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Review essay

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Within loving memory of the century

Within Loving Memory of the Century: An Autobiography.

Azaria J. C. Mbatha

Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press. 2005, 369 pp. ISBN 1-86914-062-1.

Eye me

Why because I

Is a cruel

Memory

– From: “Anonymous Throbs + A Dream” (Mongane Serote 1982: 70)

The autobiography of Azaria J. C. Mbatha is an opportune work that raises quite a number of intriguing questions regarding the genre and its possible futures. Most autobiographies tend to be linear in narration, and – except for the psychological strain apparent in Bloke Modisane’s *Blame Me on History* (1963) – pretty standard as acts of re-memory and sites of identity-formation and assertion. Autobiographies tend to “suture” individual subjects within particular milieus, communities, clans and nations. While Mbatha generally follows this structure, his model is to *re-imagine* the past (the century of the title) in often startling and ordinary ways as he interrogates and re-positions himself and family in the turbulent past. Following on Judith Lütge Coullie’s *The Closest of Strangers – South African Women’s Life Writing* (2004) Mbatha’s autobiography locates the self in a milieu of endless strife, political discourse and intervention. While Coullie seeks to order a very messy and difficult configuration of what it meant to be a woman and South African, Mbatha places the family at the site of the un-making of Black lives and in this instance his parents loom large in the re-memorization of his life. It is a daring undertaking that is sustained throughout. Punctuating the narrative at key nodes are the voices of his father and mother, the repositories of familial memory but also of the dispossessed and oppressed masses. It is through their recollections of wars of dispossession and strife that the century is shown in sharp relief, a century during which South Africa was made and re-made in the (sometimes horrifying) images of the politicians. The mobilizing vision that Mbatha identifies accounts for much of what South African society experienced during the past century – from land alienation, forced removals, oppression and its own counter-mobilizing vision of resistance in all spheres of life. What we have in this instance is a counter-narrative of official history seen from the “outside”.

In discerning what an autobiography is, one of the genre’s key theoreticians, Phillippe Lejeune (1989: 4) considers these following elements to be important to unlocking the text. While this may seem obvious to readers of the genre, it is important to place these elements on view given the comedy that James Frey subjected the world with his fantastic *A Million Little Pieces* (2003):

- Form of language;
- A narrative in prose;
- *Subject treated*: an individual life, a story of a personality;
- *Situation of the author*: the author (whose name refers to a real person) and the narrator are identical;
- *Position of the narrator*: the narrator and the principal character are identical, and a retrospective point of view of the narrative.

Of course, the study of autobiography as a genre only began to receive serious scholastic attention from 1956, "about an hour ago as such matters must be judged" (Olney 1980: 6). As a result, it has been subject to the most virulent scholastic attention from all approaches ranging from the de-constructionist, structuralist, post-structuralist, humanist and sociological positions, each position with its supporters and theoreticians. For my part, I edge towards the humanist approach precisely because the very humanity of Black South Africans was for a long time the subject of unacceptable denials of subjectivity judged by reason and rationality. Indeed, apartheid proponents sought to rubbish the subject of a Black person to an extent where life itself was experienced in Kafkaesque terms. Thus, as Olney states, it is important to see the autobiographical act as grounding in reality that political idiocy denies the subject:

Awareness of the nature of self-being is essential to the full autobiographic art; this being so, Descartes' "Cogito, ergo sum" is a pre-autobiographic statement. Few people would dispute what Descartes said, but a great many people, of course, have disputed what that reveals beyond "sum", and what it tells about the nature and quality of that being whose existence is indisputable. To realize the quality of such being is an act altogether separate, and different in kind, from the original and mere "cogito". This separate act, which is an act of realization, definition, and transcendence, is what one finds in autobiography, complete or double, and in poetry. The act of autobiography and the act of poetry, both as creation and as recreation, constitute a bringing to consciousness of the nature of one's own existence, transforming the mere fact of existence into a realized quality and a possible meaning. In a certain sense, autobiography and poetry are both definitions of the self at a moment and in a place: and I do not mean, for autobiography, that it is a definition of the writer's self in the past, at the time of action, but in the present, at the time of writing [...] In the great autobiographers, whether it be autobiography as such or poetry, consciousness of this continuing creation of the self accompanies the creation, and, in the moment after, becomes it. (Olney 1980: 43-44)

Mbatha thus locates his *self* within the very broad strokes charted by Olney, seeking a particular transcendence from the materiality of South Africanness even while he emphasizes his rootedness. The impact of language, culture, power and history come through very strongly in the autobiography, and, as Stuart Hall notes, the very fact of this interplay accounts for identification:

Identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not "who we are" or "where we came from", so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves. *Identities are therefore constituted within, not outside representation.* They relate to the invention of tradition as much as to tradition itself [...] not the so-called return to roots but a coming to terms with our "routes". (Hall 1996: 4; emphasis added)

Thus the foregrounding of his parents' narratives is an important plank in how Mbatha fashions his identity, constructing his identity *within their representation* of their past. Indeed, this is a constant refrain in the text itself, for example, "One day I listened to my mother as she sat among the women, telling the history of South Africa as recounted by the elders" (24). Further, he lays claim to his historicizing by recalling the facts of his ancestors: "Grandma lived in Babanango in Zululand. She told us that our grandparents had participated in the Zulu war of 1879. My father was born in 1880, just after the war, and my mother in 1906. I was fortunate to have parents who had a long acquaintance with the history of South Africa." (70) He combines this narrative strand with his own as a concerted effort at memorialization:

Recalling my mother's words, I Azaria, likewise remind others of what we lived through. Overcoming my grief, the pain of my own story, I exhort the dead – those who have forgotten the horror; those who long for another war – we have no right to forget, we dare not forget! Who, if not the people of my small home, their African voice ringing out, can better remind the world of its duty? (24)

In this way, Mbatha yokes his narrative strategy on instances of recall, holding conversations with his father to reconstruct events as far back as 1848 when the Natal Code with its "draconian provisions" was promulgated granting full imperial powers to the governor, coming again and again to the trauma of the Sharpeville Massacre and the darkling plain it ushered into existence in 1960. The fact remains that it is in this latter period when he reaches maturity (taking art lessons from 1961, becoming an art student at Sandlwane and winning an art prize in 1965 as well as receiving a scholarship to study in Sweden that year) and is indeed formative to his notion of identity and the "horror" described above. It is also this period that confirms for him the fact that "[...] every people must have an honourable past. It must provide them with inspiration in the midst of despondency and oppression" (54). The centrality then of oppression recounted here, leading up to the homelands system is precisely that which allows Mbatha to dissect apartheid South Africa from the issuing of the Tomlinson Report to the implementation of those now-incomprehensible *own areas* as opposed to *white areas*.

The particularity of the above is highlighted in part by Jan Assman when he notes that: "The concept of cultural memory comprises that body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose cultivation serves to convey and stabilize that society's self-image. Upon such collective knowledge, for the most part (but not exclusively) of the past each group bases its awareness, unity and particularity." (Assman, quoted in Masemola 2004: 49.)

It is then within these confines of a particular history that Mbatha undertakes two simultaneous processes: *becoming* (identity-making) and *belonging* (identification) because the greater political society had rejected his claims, as citizen, to a common identity, constantly referring to his *self* as "Zulu boy" (something similar in a way to that blistering autobiography, *Black Boy*, by Richard Wright). Writing in particular of his "small world" and "big world" later when he has settled in Sweden, Mbatha's processes highlight the veracity of Stuart Hall's (1996: 4) other observation that: "identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. They are subject to a radical historicization, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation."

In this autobiography, I would venture to say the "radical historicization" is also the transmutation of the intersecting and sometimes antagonistic discourses of that identity into art. In

effect, his art is one strand of the process by which he 'becomes', and the linocuts and paintings in the text illustrate what J. C. Leeb-du Toit (2005: xx; xxi) sees as "reveal[ing] only fragments of innate significance" which the words put into greater signification, developing "from moralizing to politicized and universalizing associations."

It is with the use of post-modernist techniques of narration, the conflation of time and space, as well as the exhortation of the dead, those Mbatha describes "who have forgotten the horror", that the text, defined in terms of Lejeune as set above that becomes a problematic. There is too much of the conflation of the past figures to "walk the earth" and bespeak of past events together with the living (e. g. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, F. W. de Klerk) that the technique raises serious questions of veracity, factual material and the like. Creating fictive characters to interact with the Dr. Livingstones and the Cecil John Rhodes of this world is well and good and has been tried in the dramatic arts, but in autobiography it ends up looking hack-eyed. Of course, Mbatha's defence here is that he has not written a political documentary, but a novel of sorts that brings the past to the reader's attention (211). But precisely because this is an autobiography, this past itself is wrought with inconsistencies and mis-representations, the very essence the autobiographical act in Africa seeks to contest. In some instances we encounter serious distortions, as in the following example where his creation, Chuma, speaks to F. W. de Klerk regarding the role of the Afrikaners during the dying days of apartheid, when the latter says: "In July 1992, the ANC decided to make South Africa ungovernable" (184), without any contextualization whatsoever. For the student of South African history – and Mbatha himself – relies on white historians as source material (see "Preface" ix) and this is incomprehensible.

These invented conversations and realities, cast in post-modernist mould, resonate with ignorance. It is a well-known fact that each ANC policymaking decisions are announced on the 8th of each January when its incumbent president charts the organizational way forward. To give an example, in his years as ANC president in exile, O.R. Tambo made two epoch-making speeches. In the 1980 presidential speech he charged the P. W. Botha government to "Release Mandela", a speech that saw the launch of an interminable, but continuous campaign of international proportions. In the January 8th of 1985 speech, Tambo called on the youth of South Africa to "render the country ungovernable" (Callinicos 2004: 548). Such a call energized youth from Bonteheuwel, Langa, Khayelitsha, Soweto, Umthatha, Mankoen, Phuthaditjhaba, everywhere in South Africa. Perhaps, ensconced in Sweden, Mbatha could not have known of these critical interventions by Tambo, what such interventions meant to the militant, politicized youth of the time. He does not, however, have the right to misrepresent them for his cross-border/international readers. As a claimant to a history that he did not live, Mbatha simplifies, rationalizes, distorts. Mbatha is not unaware of these problems for, in the preface, he does mention that some of his advisers "identified shortcomings in my methodology" (x). Then why proceed in this manner? He actually ends his historical account with the Sharpeville era, so that those very volatile years of the 1970s and 1980s are excised from the narrative as he constantly revisits the Mbatha era. What then to make of a title of a narrative dedicated in "loving memory of a century!" A most bizarre form of historicizing events and memory then becomes apparent.

For my part, I find the syrupy, preachy and speechifying tone of the narrative inconsistent and quite jarring, even irritating. Sentences such as those below quite clearly demonstrate a preening and self-justificatory writing. It is as though Mbatha has to adopt the role of the

Oracle who has seen it all, who knows it all: "We were in a crisis, friends, we had to strike a new path for our children." (47); "When some African leaders denounced colonialism, friends, freedom went to their heads." (49); "I have written that South Africa is a black man's land." (69); "Two of my daughters were born in Sweden. *Although black they loved the snow*, as all children do, and they also enjoyed skiing." (100, emphasis added); "I think that sex should never be dogged by fear or guilt." (100); "Miscegenation denotes the mating of two people of different races." (197); "We have considered *the continent* through one person's memories – that person is I, Azaria, the author of this story." (261, emphasis added)

Given his sense of worth, it is unsurprising to the perceptive reader that Mbatha considers his story even more important than simply to name some of the people who crossed and shared his life. Nowhere is this more glaring than in the omission to mention the mother of his children's name, an incomprehensible account! Beginning with their marriage to their divorce (97ff), he resorts to the predictable and annoying speechifying, as in the following example: "Hence there are many points to consider, in regard to love and sex, when a newly married African couple, each very young, reaches a new home on board a train and later decides, under the influence of the new country's norms and culture, to divorce each other." (98)

This is an unfortunate way of concluding why the union had to dissolve. Quite apart from the resistance to name his ex-wife, the essentialist manner of this writing is jarring in making this an African couple's way of dissolving their marriage. South African exiles such as Es'kia Mphahlele (*Africa, My Music*, 1984) have written with such delicacy on the ravages of exile on home and hearth without resorting to "race" as a cause for the marriages either holding up or breaking down. Mbatha skirts the reasons for the divorce, resorting to culture, manliness and the like, a most unfitting mode, more worried about the aftermath of bachelorhood and his gallivanting ways. For instance, in one instance he writes: "I glance covertly at my watch, peer at my notes, I see that it is 1.50. a.m – a discovery that is not without drollery – and that my married partner-in-crime has called for yet another round of drinks." (111)

Perhaps the answer really for such wanton self-absorption lies in the author's admission that: "Often a life-history is beset by a key theme as the individual is consumed by his obsession." (217) It is my contention that, apart from the professional success that Mbatha has curved for himself, his "obsession" lies less in re-visiting South African history as in his account of himself as part of a diaspora: "I identify myself as an international citizen, first of all, and secondly, as one of the Nguni people of South Africa." (318) This brings to mind the idea of who his primary audience truly is. His South Africanness is mediated by an *ethnic* identity, an identity that, while important, makes his re-reading of the country's history suspect. There is hardly any attempt, in his narrative, to root/route his diasporan self in the stableness of "Black Atlantic" identifications (as, for instance, Peter Abrahams does in *Tell Freedom* of 1954), so that what we are left with is the old, inverted stable identity of the Enlightenment Personality as autobiographer. This manner of framing himself is ultimately the text's major weakness – while it seeks to broaden his identity as a world citizen from South Africa, it merely rearticulates the narrow confines of its parameters. And this is not mere carping criticism: a practical example is Hugh Masekela's autobiography, *Still Grazing* (2004). In it, the author frames himself as the unrepentant urchin – and lives his life accordingly – but one with a clear political conscience, a sense of home amidst his bursting world. Indeed, in exile it dawns on Masekela that his art "to improve the plight of our people who are suffering back home in South Africa" (Masekela 2004: 130). The haunting strains of the Jonas Gwangwa's *mbhaqanga* composition,

“Shebeen” from the album *Union of South Africa* of 1967 bespeak of this understanding of the dialectic of subject and home dialectic, which is not found at any point in Mbatha’s narrative. Thus, despite his extended bohemian lifestyle and its attendant crazinesses, it is a role that the subject clings to with tenacity and which is affirmed in that wonderful Christmas Day concert held in the mountain kingdom of Lesotho with Miriam Makeba (Masekela 2004: 319-320).

So, just as Mbatha ought to have made an effort to listen to his advisors concerning his methodology, he would do well to remember what Mongane Serote (2006: 273) articulates about “homes” and “returns” in his poem “History is the Home Address”

Robben Island: what have we learnt
what do we know now
when the cells and jails are empty
and echo ghosts only?

our address is
Robben Island
ask us and we will tell you
Zizi
Madiba and his comrades left the cells
and you and we know our addresses
and the roaring seas sing of them
as the breeze whistles and whistles and whistles
and the earth spins on its miracle pin
if you go away
remember your home address

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Resensie-artikel

Not White Enough, Not Black Enough

Not White Enough, Not Black Enough: Racial Identity in the South African Coloured Community.

Mohamed Adhikari.

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In 1995 het die akademikus Les Switzer dit gestel dat "South Africa's Coloured community has remained a marginalized community – marginalized by history and even historians" (aangehaal in Adhikari, 33) Dit is veral die geval in die nuwe Suid-Afrika. Die Kaapstadse historikus Mohamed Adhikari spreek hierdie historiografiese (en lewenswerklike) marginaliteit aan in sy jongste boek, *Not White Enough, Not Black Enough: Racial Identity in the South African Coloured Community* – wat, soos die titel aandui, 'n analise is van Kleurling-identiteit in Suid-Afrika.

Voor ek Adhikari se boek ontleed, 'n vlugtige konteks.

Alle mense is in 'n sin Kleurling, of "coloured", soos in "van gemengde genetiese herkoms", maar wie se herkoms voorlopig na Afrika terug gespoor kan word. Maar Kleurlinge in Suid-Afrika is meer oogluikend Kleurling, van "gemengde" – wit-bruin-swart – herkoms. Hierdie werklikheid lei noodwendig tot veelvuldige identiteite wat in een mens of groep soms harmoniseer en ander kere oorlog voer. Die jazz sanger Sathima Bea Benjamin, wat uit die Kaapstadse smeltkroes kom, het hierdie veelvuldigheid netjies saamgevat deur te sing: "I have nations in me."

Kleurlinge in Suid-Afrika (en die wêreldoor bekend as *coloreds*, *mestizos*, *mulattoes*, ens.) word meer as ander groepe afgekraak en gemarginaliseer. Adhikari verduidelik dat dit juis hul gemengdheid is wat hiertoe lei. As sulks leef hierdie groep(e) midde 'n tweeledige bewussyn (*double consciousness*); terselfdertyd struikel hulle om 'n plek in enige samelewing te vind. Soos W.E.B. du Bois (1986: 364-365) dit in *The Souls of Black Folk* stel:

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

Die kompleksiteit wesenlik aan Kleurling-identiteit het verwarring tussen kleur en kultuur tot gevolg. In beide die Verenigde State van Amerika en Suid-Afrika word daar na Kleurlinge verwys as "coconuts" – bruin van buite en wit (Westers) van binne, dit insluitend met betrekking tot taal. Hierdie kwansuisse verwarring, hierdie oënskynlike teenstrydigheid, het tot die politieke arena oorgespoel en veral sedert 1994 was dit algemeen vir Kleurling om te sê: "First (under apartheid), we were not white enough; now (in a "democratic" South Africa), we are not black enough. As sulks slaan Adhikari se titel – *Not White Enough, Not Black Enough* – die spyker op die kop.

Deur deeglike navorsing en diepe besinning, bespreek Adhikari die marginaliteit van die Kleurlinge en die verwarring en teenstrydighede wat hul identiteit omgee – asook die produkte daarvan, en die persepsies van en werklikhede oor die Kleurling-gemeenskap. Dit doen hy deur publikasies oor die Kleurling-geskiedenis en -identiteit asook hul plek in die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing deur te werk. In 'n kragtoer deur geskiedenisboeke en ander publikasies identifiseer hy drie tendense of paradigmas – die essensialiste, instrumentaliste (met die afwysers (*rejectionists*) en sosiale konstruksioniste.

Die essensialistiese skool, sê Adhikari, sien Kleurlingskap in terme van rassevermenging tussen hoofsaaklik Europese mans en Khoi- en slawe-vroue. Die essensialiste sien distinktiewe groepe in die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing. Adhikari sê dat “This approach is inherently racialized because it assigns racial origins and racial characteristics to the concept of Colouredness” (34). Hy gee toe dat nie al die geskrifte uit hierdie perspektief as rassisties beskou kan word nie, maar volstaan met sy basiese uitgangspunt dat biologie nie identiteit bepaal nie. Hy het natuurlik reg.

Uit die essensialistiese skool volg die assimilasië- / ontwikkelingsimperatief – dat Kleurlinge geneties en kultureel na aan Europeërs sou wees en as sulks sou kon vorder tot die hoogste vlak van Westerse kultuur en dat hulle dan kultureel en sosiaal in daardie samelewing opgeneem (geassimileer) sou moes word. Hierdie geloof spruit deels uit die Kaapse liberale tradisie (van die laat-19de eeu) van gelyke regte vir alle onderdane van die Britse kroon (wat in werklikheid maar 'n klug was).

Vir die voorstanders van hierdie paradigma het hul betoog sin gemaak: hul kultuur, marginaal maar onmiskenbaar Westers het hierdie aanspraak onderskraag. Maar, helaas, in die konteks van die rasteorieë van die laat-19de en vroeg-20ste eeue is hierdie vroeë Kleurlinge vanweë hul hibriditeit en rassevermenging verwerp en gemarginaliseer.

Te midde hierdie konteks van sosiale Darwinisme en wetenskaplike rassisme (byvoorbeeld die *eugenics movement*) is die Kleurlinge noodwendig nie tegemoet gekom nie. Hulle is eerder deur hul Europese familie verwerp; in stede van erkenning is hulle belas met negatiewe rassistiese stereotipes wat die nuwe produkte van “rassevermenging” sou wees.

Die gevolg van hierdie ontwikkeling was dat Kleurlingleiers 'n pragmatiese benadering vis-à-vis die rassebestel begin volg het, betoog Adhikari. Die wese hiervan was dat hulle, as Westers-beskaafde mense, “volgende” aan die beurt moes wees.

Dit is wel so, maar ek lees, en ek mag verkeerd wees, dat Adhikari dit implisiet stel dat hierdie reaksie tot marginaliteit iets onwenslik sou wees. Maar konteks is hier nodig. 'n Mens moet in gedagte hou dat alhoewel Abdullah Abdurahman van die African People's Organisation (APO) die belange van die Kleurlinge vooropgestel het, soos Adhikari tereg uitwys, het hy hom vir die regte van alle Suid-Afrikaners beywer. In sy veldtogte in die vroeg-20ste eeu het die groot mahatma, Mohandas Gandhi, hoofsaaklik vir die belange van die Indiërs gestry – sonder apologie – soos Uma Dhuphelia-Mesthrie (2004: 132) aantoon: “While Gandhi recognised the struggles of the African majority, his struggle was an Indian one located within the larger question of India's subjugation in the British Empire. The two struggles were different, Gandhi reasoned.” Nelson Mandela (1995: 129) het later insgelyks gesê: “I was prepared to accept Indians and Coloureds provided they accepted our policies, but their interests were not identical with ours, and I doubted whether or not they could truly embrace our cause.”

Binne hierdie konteks vra mens dan watter Suid-Afrikaanse groep nie eiebelang eerste nagestreef het nie. Dit is egter net die Kleurlinge wat met die pen gestraf word. Ek poneer dat

die eintlike kwessie ten beste dié van eiebelang is, en ten slegste dié van mag, magsgebruik en magsmisbruik – nie noodwendig van “ras” of rassisme nie. Dit stel ek met volle begrip vir die feit dat stereotipering en vooroordele alle Suid-Afrikaanse gemeenskappe deurspek het en steeds beduiwel. Om Kleurlinge uit te sonder is myns insiens dus nie verdedigbaar nie. Ek verstaan dat Adhikari oor die Kleurlinge skryf, maar waar sy argument sonder vergelykende voorbeeld aangebied word, kom sy studie ietwat venynig en onregverdig voor.

Met betrekking tot die essensialiste ontleed Adhikari ’n spektrum van genres. Hy begin met leke-historici soos Dorothy Hendricks en Christian Viljoen se *The Student Teacher’s History Course*, en Christian Ziervogel se *Brown South Africa – “the first history of the Coloured people to have been written by a Coloured person”* (41) – asook die skrywers van artikels in die *APO*. Hierdie skrywers aanvaar as vanselfsprekend ’n rassehiërargie wat die Kleurling as deels-Europeër tussen die Europeër en die Afrikaan plaas. Hierdie posisie lei logies daartoe dat sosiale integrasie op grond van ’n gemeenskaplike kultuur noodwendig vir Kleurlinge wenslik en aantreklik moes wees en was.

Adhikari se tweede paradigma is dié van die instrumentaliste. Volgens hulle was die gebruik en manipulasie van rasseterme politieke instrumente om die onderdrukte mense van Suid-Afrika te verdeel. Vanaf die laat-1930s het linkse intellektuele vir ’n klasanalise betoog en nie-Europeër solidariteit nagestreef. Adhikari weerspreek hierdie instrumentaliste en wys dat hulle aan die eenkant nie die sentimente van die gewone mense (veral Kleurlinge) in ag geneem het nie, en aan die anderkant rasseterminologie gebruik het wanneer dit hulle gepas het.

Hierdie tendens – die klasanalise en instrumentalisme van die Non-European Unity Movement-denkskool – word in Maurice Hommel se *Capricorn Blues* (1981) en ook Gavin Lewis se *Between the Wire and the Wall* (1987) gemanifesteer. Jong Kleurling-studente in die sewentigerjare het ook hierdie benadering omhels.

Derdens het die sosiale konstruksioniste probeer om die kwessie van Kleurling-identiteit met die kompleksiteit wat dit verdien het te investeer. Hulle wys verfrissend op die vloeibaarheid van Kleurling-identiteit, en dat dit geskep en herskep is met Kleurlinge as die hoofagente. Adhikari ondersteun hierdie paradigma, maar hy voeg tog by dat Kleurlingidentiteit stabiel gebly het in aannames en geloof – dat hulle die produk van rassevermenging was, kultureel Westers was, en dat hulle hul middelposisie op ’n ietwat opportunistiese (rassistiese) wyse gebruik het om hul groepsbelange te bevorder.

In sy oorsigtelike hoofstuk, “Changing Perceptions” klim die skrywer onder historici van die Kleurling-storie in. R.E. van der Ross se *The Rise and Decline of Apartheid* word as ’n “bland chronicle” getipeer wat met verloop van tyd subjektief en persoonlik raak (55, 56). Roy du Pré se *Separate but Unequal* is weer ’n “highly eccentric work” wat skrei teen “vengeful Afrikaners” en “spineless English”. Met betrekking tot Du Pré maak die skrywer egter ’n belangrike toeweging, deur te sê: “This is not the tirade of a lone eccentric but a fairly representative example of the private rage with which many Coloured people, especially within the politicized petit bourgeoisie, expressed their visceral rejection of apartheid” (62). Ek wonder of Du Pré se werk tegelykertyd “highly eccentric” en “fairly representative” kan wees. Wat Adhikari wel raakvat is dat Du Pré ook die instrumentele benadering tot die Kleurling-kwessie volg.

Adhikari beskryf beide werke as metodologies en struktureel onbeholpe, vereenvoudig en persoonlik. Ek gee Adhikari gelyk dat die werke “persoonlik” blyk te wees. Maar mens moet tog toegee dat alle historici, van Herodotus tot Adhikari, hul geskiedskrywing deur

sekere persoonlike werklikhede gefiltreer het. Dié sluit in hul persoonlike ervaringe, hul spesifieke kennis, toegang tot en keuse van bronne, en vrae wat vanuit 'n spesifieke kulturele en intellektuele verwysingraamwerk gevra is. En boonop streef hulle, historici, een en almal, 'n agenda na in hul rekonstruksie van stories en identiteite. Soos Adhikari self erken: hy is 'n sosiale konstruksionis. As sulks bevind hy homself binne 'n paradigma wat noodwendig sekere perspektiewe verwerp en andere omhels.

Adhikari knoop sy oorsig deur te sê: "Historical writing on the Coloured community also reflects the hegemony of racist thinking with regard to Coloured identity. The idea that Colouredness was the product of miscegenation was so deeply entrenched in South African society that nearly all people, including academics and radical polemicists, accepted this assumption of the latter phases of the apartheid era." (64) Baie Kleurlinge kan hul herkoms wetenskaplik tot 'n Europeër en of Asiaat en of Afrikaan naspour, en hulle konstrueer juis hul identiteit op grond van hierdie genetiese en kulturele feite. Daar is g'n niks rassisties omtrent hierdie proses nie.

Adhikari hanteer vervolgens die instrumentele benadering tot Kleurling-identiteit. Verskeie opeenvolgende Suid-Afrikaanse regerings het hierdie kategorie, Kleurling, ingestel om Kleurlinge van Afrikane en Indiërs te verdeel en so oor hulle almal te heers. Hierdie argument is veral deur die radikale Non-European Unity Movement gedryf. Adhikari verwerp dit en wys dat Kleurlinge juis die identiteit van "Kleurling" omhels het. Dit mag wel so wees, maar mens moet toegee dat die apartheidsregerings "nasiewording" vir die Kleurlinge nagestreef het.

Adhikari het dit egter reg dat die linkse denkers van die Non-European Movement se opvatting nie gegrond was op die straatwerklikhede van Kleurling-identiteit en -aspirasies nie.

Adhikari stel dit dat "The Journal [dit is die *Educational Journal* van die NEUM affiliaat, die Teachers League of South Africa] rarely confronted the moral problem of the exclusion of Africans from the association" (95). Die implikasie is duidelik. Maar laat ons die "probleem" van 'n ander kant benader. Die ANC het dieselfde benadering gehad. Tot in 1969 (of is dit 2006?) was uitsluiting (*exclusion*) die aard van feitlik alle fragmente van die Suid-Afrikaanse politiek en nie die ondeug van die een of ander groep nie.

Een van die swakhede van Adhikari se argument is sy tendens om Kleurlinge van 'n hunkering na assimilasië te beskuldig asof dit verkeerd sou wees. Tog was dit juis natuurlik en pragmaties dat Kleurlinge nader sou wou beweeg aan hul genetiese en kulturele familie. Hierdie neiging is nie eie aan die Kleurlinge nie, Afrikane het ook, waar dit gerieflik was, probeer om Kleurlingskap te omhels. Hierdie neiging is standaard, amper normatief, in alle samelewings waar mag en kulturele oordad die septer swaai.

Ten spyte van sy sosiale konstruksionisme, verwaarloos Adhikari die geskakeerdheid van Kleurling-kultuur. 'n Kleurling-briefskrywer aan 'n linkse publikasie het eens opgemerk dat 'n Kleurling 'n persoon is wees wat afstam van twee van die volgende herkomste – Europeër, Afrikaan, Asiaat. Hierdie werklikheid het noodwendig tot gevolg gehad het dat daar verskillende Kleurlinge sou wees.

Daar is eerstens die "hair, nose and complexion"-Kleurlinge, amper letterlik blanke Kleurlinge is en wie niks met die Khoi- en Afrikaan-tipe Kleurlinge te doene sou wou hê nie. Hulle is daardie Kleurlinge wat ontken dat hulle "Afrika-bloed" in hulle sou hê. En hare, gesigstruktuur en kleur speel 'n belangrike rol in hul kosmos. Dié ontkenning (en toe-eiening) kan vir sekere

op 'n rassistiese refleks dui, maar tog is dit 'n geneties, kultureel en sosiaal gestruktureerde werklikheid. Sommige Kleurlinge is tog geneties, kultureel en klaarblyklik wit mense (Europeërs) eerder as bruin mense of swart mense. En hoe "witter" hulle is of hulle hulself kan maak, hoe "beter" – vir hulle. Hulle kyk neer op en sosialiseer nie met "goffels" en "afkoppe" nie. Adhikari noem die "goffel" – 'n onaantreklike Kleurling-vrou wat ook moreel verword sou wees. Hy noem nie die "afkoppe" nie. Dis die Kleurlinge wat kroes hare sou hê. Hul mag moreel sterk wees en geleerd en opgevoed ook, maar vanweë hul kroes hare word hulle op 'n afstand gehou. Die toneelspel, *Joe Barber*, wys juis uit dat daar neergekyk word op daardie Kleurlinge wat "nie hare het nie".

Dan is daar die Kleurlinge wat hulself as hoofletter-K Kleurlinge sien en uitsonderlik trots is dat hulle Europa, Asië en Afrika (ja, in daardie volgorde) in hulle sou dra. Die neiging in hierdie groep is ook om met die blankes (Europeërs) te identifiseer want kultureel gesproke, veral in godsdiens, is hulle tog Europees, of ten minste Westers. Hulle distansieer hulself so ver as moontlik van diegene wat klaarblyklik meer Afrikaan sou wees. Hulle sien hulself as 'n distinktiewe groep – Westers, Christen, Anglo-Afrikaans, en bruin.

Dan nog is daar die Kleurlinge wat oorwegend Afrikaan is en sterk met Afrika-groepe identifiseer. En Moslems, wat allerweë as Kleurlinge beskou word, ag hulself nie as Kleurlinge nie, en dit juis omdat hulle hulself beskou as die nasate van 'n ander genetiese bestel en 'n ander godsdiens, Islam. Laastens is daar unieke groepe soos die Basters en allerlei Khoi-gemeenskappe. Die Basters is trots op hul basterskap en sien hulself as 'n unieke soort Kleurling. In hierdie tyd van politieke korrektheid reik Khoi-groepe na etniese assosiasie en stamgeskiedenis. Dit wil sê, groepsbelang. Hulle beskou hulself nie as Kleurlinge nie.

'n Bespreking van hierdie groepe sal natuurlik ook marginaliteit, magtelosheid en teenstrydighede uitwys. Maar erkenning dat daar verskillende soorte Kleurlinge is, sal die mite dat 'n homogene Kleurling-groep, -geskiedenis en -identiteit bestaan, nek omdraai. Adhikari is juis skuldig daaraan dat hy die Kleurlinge behandel asof hulle een groep is – dus sy subtitel, "*Identity in the South African Coloured Community*" (toegevoegde beklemtoning). Hy lei ook sy werk in deur te skryf, "*There is a general lack of familiarity with the history of the Coloured community of South Africa*" (1, toegevoegde beklemtoning) asof daar een Kleurlinggemeenskap is met *een* geskiedenis. Ek sien verskeie identiteite in verskeie gemeenskappe met verskillende, dikwels uiteenlopende geskiednisse. Sommige van hierdie identiteite is amper diskreet, andere veelvuldig en kompleks.

Alhoewel al hierdie groepe in politieke en ekonomiese markplekke wedersydse uitruilery toon, sal hulle weinig in dieselfde sosiale geselskap gevind word.

Sou dit op rassisme dui? Nie noodwendig nie. Mense assosieer en sosialiseer tog meesal met kultureel-soortgelyke persone en groepe. Die meeste blankes, Afrikane en Indiërs doen presies dieselfde. Mense maak kulturele en sosiale keuses en dring aan op óf sosiale geneentheid óf sosiale distansiering.

Met betrekking tot "groepe" in Kleurling-geledere bespreek Adhikari nie Al J. Venter se *Coloured: A Profile van Two Million South Africans* nie. Alhoewel hoofsaaklik beskrywend, bied hierdie magnus opus 'n binneblik tot die geskakeerdheid van Kleurlingskap en van die veelvuldige groepe wat hulself identifiseer en definieer. Ons kry in Venter die mikro-definiëring van Kleurling-groepe – insluitende die Buys-groep, die Dunns en die Basters. As mens hierdie fragmentering insien en erken, is die logiese slotsom die afwesigheid van Kleurling-solidariteit of -homogeniteit.

Dis nie net in hul marginaliteit dat Kleurlinge se swakheid lê nie, maar ook in hul verdeeldheid. Dis juis in hul veelvuldige self-definisies en in hul onderdanigheid (vir redes van politieke omsigtigheid) aan die stereotipering en definiëring wat die “ander” hulle toedig dat hul swakheid lê.

As ons aanvaar dat daar baie tipes Kleurlinge was en is, sommige wat glad nie Kleurlinge sou wou wees nie, val Adhikari se teorie van assimilasië (tot blanke samelewing), behalwe miskien vir die “nose, hair and complexion-tipes”, grotendeels plat.

Maar ek haak nou vas by die negatiewe – soos Adhikari. Midde-in Adhikari se diep-ernstige styl en as gevolg van sy werkswyse (van publikasies ontleed), gaan belangrike aspekte van Kleurling-identiteit en -kultuur verlore. Kleurlingskap is dan juis deurdrenk met spitsvondigheid en plesierigheid (selfs plesieriger as Afrikaners). Dit word gekenmerk deur die nastreef van Westerse waardes en ideale. Dit manifesteer die kreolisering van kulturele uitdrukkinge – taalinnovasie, nuut- en naamskeppinge, *Cape jazz*, langarm, die bus-dans, straatpoësie, stuk sny, snoek en kreef geniet, ens. En Saterdag is daar sport speel en afkoel; Sondag weer kerk en koeksisters na die diens. En dan is daar hul vreedsame tegemoetkoming oor alle kleurgrense! Hierdie sosio-kulturele identiteitswysers van Kleurling-wees vra juis vir dieper en stelselmatige ondersoek.

Terug na die instrumentalistiese benadering. Kleurling-geskiedenis en -identiteit is in die sewentigerjare deur swartbewustheid in verwarring gedompel. Adhikari vind nie grond in die aanspraak van sommige Kleurlinge dat hulle swart sou wees nie. Binne die konteks van swartbewustheid het sommige Kleurlinge wel Kleurling-identiteit verwerp. Dit was egter ’n klein minderheid wat hulle in dié kamp bevind het. Wat wel gesê kan word is dat die meeste Kleurlinge die onderdrukker se politieke misbruik van die term “Kleurling” verwerp het. Adhikari wys tereg dat die etiket “swart” ’n politieke instrument van swartbewustheid was.

Vir my maak die konsep “swart” buite sy politieke konteks dus nie sin nie. In 1998 skryf die digter James Matthews: “For those who have absorbed the policy of Black Consciousness, the acceptance of being coloured and black is not as contradictory as it might appear, because being black does not mean not being coloured. Being black is part of their political stance – a stance they still feel [is] necessary now – and does not exclude them from their place in coloured ranks” (*Cape Argus* aangehaal in Adhikari, 144).

Die blote kwalifikasie wat amper altyd “swart” volg – “Afrikane, Kleurlinge en Indiers” – wys dat hierdie afsonderlike groepe tog as werklikhede bestaan en erken word.

Die verwerping van Kleurling-identiteit tydens die 1970s en 1980s was intens en ernstig in sekere sirkels maar verwyderd van die algemene werklikheid – waar Kleurlinge hulself as Kleurlinge gesien het. Adhikari maak ’n sterk punt in hierdie opsig. In die tagtigerjare het populistiese nuusblaaië wat die konsep van Kleurlingskap verwerp het – dit in die waai van swartbewustheid – vir ’n nie-rassige Suid-Afrikanerskap gewerk. Adhikari wys dat hierdie benadering ook nie die gewone Kleurling se sentimente in ag geneem het nie. Hul selfkonsep, vind hy, het konstant gebly – nader aan die blankes en verder van die Afrikane, nie blank nie, maar tog kultureel westers. En hulle het self hul marginaliteit raakgesien, waardeur en daarmee gewerk.

Ek stem saam met Adhikari dat slegs ’n minderheid Kleurlinge die Kleurling-konsep en identiteit verwerp het. As hulle wel stil gebly het of aangetoon het dat hulle hulself as “swart” beskou het, het hulle dit heel moontlik gedoen vir redes van solidariteit of politieke omsigtigheid.

Dit bekommer egter dat Adhikari op die teenstrydighede in Kleurling-identiteit hamer. Miskien is daar nie teenstrydighede nie. Anders gestel: kontradiksies en onsekerhede is juis wesenlik deel van elke groepservaring en inderdaad van menswees.

Andersins kla Adhikari oor deininge in die persepsies van Kleurlingheid – essensialisme, instrumentalisme, politieke solidariteit en afwysing (onder swartbewustheid) – nie tred gehou het met wat Kleurlinge op straatvlak gedink en gevoel het nie. Dit is juis Adhikari se werks-wyse wat hiertoe lei. Hy het tog publikasies as sy barometer gekies. En al die publikasies, insluitende James Matthews se geskrifte, is deur *elites* met agendas geskryf. En hierdie agendas was politieke, of dit nou assimilasië tot die wit gemeenskap of solidariteit met Afrikaner ten doel sou hê.

Ten spyte van 'n groeiende literatuur oor Kleurling-geskiedenis en -identiteit, is Kleurlinge nog nie op 'n stelselmatige en volgehoue wyse gevra hoe hulle hulself sien nie. Adhikari het die *elites* genader en hul stemme gevind. Die volgende navorser sal die klankryke strate van behuisingskemas moet binnestap en die mense daar vra wie en wat hulle nou eintlik is. Ek vermoed dat baie hoofletter-K Kleurlinge dan na vore sal tree. Ek dink Adhikari stem saam. Intussen sal die volgende navorser hom egter met Adhikari se boek moet bewapen.

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