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Paranoia, Linguistic Ambivalence and Erotic Sexuality as Postmodern Techniques in K. Sello Duiker's *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*

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Abstract

African literature in the twenty-first century still projects a robust trail of postcolonial discourses, strongly tied with African thematic refrains, and aptly foregrounded by the agency of postcolonialism. However, there has been an insurrection of stylistic changes from African writers as far as back as the twentieth century, among which is K. Sello Duiker. This study engages Duiker's deviation from the social realist style of writing, given the fact that Duiker's renowned novel, *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, strongly identifies with postmodern literary trends. Therefore, this essay attempts at critical analysis of paranoia, linguistic ambivalence and erotic sexuality in the novel, with the view to foregrounding its symmetrical stance with postmodernism within African context. One argues further that the novel cannot be restricted to a distinct narrative or interpretation, which stems from the overexploitation of postcolonial themes.

Keywords: Postmodernism, African literature, paranoia, linguistic ambivalence, deconstruction

Introduction

Towards the end of the twenty-first century, contemporary African literary scholars have described modern African and African American literary works as monotonous, and stylistically and thematically redundant. The summary of their response is based on the notion that both literatures, over the years, have predominantly reflected postcolonial themes and therefore, are not experimental enough, especially in the postmodern sense. Other positions designate postmodernism as an ideology completely incompatible with postcolonial black experience. Ekpo (1995:121) for instance foregrounds the essence of postmodernism as another level of the

West's "crisis of modernity". The feminist African American writer, bell hooks, also underscores reservations on the connection between postmodernism and contemporary black experience. Although these criticisms have continued to generate polemics, scholars are yet to thoroughly evaluate counter-perspectives of postmodern trends in African literature. The question is, is African literature fully disentangled from the far-reaching postmodern inconsistencies of Western world?

This essay therefore attempts at examining postmodern presence and practice as a trope in contemporary African novel. It also examines the notion of Africa's skeptical stance against the postmodern philosophy of its rejection against metanarratives. Since Africa has responded adequately to the principles and practices of modernism particularly as it relates to literary criticism, is the literature of the continent completely devoid of a connection with postmodern theory? Is postmodernism completely unfamiliar to African literary culture? It is on this note that this study interrogates the postmodern nuances in one of the contemporary African novels, *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* by K. Sellor-Duiker, with the view to interrogating the postmodern stylistic changes that underscore the novel's thematic preoccupations.

Perspectives on African Literature and Postmodern Dialectics: A Critical Review

Despite a fledgling literary experience, African writers aptly responded to the modern practices prevalent in the twentieth century, especially as it affected their respective nations. But with the advent of independence of several African countries, attention randomly oscillated between nationalism and the necessity for decolonisation. All these led to the literary outburst that ripened around the 1970s. Nonetheless, it was not the artistic content of modern African literature that evoked its popularity, rather the ingenious interpretations that provoked the necessary awareness for radical change. With the upsurge of African writings came the rise of African critics, who led the avant-garde for interpretation and exploitation of its own literature. Bishop (2007:415) states that "African critics began to question the inevitabilities voiced by Westerners and soon experienced a *prise de conscience* that led to a re-examination of the relationship of Africa's newly written

literature to the traditions of the West.” He initially had recognised the hegemony of European criticism of African literature, prevalent before the first wave of independence hit the shores of rising black nations in the continent. One victim of this grossly misinterpreted criticism is one of the earliest Nigerian novelists Amos Tutuola, whose novel, *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, was subjected to skewed denunciation based on Eurocentric factors.

But at the twilight of the twentieth century, there arose the term ‘postmodern age’ which emerged in Europe around 1940s and then later in America about a decade after. This period birthed the controversial concept namely postmodernism, often described as a new intellectual cum philosophical era that cuts across diverse disciplines of life such as architecture, philosophy, sciences, economy, politics and literature. Rather than advance the course of modernism, postmodernism professes a vicious reaction against and outright criticism of the principles and practices of modernism. Lyotard (1984:81), a principal postmodernist advocate, foregrounds the rejection of such terms as “Western meta-narratives”, which have been described as quite imperialistic.

Among other proponents of postmodernism is Michel Foucault, who not only rates as an undisputable authority, but whose epistemic pattern of thoughts remains fundamental to this work. While being critical as not to assume that all African texts would readily respond to the nuances of postmodernism, this literary endeavour is evidently premised on Foucault’s expression, or put more succinctly, his insightful recognition of postmodernism. Foucault (1973:384) quoted by Best and Kellner (1991:41) describes postmodernism as: “something new is about to begin, something that we glimpse only as a thin line of light low on the horizon”. This statement becomes very apt in exploring and conceptualizing the impending future of African literature and its African American counterpart. More germane hereafter is the attempted interpretation of postmodernist nuances, which are not just evident but prevalent in the select texts for this research.

In the late twentieth century, the modern era was truncated by the dialectics of the postmodern era. Postmodern literatures, which emanated from this period, reflect the upsurge of the postmodern temper, which Ellin (1999:130) refers to as “the celebration of dissonance rather than consensus.” In other words,

postmodern literary works react viciously against the modern iconography of law, order and reason, which are, for the most part, represented in close readings of modernist texts. There is rather a conscious and consistent display of violence, uncultivated sexuality and societal degradation in these postmodern texts, an obvious representation of anti-modernist self-expression which is quite appalling but enthralling (Baudrillard, 1994).

In these contemporary times however, postmodernism, as theory and practice, is apparently a secondary, if not absent, material in the interpretation of the literatures of empire, or to be specific, the literatures of the African diaspora. This does not hypothesise any alluring conceptualisation of postmodernism as alien to African literary scholarship. In fact, several African scholars have interrogated its definitions and tenets from divergent points of view. Nevertheless, quite a number of reactions on postmodernism, particularly from scholars of African descent, have been met with cynicism and skepticism. Appiah (1992:140), while critiquing Lyotard's account of postmodernism as a rejection of grand narratives, therefore concludes that postmodernism then is "a meta narrative of the end of metanarratives". He further states that with the absence of "grand narratives of legitimization", there is an insurrection of individualism or what he describes as "local legitimization" which would eventually lead to the "institutionalization of pluralism". It is on this note that Appiah (1992:145-6) argues that:

Postmodernism can be seen, then, as a new way of understanding the multiplication of distinctions that flows from the need to clear oneself a space; the need that drives the underlying dynamic of cultural modernity. Modernism saw the economization of the world as the triumph of reason; postmodernism rejects that claim, allowing in the realm of theory the same multiplication of distinctions we see in the cultures it seeks to understand.

The modernist assumption in the twenty first century which institutes the power of scientific rationale was deconstructed and discarded. Hence, postmodernist insurrection essentially justifies

the limitations and over-exaggerated claim of modernism. Ekpo (1995) is another vociferous voice from African literary circle. He fervently decries the term postmodernism, averring postmodernism is considered a juvenile approach to contemporary Western reasoning, or probably the lack of it. Despite the wild rancour around postmodernism, Ekpo remains cynical as to the relevance of postmodernism, especially within the African context.

But at the turn of the twenty-first century, there arises an exigent requisite to reconstruct and/or re-evaluate the fast-evolving nature of African literature. With the enviable spot that African literature has progressively occupied in the last couple of decades, it is expected that the twenty-first century would avail much more enhanced level for African literature. It is however ironical that severe criticisms and skepticism have continually been revived in principal debates that address the relevance and in fact survival of African literature. It is pertinent here to quote Fredric Jameson's famous proclamation on Western perception about the status of African literature. Jameson (1986:66) posits that "a popular or socially realistic third world novel tends to come before us, not immediately, but as though already-read". This statement sarcastically categorizes African literature simply as a literature in retrospect. Or Perhaps Wali (1963:13) does foresee these challenges. In his essay, "The Dead End of African Literature", he strongly predicts a downward slide in African literary works, in which he argues against the predominant use of colonial languages, especially the English Language and French, to capture the indigenous exegesis of African cosmology. He further portends that this European-oriented literature "lacks any blood and stamina" and that "criticisms being done sound so dull, drab and flippant... a repetition of the same clichés over and over again – romantic, classic, realism, Victorianism, surrealism and so on."

Although Wali's proposition is predominantly over language choice, his prediction about the 'death' of African literature cannot be carelessly dismissed at this crucial period. Six decades after this declaration, it is pertinently sufficient to add to the language death the redundant stylistic nature of African fiction and the cyclical repertoire of colonial and postcolonial messages that are beginning to bore its contemporary ultramodern audience. Despite its far-reaching success, it appears that African literature still responds to

the past, albeit recurrently. In spite of its typical neo-colonial 'lyrics', are Africa's experiences in the early years of the twenty-first century limited to its inherently determined socio-political, historical and cultural paradigms? Can Africa totally extricate itself from the drastic changes/inconsistencies of Westernisation and globalisation? To what extent does African literature respond to these contemporary trends or can a categorical response of affirmation or otherwise be sufficient replies to these seemingly unfamiliar abstractions? Wole Soyinka (2007:141), in his essay, "A Voice That Would Not Be Silenced" ultimately articulates the bigger picture:

This voice from the grave urges itself on our hearing. For let no one be in any doubt – the life-and-death discourse of the twenty-first century is unambiguously the discourse of fanaticism and intolerance. We can subsume this however we will under other concerns – economy, globalisation, hegemonism, the arms race, AIDS, even environmental challenges; some of these rightly dominate the attention of the world.

Unvaryingly, Africa is very much part of this (new) world carefully spelt out; in retrospect, its varied literatures have begun to address all the aforementioned discourses and even those that are conspicuously absent such as sex, sexuality and gender/trans-gender discourses. For more than half a century, postmodernism has been a conventional global movement that encapsulates the above-listed global consciousness. Its eclectic tentacles have certainly defamiliarised the modern world, as it was originally known, a world that Africa still blindly clings to for whatever reasons, arguably justifiable. It is probably on this basis that E. O. Enwerekwe (2011:1) states, that "postmodernism began as a movement in America, then on to Europe before spreading to the rest of the world as it exists today". Why is Africa enlisted at the tail-end with the rest of the world? Is postmodernism completely perilous to African modernist philosophy? And more importantly, is postmodernism absolutely foreign to African dialectics and consequently, its literature(s)?

Similarly, Nkosi (1998) aptly denounces the extreme exclusion of postmodernism from black writings in South Africa. Responding to the peculiar problem of literary disparity in South African post-apartheid writings, he argues against the position that black writings have more semblances to the more revered theme of nationalism:

My argument, then, relates first to the colonial status of black writing in South Africa. The first of these is the argument that postmodernism theory and practice, as offshoots of poststructuralist thought, have very little to offer oppositional black writers still deeply preoccupied with nationalist agendas and questions of agency.

Nkosi expresses his reservations about the attitude of indifference or impromptu dismissal of postmodernism by black South Africans, due to the fact that these conclusions are not premised on literary accomplishment based on necessary theoretical evaluation and also, as Nkosi states, “critical labour”. He argues that it is rather “a question of critics who have worked through these theoretical positions and come out on the other side convinced of their hopeless inadequacy”. Nkosi further interrogates the significance of postmodernism to indigenous African literature or vernacular literatures. He finally submits that “vernacular literatures, through their use of non-European languages, are rooted in or affiliated to other traditions, with different structures and modes of operation.” This view readily foregrounds the principles of intertextuality which is a predominant tenet in postmodernist theory.

In the same vein, Oyegoke’s (1991) affiliation of postmodernism and African literature becomes relevant to this point of view. He also argues that the postmodern fiction obtains its heterogeneous collection of motifs and symbolic representations from all cultures of the world. Here, it is evident that postmodernism is certainly not alien to African literature. Rather than an instantaneous rebuttal of a disconnect, there is need for continuous interrogation of the interface between African literature (fiction) and the condition of postmodern thinking. Kehinde (2001) corroborates this assertion, while pointing out that although postmodernism is indisputably an invention of Western philosophy,

African writers/critics should not be quick in an outright declaration of postmodernism as, according to Ekpo (1995), completely alien to African experience, and by extension, its literature. Kehinde (2001:31) rightly avers that:

We should not be tempted to believe that the practice of post-modernism in African fiction is an anathema or purely an extension of a development occurring in Euro-American literature. Rather, we should see it as a product of two circumstances. It is a concomitant effect of the global innovations in fiction; it is also an attempt by our novelists to go backward to the roots of African tradition.

Speaking of African (literary) tradition, while it is significantly dangerous to carelessly classify certain African writings as postmodernist, it is necessary to categorically emphasise that postmodernism is definitely neither an unfamiliar trope nor its tenets fresh and innovative as far as African indigenous aesthetics are concerned. Amos Tutuola's inexplicably 'famous' novel, *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (1952), is riddled with appreciable tenets of postmodernist style and form. Here, the novel's peculiar language and manner of expression, which has become the novel's Achilles heel, becomes an appropriate meta-narrative toward defamiliarising the absolutism of the English Language. More relevant is the fact that Tutuola, if the preponderance of magical realism, non-linear narrative style, authorial self-reference and temporal distortion, among others, are basic tenets of postmodernism, remains one of the earliest proponents of postmodernist African writers. This same ideology applies to the writings of Yvonne Vera, an award-winning Zimbabwean author, whose writings also allude to postmodernism.

Perhaps more precarious would one classify the Nigerian poet, Remi Raji, as a postmodern writer. In style and form, his poem, "Our Fragment" in the collection, *Sea of My Mind* (2013), suddenly deviates, in terms of poetic structure, literary standard and style, from modern poetic conventions (more interesting is the constant replication of postmodernist philosophy in affirmation with the postmodernist theme of pluralism); nor would Kofi Awoonor's *This Earth, My Brother* (1971) be sufficient for a postmodernist canonisation. The ingress of this study is certainly not to impose the

concept of postmodernism on African writers at every sign of such. However, it is at the same time preposterous to disallow a definite *past* and to further *ignore* the impending literary elegance of postmodernism in African writings. Postmodernism, particularly from Western perspective, has already saturated Africa and its diverse experiences. And these experiences, some collective though, are beginning to redefine the entirety (style, themes and language choice) of African literature in the twenty-first century.

Exploring Paranoia, Linguistic Ambivalence and Erotic Sexuality in K. Sello Duiker's *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*

The Quiet Violence of Dreams was written in 2001 and won the Herman Charles Bosman Prize in 2002. Set in one of cosmopolitan cities in South Africa, Cape Town, the story revolves round a young man, Tshepo, an undergraduate student at Rhodes University, Cape Town, and begins with the protagonist living in a mental hospital. He suffers from cannabis-induced psychosis. Haunted by his tortured past of rape and murder, the protagonist oscillates between his subconscious and the physical world, with the fading hope of finding relief in his endlessly depressive circumstance. But his search for a grip over his life remains elusive. The first few pages of *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* diffuse the paranoid state of the protagonist into the subconscious of the reader.

There's a part of me that will never be the same again. I feel like I've lost something or got lost in something too big to describe with easy words. So much happened in a short space of time. I don't know where to begin to look for the answers so for now I live with questions. Every day I ask new questions and every day the answer seems more elusive. It is not easy living with questions, there is enough uncertainty in life as it is. (*The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, 7)

His state of paranoia is further heightened by unhealthy lifestyle of smoking, drugs and drinking, which serves as temporary escape from his blatantly oppressive past. It is so severe that it adversely affects his health and his psychological state is equally threatened. As his health deteriorates, he becomes deviant and radical,

eventually finds his significance in his sexual identity, as a gay worker whose clients are basically white.

Other characters in the novel such as Zebron also share in this global paranoia, which is suggestive that this unbalanced state of mind is not selective. A psychiatrist patient himself at Valkenberg, Zebron recalls his ten-year history in the psychiatrist hospital, concluding that “there is nothing spiritual or healing (*The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, 23)” about the place. Rather, the authorities eventually rob the patient of that little sanity that is left. Zebron concludes: “I should have never let my brother cajole me into going in the first time nearly ten years ago. I feel more broken now than when I first came in.” (*The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, 23) This passage acknowledges parallel conclusions on concealed failures of science as absolute source of societal progression. The failing health of these patients is a figurative parody, a deconstruction of absoluteness of modern man’s scientific consciousness. In the end, the characters only experience sanity in the very expression of their despair and disillusionment. They seem to lose faith in humanity. Thespo, the protagonist, submits: “I feel angry with the world, with life and its fastidious order of things. There is so much that I don’t understand and the riddles seem to be getting more obscure.” (*The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, 9).

Furthermore, the repressive state of paranoia closes the wide gap in the quest for determining what reality is. The psychiatric characters are repressed into the hospital because they are judged to be already disconnected from the society, with the hope that through the efforts of the staff members and knowledge therein, they will become well. The irony however is that the hospital and its staff members offer no relief. The controlling attitude of the medical personnel is emphatically retributive and, at the same time, retrogressive; rather than assuage the strain, they violently assault the victims on the pretense of asserting order and control. These patients are so mentally abused to the extent that they even feel insecure with non-living objects around them. “The room oppresses you with frustration. There is a feeling of interminable doom about it (*The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, 23). The condition of paranoia in the novel metaphorically showcases modern African society as an unstable society, irrespective of the overwhelming influence of Western civilisation. Here, Duiker’s stylistic choice captures the

relentless chaotic strain, physical, emotional and psychological, that these characters undergo.

The next stylistic choice in the novel is linguistic ambivalence, a postmodern technique in which language of expression becomes deliberately distorted. This technique reverberates throughout the pages of *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*. Duiker displays an abstruse discharge of language which creates provoking and distorted views of the characters' worlds. There is an immediate eccentricity that negates the conventional plot structure of any regular postmodern narrative. However, this stylistic choice is far from redundant, as patently presented in this selected text. First, we notice Duiker's choice of multiple first person narrative technique, which extends an undulating power of narration to different voices, rather than the conventional individual voice. The writer empowers his characters, such as Tshepo, Mmabatho, Zebron and so on to reveal the intent of their subconscious, thus negating usual omnipotent voice, a metanarrative of multiple narratives. This technique quite validates Lyotard's "incredulity towards metanarratives." Therefore, there is a subversion of power that the narrator wields in dictating the events in a narration; deconstruction of dictatorial reliance on single narrator and the recognition of indispensable plurality of realities in contemporary society. Each of these characters presents a fraction of his or her epileptic perception of reality. There is an appreciation of self in their presentation of their undulant worldview; however, there is also the recognition of others too. That is why in Mmabatho's narrative of Tshepo, he claims that she "feels partly responsible for him (Tshepo)" (12) because he recognizes his own limitation in the holistic awareness of his friend's pain and personal struggles.

The technique of linguistic distortion extends beyond threshold of the narrative voice. From the beginning of the novel, the reader is proximately captivated by the poetic voice that seems to drown the narrative tone. The novel exhumes a pastiche of literary genres, which provokes a surreal impression that the reader is actually *listening* to, not reading the text. In addition, there are cases of incomplete syntactic expressions which further foreground the lack of control, unease and agitation of the character.

Things just happened. Really. I couldn't control anything. It's as if I killed someone, and then ran

away from myself... This hollow ugliness that is always with me... So I tell a friend... Things. Important Things. And friends like apples are sometimes sour. But like apples we remember them for the days when they were sweet and full of sun. (*The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, 7-8)

The incomplete syntactic statement further reveals the intention of the author in his exact words. "I don't know what to call it, this thing that happened to me because, because. (10)". This signifies a state of despair in his endless search for elusive answers. His state of depressive disillusionment is painfully extreme. Through this technique, the author draws in the reader as a confidant. His use of figurative expressions presents an imagery of crafty bait that draws attention by way of vivid comparison. Arguably most effective is the lasting imagery of personification, in which his state of paranoia dignifies non-living entities with human attributes. The consciousness of reality becomes distorted and chaotic.

Time is against me. I feel seconds ticking in my veins as I breathe. Minutes are outnumbering the hairs on my body. Hours are disappearing with each nail that grows. Forever. And ever. It's frightening. Time is frightening. It is like dominoes endlessly falling into oblivion... I begin to feel anxious again... In my dreams, Mmabatho is the woman who ran away with the sun and had an affair. (*The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, 10-11)

Also, there is linguistic interference from the sudden introduction of other language choices. The narration sudden breaks off from the use of English to other languages, such as Sotho, French, Afrikaans. C. Louis Leipoldt's poem was written first in Afrikaans, and then was later translated into English (355). Also, the employment of code-switching in the novel points to linguistic pluralism as part of the post-apartheid South African nation. An example is the conversation between Mmabatho and Tshepo where the former was trying to convince Tshepo to stop smoking zols. "That's weak. O batla ho re kereng? You know what they are calling you?" (9) Mmabatho later chastises Tshepo for being in a deplorable state

with these words: 'Ke eng ka wena? My God, you were perfect this afternoon. What happened?' (69) In another instance, Tshepo mindfully says to Mmabatho. 'Ja, well, ha re Tshwane kaofela. I don't like talking about things like that (*The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, 74). The presence of these other languages in the text contributes to the postmodern ambivalence through the deployment of multiple languages within a single narrative.

Therefore, the language choice in *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* contributes to the complex nature of the text. In the novel, poetic interference affects meaning which also adds up to the distortion of reality. For example, there is reference to Tshepo's psychotic state, when he witnesses "trees move and rock whispers" (*The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, 91). Through deliberate manipulation of language particularly in the poetic fashion, the novel relates to postmodern concept of experimentation. Duiker simply ensures that his language becomes part of his message of ambivalence.

The unrestricted use of vulgar expressions and brazen eroticism form the thrust of postmodern aesthetics of this novel. In the express description of eroticism, there is deconstruction of conservative expression of sex; there is also the subversion of the sexual role. Mmabatho displays this arrogance of sexual power in her seductive interaction with her ex-lover. She highly reverses herself: "I know I 'm big-boned. I enjoy wearing clothes that reveal my ample bust and suggestive hips. I walk with gait that some women whisper about in toilets. And I always wear my hair stringently short in defiance" (*The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, 18). Her bi-sexual nature is revealed in her confession of having an affair with an Indian woman, Karuna who is an employee at Ganesh, a café-cum-bar in Cape Town. But she immediately denies that, saying "I had an affair with her (Karuna). It didn't last long. I think I was more attracted to the idea of being with a woman than liking a woman. (*The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, 72). Here, there is validation of sexual identity as a condition of choice, and not the conclusion on natural inclination.

Still on sexuality, Duiker blatantly portrays same-sex intimacies without recurs to the usual societal restraints. Open description of sex is radically dominant; the writer's intense portrayal of eroticism overwhelms the pages of the novel. Andy

Carolyn and Ronit Frenkel (2013:36) argue that Duiker's novel becomes substantial because it "challenges the cultural invisibility of black practitioners of same-sex intimacies in South Africa." The height of erotic defiance is not just recorded in vulgar expression such as 'fuck you', 'asshole', 'bitch'. The shock effects of these are obtained from unprecedented description of non-heteronormative sexual scenes by the author. Tshepo, at a young age, was a victim of sexual assault by Zebron during the rape incidence that leads to the death of Tshepo's mother. He was also a victim of gang rape by his friends. As a result of this experience, Tshepo is introduced to a heterosexual lifestyle and finally engages in sex services at a massage parlour called Steamy Windows. In actual fact, it is a brothel.

One of Tshepo's customers is Peter, a white man who always lies to his wife that he is going to the gym every Thursday by five thirty. His persistence sexual activity is propelled by the ignorance of his wife. Once, Tshepo asks if his wife ever gives him a blow job. Peter's response is quite revealing. "Never. She thinks only desperate ugly girls do that. She thinks it is for sluts". (*The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, 388) Peter's wife represents the conservative, who regimentally presupposes sex within the confines of heterosexual marriage as sacrosanct. But that is what Peter finds disengaging and monotonous. He obtains sexual fulfillment with Tshepo largely as a result of experimentation. Tshepo notices this: 'Over the sessions he (Peter) has become adventurous... We try several poses. He grunts. I moan' (*The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, 388). Tshepo parodies the conservative mindset of Peter's wife. 'Perhaps this is all he wants every once in a while from his wife... a good wank, just a little naughtiness... certainly it would make him happier, he wouldn't complain as much about how frigid and puritanical she can be'. (*The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, 389)

The imagery of homosexuality in the novel is highly provocative. Duiker sets an uncomfortable tone in his description. At the same time, the narration assumes a normative approach. The writer's expression illustrates a distinct sense of purpose which is to deconstruct any hegemonic opinion on sexuality. Just like what obtains with race, sex is pluralistic and in pluralism lies unconditioned satisfaction.

I thrust inside him gently. He moans again. I grab his cock while I do this. He lifts his good leg to let me in. Soon I am pumping him. He moans with pathos. I have never heard anyone moan like that, deep wrenching moans that sound like they come from the depths of reticence, it is like listening to a secret language, a private conversation. Every time I vary my strokes, he responds, moaning in a different way. (*The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, 391)

Duiker's fluid description lures any reader to assume these rampant sexual scenes as natural sequence. He vogueishly presents these scenes as inventive reality of the real contemporary African society. His choice of an existent temporal setting, Cape Town, already dismisses the fictional aspect of the novel. His continuous references to real life places in Cape Town and so on provide that basis for reality. This is a replication of fiction, which is an influential postmodern technique that validates reality in this fictional work.

In summary, the selected African novels in this study are replete with salient literary techniques which expound on the postmodern temper of contemporary African literatures. Significantly, these techniques justify the aesthetic interpretations of these texts as postmodern. They equally avail readers and critics the inherently subversive intentions of these writers in the deployment of varied thematic preoccupations in the novels. Gaylard (2005:262) argues that African fictional mode estimates different levels of experience and disorder which are reflexive of African postcolonial societies. He therefore submits that African postcolonialism is "politically-charged postmodernism", adding that "the power of African postcolonial texts lies not only in producing newness by revealing what has been occluded in anti-revelatory cultural conditions, but by retaining an ethical irreducibility within themselves". The outcome therefore is a newfangled relationship between contemporary African literature and postmodern aesthetics.

Conclusion

K. Sello Duiker's writing is a complete deviation from the normative, stylistic impulses of South Africa's renowned novelists such as Peter Abrahams, Bessie Heads, J. M. Coetzee. His novel, *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* (2001), is reflections of social and psychological re-awakening to the transient realities and infinitely bleak future of South African post-apartheid era. Through his novels, he challenges and re-positions the stereotypic conceptions of sex, race, gender and identity, highlighting the multi-cultural context of post-apartheid South African society. Through his award-winning novel *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, which is the chosen text for this study, Duiker showcases the symphony of abrupt change during the post-apartheid period in South Africa. The reader is exposed to the heterogeneous subversion of language, style and other literary expressions in the novel.

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