing territories under traditional leadership and to use this system to restrict the movement of blacks into urban areas except as contract workers. According to Davenport and Saunders (2000:374),

the strength of the Nationalist manifesto ... lay in its simplicity, and in its appeal to the voters' desire for security in a world which seemed to be moving too fast in a liberal direction and turning its wrath against South Africa as it did so.

The philosophical basis for apartheid was given as the protection of Christian values and morals in order to preserve and strengthen the Afrikaner *volksgees* [national spirit]. Apartheid ideology aimed to protect Afrikaner interests, Christian morals and the Afrikaner state against the "barbarians". It was expected from Afrikaans authors to emphasize the Christian religion of the Afrikaner and to portray his resistance to his own weaknesses. Any author who did otherwise "offered a false image of the Afrikaner people" (De Lange 1997:16). In this sense, apartheid soon came to mean the total separation of blacks and whites in every sphere of South African life. The two main groups were white and non-white. White people comprised English and Afrikaans language groups. The non-white group was divided into three different racial groups, namely coloured (mixed-race people), Indian and black. Black South Africans are not culturally or linguistically homogeneous and apartheid divided them into nine different ethnic groups or "nations". This "division" conveniently made the white race the largest group in the country.¹

While Afrikaners have always been a minority group Afrikaans writers were in a powerful position. Before 1948, the fear of rejection, of being cast out of the circle of trust and driven into the wilderness was very strong. The binding factor uniting the Afrikaner nation was support for "our people" [*ons volk*]. It was therefore convenient for Afrikaner intellectuals to subscribe to the ideology of apartheid and to form a mental *laager* (a barricade or enclave) as protection against outside forces, just as their ancestors, the Voortrekker pioneers, had done when they used their ox wagons to form a physical barricade against attacks by Zulu impis. According to Brink (1983:26), "the vehemence of the cultural collision and the extent of its reverberations cannot be fully understood from the outside unless the real horror at the thought of anyone leaving the *laager* is appreciated". However, despite the force of this line of thinking and the serious implications of rejection by one's "own people", Afrikaans-speaking intellectuals became increasingly disillusioned with apartheid after 1948 and turned to more dissident writing.

What caused the rift in the seemingly unified Afrikaner group? And why did the banning of the first Afrikaans novel caused such an outcry?

4. Disillusionment with apartheid ideology: Afrikaans "ink terrorists" writing in a "state of siege"

In the course of time many Afrikaans-speaking writers and academics joined their colleagues in the liberation struggle, inside and outside South Africa. Inside the country was a group who came to be called the *Sestigers* [authors from the sixties], given the name because they spearheaded the renewal movement in Afrikaans literature in the 1960s. These writers began the revolt against "hackneyed themes and outworn structures in Afrikaans fiction", and started to re-examine notions they had previously taken for granted, such as one's identity and links with history and culture (Brink 1983:26). Without exception, authors such as Jan Rabie, Etienne Leroux, Elsa Joubert, Karel Schoeman, Chris Barnard and, in particular, André Brink, portrayed the main character in their novels as an "outsider", a person torn between feelings

¹ According to the mid-2006 estimates from Statistics South Africa, the population exceeds 47 million people. The largest group, Africans, comprise nearly 80 per cent of the population, whites 9.2 per cent and Indian/Asian 1.2 percent (2006, <http://www.southafrica.info>).

of belonging to but being rejected by the rest of the group. These authors were branded “ink terrorists” by prominent Afrikaans academic, A.P. Grové (quoted in Roos 1998:64), and they were also the first to experience the bite of censorship.

Censorship, whether exercised centrally by organs of government or more locally by editors and publishers “protecting” their readers against corruption, is “one of the most extreme forms of external constraint to which all writing in all cultures has been subject through the ages” (Holman & Boase-Beier 1999:10). The Publications and Entertainment Act (No 26) came into being in 1963, with the ostensible aims of protecting South Africans against harmful and offensive material published outside the country, of strengthening “white” Christian morals and values, and of repressing any potentially subversive material published inside the country. This law was used to prevent thousands of books coming into the country (including works by some of the world’s greatest writers and philosophers), to ban overseas productions such as *Hair*, films such as *Bonnie and Clyde* and works by leading African and coloured (mixed-race) authors. However, this Act soon became a political instrument as it was used to ban undesirable organisations such as the African National Congress (the present ruling party) and the South African Communist Party, and also to ban persons who were office-bearers, members or supporters of an organization which was deemed undesirable.

Despite its harsh character, for the purposes of my argument, it is significant to note that during the first ten years of the life of the Publications and Entertainment Act not a single literary work in Afrikaans was banned. De Lange (1997:35) cites several reasons for Afrikaans literature being seemingly protected and why there was reluctance to ban one of their own and thus jeopardise unity in the *laager*. In the first instance, pressure to conform created a strong measure of pre-publication interference and control by the publishers, all of whom had ties with the government. There is evidence that publishing houses simply refused to publish manuscripts that might have been regarded as controversial, and if an author could find no other outlet, the manuscript disappeared. Initially, the work of the *Sestigers*, although received with mixed feelings, was viewed as not sufficiently politically and culturally threatening to justify a ban.

Then, in 1974 the first Afrikaans work produced by one of the *Sestigers* was banned. This banning was a dramatic moment indeed, and the message was clear that no longer would writings by anyone in the Afrikaner cultural community be exempt from censorship. A leading Afrikaans poet and academic, D.J. Opperman, even lamented at the time that “it is a sad day when your government declares war on its own writers” (quoted in De Lange 1997:37). The fact that the government was regarded as having its “own writers” was an important idea because, in fact, government policy – apartheid – provided the reason for many Afrikaans authors becoming revolutionary, engaging in political matters and even accepting responsibility for exposing attacks on individual human dignity, all of which characterised apartheid.

In general, the kind of *versetliteratuur* [protest literature] or *betrokke literatuur* [*Littérature engagée*] which appeared in Afrikaans fiction during this time is characterised by its preoccupation with violence and cruelty, conflict between black and white, love and sex across the colour line and resistance against the Establishment. It revealed the South African government’s suppression of any opposition, depicted situations of exile and treason, gave graphic descriptions of scenes of sabotage, detention, torture and death, and had overt links to documentary data and autobiographical detail. Many of the situations, plots and character actions in such novels were directly against the laws of the time that related to treason and that prohibited inter-racial sex and people of the same race from living in the same area (cf.

Roos 1998:77-82). One novel worth mentioning here is Elsa Joubert's heartrending story of the black woman, Poppie, in *The Long Walk of Poppie Nongena* (1980), originally published in Afrikaans in 1978. It caused a furore in Afrikaner circles at the height of the apartheid era for depicting the raw emotions experienced by a black woman and for exposing some of the effects that the apartheid regime and its cruel laws had on non-white citizens in the country.

It was at this time that translation, in particular the practice of self-translation, emerged as a way of resisting apartheid and of describing the escalating conflict it was generating in South Africa. By presenting their work also in English, Afrikaans authors tried to escape censorship although sometimes both works in both languages got banned. To an extent it can be regarded as a desperate attempt to ensure personal literary survival but whatever the reason, the messages about the realities of apartheid were placed in the international domain through the mediating use of English.

In the next section, two Afrikaans authors, André Brink and Breyten Breytenbach, are discussed to show how they used (self) translation as a tool to resist the ideology of apartheid and to cope with some of the restrictions that were imposed upon them.

4.1 André Brink: “putting Afrikaans on the international literary map”

It has been said that André Brink was “the one person who put Afrikaans literature on the international literary map” and this he mainly accomplished by means of self-translation (Kruger 2000:137). But he did not start the self-translation trend in South Africa. As early as the 1930s, the tradition of utilising one's bilingual skills in this manner had already been followed by Afrikaans playwright, poet and author Uys Krige.

In 1974, Brink became renowned in some quarters, vilified in others, for being the first person to have an Afrikaans book banned, namely *Kennis van die Aand* [Knowledge of the night] (1973). According to De Lange (1997:46), every possible taboo in this politically complex country was violated in this book: the Immorality Act, petty apartheid, revolutionary violence, black power, censorship, detention, murder and torture. In the novel, the main character narrates the story of his life while awaiting execution for the murder of his lover. The fact that the narrator is a man of mixed-race origin while his lover is white made this the first political novel in Afrikaans to address love across the colour line at the height of the apartheid era. However, the fact that the main character was portrayed as a gifted actor who had won international acclaim in Europe made it extremely controversial as up to that time people of mixed-race origin and blacks had typically been portrayed in Afrikaans literature as uneducated farm workers.

Brink's answer to the ban was in the form of resistance – to apartheid on the one hand, and on the other, to promote his own ideas. He summarily translated his own novel into English as *Looking on Darkness* (1974) and had it published in London. Although the English translation was also banned in 1974 in South Africa, the publicity from the banning brought him an instant international following (De Lange 1997:48). Brink paid a high price for leaving the *laager*, however: the more books he sold overseas, the less he was accepted at home. He became Afrikaans's best known writer in the world, yet was despised, reviled and snubbed by Afrikaans academia. The more he received prizes and acclaim abroad (he has twice been nominated for the prestigious Booker Prize – in 1976 and in 1978, and has been on the shortlist for the Nobel Prize for Literature several times since 1979), the harsher the reviews of his work became here at home (Krog 2005). And the hostility seems to prevail in some circles even today, for example, a journalist commented on this old novel, *Kennis van die*

Aand, as follows: "As dit letterkunde is, dan is 'n bordeel 'n Sondagskool." [If this is literature, then a brothel is a Sunday School] (Van Rensburg 2004).

Between 1962 and 2000, Brink wrote more than twenty novels in Afrikaans, some academic books, various dramas and travel books. He has also gained fame for his excellent Afrikaans translations of the classics – among others, Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*, several Shakespeare plays and Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. What is remarkable is that Brink has been responsible for producing an Afrikaans and an English text of each of his novels. Various sources bear witness to the fact that his novels have been translated from the English text into some 31 other languages. Apart from the major European languages, his books have also been translated into languages such as Bulgarian, Estonian, Korean, Lithuanian and Vietnamese (Toerien 1993; Geldenhuys 2005:54; Krog 2005). His message about apartheid-imposed injustices and related themes that arose from South African politics in particular reached almost every corner of the world.

According to Brink (1983:113), "intrinsic motives" such as the desire to "say" the novel in a new language as well as "extraneous ones" such as refusing to be silenced because of censorship and trying to retain his well-established readership, were responsible for his starting the self-translation process that has become his trademark. Of course, it is a widely held view among translation scholars that implicit in the act of self-translation is the fact that the author-translator can take liberties that would not be permitted to an outsider. This makes establishing an appropriate source text impossible and will render any speculation by the researcher as to the most "befitting" source text amounting to nothing (Tourey 1995:75, Kruger & Wallmach 1997). Tourey (1995:75) quotes Beaujour (1989:112) as follows:

Because self-translation ... makes a text retrospectively incomplete, both versions become avatars of a hypothetical total text in which the versions in both languages would rejoin one another and be reconciled.

Brink admits to changing sections of the original Afrikaans work in the English text when he translated *Kennis van die Aand* after its banning. For example, he ingeniously re-created an "eye-dialect" (Leech & Short 1983:168) in the English translation by means of a few common linguistic markers so as to create the illusion of Capey English (the English version of "Kaaps", the dialect spoken by the people of mixed-race origin in Cape Town). Brink (1983:115) states:

There are differences between [the original and its translation], and to my mind there is nothing to be done about that: the novel exists in two languages, but each language imposed its own demands on the final shape of the work.

He has further admitted that since that time, he has sometimes begun writing in one language, then continued in the other, then translated the section written in the first language before continuing again in the other. As Geldenhuys (2005:56) expresses it, this sometimes becomes more a process of "disentangling" one language from the other, rather than an actual translation. Brink has also pointed out that many bilingual authors who write and publish in two languages seem to engage in this process and he believes it profitable because it allows him to re-think, "re-feel", contextualise and re-write the text in his mind in the other language (Brink 1983:100, 103, 113). The result is that Brink would, at times, have two distinct manuscripts in both Afrikaans and English (rather than an original plus a translation) to present to his publisher within a relatively short time. But despite his facility in English, Brink (1983:115) has confessed that he can never be an English writer:

I can never use English like Nadine Gordimer or ... Alan Paton. Not only because they have lived in the language from birth, but because their use of it embodies a peculiar form of being, of being-in-Africa, being-in-English. The English I use must bear the weight of my Afrikaans, of my Afrikaansness, because only in that way can I be true to my experience of the world as it takes shape, and assumes or produces meaning, in the act of verbalization.

Because most of Brink's books reveal similar themes, it certainly seems as though he wanted to create an alternative world through his writing, a world where inter-racial love, for example, would not be artificially regulated by laws. In my opinion, Brink deliberately used his creative writing, and consequently, the process of self-translation, as a propaganda tool in the struggle against apartheid, and in this way has undoubtedly raised international awareness of the ongoing conflict that other Afrikaans writers also experienced. "Where others talked rebellion, he wrote it", says Antjie Krog (2005). It is ironic that once he moved away thematically from producing struggle or protest literature, he was given official recognition by the group that he originally intended his writing for – Afrikaans speakers – for he won the coveted Hertzog Prize for Afrikaans literature for his drama, *Die Jogger* [The jogger] in 1997 and in 2000 for a novel *Donkermaan* which he translated into English as *The Rights of Desire*.

The second author to be discussed in more detail, is Breyten Breytenbach who also adopted a public stance against apartheid – to his own detriment.

4.2 Breyten Breytenbach: strategies for dealing with “oppressive controls”

Another Afrikaans writer who took a strong anti-apartheid position was poet, author and painter Breyten Breytenbach. His personal circumstances contributed greatly to his ideology, because, while in France, he married a French woman of Vietnamese origin – a person whom, in South Africa, would have been regarded as non-white. This meant he could not return to South Africa as his marriage was a violation of the Mixed Marriages Act (No 55 of 1949). Despite this and despite the fact that he was involved in supporting a white wing of the ANC in the fight against apartheid, he did indeed return to South Africa in 1975 after 13 years of self-imposed exile in France. He was summarily arrested for treason and terrorism, convicted of the offence and jailed for nine years, two years of which were spent in solitary confinement next to the condemned cell.

There are interesting stories about how two of his three autobiographical works were published and the strategies employed to avoid censorship. According to Meintjes (2000:156), these strategies represent forms of rewriting that authors in South Africa used to deal with the constraints institutional and social structures imposed on publishing and translation: “forms of rewriting the text in response to institutional pressures ... are as important in the translation process as translation strategies themselves”.

The first book, *'n Seisoen in die Paradys* [A season in paradise] (1976) was written in Afrikaans under the pseudonym of B.B. Lazarus. Throughout his career Breytenbach used a variety of pseudonyms to hide his identity from both his readership and the Afrikaner Establishment. The question thus arises: who is the real Breyten, the famous and renowned Afrikaans poet, the man who calls himself an “albino” terrorist (Viljoen 1998:274)? By referring to himself as a ‘white’ terrorist he was at that stage deliberately distancing himself from both black and white South Africans – most white South Africans automatically thought of terrorists as being black, just as they equated ‘red’ with communists. The novel was

produced and published in South Africa while Breytenbach was in jail. Three of Breytenbach's friends (Ernst Lindenbergh, Ampie Coetzee and John Miles) were involved in editing the text to get it past the censors. They cut all sections in the Afrikaans original that referred to issues of politics and public morality (cf. Meintjes 2000). According to Antjie Krog (2005),

John Miles remembers that many were the days when they got lists of what would really destroy [a] book. He remembered a list of "7 foks" [fucks], "8 fokkens" [fuckings], "11 Jissises" [Jesuses] and "2 Gods". And how, after much argument, they agreed to cut out a few foks in a Breytenbach novel so as to allow Breyten's wonderfully inventive word for being naked, *naaiklere* [fuck clothes], to stay.

Manipulating the text in this manner inevitably affected its literary quality but this was how the Afrikaans text was printed in the end (Meintjes 2000:163). The uncensored text, however, was translated into English by Rike Vaughan and published in 1980 as *A Season in Paradise*; it was then translated into Dutch, French and German and published overseas.

Breytenbach's second book, *True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist*, was written in English during the years he spent in detention. According to Meintjes (2000:163), the story surrounding its publication in 1984 borders on the ludicrous. The same three friends (actually, Afrikaans academics) who had published '*n Seisoen in die Paradys* earlier, founded a small anti-establishment publishing house, Taurus. They agreed that they were prepared "to run the risk of criminal charges and imprisonment, but not of libel suits". So they decided "to leave the text intact ... but to remove anything which could lay them open to claims for damages" (Meintjes 2000:164). According to the editors they had "great fun using white Tippex to delete names and references ... They made sure to leave blank spaces in the text to show where such deletions had been made!" As a result, the Taurus text published in South Africa resembles a television script which has had all swearwords and blasphemous remarks substituted with bleeps – this is common practice in South Africa, and has an essentially humorous effect rather than doing anything to safeguard the moral values of the country's citizens (Meintjes 2000:164, 174). There was, of course, no necessity for these deletions in the English text published in the same year, and used for translations into Danish, Dutch, French, German and Portuguese.

Meintjes (2000:166) regards the different strategies adopted in the editing and publishing of the two texts as ways of dealing with the anti-establishment position of the writer:

The first strategy is one of invisible omission and therefore not accessible or known to the reader ... The second strategy is one of visible and deliberate omission ... which subverts authority rather than demonstrates any respect for it.

Both processes clearly illustrate the sometimes extreme measures that South Africans took during the years of apartheid to cope with the restrictions that were imposed upon them.

4.3 Border wars and "border literature"

By the time talks started with the African National Congress on the release of Nelson Mandela, South Africa had been involved in armed conflict with neighbouring states for nearly 20 years. It was inevitable that these external battles, combined with internal campaigns to curb unrest and maintain law and order in the non-white townships, would spill over in some form or other in the South African literary context.

The experiences of the young white men who were conscripted to serve in the armed forces during the 1980s bore fruit in the form of a unique genre of short stories and novellas in Afrikaans – although the writers came from both English and Afrikaans backgrounds, the latter was the dominant medium. The reason for this phenomenon has not yet been investigated. This genre is aptly termed *grensliteratuur* [border literature] and in general demonstrates the disillusionment felt by these young men as regards the ideology of apartheid and the senseless and sickening effects of war on themselves as soldiers and the (mostly black) enemy. In general, the first person narrative is delivered in an objective, casual and nonchalant tone resulting in an almost documentary style which is in direct contrast with the traditional image of the heroic soldier. In these stories a subtle shift of emphasis is discernible – instead of reporting *on* the situation between black and white that caused the conflict, the soldiers took pains to report *it* (the event itself) in great and gruesome detail (Roos 1998:88). The general public, and Afrikaans readers in particular, responded with shock and awe, in particular because they were given little information about the details of the border wars in the media. All news about defence force issues was strictly controlled by the National Party government.

Etienne van Heerden's short stories in the volume *My Kubaan* [My Cuban] (1983) were translated by Catherine Knox as *Mad Dog and Other Stories* (1990). The Dutch translation of this volume appeared in 1988. His best known work, *Toorberg*, translated as *Ancestral Voices* by Malcolm Hacksley in 1989, is thematically and intertextually linked to his own previous work, to work by other authors of this genre and to apartheid literature in general as regards problematic relationships between black and white, racism, inter-racial sex, and feelings of guilt (Erasmus 1999:686). This novel was subsequently translated into ten languages. It won major literary awards in South Africa, and established Van Heerden as the leading novelist of his generation. Van Heerden (2007) states:

My generation of writers saw ourselves as alternative historians, urged by circumstances to lay bare the true currents of power, and the disparities between the possessors and the dispossessed. We wrote against the canonized Apartheid history.

In my opinion, John Miles's most acclaimed novel *Kroniek uit die Doofpot: Polisieroman* (1991), translated into English by Eithne Doherty as *Deafening Silence: Police novel* (1996) and made into a mini-series for television, belongs thematically to this genre as well. It is based on a black policeman's search for justice after an attack on him by a white policeman and is a prime example of "faction" (fiction based on facts). Miles received three of the most prestigious Afrikaans literary awards for this novel. It has also been translated into French and Dutch.

The two authors discussed in the next section have the same characteristics: they both write about apartheid, they are both white and they both write in English.

5. White authors writing in English, censorship and translation

As mentioned above, the entire censorship machine was in the hands of Afrikaners in government who regarded white South African English authors as "outspoken", "left" and "liberal". Their works were thus more likely to be banned. According to Van Rensburg (2004), the perception was that white South African English authors interpreted South African history as the British missionaries did in the previous century:

A country where Blacks are in need of salvation, where Afrikaners are the interlopers, the illegitimate occupiers and exploiters, and where loyalty to the Crown demanded that South Africa's riches be in English hands, and where their personal intervention would uplift and save Africans from Afrikaner oppression.

To a certain extent, English authors in South Africa during the apartheid era had an easier time of it than their Afrikaans compatriots as they could publish their works in England through publishers such as Faber and Faber, Penguin and Random House. Their works were made directly available to the outside world and could be translated from English into many other languages despite being banned in South Africa. This is exactly what happened in Nadine Gordimer's case. Some of her most memorable works, such as *Burger's Daughter*, banned because it depicts the life of jailed activist Bram Fischer and *July's People*, were written in the 1980s. Her unwavering commitment to critical realism and ending apartheid in South Africa was confirmed when she became the first South African to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1991.

By contrast, J.M. Coetzee, the second South African to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature (in 2003), has never had a novel banned. He may have managed to avoid the censors by making use of dislocation of time and place as a conscious authorial technique (De Lange 1997). His earlier novels in particular have only an indirect relation to the South African situation. *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), however, with its themes of institutional violence and torture lends itself to a political reading and seems closer to contemporary South Africa. His novels have been translated into many languages.

6. African language authors, apartheid and translation

While it is true that the two official languages (English and Afrikaans) received almost more funding than all the other languages put together, African languages also experienced a government-sponsored surge of translation activity to promote separate development during the apartheid years. However, blacks were the prime target of oppression, and they suffered the most.

During apartheid, translation played an important role in each of the new homelands and their administrations. In the same way that efforts were made to develop pure Afrikaans and to protect it from the influence of English and Anglicisms, the African languages were promoted as separate entities and linguistic purism was enforced by the different language boards that were established to develop each language. The introduction of new orthographies in the 1930s through until the 1960s influenced the natural development of African languages in South Africa. Prominent African authors such as Sol Plaatje protested that "the (white) professors ... don't know my language" (quoted in Maake 2000:144), and the fact remained that written material was of limited intelligibility for a large section of the population for quite some time.

The Bantu Education Act (No 47 of 1953) enforced the National Party's policy of mother tongue education in African schools. The huge demand for literary set works could not be met by original fiction so publishers commissioned the translation of literary works from European languages (Gérard 1993; Ntuli & Swanepoel 1993). In the 1950s and 1960s this demand for books led to a "Shakespearean phase" in some of the African languages – a period in which the translation of a play by Shakespeare into one of the African languages sparked creative writing in the dramatic genre in that particular language (Ntuli & Swanepoel 1993; Kruger 1996).

In addition, works such as H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* and *Nada the Lily*, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, Anthony Hope's *The Prisoner of Zenda* and Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* were translated into African languages. Most of these books were published by South African publishers (Ntuli & Swanepoel 1993). According to Maake (2000:139), apart from *Cry the Beloved Country*, much can be said about the "ideological inspiration" of selecting these "innocent" adventure works "with regard to their depiction of obsequious Africans and the 'Uncle Tom' motif in these works, amongst other things".

Maake (2000:139) also remarked in this context that "it is plausible to suggest that the interest in translation was encouraged by white Africanists who were working with language policy-makers". From his study of the minutes of meetings that were drawn up on making policies on African languages in general and literature in particular, it was clear that "the interests of these white Africanists were well represented, in the absence of African language speakers". Committees were appointed to choose suitable texts for translation into the African languages. Such committees were also to act in an advisory capacity to further the publication of the translations that were commissioned. "What the criteria for suitability [were] raises a plethora of ideological questions. Suffice it to say that literary merit could not have been one of the standards used. Another point worth mentioning ... is that there was a corpus of good literary works already available, but the magnates of Bantu Education wanted to create a new literature" (Maake 2000:139, 140). The Zulu author, C.L.S. Nyembezi (quoted in Evans & Seeber 2000:144), who translated Paton's *Cry the Beloved Country*, remarked:

Because of the small number of Bantu books available for prescribing in the schools and colleges in the past ... it was common for one to meet the same books in three or four different classes during one's schooling career. It is also true that the books prescribed were not always satisfying to mature people.

With the production of literature (and, consequently, translated literature) in the African languages completely controlled by publishers, the Department of Bantu Education and the different language boards who acted as watchdogs of the state's Censorship Board, many African authors imposed self-censorship and inadvertently did not produce works of literary merit. In this manner they became complicit in the apartheid ideology (Wallmach 2004). They aided and knowingly profited from the corrupt practices prevalent at the time by having their own books or the books of friends prescribed. In some cases titles were prescribed before the books were even written (Maake 2000:147).

On the other hand, many black writers chose to write in English. They did not want to use African languages as they felt that in doing so they would be playing into the hands of the government and its divisive policy that sought to break up the black majority into smaller ethnic groups. Ezekiel Mphahlele stated in 1962 that they had to "wrench" the tools of power from the white man's hand: "We have got to speak the language that all can understand – English" (quoted in De Lange 1997:119).

The 1960s in South Africa are notorious for the mass banning of black protest authors such as Ezekiel Mphahlele, Richard Rive, Wally Serote, Dennis Brutus, Bessie Head and their works. Sadly, during the apartheid years of the 1970s some black authors were silenced forever. Some, such as Zakes Mda, continued writing in English while in exile while others, who wrote in both English and an African language found alternative publishers overseas and so found an avenue for translation into other languages. The author Oswald Mtshali (quoted

in Heywood 1976:124) wrote in English and in Zulu: “I write in English for my present state of reality or unreality and I write in Zulu to establish my identity which will be translated by posterity”.

As shown above, it can be said that apartheid-imposed conflict has triggered off the use of self-translation in particular as a tool to resist the ideology of apartheid in Afrikaans literature. Translation and self-translation have been used in various ways by creative writers in South Africa to deal with conflict and to resist being muzzled by the censorship machine of the apartheid-inspired government. And now, after more than a decade of democracy, what role does translation and self-translation play in the literary scene in South Africa?

7. In conclusion: post-apartheid pre-occupations

It seems that the changes sweeping through South Africa's political life since 1990 are slow to influence our literature. However, there is still a need to use fiction – and translated fiction – to explore our painful past. Apartheid and all its evils should not be forgotten too easily. Foremost English academic and author of the influential volume on Southern African literatures states: “We cannot know where we should go, what we should avoid, unless we know what has shaped us” (Chapman 1996:412).

The self-translation trend seems to be continuing. André Brink in particular is unstoppable. In 2005, having turned 70, he published and translated a new novel, *Bidsprinkaan* [*Praying Mantis*]. A young author, Mark Behr, is perhaps trying to follow in his footsteps with two successful publications which came out almost simultaneously in 1997 in Afrikaans and English, namely *Die Reuk van Appels* and *The Smell of Apples*. This story of a young white boy growing up in the militaristic South Africa of the 1960s and 1970s does not portray public events or political themes, but depicts the personal implications of living in a particular time under a particular ideological regime.

Award-winning Afrikaans author, Marlene van Niekerk opted not to go the route of self-translation. Her controversial Afrikaans novel *Triomf* [Triumph] (1995) was translated into English by poet and academic Leon de Kock (1999). It won the prestigious South African Translators' Institute's award for outstanding literary translation in 2000. This novel is the story of four inhabitants of the white suburb of Triomf, built on the ruins of the old Sophiatown, once a vibrant and notorious centre of black city life in Johannesburg. Through their eyes the novel probes Afrikaner history and the politics of the old South Africa and reveals the bizarre and tragic effects of apartheid on the white working classes who should have been its beneficiaries. For an in-depth discussion of the painful translation process that was involved in publishing the two translations (one for the local market and one for an overseas market), see De Kock (2003). This novel has since been translated into Dutch and French.

Van Niekerk's more recent novel *Agaat* (2004) was translated into English by Michiel Heyns (2007). For the Afrikaans book she won the Herzog Prize for Afrikaans Literature and for the English she won the *Sunday Times* Fiction Prize. The judges called it a monumental work, saying: “The translation of the text opens up a world of Afrikaans literature while renewing the original story and extending the range of English. The process enriches South African storytelling” (LitNet 2007). The novel deals with the relationship between a 67 year old white woman Milla in the terminal stages of motor neuron disease and her coloured caretaker Agaat.

Antjie Krog, one of South Africa's most acclaimed Afrikaans poets, chose to write *Country of my Skull* (1999) in English. It provides a gripping account of South Africa's unique attempt to put its past to rest by means of confessing apartheid's sins at the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Her most recent book *'n Ander Tongval* (2005) has sections translated from the English version *A Change of Tongue* which appeared in 2003, into Afrikaans, apparently done by her son.

The future of our African languages in translation no longer looks bleak. Heinemann has published various works by Nigerian author Chinua Achebe, translated into Sepedi, Xhosa and Zulu. A selection of Zakes Mda's one-act plays, all dealing with typical apartheid themes and written during his years of exile, has been translated into all nine African languages. Nelson Mandela's autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom*, has already been published in four indigenous languages and further translations are being undertaken. Various prizes have been awarded for translations of literature into the African languages by publishers and the South African Translators' Institute. For the first time television soap operas in African languages are being broadcast with English subtitles.

It appears that literature in the African languages of South Africa have emerged "from the statutory inequalities of apartheid to the nominal equality of constitutional democracy ... It is now up to writers and publishers to further develop these literatures" (Oliphant 2000:125). The burden on the shoulders of literary translators of all South African languages has therefore increased tenfold as writers and publishers will rely on them to assist in continuously developing and enhancing the status of these languages.

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