THE POETRY OF C.T. MSIMANG: A DECONSTRUCTIVE CRITIQUE

by

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I declare that **THE POETRY OF C.T.MSIMANG: A DECONSTRUCTIVE CRITIQUE** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.
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INKozi inibusise!
SUMMARY

This study attempts to offer a reading of Msimang's poetry from the perspective of deconstruction. In this course it is necessary to introduce and elaborate on certain deconstruction strategies. This is mainly effected in the second chapter, where consideration is given to diachronic and synchronic perspectives on deconstruction. However, not all the ramifications of the various radical insights offered by deconstructive approaches into the various fields are explored, only the significant texts by mainly French theorists and their American disciples are investigated. Secondly, this study seeks to show that the Zulu poems under consideration are highly amenable to a deconstruction reading. This thesis examines the various practices to absorb, transform, and integrate deconstruction and to make the theory applicable as a critical method within the African languages critical environment. In the third chapter, I am chiefly concerned with the claim that a text never has a single meaning, but is a crossroads of multiple ambiguous meanings. Explaining the historical context, the interdisciplinary scope, and the philosophical significance of Derrida's project are explored in the fourth chapter. Language has no determinate centre nor any retrievable origin or truth. Belief in such is no more than nostalgia, says Derrida. What actually exists is a complex network of differences between signifiers, each in some sense carrying the traces of all others. With psychoanalysis in the fourth chapter, the focus is not on the differences between the deconstructive and psychoanalytic critics, but on their shared assumption that works of literature are in some sense indeterminate. These properties lead to the sixth chapter, which deals with intertextuality according to Derrida, Barthes and Bloom. The seventh and last chapter is the general conclusion in which main observations are summarized and important aspects highlighted. Finally, this thesis attempts to illustrate why the deconstructive procedure of analysing texts in such a way as to explicate their partial complicity with the theory, makes this deconstructive reading of Msimang's poetry possible.

Keywords:
post-structuralism
decomposition
différance
dissemination
logocentrism
écriture
transcendental signified
rhetoricity
trace
intertextuality
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Preamble

When writing was invented thousands of years ago, it was hailed as an innovative contribution to the world. Spoken words were written down and preserved for posterity. Nowadays, the attitude towards writing seems more dubious. The act of writing is seen as a risk. Its perilousness is firstly enclosed in the fact that the writer exposes his or her vulnerability in writing. There are furthermore definite limitations to what writing can represent.

Adding to this predicament, the variety of modern literary theories scrutinize not only the writer, but also the text, the readers and their various mutual relationships. Some critics contend that certain theories simply seem to pull the work to pieces - like the post-structural strategy, deconstruction. Deconstruction's principal proclamation is that writing is incapable of representing, but is self-referential. This elusiveness, again, cannot be represented: it can only be illustrated in the act of writing itself. In the deployment of deconstructive strategies which exist in the void of representation, the critic or reader is as such trapped in the rhetorical labyrinth of the text. Frank Lentricchia (1980:172) offers his insights about deconstruction:

an activity of textual privatization, the critic's doomed attempt to retreat from a social landscape of fragmentation and alienation ...

Later on, he labels it

... (a) technique of trouble ... (1980:186).
M.H. Abrams (1979a:217) complains that a deconstructive reading is "parasitical" on an "obvious or univocal" reading. This post-structuralistic practice has been branded as absurd, puzzling, infuriating or exasperating. Deconstruction is chided for its elimination of an intentional subject, its insubstantial inception of opposition, its celebration of impotence - simply for its severance from practice. Miller (1989:103) summarizes the negative feelings regarding the results of a deconstructive reading:

Paul de Man or Jacques Derrida make such extravagant demands on the mere act of reading a poem, a novel, or a philosophical text that it makes one tired just to think of it. Surely reading cannot be all that difficult! Or require such self-consciousness, such hesitations. Surely no one can be expected to master the intricate rigour of the deconstructive way of reading and apply it habitually.

This leads Geoffrey Hartman (1979:283) to the conclusion that

... no wonder some are scared witless by a mode of thinking that seems to offer no decidability, no resolution.

While the above and other critics have advanced some very useful arguments about the dead-endedness of the deconstructionist assignment, this arduous reading project still needs to be paid attention to. Critics need not only to consider the claims of deconstruction acutely but they should also understand its origins and take its existence seriously.

1.2 Aim of study

The purpose of this study is to attempt a deconstructive reading of the poetry of the Zulu poet C.T. Msimang. Specific attention will be given to his two creative volumes namely, *Iziziba ZoThukela* (1980) and *UNodumehlezi KaMenzi* (1990). An effort will be made to give a critical investigation into the relevance of the
deconstruction theory for the genre of poetry in Zulu literature. This investigation into certain aspects of the relationship between genre manifestation and evaluation with reference to the deconstruction theory and criticism in Zulu will show that post-structural literary theories do have a role to play in African languages. This thesis will try to explore the significance of the above through the twin activity of an examination of deconstruction criticism and the contemplation of relevant poems.

Every endeavour is made in this study to demonstrate a deconstructive method of reading in which Msimang as subject is put into question and shown to occupy an indeterminate position in the textual field, where he is not seen to be in control of his writing but rather controlled by writing. Through this deliberation of deconstruction and some of Msimang’s verse, I hope scholars will firstly become more aware of the existence of this rich body of poetic material, as well as consider the potentiality and feasibility of this post-structural project - something they have perhaps not tested critically before.

One of the aims of this assignment is to render a critical and comprehensive account of deconstruction, and at the same time to place deconstruction in multiple perspectives. It will attempt to examine the dilemma in which deconstruction finds itself. Despite its adversarial rhetoric, deconstruction possesses irrefutable value as a radical praxis. An assessment of deconstruction in relation to other disciplines will also be endeavoured.

Deconstruction is first and foremost associated with the French thinker, Jacques Derrida, but secondly also with his American disciples such as the so-called Yale deconstructionists - J. Hillis Miller, Geoffrey Hartman and Paul de Man. It is furthermore possible as well as necessary to utilize the thinking of a wide range of post-structuralistic theorists, which include Barbara Johnston, Shoshana Felman and Joseph Riddel. In particular, many ideas can be enhanced by way of psychoanalytic terminology. The writers associated with post-structuralism and deconstruction
seem to favour psychoanalytical interpretations; for example, Michel Foucault claims that psychoanalytic thought not only underlies contemporary thinking but is its condition. However, Derrida and de Man are more cautious. For Derrida, the psychoanalytical model is a metaphorical structure, not a literal one. Accordingly, he challenges Jacques Lacan for postulating the phallus as a transcendental signified. He is disinclined to adopt any model of interpretation, even a psychoanalytical one, because it represents a stable point of reference and a closed system. Both views will inform the point of view adopted by this study, for they are not mutually exclusive.

Deconstruction has largely been ignored in African languages to date. There is especially an urgent necessity for literary critics to examine more closely the concepts of deconstruction as it applies to African languages. This study will attempt to illustrate how deconstruction is liable to misunderstanding and non-recognition, especially in South Africa. The usual propensity for misunderstanding is the belief that deconstruction seeks purely to undermine the text. This position stems from the fact that deconstruction is detached from its materialist basis - nothing exists but the text and its modifications. It is also simply the failure to understand deconstruction as essentially a critique of metaphysics, of philosophy, a deconstruction of idealism and all its implications and not of texts as such. When texts are read or written, they are used to illustrate concepts and not to unearth codes of society structured by certain convictions. The deconstructionist needs to know exactly what he or she is trying to escape from and needs to make visible these hidden tenets of ideologies. From there, they have to supply intertextually validated alternative interpretations. When working with a deconstructive concept such as intertextuality, it necessitates a background examination on the subject so as to shed some light on the influences which to a large extent played and still play an important role in the poet’s work.

Important deconstructive concepts such as différance, dissemination, logocentrism, phonocentrism, trace, supplement, rhetoricity, intertextuality, etc. will be applied to the selected works. For example, intertextuality in poetry will exhibit the writer’s
control of archaic textual, biblical, traditional, political, societal and other influences. However, although the critical procedures of deconstruction inform the survey of the poetry throughout, the reading is not dictated to by these procedures. According to the deconstruction theory, language is unavoidably rhetorical, it is impossible to unravel the tropes of language by means of language. All that is possible, deconstruction attests, is to deploy a variety of rhetorical strategies, sometimes concurrently, in an attempt to illuminate the rhetorical maze of the text.

The contribution of this post-structuralist project towards developing the literature will also be demonstrated, e.g. deconstruction enables us to experiment with certain contemporary developments in literature, which also enhance the teaching of literature.

1.3 Scope of study

In the introduction, attention will be given to the fact that much negativity exists around deconstructive literary criticism in the Western world as well as in African languages. Very important is to illustrate the fact that almost no data on the chosen post-structural theory or even research on this topic can be found within Zulu literature. The only Zulu deconstructive study to date on Bloomian intertextuality is that of K.G. Nkumane in her Vista MA dissertation entitled ‘A study of L.B.Z. Buthelezi’s poetry’ (1995). Deconstruction is as such virtually non-existent as a field of study in African languages, and little has been done in Zulu specifically. This study aims to be a contribution in this field. Studies of this kind are done by scholars all over the world. As such, the point will be proven that post-structural literary theories do have a role to play in literature. A short biographical sketch of the poet/writer C.T. Msimang will be given so as to portray his background and the respective influences in his life. Msimang is one of the few major modern poets whose work has not been given the attention it deserves in Zulu.
In the second chapter of this study, consideration will be given to diachronic and synchronic perspectives on the evolution of this selected literary theory as well as the development of literary theory in African languages. An intelligible outlay presupposes a knowledge of concepts of deconstruction, the reading strategy introduced and practised by Derrida. There is a discussion of the most important terms which are defined and elaborated on. Necessarily, theoretical concepts like writing, subject, etc. will also be discussed under the framework of deconstruction. This is essential for a complete understanding of the utilization of deconstruction in the Zulu texts, as well as understanding the problems encountered with literary theory within African languages and outside African languages. Different approaches to understanding deconstruction are outlined. The argument that deconstruction is progressive holds that it liberates the reader or critic from all thematic interpretations, that it highlights the text itself (textual nature of reality), and challenges the institutions of traditional analysis.

This chapter will also furnish an explication on the problems of deconstruction, as well as the applications thereof to Zulu literature. Research in the field of literature in general and of African literature in particular is quite a recent development. Many publications study the text in its different aspects and relations to the author, the reader, and their respective social and cultural context. Zulu critics specifically seem to make use of either extrinsic approaches since they put emphasis on factors outside the text or structuralist theories. Although critical attention focussed on the text as such is of great importance, it is beneficial to scholars of literature to know and understand post-structuralist processes of analysis as well, to obtain new methods which are useful in studying specific texts.

The main chapters of this study are the third, fourth, fifth and sixth ones, where detailed examinations of the deconstructive literary theoretical concepts will be applied to the selected poems. These chapters are concerned with a process of reading or interpretation. The third chapter concerns typical deconstructive
rhetorical readings at its most basic level. Each of the selected poems by Msimang represents a different formulation of an introspective quest. That Msimang actively transformed received ideas are evident in the way his poetry can be read at any level of physical, emotional or intellectual response. His figurative language operates on many different levels. The poems examined could be interpreted, for example, as poems about writing poems, and as such they could be called metaphors of writing or even myths of writing. The poems examined do not simply reflect Msimang's concern with social problems, education or sceptical thoughts about love, but reflect specifically his preoccupation with the status of language and writing.

The fourth chapter concerns the question of reference and truth. In this chapter, it will be attempted to show that the effect of deconstructive writing is not to eliminate the referential power of texts, but rather to offer a rethinking of the terms in which they have been conceived. More specifically, through the analyses of the work of Paul de Man and Jacques Derrida, the study attempted to argue that deconstruction does not deny reference, but denies that reference can be modelled on the laws of perception or of understanding. Such models, which suggest that reference is 'seen' or grasped as outside the text, ultimately place limits on reference that in fact constrict it rather than open it to the new. What cannot be simply perceived or grasped, becomes from this point of view a mere fiction. The analyses by which deconstruction comes to distinguish reference from perceptual or cognitive models do not altogether eliminate reference, but rather examine how to recognize it where it does not occur as knowledge. It is indeed in this surprising realignment of reference with what is not fully masterable by cognition that the impact of deconstructive writing can be said precisely to take place.

In the fifth chapter themes and images in Msimang’s poetry are read deconstructively in accordance with psychoanalysis. In this chapter I have sought to sketch a kind of re-thinking of the relations between these two theories and Msimang’s poems. As will be seen from the poems and the texts of Lacan and Derrida, the core of
deconstruction's problematics is situated in the attitude towards life of man, as well as in the language certainty confronted with the biological involvement with death. Deconstruction sees all poems as dealing as much with the nature of poetry as with their ostensible subject which are in all three cases, the relationship between the speaker, Self and the Other. In fact, this relationship could be seen to be a figurative commentary on poetic discourse. The transformation is only achieved, however, through an equivocal play of resemblance and difference: that is, through the deployment of a mobile army of tropes which follow the indeterminate path of différence. The value of deconstruction as a critical tool capable of producing hidden contradictions which systematically undermine the overt meaning of a text will be illustrated in this chapter.

In chapter six intertextuality will be discussed, the manner in which it is evident in Msimang's poetry, its use and abuse and general contribution to Zulu poetry. In attempting to analyse certain intertexts in Msimang's poetry, one has to look at various other components. The method of identifying intertexts and especially the role of the critic in determining the different types of sources in a text also play an important role. Many external influences can also be encountered in Msimang's poetry, however, only the evidence of allusions and influences within the poems will be discussed. The scope of this study, however, does not allow for a lengthy discussion of all subjects concerned. Furthermore, a content analysis of all his poems and all intertextual traces, from past to present, is also not possible, thus only prominent poems and striking traces will be touched upon.

The seventh and last chapter is the general conclusion in which main observations are summarized and important aspects highlighted. My general conclusion provides a résumé of the most important points made in the course of the thesis.
1.4 Method of study

As the focal point of this project is to view Msimang's poetic texts from a deconstructive perspective and to give a general survey of the deconstruction theory and practice, as well as the development thereof in order to indicate how it is used in literature today, it is apparent that the applications and procedures of deconstruction will be implemented. I have mostly worked within the framework of the abridged, elliptical style of deconstruction, but I have necessarily also adopted different forms of analysis which were used in particular circumstances. I have utilised the expository style of close textual analysis, but simple, basic linear argument was also employed. The reason for adopting different registers lies in the premise adhered to throughout the study - that language is inescapably rhetorical, and that it is impossible to get behind, or get under or penetrate the figurative use of language by means of language. According to deconstruction, all that is possible is to employ a variety of rhetorical strategies, sometimes concurrently, in an attempt to illuminate the tropological, multifaceted intricacy of the text. This thesis attempts, accordingly, to illustrate this polyvocal mode of discourse. It is sometimes suggested that in doing this deconstruction simply continues the method of close reading as practised by the New Critics. However, (although in a complex way), deconstruction holds together and makes sense, it further emphasises the way in which a text becomes problematic and confused.

It is fairly well known that deconstruction is not so much a philosophy or a method/school of thought, as a specific way or "strategy" of reading. Although there is no specific approach or method to the deconstructive practice, the pattern is often to take a small section of text and to point out just how problematic the passage is. While probing Msimang's poetry, I will at times only examine certain segments of selected poems - especially to demonstrate certain outstanding features observed - but most of the time the whole poetic composition will be considered.
With all English translations of the Zulu poems, literary translation is adhered to as far as possible. However, where literal translation fails to convey the intended meaning, free translation is adopted. Not all of the poems are translated in full in the thesis as such, but the fully translated versions do appear in the appendix. Furthermore, for translations and etymological explanations of words, I utilized as many dictionaries as possible. The most frequent used dictionaries are however Doke and Vilakazi’s *Zulu-English Dictionary*, Nyembezi’s *Isichazimazwi Sanamuhla Nangomuso* and Nkabinde’s *Isichazamazwi*.

Certain key terms will be employed in the investigation of the poetry. I shall focus on a few scholars whose explanations of key terminology I consider to be representative of the main ways of looking at the problems encountered in the discussions of Msimang’s poems.

When examining Msimang’s verse, certain external factors will be contemplated for comparison and clarification. This seems to clash with the internal nature of deconstruction, but deconstructionists like Derrida or de Man are certainly not entirely intrinsic, solely concerned with language as such or limited to language in elevated isolation from the extralinguistic. There is a fully elaborated theory of the historical, psychological, and ethical relations of literature already present, for example in de Man’s *Allegories of Reading*. In his work, he has progressively focussed on the almost universal shift to politics, history, and society which marks the typicality of the current moment in literary study. If one of the dimensions of de Man’s work is a conscientious accounting for the referential, historical, social, and political effects of literature, the same thing can also be demonstrated for Jacques Derrida, who has all along included consideration of the institutional, political, and social implications of his work. This can be seen in *Positions*, for example or in an interview entitled ‘Deconstruction in America’ (1985:1-33). However, the opponents of the rhetorical study of literature still continue to misrepresent deconstruction as ahistorical and apolitical. This may just indicate the importance of
what is in question here.

1.5 C.T. Msimang and his work

The renowned Zulu poet Christian Themba Msimang was born on 25 October 1944 at Ethalaneni Mission in the district Nkandla, KwaZulu. As the first born of Michael and Allina, he had a strict, but constructive upbringing. His mother, an ex-lay teacher and disciplinarian, already started coaching him at home. His aunt, Khabonina Judith Msimang, a spinster who stayed with them, pampered and spoiled him with fabulous stories. She is regarded by Msimang as a great historian and poet. She had lived with his grandfather, who fought under Cetshwayo in the Anglo-Zulu war. It was from his aunt’s tellings that he later wrote *Izulu Eladuma ESandlwana* (1976), basing one of the characters on his grandfather.

As a former alter-boy, who tried hard to live up to his given name Christian, Msimang and the other boys from the mission station were constantly challenged by those traditionalists living outside the radius of the missionary. Msimang regards this conflict as a significant sculpturing in his life and poetry. Throughout his works, these two elements of traditional life and religious experiences can be detected.

Msimang received his primary education at a mission school in Zululand and later went on to obtain the Junior and Senior Certificates through the TransAfrica Correspondence College. After completing Form 2, at the age of sixteen, he was obliged to seek work. Through his uncle Nxumalo, he got in touch with his grandfather, Shange, in Johannesburg. His application to a compound manager failed because of his young age. A domestic job with a monthly income of six pounds was organised for him with an English couple, Mr. and Mrs. Park in Inanda.

Having attended a disadvantaged school where the only book was the teacher’s copy,
it was understandable that he had not read many books before this position in Johannesburg. One of his co-workers, Elizabeth Khumalo, a not very learned but avid reader, used to hand him books which their employers had passed on to her. These books were mainly popular literature, mostly thrillers, like James Hadley Chase. It was only then that he got the inspiration to write. This opened up a whole new world to him.

In 1965, Radio Zulu announced a competition for short texts of ± 20 pages. Being too late to submit his text, he travelled to Alexandra where he met the renowned Zulu novelist, James Gumbi. From Gumbi came the advice to seek help from UNISA where he met Prof. Louw, Mr. van Rooyen and Mr. D.B.Z. Ntuli. He held a series of meetings with Ntuli who introduced him to Zulu literature and gave him invaluable information, especially on story writing. Ntuli discouraged him to write on the exhausted ‘Jim goes to Jo’burg’ theme which was predominant in the 60s and 70s. He then abandoned the township-life theme, and turned to themes based on his traditionalist experiences. This led to *Akuyiwe Emhlahlweni* (1973), which was submitted to the SABC and produced by the acclaimed Alexius Buthelezi for radio. (One of the cast members was Jimmy Khumalo, who became a life-long friend.) From here he never looked back.

After working as a domestic worker for eight years, he was employed by Werksman Attorneys in Johannesburg as a filing clerk in 1970. When he commenced his law studies they appointed him as an articled clerk. He continued his studies through UNISA, obtaining a BA degree in 1974 and an LLB in 1978. In January 1977 he was appointed by UNISA as a Professional Assistant in African languages. He obtained both his Hons BA and MA with distinctions. His MA dissertation, entitled *Folktale influence on the Zulu novel*, has been published by Via Afrika. This study assesses the extent to which the folktale has influenced the Zulu novel, whether positive or negative. This was achieved mainly by examining motifs, motifemes and core-images in both genres.
He obtained his D.Litt et Phil degree in 1989. In his thesis, ‘Some phonological aspects of the Tekela Nguni dialects’, Msimang initially traces the history of these enigmatic speech forms, some of which are found also in the traditionally non-Nguni areas. He has used the findings of his extensive and thorough research in the field and in the available literature to prove, by means of interdialectal phonology, that all the Tekela dialects are off-shoots at various stages in the past, of one Tekela language. The work is at the same time a natural point of departure for students interested in the pre-history of the languages of the South Eastern Zone of Africa.

He was promoted to an associate professorship in 1990, and full professorship in January 1992. On 1 August 1992, Msimang was appointed to the post of Head of the Department of African languages; a post he filled until 10 March 1997 when he was seconded to the position of Acting Registrar: Academic at UNISA.

Msimang is a very involved and dedicated academic. Not only has he delivered papers on literature and linguistics at local and overseas congresses, but he serves on various language and cultural bodies. He was chairman of the Zulu Subject Committee of the Department of Education and Training as well as member of the Combined Subject Committee and Examinations Board of the same department. He was an examiner for Standard 10 as well as for postgraduate studies. He was chairman of SAFOS (i.e. Southern African Folklore Society), and is chairman of STANON (i.e. an HSRC project on Standard and Non-standard Languages in South Africa). He also sits or has served on the following committees: ACCLLS (i.e. Advisory Committee for Comparative Linguistics and Literature under the auspices of LITERATOR); Interdisciplinary congress on Values chaired by Prof. J.J. Burden; Zulu Language Board; Bureau for Zulu Language and Culture; USIBA Writers Guild and ALASA. He served on the SABC panel of adjudicators for both Radio and Television Artes Awards since 1986 (for radio) and 1991 (for TV). He also adjudicated the M-NET Book Prize in 1994.
For the past six years Msimang has been a member of the Heraldry Council. He was a member of the committee concerned in processing the various flag proposals in 1994 and as a member of Council took part in the final recommendations that led to the adoption of the new National Flag. In January 1995 he was appointed to LANGTAG - Subcommittee: Language Development. In March 1996 he was appointed to PANSALB, as a member of the decision making team on language matters.

Msimang is an ardent historian, an interest which was aroused by his aunt Judith. He majored in history, wrote many historical poems, stories and one historical novel, and is currently engaged in penning down the history of the reigning Zulu monarch, starting from Ndaba, the founder of the clan which was the core of the Zulu tribe. Besides history and law his other favourite subjects are folklore, sociolinguistics, Zulu literature and linguistics. His *Akuviwe Emhlahlweni* and *Izulu Eladuma ESandlwana* were serialised by the Zulu service of the SABC as radio plays. He has written a number of articles and reviews, as well as a number of books on Zulu literature. He has edited and translated several publications. His publication, *Kusadiwa Ngoludala*, won the B.W. Vilakazi award in 1984; and his novel, *Buzani KuMkabayo*, won the De Jager Haum over-all literary prize in 1982 and the B.W Vilakazi award in 1986. He received the coveted Vilakazi literary award once again in 1988 for his book *Izimbongi Izolo Nananumhla I* (Poets - Yesterday and today) which is an evaluation of Zulu poetry from 1935 - 1980 with an anthology. In July 1991 at a biennial ALASA conference at the University of Port Elizabeth he received the Shuter and Shooter Literary prize for studies in African Literature with his article ‘Reception of Shaka Zulu: An evaluation of its cultural and historical context’. He also received the De Jager-HAUM (Kagiso) Literary Prize for Zulu in 1995 for a manuscript of short stories entitled *Igula Lendlebe Aligcwali*.

A romanticist at heart, Msimang deems Margaret Mitchell’s *Gone with the wind* and Ann Rand’s *The Fountainhead* as the two texts which made the biggest impression
on him. It was only in the second year of his Zulu studies that he became totally immersed in Zulu poetry. He embarked on reading B.D. Ntuli’s Imitation in Zulu Poetry, which introduced him to the whole survey of Zulu poetry. Ntuli’s thesis on the poetry of Vilakazi was read repetitively, and consequently, Vilakazi became one of his most admired Zulu poets. His current favourite African poet is C.S. Ntuli, for whom he has tremendous respect. Msimang’s introduction to Zulu poetry as such was not with the texts themselves, but from the criticism of the texts, such as in Ntuli’s two works.

His artistic skills, even in genres other than poetry, have earned him favourable comments from prominent scholars such as D.B. Ntuli (1982:148) who refers with admiration to the creativity of Msimang’s meritorious works, as well as E.T.Z. Mthiyane who describes Msimang as a “da Vinci” who “has a perfect feel for conciseness and incisiveness as can be observed in character portrayal and imagery depiction” (1984:131-132).

C.T. Msimang is well-known for the numerous articles and reviews he wrote for various journals. He has written many research and grammar books and compiled and edited several literary anthologies. Other than the two collections of poetry to be considered in this study, further creative writing include:

*Akuyiwe Emhlahlweni.* Via Afrika, 1973 (novel).

*Izulu Elachuma ESandlwana.* Van Schaik, 1976 (Historical drama).


*Iziziba ZoThukela.* Via Afrika, 1980 (poetry collection).


1.6 Résumé

Chapter one was purely introductory. The aim, method and scope of this project were mainly elaborated on, in which the most important aspects on which this thesis is based, were covered. Both post-structuralism, as an umbrella term, and deconstruction were touched upon for, as one would expect, their terminology are intricately related. The negative attitude that most critics have towards deconstruction theory and practice was highlighted. Furthermore, a background study of the poet under discussion, Msimang, was given. This is done mainly for the sake of intertextuality. The primary objective behind deconstruction is that texts should be read differently now, partly as a result of new ways of reading which have shown that they are far more problematic than perhaps they once seemed. Traditionally, critics and readers viewed literary texts as a store of information on the values and ideas of their cultural tradition. Post-deconstructively, literary works should be seen as especially concentrated forms of universal features of language, the tendency of figurative language, for example, to subvert straightforward grammatical or logical meaning. Additionally, works are read differently now because they are read in a different context, by readers shaped by the mass media. Influences like television, cinema, and popular music, for example, should also be taken into consideration. Especially in South Africa, with our new multilingual, multiracial society, a modern society with increasingly amalgamated cultural traditions, we must again become focussed on the all important traditional task - the teaching of reading.
BACKGROUND TO DECONSTRUCTION AS A POST-STRUCTURAL LITERARY THEORY

2.1 Introduction

In order to fully grasp the performance and implications of deconstruction, certain basic deconstructive verities have to be explained. In this chapter an attempt will be made to introduce the fundamentals and functions of deconstruction. This approach to literature is considered by many theorists to be the most intellectually formidable method of literary analysis.

Deconstruction forms part of the literary theories grouped together as post-structuralism. It can only be fully understood when seen in its post-structuralist framework, when certain structuralist thinkers started to question certain structuralist concepts. This cast doubt on the present thinking and caused a considerable reaction to the literary theory of the day. Deconstruction was the most controversial outcome of structuralism, and still evokes a great deal of attention and even resentment. It could be said that in the last decade, criticism and theory has partly been a rejection of and reaction against deconstruction, but it has also at the same time been an absorption of, and a working forwards from, deconstruction (Peck and Coyle, 1993:197).

As stated before, this post-structural approach to literary analysis is rather a philosophy than a literary theory, a point which will be explained in this discussion. The theory of deconstruction also comprises of no specific method - there are no specific guidelines to follow when reading a text carefully and closely. The procedure simply criticises the sign and the possibility of meaning in a text. Peck
and Coyle (1993:194) views this as follows:

A deconstructive reading is a sort of double reading: it acknowledges the way in which the writer attempts to order things, but then points to the contradictions and problems in the text, the complications that the writer cannot pull into her or his system. The critic's own response, however, can also be deconstructed, for the critic, too, is involved in trying to create coherence where none exits.

To many this appears to be a negative, destructive approach. The customary objection to deconstruction is then that it is a form of criticism which, rather than valuing what a text says, emphasises a text's difficulties in saying anything.

Although there is thus no specific approach to deconstruction, a repetitive pattern does appear when analysing Derrida's work. While examining individual texts closely, he searches for contradictions and, "particularly in his studies of philosophical writing, the gaps in what appears to be a logical argument" (Peck and Coyle, 1993:195). He knows that his own readings of these texts can also be deconstructed, for all readings are misreadings in that they compel ordering-strategies:

... without being able to isolate (the) elements and atoms (of the old structure), the enterprise of deconstruction always in a certain way falls prey to its own work (Derrida, 1976:24).

Therefore

above all the work of deconstruction, its 'style', remains by nature exposed to misunderstanding and non-recognition (Derrida, 1976:4).

The above-mentioned ordering strategies will be fully discussed later in this chapter.

Deconstruction probes readings which act as conferments of an individualist's vision that was relevant to, and could inspire, all of society. It focuses on the reason why
such readings result in certain messages with mostly positive meanings that not only the critic, but his or her followers want to hear. Traditional literary criticism can be seen as a sort of scheme in which particular critics praise literature for its manifestation of specific values. Post-structuralism, and then to an even greater extent deconstruction, stepped back from this conspiracy and scrutinized it with a naked eye.

Certain individuals contributed to and were associated with the movement of deconstruction. The principal person who launched this approach was the French philosopher, Jacques Derrida. The term itself also originates in the writings of Derrida. Derrida based his work on Ferdinand de Saussure - his conception of language consists of a differential network of arbitrary signification. Derrida however raises a number of points of criticism against de Saussure’s language theory. His work has been heralded as the most significant in contemporary thinking, but it has also been denounced as a corruption of all intellectual values.

Any reader or critic of deconstruction who had assimilated even a sliver of the message of structuralism and deconstruction cannot return to the old principles of criticism, it is impossible to think along the old lines again. This is so, for deconstruction has “exposed the kind of comfortable complacency of much traditional criticism, in which the critic found a coherent pattern and set of values in the text which he could endorse” (Peck and Coyle, 1993:197). Deconstruction has changed the way in which a text is read.

2.2 Diachronic and synchronic perspectives on deconstruction

The creation of a theory discloses much regarding the content of that theory. Some theories like feminism and black literary theories were powered through their opposition to established theory and their resentment against exclusion. Their claim
was that the literary tradition has been ignorant or insensitive of any alternative tradition. Deconstruction, however, did not have its origin in opposition to any theory, but it also did not agree with any specific theory.

Deconstructive theory and practice had its origin in structuralism already, but it is grouped with the post-structuralistic approaches. An examination of post-structuralism will elucidate the roots of deconstruction further. The history of deconstruction as well as modern day views by allies and adversaries will also explicate the theory.

2.2.1 The rise and influence of post-structuralism

The rise of literary theory, from the 1960s to the present, is no more than an imperative response to the repressing effects of a no longer dynamic or investigative institutionalized technique. The New Critics’ close analysis became rigid, inflexible and self-preservatory. Critics believed that the theory was losing its skill in interpretation. Certain structuralists began to doubt the suitability of the theory that they were imposing on literature. In reaction to this, the post-structuralistic theory was triggered in the seventies. With new insights, they hoped to regain the interpretive skill.

Post-structuralism is sometimes used almost interchangeably with deconstruction, however, deconstruction only represents an important, even dominant element of post-structuralism. Post-structuralism covers all the approaches that have developed in the wake of, and which take account of, the new perceptions into language that sprang from structuralism. Other post-structuralistic theories are reader-reception, new historicism, psychoanalytic theory and feminism. Peck and Coyle (1993:196) offer the following insight:

Traditional critics accepted that a text offered a coherent response to life and that critics could make sense of this. Post-structuralist
critics, by contrast, tend to find incoherence, contradiction and anxiety in texts from the past; they tend to stress the fragility of the ideological order of society rather than the strength or coherence of any period.

Although deconstruction forms part of post-structuralism, there is a degree of uncertainty as to the use of this term. According to Richard Harland (1987:2) post-structuralism can be divided into three, i.e. groups which he had compiled according to different contributing persons. Alex Callinicos, however, proposes a rather different division of post-structuralism into two main strands of thought: textualism and Michel Foucault's "power-knowledge" (Callinicos 1989:68). The textualists, according Richard Rorty (1982:139) include the so-called 'Yale School of literary criticism', which he maintains centres around Harold Bloom, Geoffrey Hartman, J. Hillis Miller, and Paul de Man; post-structuralist French thinkers such as Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan and Michel Foucault, historians such as Hayden White, and social scientists such as Paul Rabinow. What all of these individuals have in common, according to Rorty, is an antagonistic position to natural science and the belief that we can never compare human thought or language with "bare, unmediated reality" (1982:139). Rorty sees these positions as constituting a textualism which is the contemporary counterpart of idealism, and its practitioners as the spiritual descendants of the idealists (1982:140). The textualist version of post-structuralism has had a far more significant impact on literary studies than the Foucaultian variant. Textualist post-structuralism represents at the same time both a development and a deconstruction of structuralism (Hawthorn, 1992:137). These post-structuralists caused an even more radical break with the New Critics. These critics involved themselves with the deconstruction of a text and the reconstruction of a new text.

The predominant influence on post-structuralism is Derrida, who is primarily associated with deconstruction. However, the bulk of post-structural literary theory is more political than deconstruction. "However, these theories still appertain to deconstruction in that they all remain external to the traditional values. Both Marxist and feminist criticism possess this involvement, as well as psychoanalytic
criticism which examines the construction of the subject in society. It is also true of new historicism which, rather than just drawing a picture of a period, speculates on how and why any period constructs itself in a certain way" (Peck and Coyle, 1993:198).

Post-structuralism starts with Ferdinand de Saussure, everything follows from his Course in General Linguistics, published in 1916. With regards to communication, De Saussure makes a distinction between sign, signifier and signified: a particular language sign consists of sound plus a form of writing which is called the signifier and a concept or meaning associated with the sensory perception which is called the signified. Applied to literature, this means that a text equals a sign which consists of symbols (signifiers), and which signifies the reality in which we live (signified). De Saussure also makes a distinction between two systems with regards to language, namely langue and parole. With langue he refers to a system of conventions of language (rules and norms) and with parole to the manifestation of that system in speech and writing.

De Saussure's notions have three implications for literature: firstly, that a text being a sign which communicates, also consists of different parts the same way language comprises different words; in the second instance, that there is always a certain relation between these constituent parts of the text; and thirdly, that meaning is conveyed not by one item in the text only, but by each individual part together with the whole of all the constituent parts. Structuralism regards a text as a structure which has been structured in a specific and unique way by organising unorganised and artistically indifferent material in such a way that it becomes meaningful. To the structuralists, the meaning of a specific text is of secondary importance since they are primary interested in how literature produces meaning. Selden (1988a:52) mentions that "structuralist poetics draws attention to the codes we used to construct meaning."
While structuralism is engrossed with establishing a firm hold on the text, post-structuralism is concerned with acknowledging the text's elusive nature and the fallibility of all readings (Peck and Coyle, 1993:194). It stresses the indeterminacy of all texts and the inadequacy of all readings. For de Saussure, meaning is firstly produced in the formation of signs as two-sided entities. Secondly, meaning is also produced in a play of differences. Because de Saussure's sign is premised on a binarism which he claims is indissolubly related, Derrida is immediately suspect. Although Derrida accepts de Saussure's principle that meaning is the product of the differential relations between signifiers, he does not agree with the viewing of language synchronically only. According to him, the diachronic aspect, of how language develops and changes over time, should also be taken into consideration.

Derrida argues that de Saussure applied logocentric thinking when he elevated speech above writing. This implies that meaning is conceived as existing independently of the language in which it is communicated and is thus not subject to the play of language. Subsequently, it discloses the belief that the signifier and the signified could be merged within the same temporal plane. Derrida argues that one can discover - by deconstructing de Saussure's argument and by pursuing the implications of his arguments as far as possible, de Saussure's maintenance of a strict distinction between "the signans and the signatum, [and] the equation of the signatum and the concept", which, he argues,

inherently leaves open the possibility of thinking a concept signified in and of itself, a concept simply present for thought, independent of a relationship to language, that is of a relationship to a system of signifiers ... (1981b:19).

Derrida is totally opposed to this view and he deconstructs and inverts his hierarchy of language and writing. He transforms the terms, and the relations between them. He believes that writing - where the signifier is always productive - is a better model for understanding how language works. This shatters the idea of a permanently binding of the signifier and signified. Derrida's principal aspiration has thus been a
commitment to the eradication of the belief in absolute and extra-systemic determinants of meaning:

Thus central to the post-structuralist impact on literary theory and criticism has been its argument that the play of signifiers cannot be stopped or made subject to the fluctuation of any extra-textual authority (Hawthorn, 1992:138).

Language is seen as a never-ending chain of words where meaning is produced in an infinite number of possible future contexts.

2.2.2 Deconstruction and its exponents

Deconstruction might be the most difficult to summarize of all the developments in contemporary literary theory. The reason for this is that deconstruction has no specific definition. As varied as critics of literature are, so then are the answers to what deconstruction might represent. Some critics seem to think that this post-structural theory is a way of doing philosophy or of reading theoretical texts - the latest fashion in literary theory. More negative responses were that it is a device for making trouble or that it is literature’s revenge on philosophy. Again, articles on deconstruction mostly aspire to decipher the theory itself which leads to a further problem. There has been more talk about deconstruction, as a ‘theory’ or as a ‘method’, attempts to applaud it or to deplore it, than there has been an attempt to actually do it, to show how it is applicable to literary works.

Geoffrey Hartman (1989:98-99) attempts to describe deconstruction as follows:

Deconstruction belongs to the sphere of the essay, because deconstructive reading no longer aims to establish a master-code but undoes every totalizing perspective. Yet it also belongs, in spirit, to the science of literature. We certainly have cause to place deconstruction on the side of theory ... It cannot be classified
disjunctively as a philosophy or as a type of literary analysis. It is clearly both; and while it implies a theory of reading, that theory seems to be effective only as a set of practices, of actual readings, which revise and so revive texts in an 'intellectual' tradition stretching from Plato to and beyond Mallarme. I sometimes feel that deconstruction itself is the impasse. The name stresses analysis ...

Perhaps the best one can do is to 'place' deconstruction, and to show that it is not a foreign import ...

Many critics maintain that deconstruction involves no actual change in theory of literature, but a definite modification in the theory of teaching; that is, in the critical reading of literature. Ralph Cohen (1989:xiii) comments:

Here 'reading', in the sense of rhetorical analysis of the most vigilant and patient sort, is indispensable. How else are we going to know just what a given text is and says, what it can do?

Although deconstruction is associated with Derrida, it is not the work of one person. Deconstruction is a change of mind, the way literature and its interpretations are looked at. It suspends everything the reader took for granted about language, experience and communication and led to the overthrowing of traditional concepts. Traditional critics maintain that moral and ideological meanings are ever present in literary theory. Before deconstruction, interpretation meant the process of giving meaning to words and images. But deconstruction hinges on one aspect: what one person reads and interprets is not the same as another person’s perception. It is an investigation of intertextuality, on the traces of other texts. The deconstructive critic unravels the usual rhetorical structures, searches for influences of earlier texts, makes an investigation into the etymology of the used words and tries to combine from the as such deconstructed text a new text, which again opens itself up for a new deconstruction. Traditional critics have also indicated that certain texts contain several echoes and traces of earlier texts, but these are transformed and difficult to recognize. The most important task of the deconstructionist is an ongoing investigation into old traces. Even old texts made use of even older traces. Even the literary-critical text is a link in an everlasting chain.
Structuralism also viewed the text as having a fixed meaning, and the critic had to discover the meaning. Deconstruction is opposed to the above approach. A critic cannot unsuspectingly try to capture the meaning of a text. A text is a tapestry which is combined from several intricately woven threads. The following of one thread only leads to an incorrect representation of facts. But the following of more threads does not lead to the determination of one definitive meaning. Criticism leads to aporia, a not-knowing, a meaning of which one knows no other alternative. Hillis Miller illustrates this situation with the image of the Ariadnes thread, which differently from the mythological tale, does not show the way out of the labyrinth, but ensnares the searcher finally in the labyrinth.

Deconstructionists are also against the view in which the text is depicted as a representation of reality. On the contrary, so they say, the text is actually creating a reality. The realistic impression of true presence is precisely the result of the language's ability to, what is absent in facts, recall as reality. The language creates reality. There are no events or characters in a text, only language forms which convoke these with the reader. Deconstruction questions the idea of the sign and langue of the text. It questions the idea of the context, the idea of the author as well as the reader, the role of history, interpretation, the forms of critical writing. Deconstruction is aimed towards revealing in which way the writer has made use of language and thought patterns handed down to give form to a particular vision. Deconstruction questions the New Criticism's explication of the difference between rational language and poetic language.

The deconstructive procedure is not opposed to or does not want to change other theories, but permits these apparent adversaries to develop their theories. Many theories such as New Criticism, feminism, psychoanalysis, Marxism and New Historicism comprise of components such as aims, methods, vocabularies, images, arguments that are not all in conflict. Like deconstruction, most of these approaches insist on close and careful reading of texts. This is the legacy of deconstruction and
it is incorporated into even those theories which resist deconstructive views of language.

As already discussed, deconstruction originated in France with Derrida, but it is also practised immensely in America. In France deconstruction came into being as a reaction against structuralism, while deconstruction in America emerged against the background of the New Criticism. Certain individual critics like Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva and Phillippe Sollers, who were associated with the journal *Tel Quel* developed a theory of the text in Paris during the late 1960s and early 1970s. They debated contemporary theory, especially psychoanalysis, structuralism and Marxism. Barthes explains the inception as "the meeting of different epistemes: Freudianism, Marxism and Structuralism" (Barthes, 1981:35).

Barthes himself demonstrated his shift towards the post-structural position with his essay ‘The death of the author’(1968). Again, in 1970 his text *S/Z* - which is regarded as the first important post-structural manuscript - was published. The first deconstructive essay in English translation was Derrida’s own ‘Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences’, first delivered as a lecture at John Hopkins University in 1966 and published in 1970 in *The Structuralist Controversy.* This essay has been extremely influential on literary theory (Newton, 1988:148).

Derrida’s deconstructive analyses of literary texts have also been a major inspiration to literary critics, for unlike the previous theories which exhibited the structural unity of a text, he shows how a text foils its own presumptions and is thus divided against itself.

In 1971 Paul de Man’s *Blindness and Insight* ushered in deconstruction as a critical movement in America. The theory was then taken up primarily by other American critics such as J. Hillis Miller. Miller was one of a group of critics at Yale University in the 1970s and early 1980s who adopted a deconstructionist position. Their type of American deconstruction constitutes a rather less broadly-based outgrowth of structuralism. They produced the notion of ‘misreading’, which is also found in the
work of Harold Bloom and Paul de Man. According to Culler (1983:178) they mimicked Derrida's reversal of language and writing by inverting the hierarchy between reading and misreading. Reading then becomes only a special case of misreading. Misreading would then "resist metaphysical idealizations and capture the temporal dynamic of our interpretive situation" (Culler, 1983:178). However, even if the word 'reading' is not utilized because of its idealist connotations and the word 'misreading' is used instead, misreading still implies some true reading. Hillis Miller, for example, discusses in one of his articles how principal images collide with and undermine the writer's claims for impartial vision. Another deconstructionist, Geoffrey Hartman, has written about the 'vision' in poetry (Peck and Coyle, 1993:196-197). Whereas most critics concentrate on the substance and significance of this vision, Hartman stresses how it lies beyond the reach of language, and shows how the poet's verse repeatedly becomes confused and puzzled because there is such a gap between the feeling and words (Peck and Coyle, 1993:94). These are typical deconstructive readings, emphasising the contradictions the writer cannot control. According to the American deconstructionist Barbara Johnston (1981:167)

"a deconstructive reading is a reading which analyses the specificity of a text's critical difference from itself.

The critical difference of the text is explained as follows:

Difference is not engendered in the space between identities, it is what makes all totalisations of the identity of a self or the meaning of a text impossible (Johnston, 1981:166).

Deconstruction is thus a specific way of reading which deconstructs itself without posing any alternative. Among the American deconstructionists one finds many different interpretations of deconstruction. Another mode of deconstructive reading identified simply applies Derridean terminology, using deconstruction as a model for the interpretation of literary texts - a way of solving hermeneutic problems. Not everybody agrees with the latter approach, some traditional deconstructionists feel
that it weakens the original formulations of Derrida. But according to Culler (1983:228), to set up Derrida’s work

as the original word and treat other deconstructive writing as a fallen imitation is precisely to forget what deconstruction has taught one about the relation between meaning and iteration and the internal role of misfires and infelicities. Deconstruction is created by repetitions, deviations, disfigurations. It emerges from the writings of Derrida ... only by dint of iteration: imitation, citation, distortion, parody.

It could be said that the statement ignores Derrida’s insistence on the manner in which deconstruction should not only invert, but also transform. However, many literary critics have accepted a post-structuralist position, but object to following Derrida’s textual approach too narrowly. Other deconstructionists’ strategies, like Foucault, for instance, are more acceptable, for the critic is able to pursue beyond the textual to other dimensions of texts.

It would certainly seem that deconstruction involves one inescapable implication for the process of interpretation - literary or otherwise. This is that the interpretation of a text can never arrive at a final and complete ‘meaning’ for a text. As Derrida himself remarks about a reading of the Marxist ‘classics’,

These texts are not to be read according to a hermeneutical or exegetical method which would seek out a finished signified beneath a textual surface. Reading is transformational (1981b:63).

Deconstructive procedure simply demands an improved method of reading. Not just reading, but each reading. Thus for Derrida the meaning of a text is always unfolding just ahead of the interpreter, unrolling in front of him or her like a never-ending carpet whose final edge never reveals itself (Hawthorn, 1992:33).

Like structuralism, deconstruction appears to stand outside the values and beliefs of society, but is even more all-questioning. The deconstructive reader appears to
believe that nothing can be finally understood. In contrast, structuralism contains a strong element of reason in believing that it is possible to explain how literature works (Peck and Coyle, 1993:196).

Deconstructive critics, then, stress the problems language experiences in trying to cope with life. Such an approach might seem negative, but deconstructive criticism is often very lively both because it recognises that the text is a complex thing and because the critic's sense that there is no determinate meaning to the text allows a degree of reckless freedom in discussing it.

In an interview with Imre Salusinszky, Johnston has further commented that

If it is indeed the case that people approach literature with the desire to learn something about the world, and if it is indeed the case that the literary medium is not transparent, then a study of its non-transparency is crucial in order to deal with the desire one has to know something about the world by reading literature (Salusinszky 1987:166).

The question then is whether it is really possible to learn something about the world through literature or whether this is only a delusion experienced by 'people' who can be relieved of their inappropriate 'desire' through a study of the literary medium's non-transparency.

Johnston does, however, go on to distance herself and deconstruction from the 'self-involved textual practice of close reading' of the New Critics mentioned by her interviewer, suggesting that deconstruction necessarily involves a political attitude, one which examines authority in language. She further notes that Karl Marx was as close to deconstruction as are a lot of deconstructors - particularly by virtue of his bringing to the surface of the hidden inscriptions of the economic system, uncovering hidden presuppositions, and showing contradictions (Salusinszky 1987:167).
The theory of deconstruction can be viewed as the liberator of all texts, the democracy of literary theory. It does not want to bind a single text to certain interpretations, but sets these free. Richard Machin and Christopher Norris note that post-structuralist readings tend to "feature the text as active object" (1987:3). The author is no longer seen as the source of meaning, and deconstruction is guilty of being an accessory after the fact with regard to the death of the author. There is, as Derrida infamously puts it, nothing outside the text.

Post-structuralism is therefore implicated in the death of the author, and in consistently opposing any textual interpretation claiming either finality or undeconstructable authority. It has also contributed to a suspicion of any argument or position which grants the individual human subject powers of self-determination or of historical causation (Hawthorn 1992:138).

Later on in their introduction, Machin and Norris seek to establish that whereas each reading in the collection "develops an insistent coherence of its own that drives towards conclusive and irrefutable conclusions", the possibility is nonetheless held open of "a multitude of competing meanings, each of which denies the primacy of the others"(1987:7).

Deconstruction implies, as Jonathan Culler puts it, that the hierarchical oppositions of Western metaphysics are themselves constructions or ideological impositions (1988:20). Deconstruction thus aims to undermine Western metaphysics by undoing or deconstructing these hierarchical oppositions and by showing their logocentric reliance upon a centre or presence, which reflects the idealist desire to control the play of signifiers by making them subject to some extra-systemic transcendental signified (Hawthorne, 1992:31). It is, at the same time, more openly doubtful, inclining to expose all the tactics any writer utilizes to deploy experience, and working with an idea of the impossibility of language achieving any kind of coherent commitment with the world.
2.2.2.1 Jacques Derrida

Many divergent things can be said of deconstruction. Nonetheless one finds consensus on one point: its leading exponent has been Jacques Derrida. Although Derrida is a philosopher - he studied and taught philosophy in Paris and in America - he has never written anything straightforwardly philosophical. His writing challenges the usual notions of truth and knowledge. It disrupts traditional ideas about procedure and presentation and questions the authority of philosophy. Philosophy is first of all writing and therefore it depends on the styles and forms of its language - figures of speech, metaphors, even layout on the page, just as literature does. Derrida's critique of philosophy puts the boundaries between philosophy and literature into question and destabilises the boundaries. Reactions to this have ranged from deliberate critique to sheer denunciation - deconstruction has been extremely controversial. Prof. Barry Smith and other traditionalist academics from the University of Cambridge protested in a letter to The Times (Saturday, 9 May 1992):

M. Derrida describes himself as a philosopher. His influence, however, has been to a striking degree almost entirely in fields outside philosophy. ... M. Derrida's work does not meet accepted standards of clarity and rigour. M. Derrida's writings seem to consist in no small part of elaborate jokes and puns. He seems to have come close to making a career out of translating into the academic sphere tricks and gimmicks similar to those of the Dadaists or the concrete poets. ... M. Derrida's voluminous writings in our view stretch the normal forms of academic scholarship beyond recognition. Above all, his works employ a written style that defies comprehension. When the effort is made to penetrate it, it becomes clear that, where coherent assertions are being made at all, these are either false or trivial.

It is true that Derrida's critique is not a standard analysis as it is not couched in the usual terms. Derrida doesn't adopt any fixed position among competing tendencies and traditions. He doesn't simply advocate or refute any of them, and he doesn't
advance any overarching theories, concepts, methods or projects of his own. As such, Derrida’s writing is impossible to summarize. In his terms it has no ‘basic’ concepts or methods to pick out and explain, yet it alludes constantly to a wide range of thinking. It is often strategically convoluted. It disobeys the usual procedures - start at the beginning, lay out the exposition, advance the propositions, make a conclusion, etc. Derrida’s writing is difficult and maybe subversive. It has a rigour and a logic, but of an unfamiliar order. Derrida’s writing undermines the usual ideas about texts, meanings, concepts and identities - not just in literary theory, but in other fields as well.

Derrida’s deliberations were published in 1967 in three books: Speech and Phenomena, Writing and Difference, and Of Grammatology. These were his first major publications that announced his complex assault on metaphysical thinking. He pursued to their conclusion some of the structuralist insights about a language. The main theme of Derridean deconstruction is the displacement of language by writing. Derrida attacked the logocentrism which, by giving primacy to speech over writing, presupposes a fusion between the signifier and the signified. Aristotle first represented this traditional notion of language:

Spoken words are the symbols of mental experience and written words are the symbols of spoken words (Derrida, 1976:30).

De Saussure continued this tradition at the beginning of the twentieth century and claims that:

Language and writing are two distinct systems of signs; the second exists for the sole purpose of representing the first (Derrida, 1976:30).

Derrida inverts this hierarchical ordering of language and writing, and thus redefined them in the process. Derrida gives primacy to writing, where the realisation of the meaning is always postponed by the very fact that it will always be read and re-
interpreted in the future. This fact separates the signified from the signifier temporally. The meaning is 'deferred', and Derrida coined the word **differance** to express the dual spatial difference and temporal deferment detaching the sign from the full presence of its meaning. He denies that writing is secondary to speech or doubles the gap between signifier and signified. Derrida does not regard writing as a supplement to speech, but sees it as both taking the place of speech and adding to it. De Saussure’s definition deconstructs itself - if writing is represented as the secondary signifier - which is then a signifier of a signifier - then the possibility exists that language - which was the original signified - can be seen in exactly the same way. This enables Derrida to conclude that

the signified always already functions as a signifier. The secondarity that it seemed possible to ascribe to writing alone affects all signifieds in general (Derrida, 1976:7).

Language is seen as only an aspect, a type of writing. Language’s material nature has been repressed by ‘logocentrism’ since Aristotle.

In his early essay, ‘Structure, Sign and Play in the discourse of the Human Sciences’, Derrida argued that the deconstructive practitioner must relinquish all longing for presence, and search for its opposite

- the joyous affirmation of the freeplay of the world and without truth, without origin, offered to an active interpretation ... *This affirmation then determines the non-centre otherwise than as loss of centre.* And it plays the game without security. For there is a *sure* freeplay: that which is limited to the *substitution of given and existing, present, pieces* (Derrida, 1972:264).

In ‘Differance’, he continued, “in the delineation of deconstruction everything is strategic and adventurous. Strategic because no transcendent truth present outside the field of writing can govern theologically the totality of the field. Adventurous because this strategy is not a simple strategy in the sense that strategy orients tactics
according to a final goal, a *telos* or theme of domination; a mastery and ultimate reappropriation of the field" (1982:7).

In 'Living on: Border Lines', he proposed that "all organized narration is 'a matter of the police'," insofar as it posits a "narratorial voice [that] is the voice of a subject recounting something, reinventing an event or a historical sequence, knowing who he is, where he is; and what he is talking about" (1979:104-105).

In *Positions*, where he clarified and defined the essential terms of deconstructive practice, Derrida claimed that the strategy of binary opposition characteristic of all Western metaphysics entails not "the peaceful co-existence of a vis-à-vis", but a "violent hierarchy". It is the goal of deconstruction, accordingly, to "overturn", "displace" and "transgress" this hierarchy, its strategy of undecidability "resists" and "disorganizes" binary opposition. Deconstruction aspires not simply to "neutralize the binary oppositions of metaphysics [by] residing within the closed field of these oppositions, thereby confirming it", but instead to "overturn" and "transgress" and "displace" in a double gesture that is simultaneously negative and positive (1981a:41,66).

Derrida explains in his work *Of Grammatology* that the title designates a "science of writing", that he believes is showing signs of liberation all over the world (1976:4). This is not, however, a full-bodied science with basic principles which are established and final, but - as he implies - a science in which everything is questioned, including its own basis and history (1976:28). At the beginning of the text, Derrida claims that "phonetic writing, the medium of the great metaphysical, scientific, technical and economic adventure of the West, is limited in space and time" (1976:10). For Derrida, it is not a question of rejecting notions such as time, presence, truth, fixity, *telos*, totality and all that accompanies logocentrism, for "they are necessary and, at least at present, nothing is conceivable for us without them. It is a question at first of demonstrating the systematic and historical solidarity of the
concepts and gestures of thought that one often believes can be innocently separated (1976:13). Derrida believes that in deconstruction, one is

operating necessarily from the inside, borrowing all the strategic and economic resources of subversion from the old structure (Derrida, 1976:24).

His general position as a philosopher, however, is to discard hierarchical formulations of relationship by firstly reversing them (speech/writing, nature/civilisation, good/evil) and then disposing of the reversal. In literature this process of deconstruction enables us to identify when and where a text breaks the framework it seems to make for itself, and thus disintegrates.

The title of another of Jacques Derrida’s books, Dissemination (1981b), describes that state of endless seeding and potential growth of meaning said to characterize the play of signifiers in the absence of signifieds. According to Spivak, the term refers back to “the seed that neither inseminates nor is recovered by the father, but is scattered abroad” (Derrida 1976:xii). Unlike “representation”, which simply “castrates”, and even “polysemy”, which remains committed to a “teleological and totalizing dialectics”, dissemination “marks an irreducible and generative multiplicity” (1981a:41,43,66,45). The flow of new meanings can never be exhausted, nor can these be in any way attached to an author - they are the product of language itself.

There is no absolute agreement concerning what implications Derrida’s more general positions hold for literary criticism and theory. For Barbara Johnston, deconstruction is not a dissipated abandonment of all restraint, but a disciplined identification and dismantling of the sources of textual power:

Deconstruction is not synonymous with ‘destruction’. It is in fact much closer to the original meaning of the word ‘analysis’, which etymologically means ‘to undo’ ... The deconstruction of a text does not proceed by random doubt or arbitrary subversion, but by the
careful teasing out of warring forces of signification within the text (1981:5).

Most other theorists agree on this point - for them deconstruction also involves an articulation of the said and the unsaid, of the discursive and the non-discursive.

2.2.2.2 Paul de Man

After Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man's contribution to the deconstructive literary criticism and theory has been immense. De Man has been one of the most influential figures in American criticism and theory since the 1960s. He participated in Reuben Brower's 'Hum 6' course at Harvard University, and so the era of deconstruction in American was launched. De Man's earlier writings in the 1950s was a sort of analytical criticism, focussed on imagery, but later in the 1970s, while in contact with Jacques Derrida and deconstruction, he developed a style of rhetorical readings (Culler, 1989:269).

Just like Derrida, de Man established a definite break from previous literary traditions. De Man differs with the New Critics in his concept of intention. In his essay 'Form and Intent in the American New Criticism', de Man finds the New Critics' 'Intentional Fallacy' illogical. The New Critics asserted that any consideration of the writer's intention is situated outside the boundaries of criticism and that "the design or the intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art" (Wimsatt, 1970:3). The New Critics believe in only one type of intention, that which the writer has in mind at the time of formulation, and which can be deduced only from biographical details. De Man argues that the New Critics' emphasis on the organic unity of a text compelled them to actually disregard the writer's intention. The intention that the New Critics distinguishes, de Man argues, is different from the intention which is realised in the structure of a work of literature. According to him, the structural
intention directs and controls various components of a work and designs them into a whole. De Man insists that a literary work is an intentional object - it is created by someone; like a pot, it is not a natural object like a plant.

Furthermore, de Man asserts that the New Critics' accent on irony and ambiguity in literature undermines organic unity: "instead of revealing a continuity affiliated with the coherence of the natural world, it takes us into a discontinuous world of reflective irony and ambiguity" (1979b:28). Ironically, by emphasizing these qualities, the New Critics unwittingly accept intention in by the back door, for both irony and ambiguity can only characterize an intentional object.

Jonathan Culler (1989: 271-279) maintains that de Man gave five contributions that seem important for the future of criticism and theory - a cursory outline will be given of each aspect. One of the first developments was his revaluation of the allegory. The post-Coleridgean criticism preferred the symbol as superior figure of speech, and they treated the allegory as an undesirable and unsuccessful type of figuration. De Man links allegory and irony because of their discovery of discontinuity, disjunction, non-identity. For him, texts function as allegorical statements about language, literature, and reading, and by foregrounding this aspect, he questions the relation of figuration to interpretation.

Another of de Man's achievements has been the rediscovery of romanticism, which was seen by the New Critics as deluded or sentimental. Poetic language, according to de Man

seems to originate in the desire to approximate the condition of the natural object, (but) this movement is essentially paradoxical and condemned in advance to failure (1984:7).

Thirdly, there is de Man's identification of the relationship between blindness and insight, to which he dedicated a whole book of the same title. De Man argues that
critics "owe their best insights to assumption these insights disprove", a fact which "shows blindness to be a necessary correlative of the rhetorical nature of literary language" (1979b:141).

The above insight caused a "phenomenological vocabulary of consciousness" (Culler, 1989:274) which de Man created in Blindness and Insight. De Man transforms this vocabulary to a rhetorical terminology which starts to focus on operations of language: "The assumption that there can be a science of language which is not necessarily a logic leads to the development of a terminology which is not necessarily aesthetic" (De Man, 1982:8). Like Derrida, de Man shows that language is not coextensive with meaning; rhetorical reading becomes in part an exposure of the ideological imposition of meaning on language. Literature, conceived as the rhetorical character of language revealed by close reading involves the voiding, rather than the affirmation, of aesthetic categories. One of the consequences of this is that, whereas we have traditionally been accustomed to reading literature by analogy ... we now have to recognize the necessity of a non-perceptual, linguistic moment ... and learn to read pictures rather than to imagine meaning (De Man, 1982:13).

Much of his career is staked on the premise that close reading attentive to the working of poetic language will expose the totalisations undertaken in the name of meaning and unity:

What is meant when we assert that the study of literary texts is necessarily dependent on an act of reading, or when we claim that this act is being systematically avoided? ... To stress the by no means self-evident necessity of reading implies at least two things. First of all, it implies that literature is not a transparent message in which it can be taken for granted that the distinction between the message and the means of communication is clearly established. Second, and more problematically, it implies that the grammatical decoding of a text leaves a residue of indetermination that has to be, but cannot be, resolved by grammatical means, however, extensively conceived ... (De Man, 1982:14).
De Man believes that deconstruction seeks to undo all oppositions that, in the name of unity, purity, order and hierarchy, try to eliminate difference by the replacement of a hermeneutic by a semiotic model, of interpretation by decoding, would represent, in view of the baffling historical instability of textual meanings ... a considerable progress (De Man, 1982:14-15).

In 'Rhetoric of Temporality', de Man's reading reveals the way the linguistic character of language undermines its apparent offer of meaning. He describes how the language of the most lucid and rigorous Romantic writers deconstructs its own notion of trope as literary symbol; de Man's deconstructive reading allows the very rhetoric of the Romantic discourse about the symbol to expose the fraudulence of its own illicit assertion of an intrinsic (metaphorical as opposed to metonymic) relation of image and meaning. In a later essay on Friedrich Nietzsche 'Rhetoric of Persuasion (Nietzsche)' complicates this picture of language's power of internal subversion, charting a constant, unresolved oscillation between language's claim to assert truth and its apparent performative power to enact a deed. De Man points to a recurring tension in language between its tropological and performative functions. He argues that these two functions work together finally to undermine the performance of language in favour of its (failed) epistemology. The essay on Shelley 'Shelley Disfigured' focuses on the violent, coercive workings of that performative or 'positing' power of language in its own right. Taken together as a series, the essays outline an increasingly sever view of language: as failed effort at knowledge; as undecidable oscillation between knowledge and performance; as arbitrary and violent imposition of power.

Finally, de Man's later essays, collected in Aesthetic Ideology, undertake a critique of an aesthetic ideology which imposes, even violently, continuity between perception and cognition, form and idea, and which literature, properly read, is always undoing.
If Jonathan Culler's listing of the contributions Paul de Man has made to literary theory and criticism is considered, one realizes that some of these have been incorporated into theories that renounce de Man's attitudes to grammar, rhetoric, and language. But even when theorists incorporate his views of reading, they add to them the hypotheses that value assumptions govern readings. Reading involves the values that one wishes to test or discover or confirm. Particular readings are connected with values that are confronted by others who oppose them. Readings can even reveal values that were unanticipated.

De Man's illuminative writing grants great authority to texts but little authority to meaning. His constant insistence not to give in to the desire for meaning encourages a rigorous questioning of any moment that might convince us that we have attained a demystified knowledge. Reading follows suspensions of meaning and resistance to meaning

... more than any other mode of inquiry, ... the linguistics of literariness is a powerful and indispensable tool in the unmasking of ideological aberrations, as well as a determining factor in accounting for their occurrence. Those who reproach literary theory for being oblivious to social and historical (that is to say ideological) reality are merely stating their fear at having their own ideological mystifications exposed by the tool they are trying to discredit (1982:13).

Deconstruction's value as an instrument of ideological exposé will, I believe, prove productive for criticism as it explores the resources of de Man's writing and its possible links with other contemporary theoretical discourses - of psychoanalysis, feminism and Marxism. Criticism has not yet fully explicated or worked with the more difficult and unsettling aspects of de Man's writing on language and their relation to the questions of history.

After his death in 1983, a great collection of difficult texts - many still unpublished - were left behind. These texts still have to be interpreted and explored, a major
assignment for the future of literary theories. Only then will the implications of de Man's critical and theoretical writing be holistically grasped. Not only will it be a daunting task to understand what these texts say and why, but especially the potential correlations to other contemporary critical discourses, such as psychoanalysis, feminism and Marxism, which have recurrently also interested deconstructionists.

Concepts in deconstruction

Because of the relative unfamiliarity of some of the ideas to be treated in this study, the reader must be introduced to the important arguments of deconstruction. Both Derrida and de Man were great coiners of neologisms. In order to avoid any repetition, only certain terms will be explained here. The other terminology, such as supplément, trace, site, etc., will be explained as they are practically applied in the chapters to come. Deconstructive terms pertaining to psychoanalysis will be explicated in the chapter on deconstruction and psychoanalysis, etc. What must be kept in mind, however, is that none of the following deconstructive concepts are stable definitions or possess fixed meanings. This is a strange idea, for language only makes sense to the readers if they impose an established meaning on the words. Readers search for such a meaning because they are committed to the notion of presence, to the idea that there should be some referent and that words should make sense in relation to some presence outside the text. The meanings of Derrida's neologisms, however, are constantly deferred and subject to difference. There is no firm or fixed presence that can guarantee or underwrite the meanings of these terms. If there were, then this theory on which the term depends would of course be in error.
2.3.1 Différance

Différance is not a French word, but it is related to the noun *la différence* (the difference), the verb *différer* (to differ, and to defer) and the verb-adjective *différant* (the condition of differing, or of deferring). This neologism tries to supply a number of semantic equivalents simultaneously which includes difference, delay, divergence and deferment. It covers all other absences and occlusions of meaning across the above related nouns, verbs, etc. (Derrida, 1982: 89). According to Selden (1985:85)

Derrida invents the term ‘différance’ to convey the divided nature of the sign.

He coins the word in order to get away from the structuralist’ notion of fixed differences in language when they argue for a system of binary oppositions. Derrida sees a constant sliding between meanings and a plurality of differences in which opposites always bear traces of each other. As such, différance sees the text as an endless stream of signifiers, with words only pointing to other words, without any final meaning. Words are defined by their difference from other words, and any meaning is endlessly deferred as each word leads us on to another word in the signifying system.

Derrida employs and examines the term throughout his writing, it is a central idea in his critique against hierarchical thought. He identifies three main meanings for the term:

First, différance refers to the (active and passive) movement that consists in deferring by means of delay, delegation, reprieve, referral, detour, postponement, reserving ... Second, the movement of différance, as that which produces different things, that which differentiates, is the common root of all oppositional concepts that mark our language, such as, to take only a few examples, sensible/intelligent, intuition/signification, nature/culture, etc. ...
Third, différance is also the production, if it can still be put this way, of these differences, of the diacriticality that the linguistics generated by Saussure, and all the structural sciences modelled upon it, have recalled is the condition for any signification and any structure. From this point of view, the concept of différance is neither simply structuralist, nor simply geneticist, such an alternative itself being an 'effect' of différance (1981b:8-9).

Thus, according to Derrida, différance is

... the systematic play of differences, of the traces of differences, of the spacing (espacement) by which elements relate to one another. This spacing is the production, simultaneously active and passive... of intervals without which the 'full' terms could not signify, could not function (1981a:27).

Différance is the opposite of and alternative to logocentrism. Logocentrism posits the existence of fixed meanings guaranteed by an extra-systemic presence or origin. Différance, again, undermines logocentrism by implying that meaning can never be fully present since it is always deferred in an open-ended chain of meaning with temporal as well as spacial dimensions. Such a view rejects reason as merely an ordering-strategy that the reader imposes on literature: the reader wants to pull the text into his or her own frame of reference (Hawthorn, 1992:43).

2.3.2 Binary oppositions and undecidability

The standard ordering strategy of Western and other cultures is the organisation of thoughts in binary pairs (for example, good and evil, black and white, man and woman). Binary oppositions classify and organise the objects, events and relations of the world. There are many such oppositions, and they are all governed by the distinction, either/or. Deconstructive critics argue that meaning is not oppositional and that binary terms are never isolated - there is always a trace of the other in them. A deconstructive reading undoes these oppositions by pointing to the way the terms invade each other and how each shows traces of the other, so that, in the end, it is
impossible to decide the difference between the two terms. Derrida demonstrates the method by accounting that his writing has a matrix which contains two strands: derailed communication and undecidability. Derrida finds both of these in the figure of the virus, which can be many things. The virus introduces disorder into communication - a derailing of coding and decoding. A virus is also not a microbe, it is neither living nor non-living. If the virus is neither dead nor living, then it is puzzlingly undecidable. Undecidables are threatening for they poison the comforting sense that we inhabit a world governed by decidable categories.

Undecidables disrupt the oppositional logic of the binary structures of metaphysical thinking. They slip across both sides of an opposition but do not fit properly either, they play all ways, but takes no sides. They are more than the opposition can allow and because of that, they question the very principle of 'opposition'. Derrida comments:

In a classical ... opposition we are not dealing with the peaceful coexistence of a vis-à-vis (facing terms), but rather with a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms governs the other (axiologically, logically, etc) or has the upper hand. To deconstruct the opposition is, first of all, to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment (1981a:41).

Derrida draws attention to the presence of as well as the inadequacy of such an ordering strategy in texts but is also aware that his own text is likely to betray a similar dependency upon binary pairs in order to create a coherent case. The terms used to describe the virus depend on the binary opposition 'life' and 'death': a pair of contrasted terms, each of which depends on the other for its meaning. Even something as simple as structuralism's notion of how society and thinking are constructed on the model of binary pairs, for example the pairing of man and woman, could lead to the idea that this particular pairing would privilege the man and marginalise the woman. Undecidables would overturn this binarism, but would leave no certainty of a privileged foundational term against a subordinated second
term. Deconstruction emphasizes the plurality of differences rather than difference fixed on opposition.

2.3.3 Logocentrism

Jacques Derrida's coinage of logocentrism was constructed from the Greek word 'logos' which can mean logic, reason, the word or God. Richard Harland provides the following useful annotation on Jacques Derrida's use of this term:

a Greek word that illuminatingly brings together in a single concept the inward rational principle of verbal texts, the inward rational principle of human beings, and the inward rational principle of the natural universe. Even more illuminating, 'logos' combines all these meanings with a further meaning: 'the Law'. For 'logos' as an inward rational principle serves to control and take charge of outward material things (1987:146).

Metaphysics ascribes truth to the logos, along with the origin of truth in general. It is the drive to ground truth in a single undivided point, an ultimate origin. In Derrida's perspective the sense of security provided by a belief in logos is illusory, it is "the deluded sense of mastery of concept over language"(Norris, 1982:29). Derrida's task is to undermine metaphysical thinking - to disrupt its foundations, dislodge its certitudes, turn aside its quests for an undivided point of origin. As such, "logocentrism refers to systems of thought or habits of mind which are reliant upon what Derrida, following Heidegger, terms the metaphysics of presence - that is, a belief in an extra-systematic validating presence or centre which underwrites and fixes linguistic meaning but is itself beyond scrutiny or challenge"(Hawthorn, 1992:94). Derrida argues that the dismantling of logocentrism is simultaneously the deconstruction of idealism or spiritualism "in all their variants" (1981b:51). Derrida says of the history of metaphysics that it has

always assigned the origin of truth in general to the logos: the history of truth, of the truth of truth, has always been ... the debasement of
writing, and its repression outside 'full' speech (1976:3).

According to Derrida, speech has been privileged through the millennia as the medium if meaning (phonocentrism). Writing (écriture) merely represents speech. Logocentrism is thus associated by Derrida with the making of écriture subject to speech. However, literacy (the writing of books) is the cornerstone of Western civilization. The so-called civilized cultures depend on books for religion, political systems, education, etc. To Derrida, it seems as if the West has in fact privileged writing, and he sets to reverse this logocentric foundation. For Derrida, such a position is integrally idealist. He has never claimed that what he does is possible. He knows that no critique can ever totally escape from what it is criticizing.

2.3.4 Presence

Derrida criticizes the way in which Western philosophy has tried to make meaning seem full, unified and immediate, centring upon an ultimate principle or presence. According to Jacques Derrida in an early article

all the names related to fundamentals, to principles, or to the centre have always designated an invariable presence - eidos, arche, telos, enerfeia, ousia (essence, existence, substance, subject) aletheia, transcendentality, consciousness, God, man, and so forth (1978:279-81).

The concept of presence is closely bound with the idea of logocentrism. Both notions refer to the phantasm that the endless play of language can be avoided on the grounds that something, by means of its presence, can guarantee certainty. The metaphysics of presence, then, is a logocentric belief in and reliance upon some of the above quoted extra-systematic points of reference or authority. Abrams attempts to clarify this:

By 'presence'[Derrida] designates ... a foundation outside the play of language itself which is immediately and simply present to us as
something ultimate, terminal, self-certifying, and thus adequate to 'centre' the structure of the linguistic system and to guarantee the determinate meaning of any utterance within that system (1979b:569).

Metaphysical oppositions rely on assumptions of presence. The first binary term carries 'full' presence, and its subordinate absence, or of mediated, attenuated presence. Presence to Derrida can be spatial as well as temporal. Speech has been privileged because it seems to carry full presence, while writing depends on absences. The order of writing is distance, delay, opacity, ambiguity and death.

2.3.5 Écriture

According to French-English dictionaries, the meaning of écriture is equivalent to 'writing' in English. M.H. Abrams has annotated écriture as "the written or printed text" (1977:428) in an article on deconstructive criticism. Many contemporary critics persist in using the French term, because, they suggest, the English translation of écriture as writing may be misleading.

Jacques Derrida's use of the term écriture also illustrates a loss of complexities when translated into English. Writing becomes a palaeonymic in Derrida's hands. It no longer designates scripting rather than speaking but rather the undecidable play in both. It inhabits spoken words, inscribed marks and all other signs. At least two meanings of the word 'writing' are discernible in Derrida's writings: the accepted meaning, which opposes (phonetic) writing to the speech that it allegedly represents and a more radical meaning that determined writing in general, before any tie to what glossators call an 'expressive substance'. This more radical meaning would be the common root of writing and speech. The treatment accorded to writing in the accepted sense serves as a revelatory index of the repression to which arche-writing is subject (Derrida 1981b:7-8). For Derrida, écriture and arche-writing can on occasions perform almost interchangeable roles.
The conclusion cannot be made that the term was now possessed of a relatively fixed set of meanings: because of the centrality of the role played by the term in a range of actively developing contemporary theories, its meanings seem to be characterized more by continued expansion than by finality or fixity.

2.3.6 Transcendental signified

The influence of Jacques Derrida has radically changed the connotations of the word ‘transcendental’ and its cognates for many. Whereas at one time its associations were mainly positive - that which is above all other categories of thing - since Derrida the word is associated with a belief in fixed, extra-linguistic points of meaning-determination, a view which he characterizes as logocentric and representative of the metaphysics of presence.

Derrida believes that Western metaphysics suppresses the signifier and uses the signified as grounding term. When the signifier is evaporated, all that is left is a ‘pure thought’ - the transcendental signified. This, according to metaphysical conviction, is most complete in the speaking voice, that is, when speech and thought is almost unified. However, Derrida (1981b:49-50) himself, from his very first published work has sought to

systematize a deconstructive critique precisely against the authority of meaning, as the transcendental signified or as telos; in other words history determined in the last analysis as the history of meaning, history in its logocentric, metaphysical, idealist ... representation.

Derrida attacks the desire for the transcendental signifier for a stability of meaning which derives from outside language. For Derrida, there is only language and diffréance - that is, meanings which are always differential and deferred. According to Alex Callinicos (1989:74), Derrida believes that

any attempt to halt the endless play of signifiers, above all by
appealing to the concept of reference, must ... involve postulating a ‘transcendental signified’ which is somehow present to the consciousness without any discursive mediation.

The implications of such a position for literary criticism are not far to seek: the text is also subject to a totalizing play of linguistic difference which cannot be fixed or organized by any extra-systemic reference-point - author, authorial intention, ‘common reader’s’ interpretation, or whatever. Derrida believes that “the absence of a transcendental signified extends the realm and the play of signification to infinity” (Abrams, 1979b:570).

2.4 Problems encountered with deconstruction

In America and Europe there has been a massive shift of focus in literary study since 1979 away from the intrinsic, rhetorical study of literature toward study of the extrinsic relations of literature. Literary critics were concentrating on writing about struggles of power, history, ideology, the institution of the study of literature, the class struggle, the oppression of women, and the real lives of men and women in society as they exist in themselves and as they are reflected in literature. It seemed to signal to many that the era of deconstruction was over.

Along with this deviation away from rhetorical studies, one often finds erroneous statements of what de Man, Derrida, or their colleagues actually said about the extrinsic relations of literature. It is said that Derrida and his devotees are concerned only with language and they cut language off from the real world of history and of living men and women. As such, it is opposed to the newer sociological methods which are pragmatically engaged in the real world outside language. Deconstruction is thus piled onto the garbage heap with other outmoded, ‘sterile’, and ‘elite formalisms’.
The question is what this (extrinsic methods) has to do with the study of literature. It is in defining that liaison that the difficulties and disagreements begin. My contention is that the study of literature has a great deal to do with history, society, the self, but that this relation is not a matter of thematic reflection within literature of these extra-linguistic forces and facts, but rather a matter of the way the study of literature offers perhaps the best opportunities to identify the nature of language as it may have effects on what de Man calls "the materiality of history".

Traditionalists furthermore argue that although deconstruction has some substance, it is basically only valid at a theoretical level. They claim that when readers do share a context of understanding with a writer, they can assign a meaning to what the text says. Customarily, the aim with literature study is to give a systematic, verifiable description of the meaning of a literary text through analysis and interpretation. Deconstructionists assert that although this direct engagement with a text may be possible, it is only an illusion. They, again, insist that traditionalists are simply imposing determinate meaning on words - the meaning of a text is never found - there is an unending multiplicity of meaning.

Because deconstruction refers to a type of philosophy and a conception of language, the practice thereof is on the whole rather confusing. There is space for much subjective speculation, the desired never-ending continuation of the investigative process leads to the application of every form of association possible by deconstructionists. This form of criticism becomes strongly bound to the knowledge and personage of the critic. The denial of reality behind the text can easily be taken up too literally. The metaphorical style of the deconstructionist can lead to an isolation of this literary criticism. To relay or explain the method is difficult because one has no determined boundaries on the overlapping/laying of connections with other texts.

Many scholars interested in deconstruction have been blamed for being more
attracted to the critic's attitudes than with agreement with the informing theory. This outlook is seen as one of non-involved scepticism of a world which is chaotic and baffling.

Machin and Norris (1987:3) note that deconstructive readings tend to feature the text as active object, the author is no longer seen as the source of meaning, and deconstruction is guilty of being an accessory with regard to the death of the author. Later on, they argue that each reading "develops an insistent coherence of its own that drives towards conclusive and irrefutable conclusions", there is "a multitude of competing meanings, each of which denies the primacy of the others" (1987:7). According to Hawthorn, scepticals are not yet convinced by the probability of such a "paradoxical blending of linear rigour and pluralistic co-existence" (1992:33). He sums up the situation as follows:

... one of the most recurrent criticisms of the readings or interpretations generated by deconstruction is that they are not subject to falsification. Another objection is that these same readings and interpretations have a tendency to end up all looking the same, all demonstrating the ceaseless play of the signifier and nothing much else ... (1992:33).

Objections are further raised against the belief that the ego is undetermined by and independent of social and cultural forces (transcendental subject), and that it constitutes a unity rather than a site for the play of contradictions. Murray Krieger, in his brief survey of Western critical theory, argues that moral and ideological meanings are ever present in literary theory. Even when the critic focuses on ever present structure, as in deconstruction, his attitude to the structure itself brings out his moral concern. He denounces deconstruction, that with its dissociations of language from reality and the emphasis on pure temporality, expresses by implication faith in "the disappearance of God" (1989:16-19). He implores:

Has all that the history of criticism taken so seriously for so long
been demythified, demystified and deconstructed away? Is there nothing left except for us to examine the history and the nature of our deceptions and self-deceptions? (1989:17).

Some critics complain that to take what deconstruction says seriously about the language of literature or about language as such, might cause an indefinite delay in turning the attention to the relations of literature to history, to society, to the self. De Man has analysed the reasons for this impatience and desire to evade the difficulties of seeing literature clearly and thinking out rigorously its nature as a specific use of language. Looking closely at the language itself (at the particular word used and its implications) does not let emotions, values or thematising get the upper hand. Even if a particular text has been analysed by generations of reviewers, this cautious way of reading cannot be taken for granted.

Regardless of all the negativity that surrounds this post-structural practice, and whether one objects to the theory or embraces it - if deconstruction is able to only let the reader or critic stop and think about the validity and possibilities of his/her interpretations, it has already achieved something.

### 2.5 Deconstruction in African languages: the present and the future

As previously stated, deconstruction is a concept rarely, if ever used, in African literary theory. The main problem concerning the adoption of this approach into African literature is confusion about the subject. This bewilderment is seen not only in African languages, but in the Western world as well. It took a long time for America and Europe to receive Derrida and de Man - not only to receive, but quite relevantly to ask how their work might benefit the study of literature. The long processes of questioning the use and value of the approach seem to be at an end in these countries, while here in African languages the questioning has not yet begun, or has begun in a very limited way. Ignorant statements that deconstruction has
nothing to do with literature seem to exacerbate the situation.

The usual reactions against deconstruction which were discussed earlier also apply to the critics of deconstruction in African languages. However, an additional element is encountered here. The main obstacle in employing deconstruction and other post-structural literary theories appears to be that these conceptions are regarded as foreign Western concepts, ideas applicable only to Western culture and symbolism. This is only partly true - culture does play a role - but in reading a text deconstructively, the rhetorical manipulation of language is important and not meaning as such. Deconstructive literary theory in African languages needs to be thoroughly discussed in order to find any differences or similarities in the employment thereof. At this time it is urgent in African languages to indicate how especially Derrida might intervene and disrupt our reigning orders of knowledge, our disciplinary arrangements.

In deciphering an African text, the emphasis on the process draws attention to deconstruction as a reading strategy rather than a method or a specific product of interpretation. This intimidates and discourages potential deconstructive literary scholars in African languages. However, armed with a basic background on the ideas and principles of the strategy, the potential researcher can scrutinize literary texts, developing his/her knowledge as he/she goes.

The subject of this study is dualistic: the study of deconstruction as well as African literary texts, i.e. Zulu poems. African literature is seen as that which is written in an African Language, in English, French or Portuguese by Africans. It is written out of the emotional, intellectual and physical experience of an African people, fashioned by their cultures (Chaphole 1984:105).

This can create its own set of problems. Difficulties may be experienced when African literature is examined in the light of a new 'Western' literary theory. One
can view this study furthermore as a comparative literary study - the study of literature beyond the boundaries of one nation or culture or language. The Western world has, in its position of power, had an enormous impact on world literature. It seems like Western literature and Western traditions have become the normative.

Before one condemns the application of Western theories to African languages, one has to keep the evolution of African studies and more specifically, Southern African literature, in mind. According to Gérard (1971:2), "African literature is an immense field and ... a multilayered quarry". Most of the literature consists of oral folk art, which also forms the literary prehistory of the then illiterate culture. "Diachronically, the second layer of African literature is constituted by such writing as was produced before exposure to Western influence"(1971:4). As yet, this only applies to the African countries which were in contact with the Arabic people. However, Gérard (1971:4) remarks that it was not until Europeans settled in Africa that modern literary activity emerged on the black continent itself. As such, the third stratification is reached, which “is made up of the works that were written and printed under European influence”(1971:4). Africans were taught literacy in an European manner, the texts they write today are mostly based on Western forms and techniques. However, this does not have to stop these writers from developing any theory further, or even developing a new theory. Ntuli (1987:137) offers the following insights:

Critics, too, should come together to review their approaches. We know that articles and theses have been written on general surveys, specific genres, special authors and other aspects of literature ... It is important for scholars to come together to take a closer look at the critical yardstick they are using for vernacular literature. It has been suggested, for example, that engagement should be adopted as a literary criterion for this literature. How far should we go with this proposition? We have sufficient material to be able to sit down and determine whether we can make our own contribution towards literary theory using vernacular work as a basis. The coming together of critics need not aim at reaching some kind of consensus, but it should be an exercise directed at the promotion of African
Given the basic foundations of literary criticism, a new development in African languages is a great possibility. New perspectives on the world lead to new texts, and new perspectives on literature need a new kind of criticism. On the basis of so much new data being received, it is inevitable that, at the level of research, a number of concepts and views must be redefined or modified. Just as Derrida coined neologisms and palaeonymics, new concepts and ideas have to be described, named or renamed that had never before existed in African languages.

However, the questions Chaphole (1984:107) asks regarding critical standards for African literature holds true to the question of applicability of deconstruction and other post-structural theories to an African literary text:

i. Do we continue to employ Western standards as if nothing has happened? OR

ii. Do we develop brand new African standards to handle the new literature that clearly shows influences of both traditions?

iii. Do we modify existing critical procedures in order to make honest, informed judgements about African writing; bearing in mind that what functions as criticism for one literature may not necessarily function for another?

I do not think that a different set of criteria should be evolved for the criticism of African literature. An adaptation in the way of appending African requirements onto the existing post-structural theories, will be more feasible. This is, however, no small task. This being the case, one has to affirm the questions Schipper (1989:26) asks: How Western is the study of literature and how Eurocentric is literary research? Shouldn't the term 'universal' apply to literary criticism nowadays?

In applying a so-called Western concept to African languages, a critic has to ask how, why and for whom the fixed canon is a reality. In Black Literature and
Literary Theory. Henry Louis Gates Jr. (1984:3) posed a number of relevant questions about the formal relations between Black and Western literatures:

What is the status of the black literary work of art? How do canonical texts in the black traditions relate to canonical texts of the Western traditions? As if these questions were not problematic enough, how do we read black texts? Can the method of explication developed in Western criticism be 'translated' into the black idiom? How 'text-specific' is literary theory, and how 'universal' are rhetorical strategies? If every black canonical text is, as I shall argue, 'two-toned' or 'double-voiced', how do we explicate the signifying black difference that makes black literature 'black'? And what do we make of the relation between the black vernacular tradition and the black form tradition, as these inform the shape of a black text? Do we have to 'invent' validly 'black' critical theory and methodologies?

... If Western literature has a canon, then so does Western literary criticism. If the relation of black texts to Western texts is problematic, then what relationship obtains between (Western) theories of (Western) 'literature' and its 'criticism' and what the critic of black literature does and reflects upon?

What is the relevancy and usefulness of the existing literary theories developed by Western scholars, formed by Western theoretical and literary traditions for those who want to study African literature? Writers and critics in Africa are increasingly aware of the dangers of Eurocentrism and they have often reacted against it. In the early 1960s, the Zulu poet, R.M. Kunene, was one of the first critics who advocated against "the ritualistic adoption of such Western poetic techniques as rhyme, syllabic metre, or regular stanza forms, all of which, he claims, are alien and even antagonistic to the very spirit of the Bantu language" (Gérard, 1971:269).

Various researchers have expressed their views on Zulu literature. Gérard (1971:270) complains about the "disquieting amount of childish stuff" being published in Zulu. Many critics of Zulu literature state that the immaturity of works not only in Zulu, but in all the Southern African languages, originates from the fact
that there is no organised form of literary criticism whose function would be to set up the standards. This could be true, for many literary critics in Zulu generally complain of the violation of the basic literary requirements. This is why the introduction of literary theories and criticism will be a contribution to this field. To know the medium you are working with, will result in better work being produced, better writers and better literary critics.

Decoding African texts deconstructively from either an African or a Western perspective may seem arduous. Chaphole (1984:107) also experiences problems in this regard:

Jabbi suspects that a critic better informed in Western literature than in traditional African forms may see modern African writing as emerging mainly from Western forms; another critic, more nostalgic towards African traditions, may see things the other way round. Then there is the cautious critic who is hesitant to be caught out. We must all consider and accept our individual limitations in the presence of the vast complexity of cultural factors. Any bias of knowledge will always involve a degree of covert ignorance or overt indifference to certain relevant cultural considerations. African literature cannot afford prematurely rigid alignments in criticism and scholarship in the early stages of its development.

In an interview with Mineke Schipper (1989:44), the father of negritude, Leopold Senghor, confirms the constructiveness of interaction between Europe and Africa, whatever level it may be:

*L'Europe nous apportera, essentiellement, avec son esprit de méthode et d'organisation, ses découvertes scientifiques et techniques. L'Afrique, je veux dire l'Afrique noire, apportera ses vertus communautaires et artistiques, singulièrement sa philosophie de la vie, fondée sur la complémentarité, et, dans les arts, son sens de l'image analogique, du rythme et de la mélodie.*

(With its spirit of method and organization, Europe will bring us, mainly, its scientific and technical discoveries. Africa, I mean black Africa, will bring its communitary and artistic values, particularly its
philosophy of life, based upon the complementarity, and, in the arts, its sense of analogical image, of rhythm and of melody).

The comparative study of criticism from different cultures will certainly be quite enlightening, because a different cultural background may lead to completely different interpretations of a text. The mother-tongue reader has an obvious advantage in this regard on the non mother-tongue reader, however, problems may also be experienced by the uninformed mother-tongue reader. Irele points out that African literature enjoys an ambiguous critical position. First, the African critic draws from an indigenous oral tradition and a Western tradition. These two traditions combine to provide a background of responses which forms the basis for judgement (Chaphole 1984:107). In my analysis, I will draw from my knowledge of these two resources.

When analysing a text, Western or African, the critic’s responses and interpretations are not always so instructive or revealing as they may be, for his/her range of information has grown from a matrix of values which he/she has in common with mankind as it has developed within the tradition. The level of response will vary with each person, depending upon the degree of complex understanding which he/she is able to bring to the work. A difference in interpretation may appear with readers with different language knowledge, with different literary experience and with a different outlook on life. This can create problems when dealing with deconstructive aspects like the origin of words or intertextuality, where considerable background information is expected. But although the reader’s view in a frame of reference is always per se coloured subjectively, the aim of deconstruction is not to give solutions, but to disarrange and re-arrange the text. Furthermore, even if, practically, readers are unconsciously influenced by their own value systems, and also because they know too little about the many existing literatures in our world, and they make not so well-grounded systematic or objective judgements as the discipline demands, deconstruction can still be practised.
Résumé

In the above discussions, the origin and growth of post-structuralism and specifically, deconstruction was illustrated. It was noted that deconstruction and other post-structural theories stem from de Saussure's structuralist theory which presupposes that all systems are structured like a language. Deconstruction, however, opposes and modifies structuralism in many ways. Certain deconstructive concepts were discussed for application in later chapters. Problems with deconstruction in general, as well as in African languages specifically, were also highlighted. Many critics queried the political implications of deconstruction which to them appear as a kind of apolitical, endlessly sceptical game. Peck and Coyle (1993:198) comment however:

The story, however, is more complex than a rejection of deconstruction, for what Marxist and feminist critics realised is that structuralism and deconstruction between them had offered the most radical analysis yet of the way in which Western society had constructed itself ... What structuralism and deconstruction encouraged people to see was, in essence, that the order of the world was not something given, but something that the world had chosen to construct through language. Deconstruction, in short, provided a new angle from which to analyse the structure of Western society, for example, traditional critics had always endorsed the individual; deconstruction, taking a rather more sceptical view, could see the fragility of the construction of the notion of the individual.

It would be a catastrophe for the study of literature if the insights of deconstruction were to be forgotten so that they no longer need to be taken seriously in the present-day work of literary study. I should go so far as to say that the task of literary criticism in the coming years will be mediation between the rhetorical study of literature, of which deconstruction is by far the most rigorous in recent times, and the now so irresistibly attractive study of the extrinsic relations of literature.

There is also absolutely no reason why deconstructive analyses of the kind suggested
by Derrida and de Man would not be applicable, with proper modifications of technique, to Zulu literature. The study of literature is accompanied by serious reflection on the specificity of literature as a mode of language. This will in fact be the test of African literary criticism in the coming years, to incorporate and expand new knowledge of literature. As Toynbee (1970:62) concludes:

The scholar, critic, student or teacher of literature ought to strive now with all his or her might to widen his or her public’s literary horizon; and to do this he or she must begin by widening his or her own.
CHAPTER 3

POETIC TRANSFORMATION IN THE POETRY OF C.T. MSIMANG

3.1 Introduction

Traditional literary theories insist on a simple mode of reading in which one 'literal' meaning is searched for. According to convention, a poem is considered a direct utterance from a specific human consciousness, the poem's language can express the unique and individual thought of that consciousness and the poem’s meaning is stable and determined by certain objective factors, like the author's intention. These metaphysical beliefs, according to the post-structuralists, led to the loss of interpretative flexibility. Deconstruction enters at this stage as a supplement to the recovery of a forgotten skill. The purpose of deconstruction is to unhinge restrictive traditionalist thinking, which is based on a misguided pursuit of a fixed, unified and self-validating meaning.

Deconstruction unmasks the ambiguity of the text by engaging an effective strategy to designate the rupture or splitting open of the text. It lays bare the assertions of the text in claiming a self-presence of meaning by revealing the perpetual play of infinite substitutions that comprise the text. As Spivak explains:

Sign will always lead to sign, one substituting the other (playfully, since 'sign' is 'under erasure') as signifier and signified in turn (1976:xix).

Subsequently, the circle of representation is shattered, and what was considered as identity or meaning is shown to be merely displacement, deferment, différence. De Man emphasizes that this theory of interpretation "denies the possibility of a straightforwardly literal or referential use of language" (Selden, 1988a:94) in the ambiguities generated by rhetoric. He establishes that language does not
communicate single, stable meanings but rather continually signifies a web of interconnected and incompatible senses.

De Man asserts that texts, in reality, dismantle themselves. When their language is closely scrutinised, it falls apart into contradictory meanings. The task of the deconstructor is to merely uncover the hidden potency and repercussions of the disruptive logic inherent in language. Young (1981:10) characterizes post-structuralist criticism in the following terms:

As a self-reflexive discourse, which constantly divides itself against itself and transgresses its own systems, post-structuralist criticism avoids becoming fixed, avoids becoming an established method.

Young accentuates the "self-critical, self-transforming aspect" (1981:7) of post-structuralist writings which makes it difficult for the reader "to pin down and systematize a series of texts" (1981:7). This self-alteration facet of critical discourse is made possible by its realisation of its own différence in the sphere of signification. This basically means that post-structuralist criticism is aware of its rhetorical status, and, in exploiting and playing with it, transgresses any self-identical system it may have posited. Reading any literary work becomes, thus, a disentanglement of the figurative threads of the literary text, and an indefinite production of meaning during the course of which the boundary between literary text and critical text becomes blurred as the two texts become interwoven (Young, 1981:7). This means that the difficulty in comprehending the meaning does not lie in its belonging to another dimension, but in the ambiguous metaphors and rhetorical figures employed to 'dress' the meaning.

In this chapter the aim will be to make a reading of Msimang's poetry in order to demonstrate a poetic transformation as seen through deconstructionist's eyes. The angle of approach this reading will take in particular is that which has as its most important premise the impossibility of ever arriving at self-presence of meaning.
In this reading, displacement - which is a powerful deconstructive rhetorical tool - will be deployed. Deconstructive practice is to subject the text one is reading to displacement. This is achieved by inverting the dualistic conceptual framework - undoing the opposites with the aid of inversions, reversions, irony and paradox - and by extending the text beyond its traditional boundaries to create an intertextuality of writing. Intertextuality itself will be fully discussed in a further chapter. One has to commence with the deconstructionists' one inescapable implication for the process of interpretation - rhetorical reading.

3.2 Rhetoricity in Msimang's poetry

Deconstruction questions the structuralists' assumption that structures of meaning correspond to some deep-laid mental set which determine the limits of intelligibility. It shows how this structure is subverted by the working of the texts themselves, and asserts that behind the structure of the text the structurality of language is at work. Deconstructionists show that language is not co-extensive with meaning, and rhetorical reading becomes in part an exposure of the ideological imposition of meaning on texts. It further sees language as a system of signs which are in constant play, and meaning is a product of this play of differentiation. However, this view does not entail that everything goes with regard to the interpretation of texts, but signifies that one is sensitive to the presence of phrases of countless other words and other texts, which are absent. A text is further seen as an intertextual event itself and changes continually for the interrelationship between signs are never constant. Instead of producing a univocal meaning, the text at every stage exhibits infinite polysemy.

Derrida's approach to unveiling the layers of infinite meaning is to look for "the moment that is undecidable in terms of the text's apparent system of meaning, the moment in the text that seems to transgress its own system of laws" (1976:xix).
This, one is further told, is the moment “that its [the text’s] ‘origin’ and its ‘end’ are
given over to language in general ... the moment in the text which harbours the
unbalancing of the equation, the sleight of hand at the limit of the text which cannot
be dismissed simply as a contradiction” (1976:xix) and finally, it is “the moment of
the forgetting of the trace” (1976:ix). Having detected the fissure in the apparent
closure of the text - the irretrievable and permanent cleavage between sign and
meaning - the deconstructor reveals the chain of substitutions that characterizes the
text and links it to all other texts.

Paul de Man characterises literature as “the rhetorical model of the trope”
(1979a:136). In its deployment of metaphor and other rhetorical patterns, literature
uses “resemblance as a way to disguise differences” (1979a:137). This disguise is,
however, incomplete: “a literary text simultaneously asserts and denies the authority
of its own rhetorical mode ... ” (1979a:139). The literary text can therefore be
regarded as constituted by an indeterminate and paradoxical play of resemblance and
difference, sameness and otherness. The mask of an original and self-identical
meaning - the sign - slips and reveals an infinite regression of origin and a plurality
of meanings:

Rhetoric radically suspends logic and opens up vertiginous possibilities of referential aberration. And although it would perhaps
be somewhat remote from common usage, I would not hesitate to
equate the rhetorical, figural potentiality of language with literature
itself. I could point to a great number of antecedents to this equation
of literature with figure; the most recent reference would be to
Monroe Beardsley’s insistence ... that literary language is
characterized by being “distinctly above the norm in ratio of implicit
(or, I would say rhetorical) to explicit meaning” (De Man,

As far as literary criticism is concerned, the implication of this slipping of the sign -
or what is also termed “deflection” and defined as “any slight bias or even
unintended error” (1979a:127) - is far-reaching:
The deconstruction of metaphor and of all rhetorical patterns, such as mimesis, paranomasis, or personification, that use resemblance as a way to disguise differences ... puts into question a whole series of concepts that underlie the value judgements of our critical discourse: the metaphors of primacy, of genetic history, and, most notably, of the autonomous power to will of the self (1979a:137).

In another essay de Man argues that when 'figure' is given privilege over 'persuasion', "rhetoric becomes the ground for the furthest reaching dialectical speculations conceivable to the mind" (Young, 1981:276). As Robert Young makes clear, in the play of resemblance and difference which constitutes the rhetorical basis of the literary text, what is pursued is not self-present literal meaning, but rather the 'dialectic' to which de Man refers. Discussing Derrida's strategy, Young says the following:

Undoing the values of truth, unequivocal meaning and presence, deconstruction shows the possibilities for writing no longer as a representation of something else, but as the limitlessness of its own 'play'. To deconstruct a text is not to search for its 'meaning', but to follow the paths by which writing both sets up and transgresses its own terms, producing instead an asemantic 'drift' (derive) of differance (1981:18).

The notions to be explored at this stage thus includes the text as a play of resemblance and difference (in other words, the rhetorical status of the text) as well as the questionable autonomy of the self, and writing as transgression. The above terminology requires explanation and ramification, which will be offered in due course with the aid of the following of Msimang’s poem 'Iziziba zoThukela'.
Iziziba zoThukela

1. Ziziba ezizonsobele
2. Zolani ningisondezele.
3. Ngiyabesaba oben' ubunzulu,
4. Ngiphonse itshe lazika,
5. Nokho ngiyanomela
6. Ngoba ngiyanazi,
7. Ophuza kini phinde ome.

8. Ngibabaza leyo ntobeko
10. Izimpophoma aniziggizi qakala,
11. Zingishayel' ihlombe liphuma lishona.
12. Imithelela niyithi klate, niphole;
13. Nazi kahle, iphanga nje umdaka,
15. Ngiphuze qede yangibangel' inkwanaka,
16. Uphuza kuyo uphinde wome.

17. Nolwandle niluhlek' usulu,
18. Lugubh' amagagasi lungaphwezi
19. Lwehta lwenyuka lungenasinge.
20. Nimile ngentobeko nibheke phezulu,
21. Nimile sengathihi anisacwayizi,
22. Nkhongozele inhlakanipho yezulu
23. Ephuma ngokuphuma kwekhwezi,
24. Esa ngokusa kwelanga,
25. Inifique nikhangezile nilindele,
26. Nilindele umyalo wengilosasi
27. Eyathi babusistwe abalindayo.

29. Imifula engemi iphikelele kude,
30. Ilanga liyilindele emadotsheni,
31. Ihwamuke iphielele ezeni.
32. Amanzi izowachitha enquntu shini
33. Isale ize, nisale nimile.
34. Nami ngimile kini ngazibuka,
35. Ngoribuka niphenduka istibuko,
36. Nangikhombisa ubunqunu bami,
37. Ngazibonela ubunhluzwa bami.

38. Ingqondo seyaggwala yathomba,
39. Ngokulalelewa ngamazolo nesithwathwa
This poem is, as its summary title suggests, about the pools of a river, specifically those of the Thukela river in KwaZulu-Natal. Structurally, the poem can be divided into six parts, which accordingly agrees with the six stanzas of the poem. The first stanza concerns the speaker’s awe of the depth and hypnotic power of the pools. In the second stanza the speaker praises the pools for their courage, tranquillity and demure, while comparing them to the frivolous waterfalls. The third stanza again is a comparison between the serene pools and the restless sea. The fourth stanza consists of the pools being compared to rivers, which can dry up at any time. The fifth and six stanzas are remarkable, for the relationship between the pools and the speaker is very intimate here. The speaker connects spiritually with the pools, in order to cleanse him, to impart on everyone who has humility, wisdom.

The tone of this poem develops from the first stanza to the last. In the first stanza, the tone is that of awe, fear and respect. Later on it transposes to an attitude of full trust and devotion towards iziziba.
The poem is mostly assumed to be simply about nature. The speaker in the poem draws the reader's attention to the beauty of nature, water, etc. Superficially, this poem is about pools, but the reader is warned from the first stanza, that beneath this integument is something deeper, an urgent message, which touches on the fundamental aspects of life. Evolving from the endless play of signifiers in the poem, one finds a *mise-en abyme* situation - described by deconstructionist writers as the sense of vertigo produced by the instability of meaning. Diverse interpretations of this poem can be extracted - on an individual and a spiritual level, for example. The calm of the deep pools of *uThukela* river unperturbed by the change of seasons makes the speaker envious, wishing that the same calm could prevail in his/her inner being, irrespective of the ups and downs of life. In the depths of the pool man could learn of man's shallowness in thought, mirrored by the waters. Also, inspiration for writing may, like the river water, rush about only to dry up when winters of life come along, when the mind becomes clouded.

The pool has, according to Zulu culture, other associations as well, which substantiates the idea of a new life. A pool is the place of *'uhlanga'*, in other words the origin of man. The reeds are the carriers of water, they penetrate the earth, causing conception of man (Berglund, 1989:144). The pool of water can also be associated with the water surrounding a child in the womb, which again signifies water of birth.

On a religious plane, the speaker wishes that the clear waters could rinse off the worldly dirt and rust from his mind, soul and conscience. The speaker is privy to profound Biblical information: “*Ophuza kini phinde ome*” (who drinks from you [the pools] never becomes thirsty)[line 7]. The sinner will convert from a destitute person “*inhluzwa*” (line 40) to a Christian “*ngembethe*” (line 40). If one confesses one's iniquities “*hlambulula*” (line 42), one can just like the pools become clear “*sicwebe*” (line 47) or considered theologically, be holy. The pools discriminate between good and evil, represented as white and black. However, the pools can also
join, unite black and white in complete harmony, who one day will tell the story to the coming generations. The imagery of black and white colours uniting, support a political theme for this poem. The theme may even be education - striving for learnedness strips you of ignorance. The traditional elements in this poem may again focus on a wish the speaker has; that is, not to lose your culture in a fast westernizing world.

Because of the use of traditional objects and terminology, linked together with the specific Zulu river and the praises and forms, one can make the assumption that this poem can also symbolize a meeting with the forefathers. The poem has distinctive cultural associations. This last stanza is reminiscence of the ‘ukuvuma idlozi’ practice, that is when a diviner ‘isangoma’ accepts the call of the ancestors to become a diviner. This activity is always done in a pool, where at the bottom of the pool the ancestors await, normally in the form of snakes. They ask the diviner, who is naked (just like the speaker) to smear himself with a white clay (black becomes white, in line 57). His sickness or sin is then left behind - it is a sort of a burial ‘ukuguqula ubuntu’, it is the pool that changes the man. It is said that when a man comes out of the pool, it is known that he comes from the ancestors in that he comes out white (symbolizing a definite break with the old life and a start in the new). The colour white (in the 6 stanza) is also associated with the ancestors, as Berglund (1989:371) claims: “shades, like the cattle of the underworld, are thought to be white ... No Zulu whose thinking on shades is representative doubts that they are white”. One is also white at birth. This definitely links up with the last stanza’s ceremony. One can also thus interpret the poem as such.

However, any endeavour to give a systematic, verifiable description of the meaning of this literary text through analysis and interpretation is according to the deconstructionists, never found - there is an unending multiplicity of meaning. Derrida coined the term ‘differance’ which sees meaning as permanently deferred, always subject to and produced by its difference from other meanings and thus
always volatile and unstable. Trying to pin down meaning is impossible for the meaning is always unfolding just ahead of the interpreter, unrolling in front of him or her like a never-ending carpet whose final edge never reveals itself.

Msimang’s poem however clearly depends throughout on a set of simple, clear-cut oppositions: up/down, still/move, deep/shallow, knowledge/ignorance, humility/arrogance, calm/agitated, come/go, quiet/noise, complete/incomplete, permanent/temporary, ascend/descend, heaven/earth, light/dark, wealth/poverty, abundance/shortage, naked/clothed, stripped/covered, soul/body, life/death, clear/muddled, white/black, good/bad, speech/writing.

The speaker’s sense of “iziziba” is inserted into these binary oppositions. The pools are deep, the river shallow, the pools are clear, the speaker’s mind is muddled, the pools give knowledge, the speaker is ignorant, etc. The terms ‘knowledge’ and ‘ignorance’ form a binary opposition: a pair of contrasted terms, each of which depends on the other for its meaning. There are many such oppositions, and they’re all governed by the distinction, either/or. If this is acceptable, conceptual order which makes decision possible, is established. Derrida, nevertheless, ‘unfixes’ these oppositions by offering a different way of thinking. He turns both terms of the polarity into undecidables. These undecidables constantly slip across each other’s boundary resulting in a relation which is more than the opposition can allow. And because of that, they question the very principle of ‘opposition’.

To illustrate the concept of undecidables a relatively easy example will be used - that of abaphansi/amathongo, implied in this poem and used in many other poems by Msimang. Abaphansi is translated in English with the word ‘ancestors’, although this translation contains the meaning of ‘deceased persons’ which is incorrect. The term abaphansi in itself is already a binary opposition - ‘those below/under’ - are with us, are all around us, up above, etc. Prof. J. Mbiti in the book African Religion and Philosophy speaks of “the living dead” (1969:34). The abaphansi might either be
alive or dead. But they cut across these categories: they are both dead and alive. Equally they are neither alive nor dead, since they cannot take on the ‘full’ senses of these terms. The abaphansi short-circuit the usual logic of distinction. Having both states, they have neither. They belong to a different order of things: in terms of life and death, it cannot be decided. Ancestors are inscriptions of the failure of the ‘life/death’ opposition. They show where classificatory order breaks down: they mark the limits of order.

Like all undecidables, the concept of abaphansi infects the oppositions grouped around them. These ought to establish stable, clear and permanent categories. But what happens to ‘light/dark’, ‘good/evil’, ‘humility/arrogance’ and ‘knowledge/ignorance’, when the dark sinister pools also give light, when they incorporate both good and bad characteristics, both humility and arrogance? It is the speaker who attributes the pools with having humility (meekness, mildness) - but from the first stanza of the poem the actions of the pools illustrate the opposite - they grow overpowering, they move aggressively as if to attack, they mock the rivulets, they laugh cynically at the sea to scorn - these aren’t virtues of humility. Ironically, when the speaker pleads with the pools to wipe the oozings from the eyes “Nesule ubhici emehlweni” (line 54), he indirectly asks them to humble themselves.

According to Zulu folklore (Nyembezi, 1962:70), an old woman whose eyes are full of discharge, asks certain characters to clean her eyes. Those who humble themselves are blessed, while those who refuse suffer the fatalistic consequences. The allocation of this term illustrates the speaker’s blindness. It is possible that the perception the speaker of the poem has of the pools is precisely the opposite of what he/she believes it to be. The speaker’s so-called insight into the worthiness of the pools - “ngiyazani” (I know you) [line 6] - is accompanied by his blindness to the workings of his own rhetoric - this again mystifies the nature of this poem.

Derrida furthermore introduces the term supplement. For Derrida, the sign is irrefutably bound up with the supplement:
Somewhere, something can be filled up of itself, can accomplish itself, only by allowing itself to be filled through sign and proxy. The sign is always the supplement of the thing itself (1976:145).

The word 'supplément' derives from the French language and means both addition and replacement. The pools are part of the river, they are supplements to the river. The supplement both extends and replaces - similarly, the pool as supplement both adds to the river and is part of the river. The supplement obeys a strange logic. To be an addition means to be added to something already complete, yet it cannot be complete if it needs an addition. The river is complete and has an addition; however needing an addition, the river is not yet whole. The supplement extends by repeating. The pools have the same water as the river and are the river's extension. But the word 'supplement' also means replace, it opposes by replacing. The pools will usurp the river, take its place. In this poem the pools are placed in opposition to the river in terms of importance, the poem illustrates the significance of the pools, not the river. In the first line the relative "ezizonzobele" is used to describe the pools: the word means 'to grow overpowering', 'to spread over and beyond others in fame and achievement', in other words also to usurp. But if the pools (as derivatives) are opposing the river, its source and creator, they are actually opposing themselves. They are undecidables. They signify a floating signifier, something which puts the poem into play. Every act of the pools is marked by an unstable ambivalence. The noun "isiziba" incorporates the verb '-ziba' which means 'to deceive, to pretend, mislead or bribe'. The pools have no proper determinate character. They are terrifying to the speaker, yet the speaker describes them as possessing humility. This ambiguous quality is highlighted throughout the poem.

The speaker apostrophises the pools in the first two lines: "Ziziba ezizonzobele / Zolani ningisondezele" (lines 1,2). These strategically placed introductory lines evoke many associations, the most prominent one being the characteristic praise of Dingane: "isiziba esizonzo sinzonzobele" (the deep pool, still and silent, has overpowering force). This praise refers to Dingane's sly, scheming ways, his
suspicious silence. The English proverb ‘still waters run deep’ or the Afrikaans proverb ‘Stille waters diepe grond, onder draai die duivel rond’ - still waters, deep in the ground, the devil is turning around fits this translation better. These lines also allude to the following praise from Shaka: "Ichibi elinzonzo linzonzobele" (The silent pool has grown overpowering). Again, the pools are fixed with double play, they are not to be trusted. The second line of the poem also correlates well with Dingane’s praises. The speaker is afraid when the water moves towards him. Dingane’s stealthy slyness is reflected in his praise name 'Manyelela' (stealthy mover). The verb “-sondezela” does not only mean ‘moving towards’, but also has the meaning of ‘taking up position for attack, taking up action stations or marking an opponent’. The speaker desires to be like the pools. Yet as an unstable supplement and undecidable, what the speaker desires could not be the positive aspect we thought it was. Wishing to gain these qualities of the pools, the speaker becomes a supplement to the pools, with its spiralling consequences. This supplement generates another supplement and again another - an endless reproduction and proliferation announcing integrally

an infinite chain, ineluctably multiplying the supplementary mediations that produce the sense of the very thing they defer: the mirage of the thing itself, of immediate presence, of originary perception (Derrida, 1976:157).

The above situation is embodied in Msimang’s text in the following lines:

Nami ngimile kini ngazibuka,
Nginibuka niphernduka isibuko,
Nangikhombisa ubunqunu bami

(And I stood with you [the pools] and looked at myself, 
I watched you change into a mirror,  
And show me my nakedness)

The image of the speaker as supplement looking into the pool produces the initial
recognition: he/she isn’t flawless, similarly the pools aren’t the ideal. The ideal image is, upon closer examination, itself a distortion, just like language does not mirror without distorting. The use of metaphor makes things look alike that are in fact very different. In Derrida’s hands, the text unravels - his strategies unfix order. It is the play of possibilities, the movements back and forth, into and out of the opposites.

In the last four lines of the last stanza, the black and white marks could represent writing, however the story they ‘tell’ takes the form of an oral narration. The binary opposition speech/writing could be made here. In casting the key term ‘speech’ against its opposite, ‘writing’, speech has been privileged as the first term - it is the positive term, that which articulates the fundamentals, principles or the *logos* (ultimate truth). The second term is subordinated, it has to be negative or the first term can’t be positive. It has to be deficient, lacking, corrupt or just derivative. Derrida claims that throughout the millennia - from Plato to de Saussure - speech has been privileged. This leads to the term ‘phonocentrism’, which claims that the voice is the privileged medium of meaning. Writing is derivative, it merely represents speech. In Derrida’s view, writing has characteristics that can’t be decided within these oppositions. It plays across good and bad, curative and injurious, as Derrida ascertained with his analysis of the word *pharmakon*, which means both cure and poison. Derrida therefore inverts the ontological hierarchism that elevates speech above writing. His purpose in giving writing precedence is to demonstrate that language cannot represent something non-linguistic. Speech is here subsumed under the general notion of writing: it is merely a phonetic form of writing. For this very reason writing has always been constituted a threat:

What writing itself, in its non-phonetic moment, betrays, is life. It menaces at once the breath, the spirit, and history as the spirit’s relationship with itself. It is their end, their finitude, their paralysis. Cutting breath short, sterilizing or immobilizing spiritual creation in the repetition of the letter, in the commentary or the *exegesis* ... it is the principle of death and of difference in the becoming of being.
In this poem Msimang also disrupts the 'either/or’ structure of the binary opposition of speech/writing and makes writing an undecidable. He prioritizes first writing and then speech. This binary opposition relies on the assumption of presence, for example, the first or privileged binary term ‘speech’ carries full presence, its subordinate ‘writing’ absence. Speech is commonly assumed to represent self-presence of being in breath. No lapse of time, no surface, no gap comes between speech and thought. As Msimang indicates, writing however, doesn’t need the presence of the writer, or of the writer’s consciousness. The written marks are abandoned, cut off from the writer, yet they continue to produce effects beyond his presence and beyond the present actuality of his meaning. However, the order of writing is distance, delay, ambiguity, and death - ‘dead’ meaning, not the living meaning of a present speaker. Msimang keeps his writing alive by transforming it to a type of oral literature. Through generations to come the words on the paper will be read and also related verbally:

*Ihlanganise amnyama kwelimhlophe,*  
*Axoxe le izizukulwane indaba*  
*Ethi: Kwasukasukela; Zithi: Cosu!*

(It [the mind] will join together the black and the white,  
Which will tell the generations a story  
Saying: Once upon a time; They say: Go on![a little bit])

The writing he uses here plays all ways - it won’t be fixed down. It leaves no certainty of privileged foundational term against subordinate second term. Writing no longer designates scripting rather than speaking but rather the undecidable play in both. Writing inhabits spoken words as well as inscribed marks.

In the last line of the poem, the word "cosu" is an ideophone describing an act of chipping, cutting or tearing away in small bits. When used in an oral folktale performance, it signifies that the narrator of the story has to continue, once began,
she/he cannot back down. Msimang (1986a:221) attests that the word implies that the folktale performance is a gradual process marked by a series of phases from harmony to disharmony, and its resolution is a neat tying up of all the loose threads. The exposition is marked by rest-points or pauses after every phase (or bit) to ensure that the audience is listening attentively.

This ideophone, normally used in the exposition of a story is the conclusive word in the resolution of the poem. This complete reversal of folktale order signals that the story to be verbally told at the end is only the beginning of things to come, which refers the reader back to the commencement of the written poem in a never-ending cycle.

The speaker's search for a truly new beginning emphasizes this aspect as well. The conclusion of the poem with an initiatory formulation realises a circular or spiralling movement in the poem, in its search for the paradoxical or self-contradictory position of making a wholly new beginning, and reaching back to an origin which was once, at the beginning of time, the beginning. As Heidegger adds: “Since it is a beginning, the beginning must in a sense leave itself behind” (Riddel, 1974:58). The project of this poem equates a new sense of being with the original source of being, thus it maintains a kind of double-focus between its sense of loss and its incipience of hope, between reaching back and reaching forward.

This is not standard literary procedure where a clear answer is expected: a clear agreement or disagreement. That would be the normal analysis, the attempt to master undecidability. Instead of countering the normal analysis, or approving it or modifying it, deconstructionists insist on its instabilities. It is the ludism or play of possibilities which is all-important, as Hawthorne (1992:95) exclaims:

The central idea behind all these usages is that once the illusion of presence has been dispensed with, reading and interpretation no longer involve a decoding that is subject to the firm discipline of
some centre of authority that has access to the code book; instead the reader can observe and participate in the free play of signifiers endlessly generating a succession of meanings none of which can claim superiority or authority.

The concepts of contradiction, the deferral of meaning in Msimang’s poem, as well as the echoes of other ideas and texts, determine that ‘Iziziba zoThukela’ can never be reduced to a single, univocal meaning or reading. Many critics detest the open play of signification which to them results in a certain sense of lack of discipline. However, the interrelated tensions and forces which result from a deconstructive reading, can only be achieved when the potentialities of textual significations are explored without searching after ultimate truths or unified meanings.

In the poem ‘Uthando’ (1980:8), the productive interaction of signifiers and signifieds again produces endless meanings and relationships.

**Uthando**

1 Uyimpicabadala weThabisile,
2 UyinqabakayitselwanweDuduzile;
3 Uyindida weBathandekile,
4 Uyinkinga weBazondekile;
5 Uyingwijkenwebu Bahlukanisile.

6 Ngikubonile uLumba inkomo edlelweni,
7 Yakhotha enye bathi ngeyikhothayo.
8 Ngisho nezinambuzane uzihungulile,
9 Izintothoviyane zaze zafa zibelethene;
10 Abantu bona bazethuke sebakhe emkhathini.

11 Nami wangithwehule ngondilileka,
12 Ngamfoma izithukuthuku kule’ uMqogwane,
13 Ngakhangwa ukukhanya kumnyama kuhle,
14 Imamba nendlondo zaphenduk’ iziquzi,
15 Amagquma nezikhinsi kwaphenduk’ amathafa.

16 Yebuya luthando umuka njengeqaqa,
17 Umuncu njengomhlonyane,
18 Ubaba kunesibhaha,
The poem gives a vivid reflection of a disappointment in love. The title proclaims the poem to be about love, although when one starts reading, a direct contrast of conventional love is experienced. The poem's thought can be summarised in a series of points: Love appears mysteriously as a comfort and as happiness, but love is in fact callous. Love changes animals, insects, reptiles, geography and people. The speaker was also affected by love, but it leaves him/her with negative reflections.

The metaphysical hierarchies operating in the poem are love/hate, confused/clear, apart/together, transience/permanence, dark/light, cold/warm, harmful/harmless, unpleasant/pleasant, bitter/sweet, foul-smelling/sweet-smelling. In the poem, the first term in each case is valued above the second, except for the opposition love/hate, which the poem deconstructs itself. The poem's notion is captured in the reversal of the typical positive and negative oppositions. Love is bitter, smelly and cold, a witch capable of hypnotizing and rendering a virulent entity innocuous. Love is a transience, a loss - there is no permanent essence in it. Msimang's initial privileging of love over hate changes in the fourth line when he immediately reverses the more usual prioritization.

This metaphorical poem's first stanza is a composite of basically nouns only, identificative copulative nouns at the beginning of a verse-line and directly afterwards personal deverbative nouns at the end. Msimang has, in the first stanza, enriched the compounded copulatives which refer to love by coupling them with different contrastive personal names that he confers on love. These names reflect the many facets of love and the results thereof. The nouns are juggled from the one side to the other; on the one side metaphors which have an element of mystery in common are found, and on the other side personal nouns which mostly have emotional components in common, like happiness, comfort, love. But in line 4, the mood changes to hate and parting. The whole balancing act of the rhythmic pattern is disturbed, and this is only restored in the last stanza. This of course binds the first
and last stanzas together, not only through rhythm and use of metaphors and similes, but also through shock value. By the juxtaposition of successive noun units, Msimang weaves an intricate pattern in his poem:

| impicabadala | ←→ | weThabisile |
| puzzle       |     | delight     |
| -phica (trick, entwine, interweave) |

| ingabakayitshelwana | ←→ | weDuduzile |
| incomprehensible    |     | comfort     |
| inqaba (difficulty, fortress) |
| -ngaba (refuse, excellent) |

| indida | ←→ | weBathandekile |
| riddle |     | loveable      |
| -dida (confuse, mislead) |

| inkina | ←→ | weBazondekile |
| mystery, inexplicable |
| -khina (complicate, bind tightly, tangle) |

| ingwijkhwebu | ←→ | Bahlukanisile |
| unreliable, surprise ending, mislead |
| khwebu<khwebuka (go back on one's word, break promise) |

The above stanza visually displays echolalia at work. Echolalia conveys “the ceaseless echoing back and forth between signs whose significance is determined only relationally and not by any over-riding presence or fixed authority” (Hawthorn, 1992:53). Msimang represents the subject of his poem by manipulating a cause and effect pattern. The compound noun “impicabadala” is combined from a verb “-phica” and a class two noun “abadala”. The merged word literally means ‘what
puzzles the old folk’. However, the verb “-phica” comprises the content of ‘trick’, as well as ‘entwine’, ‘interweave’, which again links with “Bathandekile” (-thanda: ‘love’, but also ‘weave’, ‘twine around’ and ‘encase with coils’). This again connects with “inkinga” (-khinga: ‘complicate, tangle, bind tightly’). The notion of entrapment, being tied up or entanglement is being insinuated. The last personal noun of the stanza “Bahlukanisile” undoes these constrictions with its significations of ‘separate, divorce, divide’.

In a similar manner, the compound noun “ingabakayitselwana” (literally ‘a difficulty which cannot be told to each other’) has the noun “inqaba” (‘difficulty, fortress, stronghold’) as a component. Cast against this noun in the same line is the personal noun “Duduzile”, derived from the verb “-duduza” (‘hull to sleep, comfort’ but also ‘make a thudding noise’), which has a synonym dubuza. This verb contains the meaning of ‘breaking up’ or ‘to fall to fragments’. It is a case of opposites attract, the incomprehensible concept called love which gives comfort, but as it can break down any defences to achieve its purpose, it can also break up an affair. The same sense of a love-hate relationship is reverberated in the verb “-nqaba” found in “ingabakayitselwana”. Not only does it have the negative connotation of ‘forbid or refuse’, but also ‘to be fine, excellent’. A hidden warning is even perceptible in a related proverb: “inqab ‘inqabel’ umniniyo” (the fort thwarts the owner). With this play of words, the rhetoric implies that one is hoist with one’s own petard. One affects oneself by one’s scheme against others. This insinuates to certain sinister developments of potential importance in the coming stanzas. This first stanza already portrays the speaker’s intensely emotional relationship with love in which ambivalent feelings of love and hate are experienced. On a small scale, the stanza represents the abyss of the metaphor, a notion advocated immensely by de Man.

The predisposition displayed by deconstructors is for setting in motion a dynamic flux of ideas; just as illustrated in this verse. Signifiers are never themselves alone:
to function they need to be interpreted, and this involves the creation of a new sign which produces a new signifier which needs to be interpreted - and so on ad infinitum. This process is termed ‘radical alterity’ by Derrida. The posited process is completely internal to language, it allows for no way in which the signifier can function other than by means of interaction with other signifiers. This view has been adopted by other deconstructionists who allow for a more lenient engagement of linguistic engagement with non-linguistic reality.

Deconstruction views the birth of thought as synonymous with the birth of metaphor, and that metaphor (as a substitution) leads to the infinite deferral and play of meaning. This poem could denote frustration about the creative process and creative muse. “Uthando” also has the meaning of ‘one who does artistic work’ such as plaiting, weaving, moulding, carving, etc. This is substantiated by other words in the poem, as illustrating above. The last noun “Bahlukanisile” of the first stanza literally divides this stanza from the next. Msimang is sculpturing his craft in a clever manner, just like the title “uthando” intends. In the second stanza, the speaker continues to fabricate stories with metaphors and proverbs, as the verb “-lumba” (conjure tricks, fabricate, invent stories or concoct) so ambiguously suggests. The first disguised proverb in the second stanza “ikhoth’ eyikhothayo” (it licks the one which licks it or one good tum deserves another) is a relative clause formation based on the main verb “-khotha”. The idea of reciprocity is clearly illustrated with the depiction of cattle standing licking one another. Like people, beasts are sensitive to acts of kindness and cruelty. Thus a beast will lick the beast which licks it - one helps the one who helps one. This is further observable in the hidden contrasting idea which is coupled with this expression. The continuation clarifies it in a full expression with a second principle verb of the parallelism - “ikhab’ eyikhabayo” (it kicks the one which kicks it). Another variant is “engayikhothi, iyayikhahlela” (the one which does not lick it [it does not care for] it simply kicks away). In this context the proverb relates to social or emotional matters.
As the poem unfolds, however, the notion of an emotional difficulty gives way to that of a sexual adversity. As in other poems to be analysed, there is a confluence between the mystical (mysterious love and its entrancing characteristics) and the physical and erotic. The verse-line “Izintothiyane zaze zafa zibelethene” (locusts eventually died carrying each other on their backs) reaffirms the mystical-erotic substantiality of the love already established with the first proverb. This phrase seems to originate from the proverb “Baze bali bona neboni ukuthi libelethe indoda” (They [people] eventually realized that a female locust was carrying a male locust on her back) The reference is to locusts mating. The saying is a warning to someone who does things secretly that one day he/she will be exposed. Nothing remains a secret for all time (Nyembezi, 1974:173). The poem contains sexual associations not only through the sensual words ‘lick one another’ and implicit reference to mating, but also through the use of love-charms. By means of cultural implication, many love charms and traps are mentioned: -thanda (encase with coils, like a snake, entrapment); intando (love-charm); -lumba (practice witchcraft, conjure tricks); hungula (entice, allure); -thwebula (mesmerize, bring under one’s control by charming); amathwebula (medicinal concoctions or powers for charming); -nuka (smell but also smell out ‘divine’). The last two lines of the third verse read as follows:

Imamba nendlondlo zaphenduk' iziquzi,
Amagquma nezikhinsi kwaphenduk' amathafa.

(The mamba and the horned viper turn into lizards,
The hillocks and hollows change to plains)

The Zulus view the above two snakes as the same reptile, they distinguish between a young “mamba” and an old mamba “indlondlo”. They are of a very venomous nature and are regarded as the most dreaded of snakes. Furthermore, the specific type of lizards into which the snakes metamorphose are regarded as harmless animals which do not bother people at all. Symbolically seen, the two snakes are phallic symbols, which turn into non-phallic creatures, suggesting a loss of sexual
virility. Similarly, the geographical terms indicate that which goes up “amagguma” and goes down “izikhinsi” alter to a state of horizontality and neutrality “amathafa”. The poet’s speculations about “uthando” is seen as essentially directed towards a philosophy of experience, rather than a transcendental essence. From the first stanza, the relations of life and love are no longer determined by dualistic divisions between appearance and reality, or thing and idea, but they are simply a texture of being, a sense of one thing changing into another, diversity evolving into unity.

In the third verse, after three initial verse-lines relating personal experiences referring to the effects of love on the speaker, the poet continues with descriptions analogous to those employed in the second stanza. The two lines seem out of place here. The effect produced is that in the second and third stanzas, one event does not grow out of the other, instead it is imposed on it. The gradual construction of incidents alternates from a beast to a climbing plant or small, slow-moving animal or person, to insects and people. The focus shifts then to the speaker him/herself, to snakes and lizards and geography. This seems to confer on events a random disorder and discontinuity and obviates any neat causal link one might have been tempted to establish between these events. The only tie between these events is the catastrophic effect change has on certain entities which again reflects the speaker’s dazed and bewildered emotional state of mind.

Love which is normally ascribed with positive attributions, is adorned with negative connotations. Although the speaker is still in awe of love which can perform miracles, the message he gives is that love is unnatural, like witchcraft. It is an entity conferred on something or someone without any power of choice, like being hypnotized. Hypnosis is defined as a state like sleep in which the subject acts only on external suggestion, a situation clearly depicted in the poem. The speaker, in a hypnotic state, experiences fever-like symptoms in a delirium induced by love. However, the narrator now associates love paradoxically with light “ukukhanya”:
One must take into consideration that hypnosis has the synonym of trance with its dualistic meanings of a state of extreme exaltation or rapture, ecstasy, or a cataleptic circumstance. The speaker was enveloped in darkness, love appears as a light to him, love becomes an undecidable in a love/hate relationship itself. Love is a cardinal component of every human being’s emotions, but as illustrated, it can also monopolize a human being’s emotions which can lead to disastrous consequences, to the person’s own destruction. By charming, hypnotizing and alluring beings, it takes over the being’s normal existence and this brings about, in the case of the speaker, negative consequences, as he/she discards love completely. But this also cannot be accomplished, for love’s relationship is that of supplement. It’s a never-ending spiral. Love equals the speaker as artist - both fabricate stories, entice and hypnotize. Love becomes a floating signifier, because of its dualistic nature - it extends itself to be both positive and negative.

The tone in this poem changes from beginning to end. The first and last stanzas become more personal and are emphatically “u-” (you) based, versus the middle two which concentrate more on “ngi-” (I), and what this person observes. The first stanza consists of emotions, feelings, matters of the mind. The last stanza embodies the senses. The similes employed by Msimang in this stanza appeal to at least three of the five senses making even abstract phenomenon, like love or complex feelings and experiences describable in perceptible terms.

The change in being, already denoted from the first stanza, modifies most of the senses graphically illustrated by Msimang in this stanza. Love becomes repellant, with a very offensive, nauseating smell. Again, this line harbours a hidden proverb: “Iqaq’ alizizw’ ukunuka” (The polecat does not know its own smell). The skunk is not aware of its own smell and does not seem to be inconvenienced by it. This
proverb means that nobody recognizes his/her own faults. Yet this repulsive stink is not without its value because “iqaga lisinda ukuzalusa” (the polecat escapes by watching itself). The opposing poles seem to annul each other. Love tastes bitter like bark of the African wormwood tree. Interestingly, these African herbs are actually used for enemas, not for oral consumption. This implies that the once beloved one, has become unpalatable, it is not worth ‘tasting’ figuratively. The sense of taste is accentuated and extended in the next phrase - love is more pungent than fever tree root/bark. The adjective ‘pungent’ combines both senses of a sharp or strong taste and smell, so as to produce a pricking sensation. The last sense is that of touch - love is colder than ice “ubanda kuneqflwa”. Cold to the touch, but also ruthlessly callous. Like the snakes and the lizards, love is a cold-blooded reptile which only needs momentary warmth before it hibernates again. The synaesthesia of the images combines the optical, the olfactory, the gustatory and the tactile to suggest the interpenetration of the orders of existence, the erasure of difference to create an unusual and illusionary identity for love.

“Uthando” presents its contents well for deconstructive reading. In the speaker’s resentful disparagement of love which he/she cannot personally acquire, all opposing elements are nullified. However, much the same as a juggler tosses objects in the air and catches them, keeping several in the air at the same time; the same act is repeated by deconstructionist critics with language, obliging the reader to think of its negative dismantling, as well as promissory, aspects. The praxis is that the signifier functions to establish a theory of meaning in which the actuality of infinite substitution is acknowledged.

In the poem ‘Ndiza Nyoni’ (1980:50) the delineation of a bird in flight presents a vision of an ideal world where death and miseries are left behind, but there is also a firm sense of the gap between how things might be in a perfect world and how they are in the everyday world. The text is elaborately patterned to reinforce this sense of something ideal and remote from ordinary life, but there is a further complication
in the presentational mode of the narrator, who hints at the perplexing nature of experience. This speaker of the poem is on a quest - he/she is on a symbolic journey in order to gain intellectual, moral or spiritual qualities. Msimang could be seen as morally instructive in this poem, intent on demonstrating the difference between the ideal order and what he perceives in this world. The poem reads as follows:

Ndiza nyoni

1 Kusakavumile wena nyoni,
2 Suka kulengatshe uhlale kuleya.
3 Tshilotshiloza uziphelele macala.
4 Bhula amaphiko kabili, kathathu.
5 Shiya phansi izigodi zosizi
6 Namahlungu alomhlaba ahlabayo,
7 Ujubalale ...
8 Suka kwelo ntulo
9 Uye kwamasi-asiphihi,
10 Kwanyama-iziduli.
11 Damiza amadumu esibhakabhaka.
12 Cababa emageekeni akwankululeko,
13 Ngale kwezintaba namafu.
14 Uyokuthola ukwaneliseka?
15 Kusakavumile nawe nhliziyo yami,
16 Suka kuleli gumbi uhlale kuleliya.
17 Ndizandiza uziphelele macala.
18 Bashiyhe phansi abanotwayi,
19 Ungangixhawu uziphelele ngokhwekhiwe.
20 Shiya phansi elempofana
21 Uvakashele kwelawomakhomba-ngophakathi,
22 Unyenye ngonyenyeni, undize ngendiza.
23 Phezulu ... phezulu ...
24 Indiza yobankulu,
25 Inwebe amaphiko ibhonge kakhusu,
26 Umoya uyihubele ihubo elikhulu,
27 Umhlaba ube ligenqelana,
28 Phansi ... phansi ...
29 Inyoni indiza iphelele emafini?
30 Ndiza phela nawe ngqondo yami,
31 Shaya amaphiko kabili, kathathu,
32 Ngiphaphame ebuthongweni bobusuku.
This poem has the flavour of a typical Romantic verse. Romantic poets return to nature to find a truth and value which had been lost sight of, similarly to what Msimang aims for in the poem. Msimang follows a more parallel pattern than that of the Romantic poets. He presents the reader with a picture of something natural (a bird) on which he imposes an imaginative interpretation. The emphasis on the imagination suggests how the mind is central in the poem, and the awareness of how the poet creates ideas in the imagination puts a new importance on the fantasies that can be created in the mind. The concept of imagination is cardinal in romantic thought, for it is the creative insight of the poet that allows him/her both to perceive and create an order in the natural world. The speaker of the poem wants to shift from the problems of the real world to how he would like things to be. In a literal flight of imagination, a perception of a harmonious world could be created in the speaker’s mind. The make-believe world he creates in his mind is, however, always put in conflict with the real world. Perfection is transient, so the disorder of life intrudes into the poem. Like the Romantic poets, Msimang does not have a simple philosophy to offer. In the end, the poem demonstrates that reality is more complex and confusing than any order the poet might create. This is the point the poem eventually arrives at - Msimang realises that it is nature and his mind working together that create this deeper harmony.

Deconstruction and Romanticism share a certain relationship. In both, the point of
departure is a cognizance that considers language as producing rather than reflecting meaning. This multiplication of meaning is viewed to ensue from the play of correspondence and difference that constitutes language. In the same way as Romanticism aspires not to mirror experience but to extend and transform it, post-structuralism does not purport to master the literary text and represent its meaning. Additionally, the nature and function of language in Romanticism is closely bound up with the nature and function of the imagination, as does Msimang in this poem. Romanticism marks the elevation of the imagination from a secondary status as mere fancy to a primary status as an agent of creativity, just as post-structuralist criticism privileges rhetoric over meaning. Finally, in both post-structuralist criticism and Romanticism there is a scepticism of reason. Both see reason as a misrepresenting rather than elucidating experience, in that reason inflicts a subjective and restrictive structure on experience. Both transgress the limits and systems of reason stylistically by heightening the disruptive elements within rational discourse, and therefore undermining reason, as it were, from the inside through paradox, inversion, irony, ambiguity, discontinuity, contradiction. By going beyond the bounds of reason, post-structuralist criticism and Romanticism show experience to be quite different from what reason suggests. Most of all, the indeterminate and shifting aspects of experience hidden behind the reassuring veil of reason, are uncovered.

Searching for the main hinge-words in the poem delivers interesting results. The term 'hinge-words' originate from Derrida's writings and contains a paradoxical logic which must be explored by deconstructive analysis. Commenting upon Derrida's use of this term, Robert Young suggests that the effect of such hinge-words "is to break down the oppositions by which we are accustomed to think and which ensure the survival of metaphysics in our thinking" (1981:18). The title of the poem suggests the first hinge-words. The poet chose to utilize the verb "-ndiza" although he could have used a selection of other verbs, like "-phaphazela", "-phaphalaaza", "-phapha", "-phepha", etc. instead. The verb "-ndiza" not only indicates the action of flying, but also has the meaning of loss of mental balance.
through excitement, or to be overexcited. This unbalanced state of mind seems to connect to the mood of the poem. A noun, "indizane", formed from this verb, contains the meaning of a vacillating person, one who fluctuates in opinion or resolution. This can also be seen as equivocation where ambiguity is used to conceal the truth.

Furthermore, the noun "nyoni" (bird) also denotes anxiety, nervousness or mental derangement. It cannot be accepted as coincidence that these two words were chosen as the focus, the hinge words of the poem. The poem ostensibly traces the bird and its flight, but it also relates to intellectual or spiritual imbalance and agony. This is pertinently established in the line which claims: "Ndiza phela nawe ngqondo yami" (fly away my mind). Like the bird, his mind or mental pressures and abilities must escape the pressures of daily difficulties and calamities. Terminology connotating to mental suffering in the poem abound: usizi (mental pain, distress, affliction), -hlungu (pain), -hlaba (hurt the feelings, wound mentally, criticize), nhliziyo (conscience), ngqondo (mind, understanding, intelligence). In the first stanza, the poet employs an interesting synonymic parallelism by final linking:

\[
\text{Shiya phansi izigodi zosizi} \\
\text{Namahlungu alomhlaba ahlabayo}
\]

(Leave below the valleys of sorrow 
And the black-burnt fields of this hurtful world)

The noun "usizi" indicates sorrow, pain or distress, but also conveys the content of the black ash left on the veld after grass-burning. The noun "amahlungu" connotes a newly-burnt veld or burnt grass patches, but also incorporates the noun stem -hlungu which denotes pain. By means of dual accentuation, stress is laid on the words indicating pain, but which also vividly depicts the barren and desolate valley of pain and death "izigodi zosizi".

Msimang emphasizes the element of suffering moreover by employing unique Zulu
socio-cultural images which are localised to time and space. These images reveal cultural traits with a specific context and specific culture-orientated attitudes to given phenomena. In line eight of the first stanza, the speaker bids the bird "Suka kwelelentulo" (Go away from that of the lizard). In its literal translation, the phrase denotes hardly anything, but seen against the Zulu cultural imagery, it evolves into an elegiac proverb. The full expression is "sibamb' elentulo" (we are holding to that [the word] of the lizard) and refers to the myth regarding the origin of death. The lizard was the messenger of death to the people, because the chameleon failed to deliver his message first. According to Nyembezi (1974:197), this saying means that one will abide by the first information, and will not change one’s mind in the light of later information. This locution connects well with the theme of sorrow and death, as well as with the unbalanced mentality topic.

In the second stanza two proverbs are found. Line 20 incorporates the relative "elempofana" (that of the poor man). Again, this saying needs to be made clear additionally with detailed information in order to be grasped thoroughly. The unabridged proverb is "elempofana livunywa muva" (that [the word] of the poor man is taken last). The saying originates from olden Zulu society, where it was a usual thing to discuss all matters of importance at court (ebandla). All men, even strangers, are welcome in the ibandla. However, the wealthy men have a certain position of importance and power, and their words of wisdom are weighed carefully. In contrast, a pauper is not expected to make any intelligent contribution to the debate. Even a wise suggestion made by him, will be ignored until a ‘big’ man supports it (Nyembezi, 1974:197-198). The next saying correlates with this proverb: "kwelawomakhomba-ngophakathi" (at the place of those who point with the middle finger). Many people use the fourth finger (index finger) to point with, just as many people live in want. However, not many people use the middle finger to point with, similarly well-to-do people are much fewer than the poor. This describes a prosperous person who lacks nothing. The middle finger is also protected by the other four fingers (Nyembezi, 1974:93). The opposition of the
wealthy against the poor is made here, but it strikes deeper than this - the suffering oppressed form part of the dark underworld from which the speaker wants to escape. Ironically, the speaker pleads repetitively that the bird must leave behind ("shiya phansi") the sorrows of this world, yet it could be deduced that he was left by the bird, "washiywa yinyoni". This saying affirms that the speaker feels solitary and abandoned.

The speaker/poet implores the bird to fly and to give his heart and mind wings so that he may gain inspiration or spiritual renewal. Illumination of the rising sunbeams will clarify his thoughts. As a poet, the light will recharge him and improve his artistic abilities, so he can 'glow'. The first phrase of the poem already expresses the desire to 'turn out well' (-vuma); to be able to produce a good piece of work. In order to accomplish this, the poet must leave behind the worldly troubles (-shiya), but this word also mean excel or surpass. It is worth remarking that in man the highest, most noble pursuits (which are conventionally of truth and knowledge) - are expressed as a hunger, a thirst, a need - ironically all metaphors are of body-sustaining functions. In 'Ndiza Nyoni' the same wish is expressed in an identical manner, the bird must fly (and the speaker wants to go) to kwamasi-aziphihli (the place where there is an abundance of curdled milk), kwanyama-iziduli (the place where there are mounds of meat), amadamu (a large quantity of beer).

When invoking the bird (seen as a muse), the speaker is professing a dependence on the favours of this inspiration for his/her compositions. This ought to be examined more carefully than is the practice by literary critics who frequently regard this invocation simply as a device. What the poet essentially does when he invokes the muse is to recognise that he is not the source of his poetry, paradoxical as this may appear. The speaker is seen as the subject of the poem, but in contrast to the traditional sense of subject which believes that the individual human being possesses valid self-knowledge and is self-actuating (in charge and control of him/herself), deconstruction views subject as secondary, constructed (by language, or ideology,
for instance), volatile, standing in its own shadow, and self-divided (Hawthorn, 1992: 180-182). As subject of the poem, the speaker does not have control over his utterances, they do not originate with him. His self-consciousness has already been transformed by language, ideology, etc. The subject is a rhetorical fiction, an illusion, a construction in language - the subject is constituted and controlled by language.

The thrust of this argument is to reverse the notion of the autonomous subject from whom language originates and who consequently exercises control over language. The subject is no longer seen to be at the centre of his discourse: he is displaced and dispersed within language and at the mercy of language, which is beyond his control. The subject uses language only to find he is being used by language, in the sense of having become a victim of, and a construction in, language. The subject is site rather than centre or presence, in other words the subject is where things happen, or that to which things happen, rather than that which makes things happen: extra-individual forces use the subject to exert their sway, the subject does not use them (although he thinks that he does, and this is part of the cunning of the system).

The speaker yearns to have wings like a bird. But the bird is merely the means by which his aspiration can be acquired - that of enlightenment; obtaining light. The bird is in the ideal position of being a constituent of both earth and heaven, an intermediary between earth and sun, day and night, light and dark. Being oppositions, the one exists because of the other, but the bird symbolizes the point where they come together.

The second stanza resembles the first, but reveals significant growth. At this point, the speaker enters the poem for the first time in a personal capacity. This emergence coincides with the determination to contrast himself with the world around him. He, however, identifies with the night-time world - the sorrows of the world-weary of the first verse - not with the day-time world. The speaker states in line 9:
Ungangixhawuli ngesandla ngingokhwekhwe
(Don’t greet me by the hand, I have mange)

The sick and indigent people - like the speaker - are associated with affliction, pain and darkness. His initial thoughts are of a sombre nature - dark thoughts, not daylight thoughts, thoughts that are opposed to the celebratory ideas associated with sunrise. Assuming the associations of night and death, day and life, are valid, his identification with the night rather than with the day suggests that what he relates to is death, not life. The phrase ‘deep sleep’ in the following two lines could denote death:

Shaya amaphiko kabili, kathathu,
Ngiphaphame ebuthongweni bobusuku.
(Beat your wings twice, thrice,
So that I wake up from the deep sleep of night.)

The speaker finds himself at a point of intersection where the axis of the night fleeing ahead and the sun rising behind (the horizontal) crosses that of heaven above and the earth below (the vertical). At this central point in space and time, this intermediate moment of transition from night to day, the speaker desires to awake from a deep sleep. However, the implication is that if the speaker had literally been sleeping, what he had encountered in the previous two stanzas had been a dream, induced by sleep. This dream would however have obscured the natural world. It is also clear from the poem that the speaker’s sleep does not cancel out the natural world. However, the possibility exists that his experiences occurred in a dream, and thus ironically, none of his aspirations will be realised. His desire to awake is underlined by the ambiguous meaning of the verb “-phaphama”, which not only denotes ‘to wake up’, but also ‘to begin to show intelligence and ability’. His wondrous vision of being illuminated will be a waking dream in the fully paradoxical sense of this phrase.
The nature of the sleep is therefore such that it erases dualism. The sleep the speaker describes is thus no ordinary sleep. The speaker is not asleep, yet he is not awake. In the death-like sleep, the speaker struggles to suppress and forget all sensibility of the pain experienced before. In a passage applicable to the poem under discussion, de Man wrote that...

... to ‘wake’ from an earlier condition of non-sleeping into this harsh world of life can only be to become aware of one’s persistent condition of slumber, to be more than ever asleep, a deeper sleep replacing a lighter one, a deeper forgetting being achieved by an act of memory which remembers one’s forgetting. And since Heaven and Hell are not here two transcendental realms but the mere opposition between the imagined and the real, what we do not know is whether we are awake or asleep, dead or alive, forgetting or remembering. We cannot tell the difference between sameness and difference, and this inability to know takes on the form of a pseudo-knowledge which is called a forgetting. Not just because it is an unbearable condition of indetermination which has to be repressed, but because the condition itself, regardless of how it affects us, necessarily hovers between a state of knowing and not-knowing, like the symptom of a disease which recurs at the precise moment that one remembers its absence. What is forgotten is absent in the mode of possible delusion, which is another way of saying that it does not fit within a symmetrical structure of presence and absence (In Hartman, 1979:51).

The speaker’s sleep occurs within life and marks a break in life and a transition from one facet of life to another. Life is not a growth and development from one stage to another, but an imposition of one experience (moment) on another, and by the erasure and forgetting of the former - the blotting out of it.

The occurrence described in lines 33-35 is one in which the characteristics of light and dark are merged:

*Suka uphele ezigodini zobunyama,*
*Udabule umlalamvubu nenkungu,*
*Uhlangabeze ilanga*
(Get away from the valleys of darkness,
Tear through the thick fog and rainy mist,
Go out to meet the sun)

Darkness is a curtain drawn over light, yet the fog which his mind 'cuts through' - although it hides everything from view - is a shade of light, of darkness dematerializing. Awakening from sleep spreads a light on the natural world which serves to illuminate what was formerly hidden or obscured from sight. In addition to this state of transition from dark to light, a telling inversion is contained in lines 36 and 38. The speaker is narrating the remarkable particulars of that which happened at sunrise, yet he includes the verb pertaining to sunset- "shonisa" - a verb which also refers to dying. This implies that in his present frame of mind the two are not distinct and antithetical phenomena. It could also suggest that what in the natural world is experienced as birth and renewal is for him a kind a death. And, over and above, it collapses the oppositionary conceptualizations through shifting inversions and reversal, shaking dualistic thought at its foundations.

The last four lines reads as follows:

_Ugwinye imisebe yelanga liphuma,
Ikhanyisele imicabango yami.
Ingikanyisele ngokukhanya,
Ngiyokhanya._

(You swallow the rays of the rising sun,
It [the rays] will clear my thoughts.
Its light will give me light,
I will shine forth.)

Taken at face value, these lines are a celebration of the sun and sunrise, which here connotes mental and spiritual regeneration and victory over benightedness. Sunrise - which is the birth of light - is pictured as a swift, ardent action:

_Nanto liqhamuka eMpumalanga._
It enacts its ascendancy over night in a single, assertive decisive gesture. The birth of light occurs through a conquering of night, an erasure of darkness that is compared with the lifting of fog. The curtain of darkness (night, pain, poverty, sickness) draws away from an awakened earth. The ascendancy of the sun is, therefore, consistent with convention, associated with birth and awakening - life's triumph over death.

The sun is also here an ancient symbol representing a parental (inspirational) divinity, its phallic potency generating life. The speaker 'swallows' the rays (phallic symbol) which causes a rebirth (line 41), also sits on the apex of the mountains to meet the sun (line 37). Ironically, the sun as giver and regenerator also causes the daily toil that his progeny suffers. This last observation radically undercuts the impression of the benevolence initially created. The struggle the sun imposes on his scion is unpleasant. The ambivalence thus created spreads over the text, fracturing even its most assured statements. The light ("ukukhanya") of lines 42, 43, 44 reveals itself as inextricably bound up with darkness. The sun creates life but also represses it. It is not rebelled against, but is worshipped, nevertheless, as the poem will make clear, the sun is also condemned in so far as life itself is condemned. In desiring to obtain light, to become glowing, the speaker inherently expresses the ambition to become the sun, thus usurping the father-sun. The conventional values attached to the father-son symbol are therefore both upheld and inverted, in a double register operating not alternately but simultaneously, so that antithetical values co-exist.

The structural principle operative in the poem is that of repetition and difference. Repetition excludes linear development and functions differentially. From the first stanza a certain decisive moment recurs, replacing and erasing its earlier manifestation, supplementing it in the Derridean sense of the term: an addition to an already supposed fullness revealing the inherent lack of the former and purporting,
through the supplement, to confer on it finally a real fullness, though it is itself susceptible, in turn, to the action of the supplement.

In this poem, the everyday world is characterised as dark, disfigured, disformed and void, it is given a figure or form through the positing action of thought. It is thus a hermeneutical construction represented by unreal figures of thought, by language. Clearly seen in this poem is de Man's notion of the retreatment from the "original self" to the "linguistic subject" (1979b:199), exchanging the "empirical world" for "a world constituted out of, and in, language" (1979b:196), a language in which "the relationship between sign and meaning is discontinuous" (1979b:192). For language is hopelessly differentiated from the world and cannot bridge the abyss between them: the temporal void is revealed "in the narrowing spiral of a linguistic sign that becomes more and more remote from its meaning, and it can find no escape from this spiral" (1979b:203). Consequently, applying verbal knowledge to the empirical world is an "impossibility" (1979b:203). Accordingly, the poem is to yield to this referential incapacity of language. But since the poem is also an allegory of man as subject, the poem is being allowed by de Man - in spite of himself - to find a bridge after all, and cross over to thematise itself by illuminating our "temporal predicament" as existents (Krieger, 1989:22).

3.3 Résumé

In this chapter an endeavour was made to give an informed commentary on the occurrence of rhetoricity in a selection of Msimang's poetry. By rhetoric, deconstructionists do not mean the common definition of the term, that is, the skilful use of words to persuade, but rather an allusion to words' figural capacity. De Man (1979a:8) defines figurality as words' ability to refer to different meanings at once, each meaning being an 'error' in relation to the others. De Man explains that it is because language is thoroughly rhetorical that it generates multiple, contradictory
meanings: “Rhetoric opens up vertiginous possibilities of referential aberration” (1979a:10).

A deconstructive reading of Msimang’s poetic texts according to rhetoricity yielded very curious results. The poem ‘Iziziba zoThukela’ demonstrated that none of the interpretations are in conflict with each other or compete against each other. As de Man highlights, to assert one meaning is to undermine and deny the others. To read the poem in one way only, is to ignore or fail to recognize that it also sponsors some other interpretation that subverts meaning. In ‘Uthando’ it was again confirmed that meaning never finally settles into a single assertion but instead is fractured and multiple, circulating among opposed senses. Finally, the text ‘Ndiza Nyoni’ was disclosed to be subject to ironic interpretation, as de Man (1979a:9) maintains, it is at least double voiced, saying contradictory things simultaneously.

In the reading of Msimang’s poetry, an attempt was made to centre less on poetry’s licence to reveal moral contingencies and focus more on the revelatory capacity of poetry to create complex illusions. This was achieved by bringing to the foreground certain surface features of words, like similarities of sound, root meanings as well as reverse values of words, which are crucial to the overall meanings of the poems. On deeper investigation, Msimang’s poems absolutely refuse to yield to a simple interpretation whereby a coherent and consistent pattern of imagery, thought and feeling is revealed. Instead, one is confronted with shifting values and abrupt displacements of meaning. It became impossible to sustain a univocal reading, for the language explodes into a multiplicity of meaning. The above observations should, moreover, suffice to caution against any attempt to discover a consistent pattern in Msimang’s employment of symbols. The values and significance with which any given symbol is endowed are determined by the immediate poetic context and not by an eternal, transcendental, coherent, closed system. This will be fully explained in a further chapter.
By way of conclusion it ought to be pointed out that reading and interpretation in deconstruction are not just reproducing what the writer thought and expressed in the text. Critical reading must produce the text, it has to be de-constructive rather than re-constructive. Furthermore, it has to be kept in mind that any literary work is a self-conscious fiction, and any attempt at reading the work while operating within a certain moment of aesthetic perception can only be achieved within such a temporariness and within the reader's cognisance. Any critical commentary is a thoroughly self-conscious - reflexive as well as reflective - representation of rhetoricity.
CHAPTER 4

REPRESENTATION AND TRUTH IN DECONSTRUCTING MSIMANG'S POETRY

4.1 Introduction

A critical deconstructive reading recognises that, in the inevitable lack of a “natural presence”, a text “has never been anything but writing”; that is “substitute significations which could only come forth in a chain of differential references” and which “opens” meaning and language, as Derrida phrases it, “to infinity” (1976:158-159). The deconstructionists believe that no truth, no knowledge of any sort, can be conveyed by literature which is only a freeplay of signifiers. De Man maintains that the primary nature of language is figurative. He assents to Nietzsche’s opinion that “no such thing as an unrhetorical natural language exists that could be used as a point of reference” (De Man, 1979a:105).

In the previous chapter where the rhetoricity of language was focussed on, it was concluded that as metaphors and other figural devices are omnipresent in language, true knowledge or meaning can never be ascertained. This indeterminacy of texts touches on the impossibility of deciding truth or conveying truth in any work. All that can be communicated is the illusion of truth which is characteristic of the rhetorical mode. Nietzsche had declared:

What then is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms, ... truth are illusions of which one has forgotten that they are illusions, worn out metaphors which have become powerless to affect the senses, coins which have their obverse effaced and now are no longer of account as coins but merely as metal” (Derrida, 1976:xxii).
Literature cannot lay claim to truth. In recent years, the questions raised by deconstructionist criticism regarding the foundation of truth and reference have appeared to many readers to constitute a dangerous denial of any link between texts and reality. The possibility that reference is indirect seems to mean that there is no credible or dependable access to experience or to history.

The dismantling of truth claims through the power of rhetoric has particularly interesting implications for poetry, especially the concern of this study, Zulu poetry. If poetry presents non-truths, what about the magnitude of historical poems or izibongo found in Zulu? How are these to be viewed? How might one have entry to a history in a poem that is established by its endlessly delayed entrance into experience? In what ways could a historical happening or religious statement be explicated if it emanates from a position in which full understanding is not possible? In this chapter, these questions will be given attention to. Furthermore, this section will question the assumptions underlying the critique of deconstruction: the belief that knowledge is attained by meaningful perception, that history is fundamentally available as the completed knowledge of a past, that political and ethical resolutions can and do arise only from a situation of understanding and self-understanding (Caruth, 1995:1).

4.2 Signification, reference and truth in Msimang's poetry

There are certain texts which pose problems for deconstructive interpretation. These texts claim to convey referential truth but they may rely on metaphorical language or other indirect means of expression. As such, their language disfigures experience or reality, and hence leaves it ultimately inaccessible.

This is not a modern literary problem. Attempts to assess the truth value of such texts frequently oscillate between traditional models that claim that literary texts
refer directly to a world outside the text, and theories that emphasize that because all texts can always be fictional, they therefore do not reliably refer to any reality, which consequently remains inapproachable.

In poetry especially, the poem’s alleged autonomy is under attack. Many poems depict the human in all its generality, however many portray historical events or personages. Deconstructively seen, the first mentioned type are more true than those that depict history. History is understood as what is referred to outside the text or through its perceptual presentation and as such unreliable. Past critical enquiries have alternated from perceiving poetry as concrete historical verity in attachment to a certain context, to regarding the poem as a self-sufficient and meaningful ideality of a fiction. The loss of reference to empirical experience in certain literary theories has been deplored by some, but others have felt it to be a sacrifice made for gain. Post-structuralist critiques of the subject have modified the assessment somewhat. This theory which views texts as self-reflexive structures has dispelled the illusion that poems represent a generalized, fictional self. These critics praise poetry for its undoing of ideal fictions, rather than for its production of them.

As concluded in the previous chapter, the metaphor and other rhetorical devices are consequential in deconstructive readings. The philosopher Nietzsche describes the figurative drive as

that impulse towards the formulation of metaphors, that fundamental impulse of man, which we cannot reason away for one moment - for thereby we should reason away man himself (1964:188).

Nietzsche holds the view that man and metaphoricity are inextricably bound. It is in man’s nature to make metaphors, it is a fundamental impulse to name things/objects - to supplant a word for an image, a concept for a word. The word ‘man’ itself is a metaphor - a substitution of one thing for another. To excise metaphor from man is to obliterate man himself, he is a dependant of metaphor.
Both Derrida and de Man turn to Friedrich Nietzsche's tenets in creating a new view of interpretation. Nietzsche contributed to the realisation that no pure and simple basis exists on which the interpretation of signs can be founded. In Derrida's 'White Mythology' (1974), and Paul de Man's 'The Epistemology of Metaphor' (1978), they tried to illustrate the problem of relationship between metaphor and knowledge, metaphor and truth. According to the two scholars, words are generally distinguished by those embodying reality in a direct and immediate way, and those words figuring reality in an oblique and displaced way. Figuration is judged by its proximity to truth - with the supposition that truth is self-present and self-evident (Derrida, 1974:73). Derrida and de Man question this claim to self-present and self-evident truth. According to them, language is always and everywhere figuration. For this reason it falls victim to itself - it cannot stand outside of itself to reflect on itself; it cannot place itself above the chain of signification. Language cannot escape its tropological status.

Derrida is attracted to Nietzsche's scepticism regarding knowledge and truth, as well as his discovery of the inevitability of figurative language in philosophy. Derrida's sympathies lies with the Nietzschean affirmation of a world of signs which are not "to rejoice in uncertainty" (Derrida, 1976:xxx). The language is always metaphorical in character, and even philosophers cannot escape from it. The assumption that reason can operate in a sovereign sphere which guarantees entry to the truth, is a phantasm because reason self works by means of figural language. The figurality of the language subverts the reason's claim to truth.

Derrida accepts that one cannot exist as a social being without some reliance on metaphysical commitments. However, he wants to show how impossible it is to escape the differential nature of language, or to extricate oneself from the aporias of discourse (the 'undecidable' flow and counterflow of all signification characterizing the rupture between language and thought, the discrepancy between statement and meaning). Derrida further illustrates that it is impossible to escape the
differences and the traces of differences which are historically constituted. All discourse is subject to historical conditions. Nevertheless, history cannot be taken as the basis of meaning. The import of time does not bring a stable point of reference, but rather the inevitability of the play of differences. History is not a privileged instance which can, by means of authority, stabilize or fix meaning. It is part of a general text which has to be continually interpreted and re-interpreted. As Derrida suggests:

A text ... is henceforth no longer a finished corpus of writing, some content enclosed in a book or its margins, but a differential network, a fabric of traces referring endlessly to something other than itself, to other differential traces. Thus the text over-runs all the limits assigned to it so far ... - all the limits, everything that was set up in opposition to writing (speech, life, the world, the real, history, and what not, every field of reference - to body or mind, conscious or unconscious, politics, economics, and so forth)(1979:84).

One cannot distinguish between text and world, by positing the world as a presence or substance that exists apart from the processes of constitutive difference that characterise literary texts. To say the world is the text is to say equally that the text is the world. Derrida confirms this by writing: “the task is ... to dismantle the metaphysical and rhetorical structures which are at work (in the text), not in order to reject or discard them, but to inscribe them in another way” (1976: lxxv).

In the essay ‘Rhetoric of Tropes (Nietzsche)’ in Allegories of Reading (1979a), de Man also follows Nietzsche in that language can never be the object of consciousness or of knowledge or science. This is because consciousness is language - meaning that it is false and misleading, that is, history or ideology is aberrantly referential. Nietzsche first shows that although language seems to state knowledge, it actually performs an act, but then he shows that it is just as uncertain that language performs an act. De Man contends that the pretension of language to offer knowledge of the world is rooted in the principle of noncontradiction: that A cannot simultaneously be and not be A. Insofar as language is constituted by the
unstable relation of grammar and rhetoric, it is unable to come into being as an object of knowing, consciousness, science (Warminski in Caruth, 1995:30). De Man holds that in language referentiality is anomalous, while figurality is radical -

the straightforward affirmation that the paradigmatic structure of language is rhetorical rather than representational or expressive of a referential, proper, meaning... marks a full reversal of the established priorities which traditionally root the authority of language in its adequation to an extralinguistic referent or meaning, rather than in the intralinguistic resources of figures (1979a:106).

It is the figurality that forms the base of the language and referentiality is only a deviation from it (1979a:202). De Man is of the view that the literal and figural meanings co-exist in a diametrical opposition making it impossible for any truth or meaning to be conveyed. However, de Man does not renounce the referentiality of language but reckons it secondary. De Man explains as follows:

It would be unfortunate, for example, to confuse the materiality of the signifier with the materiality of what it signifies. This may seem obvious on the level of light and sound, but it is less so with regard to the more general phenomenality of space, time or especially of the self; no one in his right mind will try to grow grapes by the luminosity of the word 'day', but it is very difficult not to conceive the pattern of one's past and future existence as in accordance with temporal and spatial schemes that belong to fictional narratives and not to the world. This does not mean that fictional narratives are not part of the world and of reality; their impact upon the world may well be all too strong for comfort. What we call ideology is precisely the confusion of linguistic with natural reality, of reference with phenomenalism. It follows that, more than any mode of enquiry, including economics, the linguistics of literariness is a powerful and indispensable tool in the unmasking of ideological aberrations, as well as a determining factor in accounting for their occurrence. Those who reproach literary theory for being oblivious to social and historical (that is to say ideological) reality are merely stating their fear at having their own ideological mystifications exposed by the tool they are trying to discredit. They are, in short, very poor readers of Marx's German Ideology (1982:11).
De Man shows that language is not co-extensive with meaning; rhetorical reading becomes in part an exposure of the ideological imposition of meaning as a defence one builds against language. The reader or critic confers a sense or meaning on language through figuration:

How can a positional act, which relates to nothing that comes before or after, become inscribed in a sequential narrative? ... it can only be because we impose, in our turn, on the senseless power of positional language the authority of sense and meaning ... We cannot ask why it is that we, as subjects, choose to impose meaning, since we are ourselves defined by this very question (1984:117-118).

One transforms language into historical and aesthetic objects, or embeds discursive occurrences in narratives that provide continuities, in a process that de Man calls "the endless prosopopoeia by which the dead are made to have a face and a voice which tells in turn the allegory of their own demise and allows us to apostrophize them in their turn" (1984:122).

There is a tendency among critics to see deconstruction erroneously as a non-historical critique of all rational procedures. Although Derrida does criticise philosophy, his critique is, within its immediate historical context, essentially a radical response to liberal reason that promotes a more socialised, historicist and ethical way of thinking. Derrida does not deny any reality outside the text, but wants to rethink the usual, assumed relations between reality and text.

De Man also does not repudiate that language has any referential property. He believes that language has two distinct properties, literal and figural, which he designates as signification and symbolisation. All deconstructive discourse always "states the fallacy of reference in a necessarily referential mode" (De Man, 1979a:125). This necessity is a function of language itself, not of any language user - "deconstruction is not something we can decide to do or not to do at will. It is coextensive with any use of language, and this use is compulsive or, as Nietzsche
formulates it, imperative" (De Man, 1979a:125). The very existence of figural language presupposes the existence of non-figural language from which it can be distinguished and with which it can be contrasted. The very fact that deconstruction is the deconstruction of referential meaning implies that referentiality is present in language. De Man writes:

The situation implies that figural discourse is always understood in contradistinction to a form of discourse that would not be figural; it postulates, in other words, the possibility of referential meaning as the telos of all languages (1979a:201).

Literary theory shows up the questionable passages of argument in the form of unlooked-for textual aberrations. This may help to explain the common misreading of de Man which takes him to deny all practical commerce between language and reality. "In a genuine semiology" he writes, "the referential function of language is not being denied - far from it; what is in question is its authority as a model for natural or phenomenal cognition" (1982:11). Caruth (1995:2) affirms the above misreadings and states that

in increasing numbers of texts, deconstruction has been wrongly identified with the claim that reference is a fiction, and has accordingly been dismissed as denying memory, history, and all notions of truth. What is crucially important, on the contrary, about the intervention of deconstruction in literary theory - and by extension, within larger debates about history and memory - is precisely that it searches for a way to think of language, and specifically reference, in terms that do not fall prey to the dynamic in which every textual affirmation meets with a seemingly inevitable denial.

She suggests a rethinking of the notions of reference which does not close down any access to reality, but rather opens up an inquiry in which experience can be rethought and recognized anew. Traditional models do not capture either the specificity of history or the way it may occur as a continuing event, which must be continually reconfronted - a point confirmed and emphasized by other critics as well:
The space available for movement between any given text’s formal coherence and referential force, or between its truth and history, always outstrips the possibility of a definitive calculation, and ... always remains to be determined anew (Newmark in Caruth, 1995:172).

The thinking of how the then and there ... may implicate us, here and now, poses the challenge of thinking history, not as a symmetrical, totalizing narrative of origins and ends, but in the precise terms of the material specificity of the event (Esch in Caruth, 1995:194).

To reanchor a poem too quickly in a context by a referential determination is to foreclose on the very place where poems could be speaking to the question of their historicity (Burt in Caruth, 1995:130).

Krieger (in Rajnath, 1989:17) argues that moral and ideological (historical) meanings are ever present in literary theory, even when the critic’s focus is on the verbal structure. His attitude to the structure itself brings out his moral concern. Johnston (1989:14 -15) is of the opinion that deconstruction has often given nothing but negative help in the attempt to read literature with history and biography. In saying that history is a fiction, a text is subject to ideological skewings and mystifications, and that it cannot be relied upon as a source of objective knowledge. Deconstructive theory sometimes seems to block all access to the possibility of reading explicitly ‘referential’ documents in conjunction with literary or speculative texts. However, Johnston encounters that

Yet in practice, we find Derrida drawing upon Freud’s life and letters in his analysis of ‘Beyond the Pleasure Principle’, and de Man often beginning an article with a historical account that in some way doubles the rhetorical problem he is about to discuss. The question, then, is how to use history and biography deconstructively, how to seek in them not answers, causes, explanations, or origins, but new questions and new ways in which the literary and nonliterary texts alike can be made to read and rework each other [my italics](1989:15).

The notorious proclamation “all readings are misreadings” (Miller, 1979:467) does
not simply deny the notion of truth. Truth is preserved in rudimentary form in the notion of error. This does not mean that somewhere there is, forever unattainable, one true meaning. Rather, it implies that the reasons a reading might be considered true are motivated and undercut by the text's own interests, blindness, desires, and weaknesses, and that the role of truth cannot so simply be eliminated. To reject objective truth (like historical facts) is to make it harder to avoid setting oneself up as an arbitrary arbiter. Historical happenings as in Msimang's 'Siwela iMoretele' (1990:14 - 15) do consist of some truths. Thus, the one imperative a reading must obey is that it follows, with rigour, what puts in question the kind of reading it thought it was going to be. However, expectations about the reading as historical reproductions are reversed. Msimang's text is a statement about a distinct historical event. A text, as de Man states,

is defined by the necessity of considering a statement, at the same time, as performative and constative, and the logical tension between figure and grammar is repeated in the impossibility of distinguishing between two linguistic functions which are not necessarily compatible (1979a:270).

This discrepancy between language conceived as grammar and language as reference or intentional action, is the rhetorical structure, and the indeterminacy of this structural relationship is what de Man calls 'text'. Msimang's poem is a good example of the two types of language views.

**Siwela iMoretele**

1. Uquqaba oluqishelene lwagqana phezu kwalo mfula,
2. Kwakungathi wuquqaba lwabantwana bakwa-Israyeli
3. Beqoqene benqwabelene phezu ko1.wandle Olubomvu;
4. Sasilquqaba sibalekela ulaka lukaFaro,
5. Sasilququba sihlasele esigodhveni sikaFaro,
7. Amanzi eMoretele athenk’ amandla nethemba,
8. Awagagamelanga okwamagagas’ ol.wandle Olubomvu,
Msimang's poetry is the product of his subjectivity that has undergone alteration in his understanding of language and has recognized it to be historical. As such, it is difficult to interpret and separate the figural meaning from the literal in his rhetorical text. Both are simultaneously present, contradicting and undercutting each other. The figural and the literal meanings conflict with each other without either of them becoming predominant. Furthermore, the level of meaning, rhetoric, always comes to interfere with the grammar of the sentence (De Man, 1979c:129). Miller also suggests that referentiality is never completely absent from language. He contrasts
referentiality with deconstruction:

It [the text] says something which is capable of being interpreted in two irreconcilable ways. It is ‘undecidable’. One way is referential (there is an origin) and the other deconstruction of this referentiality (there is no origin, only the freeplay of linguistic substitution) (1975:30).

It is impossible to remove critical discourse from the question of rhetoric, and it is also inconceivable to unmask its ideologies once and for all. De Man (1982:11) points out that those who fill up the content with form or with content, intrinsic or extrinsic, sign or meaning, and think that they are making a theoretical, practical, political difference are only reproducing and teaching ideology not history. He emphasizes

That literature can be ideologically manipulated is obvious but does not suffice to prove that this distortion is not a particular aspect of a larger pattern of error. Sooner or later any literary study must face the problem of the truth of its own interpretations, no longer with the naive conviction of a priority of content over form, but as a consequence of the much more unsettling experience of being unable to cleanse its own discourse aberrantly referential implications (1993:174).

The text may indeed be seen as a deceptive ideological instrument, however, it would do well to let it make its claims and to examine these on their own, as if they were objective pokes at the truth.

One does not have to recourse to the poet’s biography or psychology to understand the effect of his poetry, which is produced by linguistic structures and figures. It is possible that this poem refers to a specific event of a change in consciousness within Msimang’s history as poet, an event that marks the appearance of a new subjectivity. This venture could be looked into. However, one does not seek to establish any causal connection between the events of the Moretele massacre and a psychology, be that of an individual or of the masses. The poem does not support a crude
causality of this sort. Finally, however tempting it would be to explore the poem as a history written within a psychoanalytic framework, there are reasons for preferring to start with a less subjective landscape.

The urge to apprehend what this undeconstructed text is trying to claim still remains - to apprehend that claim and to judge it as a claim to be true. In reading this poem, the text will not be tested to see whether the historical or political content is 'true' or not. There is no need to accept the historical evidence, however, the historical truths in this poem will also not be disregarded. The text was written by a certain individual during a particular time span. The poem dates to approximately late 1985, after the actual event took place. The title - translatable as 'We cross the Moretele river' - suggests that the poem will be about the Moretele river, or a happening which concerns the Moretele river, or else about the apartheid struggle in general. Msimang focusses the reader's attention on the specifics of the happening by including a prosaic epilogue. This seems necessary, for if it wasn't for the Moretele river being mentioned twice in the poem, this poem could represent other historical incidents as well, for example the Blood River bloodbath. The question to be pursued is the question of what this poem has to say about the pressures in language toward reference and signification, as also what it says about its historicity.

The poem by Msimang ostensibly refers to the historical event of 21 November 1985 when the residents of Mamelodi East crossed the Moretele River to the superintendent's office, to negotiate about their rentals. Before they could reach the offices, officers blocked the marching residents and shot at them. In his notes on his poetry, Msimang affirms the above:

(In 1985, an apprehensive event happened in Mamelodi on November the 21st. Indeed, on this day a large group of people crossed the Moretele river to complain about the escalation of rentals at the offices of the superintendent of the location. This undertaking had as a result the death of more than ten people who were shot by the police. Thereafter, I wrote this historical poem called: “Siwela iMoretele”).

What could be inferred from the statement above is that the senseless deaths of these people of Mamelodi made such an impression on the poet that he wrote a poem on the incident in order to pay homage to them. This implied intention of the writer is not as such accepted by the deconstructionists. De Man has distinguished between the intention in the mind of the writer and that realised in the structure of the work and argues that it is the latter rather than the former which is significant for the literary critic. “The structural intentionality” writes de Man,

determines the relationship between the components of the resulting object in all its parts, but the relationship of the particular state of mind of the person engaged in the act of structurization to the structured object is altogether contingent (1979b:25).

The poet wrote this poem, as he himself asserted, in a state of personal compassion and political crisis. The implications of his thought and writing in the violence of history are legion. Msimang’s text was thought out during the apartheid struggle and are directly linked to an anguished meditation upon the historical destiny of the oppressed people of South Africa, a meditation that finds an echo in his poem. This poem not only serves as a memorial of a tragedy, but also a unifying bond, linking the nation in solidarity through similar experiences. Critical reading of Msimang is a way of undoing this mystification that draws from poetry a supposed reconciliation which repairs the divisions of human experience and offers this as an organic model for human destiny. Ironically, de Man states that poetic language, far from serving as ‘common ground’ on which ‘poetically man dwells’ is a site of division and
struggle, "always constitutive, able to posit regardless of presence, but, by the same
token, unable to give a foundation to what it posits except as an intent of
consciousness" (1984:6).

By commemorating this event in this poem, Msimang brought into being
monumentalization. This involves turning people, events and even texts into
historical and aesthetic objects. The key component to monumentalization is one's
shirking of the text's power by means of a cognition based on a notion of unity
between what is known and the knower; a knowledge and a value that one might
then praise or condemn. Deconstruction argues that readers fool themselves into
thinking that they see a line of continuity, which only serves to mask their own
present state of deficiency. Such a reading is a recovering of what is missing by
appealing to another to which one bears some sort of natural relation. Critical
decomstructive reading must account for the blindness, for the critical failure of
cognition to inscribe a certain history.

Msimang chose the genre of poetry to render the historical happening. Since in its
interpretation, the written word is also involved - in an infinite play of differences -
different meanings are endlessly deferred from the thing itself. And

if in language there are only differences with no positive terms, it is
in literature that we have least cause to arrest the play of differences
by calling upon a determinate communicative intention to serve as
the truth or origin of the sign. We say instead that a poem can mean
many things (Culler, 1975:133).

One is always in the situation of having to revise a judgement to a work, for a new
fact, a new text, makes a difference in the way one reads. Indeed, eventually there
is no restraint to the play in the interpretation of literature except the limitation of
the critic's imagination, a limit which grows or changes with each reading.

De Man's readings always start out from the quite traditional questions of literary
theory - but merely to underline the fact that the discipline of history can do its work only by suspending the rhetorical dimension of language and hence by not reading texts. De Man's commentary on historical poems more or less ignores any national themes and focuses on the imagery that fills in the decisive structural framework for the description. The reading of this poem will also concentrate on imagery by firstly construing the text and explicating the implied purport of the different meanings in ways closely tied to the construal.

The poem 'Siwela iMoretele' is read as a verbal presentation of human experience, its presentation is ordered, especially in sharp division of stanzas and spacing. The whole poem is descriptive except for six lines of active animation. The poem is organized into sequences, of which the coordinating principle is that of a progressive narration. This poem can be summarized in its main points: a crowd on the banks of the river resemble the fleeing Israelites, nature is a witness to the happenings, they cross the river and are fired on. Still advancing, they get shot at - retreating, many dead are left behind. The poem expresses both eloquently restrained grief for the deaths and belated knowledge.

The poem is the utterance of a particular speaker, identified as 'we' of the text. The possibility exists that the speaker/poet was an eyewitness to this incident, he/she could have been a participant in the event, or he/she could be simply sympathizing with the victims by including him/herself. Even as an observer of the occurrences which took place, the narrator's coverage of the episode cannot be taken as an account of the truth for it occurs in the form of a poem, which is unreliable for it makes use of metaphorical language.

The tense of the verbs ranges from past perfect (signifying an event in the past) to the present (sustained 'today', that is, of the speaker's utterance) and future tense. The shift from past to present tense (which occurs in the last line of the poem) opposes the then to now, ignorance to knowledge, naivete to experience, life to
death. The speaker/poet has moved across the line from innocence to knowledge through the experience the poem represents.

This experience might be specified as a shocking discovery of the savagery of oppressors, or the awful suddenness, unexpectedness and finality of death. This poem can be an elegy for the departed, illustrating their hope, courage, despair and death or an ideology or socio-political commentary on the government of the day. Nonetheless, Msimang terms it a simple “umlando” (historical poem), and by doing this, he obfuscates the situation. However, since literature is not grounded in something outside language, the determinate bounds of its meaning are undermined by the text itself, in a play of tropes that leaves an unassimilable residue of meaning. As such, the determination of specific meanings in the poem read as an entity - which is an initial phase in deconstructive readings - is subverted beyond any unifying boundaries.

In the deconstructive over-reading of the poem, the text is undermined, and the construed meaning explodes into an undecidability among contradictory alternatives of meaning. The first stanza is connected not only by an ecumenical image, but also in structure. The first three lines are related; the second and third lines repeat the first, and a similar situation occurs with lines four to five, except that the last clause contains a negative statement. The poet sets himself the objective of finding an image for the marching crowd. His starting point is the vision of the crowd assembled on the upper bank of the river. This beginning occurs within a representational system (metaphor/simile) asserting that the crowd was like the Israelites:

*Kwakungathi wuquqaba lwabantwana bakwa-Israyeli*  
(It was as though the crowd of Israel’s children)

Deconstructively, the first focal point will be to fix upon the word ‘as though’ or
'like' (kwakungathi) - that word which subverts the force of full assertion by its introduction of the element of analogy. A would-be affirmation of a presence outside the mind is withdrawn into a mere analogy, the desire for a union of all beings. Dualism and difference can be resolved, but only in the figurations of language. What the poem would like to retrieve is the claim: 'as though'. But it questions its own supposed assertion to firm knowledge by the use of the word 'as though' and all that this simile implies, for this allegory is marked through and through by a contradiction. In comparing the marching crowd with the Israelites, the poet affixes more detrimental than favourable connotations. One can infer that with this image he wanted to foreshadow the crowd's promising destiny - that God guided them like he guided the Israelites. However, the differences between the simile's tenor and vehicle are far more than the similarities. Both gatherings were down-trodden and enslaved people, but while the Israelites crossed the sea in order to escape Pharaoh's forces who resolved to recapture and enslave them once again, the Moretele crowd crosses the river in order to confront their oppressors. This is confirmed by the use of the verb "-hlasele" (gone out to war, invaded, attacked, go against, hunted). God made his presence clearly known to the Israelites, travelling before them by day in a pillar of clouds (Exodus 13:21), similarly to the clouds appearing before the protesters in the poem. These clouds, however, behave discordantly - they cannot reach unity - momentarily merging and disintegrating as if fleeing from the scene:

_Amafu phezulu ahlangana ehlukana_
(The clouds above accumulated and parted)

The book of Exodus stressed that the Israelites' deliverance from Egypt was an act of God. This was demonstrated through miracles that touched almost every detail of the Exodus story. Again, in *Siwela iMoretele* amazing phenomena also occur:
AWASITHIBELANGA, AZEDLULELA EJEQEZA EBALISA,
ALILA ISIISO SEZILISO NESILOKOZANE,
AMAFU PHEZULU AHLANGANA EHLUKANA,
NELANGA ELALISHILOLA LAHOLEKELA EMUVA.

... ZAWELA IZIGAGAYI KWABABAZA IBHULOHO,
AMADWALA PHANSI ABAMBA ONGEZANSI,
IZINHLANZI ZAKUYEK' UKUISHUZA ZAKH' IMILOMO.

(It [the water] did not restrain us, it passed by solicitously glancing,
It wept a mourning of deep sorrow and sobbing,
The clouds above accumulated and parted,
And the sun which guided us, retreated to the rear.

... The march crossed and amazed the bridge,
The slippery stones below showed astonishment,
The fish stopped swimming and stupefyingly stared.

To the Israelites, the crossing was a miraculous path to freedom - to the marchers it was a path to despair and destruction. Upon seeing the approaching army, the Israelites lost faith and cried out to the Lord. But Moses said to them “fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord” (Exodus 14:13). The deduction made from this comparison is that the Lord had forsaken the Mamelodi crowd’s plight and had no salvation for them as He had for the Israelites. The roles are reversed, and when, like Pharaoh’s forces, they retreat in a panic, they leave many dead behind. Instead of being the victors, they were the victims. Whereas the Israelites sang a hymn of triumph and praise to the Lord for delivering them from the Egyptians, in Mamelodi the water of the Moretele simply murmurs a lamentation (line 36).

In his poem as a whole, Msimang oscillates between these contraries: the alternate priorities of subject and object, humans and nature. His poem makes evident that an external world can be constructed and believed in if the stimuli for sensations originate outside the mind. If, on the other hand, sensations are like metaphors themselves, then their constructs have little validity outside the mind. Riddel picks on the second possibility:
Nietzsche radically situates the notions of essence and truth, located as it were in the 'thing-in-itself', in the evasions and discontinuities of language that are taken for 'truth' because the origins of truth in metaphoric accident have been forgotten. For Nietzsche, even a percept is a 'first metaphor', discontinuous with the unknowable stimulus that provoked it, and language, or the sign ... of the percept is a metaphor of a metaphor, a 'second metaphor' at best. There can be no movement of essence or presence through these discontinuous planes, hence no access to a 'truth' or its 'origin', the 'thing-in-itself', by a regression from late to earlier metaphors (1980:356).

In his desire to encompass the experience of the Moretele crossing, and its resemblance to the fleeing Israelites, the poet employed the belated secondariness of language or in de Manian terms poetic logos made flesh. The Biblical image of the Israelites is thus a delicate image indeed. It is a second metaphor, but is still further estranged from the truth because of the type of metaphor it represents. The question of Biblical evidence as truth will be dealt with later.

The poem contains an interrelated set of binary oppositions: past/present, life/death, here/there, positive/negative, hope/despair, river/sea, etc. The seeming boundary between each pair of these terms dissolves into an inevitable structure of chiasmus (inversion in the second of two parallel phrases of the order followed in the first). As a result there is a constant slipping of entities across borders into their opposites so as to effect a perpetual reversal of properties; this cross-over is forced on the reader by a remnant of meaning within the text of the poem itself. The sun is mentioned for the first time in line 12 of the poem:

\[
\text{Nelanga elatisihola lahokela emuva.}
\]

(And the sun which guided us, retreated to the rear.)

At first it seems as if the clouds and the sun mark only the passage of time elapsed, in other words, the sun was ahead of them (as in the morning) and then behind them (as in the afternoon). However, with a second reading the allusion could be made that the sun is backing out, abandoning them. This exposes the sun as a coward, a
circumstance quite different from the usual associations of splendour and glory. The sun is further the source of life; sunrise equals life or new life and sunset death. This is represented in the following line:

*Balibona liphuma, abalibonanga lishona*

(They saw the sun rise, they did not see it set)

A reverse situation is experienced here: to see the sun set, meant to be alive. Sunset thus constitutes life. This overturns the conventional figurative association between darkness and despair, and light and hope. The antithesis of passive and active are also reversed in this poem. The river is passive, its water does not - like the Red Sea - bar or detain the crowd from crossing to a certain death, which it has pre-knowledge of:

*Amanzi eMoretele athenek' amandla nethemba,*  
*Awagagamelanga okwamagagas' oLwandle Olubomvu,*  
*Awasithibelanga, azedlulela ejeqeza ebalisa,*  
*Alila isililo sezililo nesilokozane*

(Moretele's water discouraged and diminished in strength and hope,  
It was not brash as the waves of the Red Sea,  
It did not restrain us, it passed by solicitously glancing,  
It wept a mourning of deep sorrow and sobbing)

The river does not give any assistance, its water is discouraging. It passively shows concern and trepidation about the venture while simply mourning the people passing by (line 9-10). The huge rocks, the fish and the bridge (lines 16-18) simply show astonishment at the crusade, but do nothing to stop them. Nature which is vital, acts dormant, while that which causes death is active like the gun blasts in the fifth stanza and the eagle of death (line 31). The inertia encountered in the natural objects in the poem first creates a more generalised sense of despair which casts a shadow over the cursed quest. This desperation continues throughout the poem, whether one delves into its human history or into the self, whether into the past or into the future,
whether the quest is seen in space or in time.

The fact that the poem is yet to be established before a reading opens a space simultaneously between it and the letters on the page. This is called spacing in deconstruction and it refers to the fundamental separation of the poem from the black marks on the page. It calls attention to the material space and time in which one exists. Derrida points out that spacing and temporization (the way the poem is deferred and never quite established) are joined, that they are co-existent with one-another and hence their different meanings are contained in the one term. Because of the spacing of language into space and time, meaning arises through systems (codes) as well as through semiotic contexts, but this very spacing leads to randomness, indeterminacy.

The above situation is clearly illustrated in the word ‘cross’ which already implicates a change, a going over from one situation to another, going across to the other side. The term denotes movement, usually with the idea of accomplishing a particular matter. When crossing a river, one succeeds firstly in safely reaching the other bank. In the Zulu culture, there are many proverbs in this regard, for example: "Auwuelwa umfula ugcwele" (A river is not crossed when full) - meaning one has to take the right opportunity to do something. In the statement "siwela imoretele", one can thus infer that the river is crossed for a specific reason. This reason is not supplied in the poem itself, but stated by the poet afterwards - to state their grievances concerning the recent rental escalation. Seen however, in the light of the image mentioned previously, it is not for this cause alone. Like the exiled Israelites, these burdened beings seek freedom. Freedom from oppression, from apartheid - simple human freedom. Crossing the river would be a type of liberation for these masses. In the outset of the poem a state of devoted hope is experienced, but this quickly deteriorates into despair. The stirring events that follow the march over the river come to a climax in the fifth stanza with guns firing and mortals collapsing on the ground. One has to consider that the other verb "-wèlà" - which is different in tone
from "-wélà" (cross) - has connotations that might be very revealing. This verb expresses the idea of falling for or into an entity, or to make a mistake, to be misled, or to make a slip. In crossing the river, the community made an error. Whatever this oversight was, perhaps to trust the authorities, had deadly consequences.

The notion of error is confirmed by the speaker him/herself. The speaker commits to two stages of consciousness, one belonging to the past and mystified, the other to the now of the poem, the stage that has recovered from the mystification of a past now presented as being in error. The stance of the speaker, who exists in the 'now' is that of a subject whose insight is no longer in doubt. First there was error, then death occurred and now a perspicacity into the rocky barrenness of the human predicament prevails.

The speaker's feelings are not proclaimed, but must be inferred from the terms with which he asserts the state of affairs. This allows for considerable room for variance in this aspect of interpretation. The descriptive stanzas in which the speaker's sympathy with the crowd's predicament can be deduced is contrasted with the animated execution of the fifth stanza, which is also visually placed differently from the rest of the text. There is a major time shift and change in viewpoint encountered here which actualizes a shift or break in the continuity of the poem. This shift reveals an instability of attitude in the poem, as will be disclosed shortly. The direct speech in quotation marks (lines 29-30) attracts attention for it seems like an intrusion of another voice than that of the narrator. It could also be the narrator speaking out in his/her own voice, now identified as a first person narrator "ngi" (I):

"Maye! Kodwa bengisho!"
"Maye! Shwele, nkosi yomusa!"

("Alas! But I had said!"
"Alas! Forgive, lord of grace!")

The curious question to be asked here is not merely who the speaker of this
discourse is, but also to what and to whom the content refers to. What was it the speaker had said, and to whom did he/she say it? Was it a warning to the crowd before the event? Who asks for forgiveness and why? Is it the narrator of the poem or/and a person or persons in the crowd, and do they ask forgiveness on behalf of themselves, the police or the crowd? Are these speakers present in the activities as onlookers, or are these statements uttered in surprise by panicked people in the happenings? The tension between these non-disclosures and the suspense leads to a disequilibrium in the text. This subversion ties in with the instability and incoherence determined in deconstructive texts. The clash of voices as well as positions in this historical period challenges and undermines what might have seemed to be its central assumptions, rather than just expressing a straight-forward ideological stance.

What can be concluded from this passage is that a subject is presented who is contraditorily both situated and cited. It seems as if this enunciative 'I' is only now entering a discourse which has excluded him/her. But the performative effect of bearing witness, the sense of the subject’s action of urgency, does not seem denied by this splitting. In a quite determinate and empirical situating of him/herself, as well as his/her audience, this passage calls forth the exigency as well as the position and pathos of political powers.

The use of ideophones to convey movement and visual suffering makes this verse unique. This is the only locale in the poem where this exceptionally creative part of speech is encountered. Mono- and disyllable ideophones which appear as predicates on their own are utilized. The word “qiz” is indicative of gunshots and “bani” and “phazi” of the sparks from the barrel of the gun after firing a shot. The interjection used emphasises the emotional state of the speaker exclaiming his disbelief. It is clear from these passages in the poem that the compatibility between the inner states of consciousness and acts of power is a thematic concern.
The life/death, sunrise/sunset opposition acquire further supplementary meanings. In the assertion that the second line of direct speech is representative of what the speaker him/herself states, one can deduce that, in what the speaker believes to be the final hour of reckoning, he asks for forgiveness for his wrong-doings, whatever they may be: "Shwele, nkosi yomusa!". The speaker has a firm conviction of his mortality. This conviction is associated with a strong sense of participation in a nature both permanently material, therefore immortal (river) and at the same time enduringly spiritual, therefore also immortal. The nature/culture opposition collapses with the other binaries, resulting in the proclamation made by this first person speaker which is exemplary of one trying to clear his name. A feeling of guilt could be traced here. Guilt perhaps because he/she did not die for the cause, like the others did. His only hope for re-establishing the bond that connected him to the people and their world is to die without dying - to be dead, and yet still alive. The poem is thus his displaced representative of the above commiseration. The deaths of the Moretele multitude is an allegory for the loss of logos, leaving the poet, his words groundless. After the violence and losses, he can simply state in his presence:

_Nanamuhla amanzi asasilita leso sililo._

(Even today the waters still wails this lamentation.)

The poem thus performs an act of self-qualification which, in the view of the poet's desires, must be seen as an act of self-subversion, or self-deconstruction. The writer deconstructs whatever he constructs, or unbuilds whatever he builds. The poet's succour lies in language, its capacity for lies. Whether these deliberate lies, or illusions restore any semblance of a presence is the question.

These people, just like the exiled Israelites, were taught by sorrow and disciplined by suffering to usher in a new day, not only for their own people, but for all mankind. As such the poem reads about the retrieval of a sense of direction; a poem which falls back upon memory to renew a sense of purpose, and on forgetfulness to
give its beginning again a sense of newness. The poet forgets the harshness of the
actuality by writing his version of history. The possibility of writing and of history -
like the possibility of writing history - thus is conditioned by, in de Man's terms, a
'forgetting' that occurs through writing. In forgetting, one reverses a consciousness
to the certainty of perception and the conviction it can say what it means.
Consciousness always forgets the negative insight it had achieved, and
"recommences that movement from the start" (Hegel in Caruth, 1995:78).

It is true that historical things happen in ways people do not necessarily expect or
control. And when it is a question of reading a text - like this one, for example - this
means that the reader may not yet know all that is already truly happening in it.
Msimang's poem invokes the authority of history, the urgency of political agency,
and the strange intertwining of chance and necessity that attends historical event.
The description of the Moretele crossing encountered in this poem could be exactly
the same as the true occurrence, the poem could be read - descriptively and
historically - to mean the same things one is mostly familiar with. In this poem,
history can be seen as a report or description of what has happened, history as the
actual event which happens in its own right. Nonetheless, the poem also allows a
distinction between a poetic space where an interrogation into the verbal nature of
literary language continues, and the public, historical space where language aims to
represent the world as in a painting. In the poem's focus on a tragedy in history, it
tends to reverse into its opposite and end up creating the history it attempts to
reveal. The conviction that a text points 'outside' to a certain reference ultimately
inverts into the certainty of a text pointing to itself:

Every report or description about the past, in other words, about the
steps leading up to the question ... is concerned with what lies at
rest; this kind of historical report is an explicit laying to rest of
history - whereas history is on the contrary a happening. We ask
historically when we ask what is still happening, even when, to all
appearances, something belongs to the past (Heidegger quoted in
The truth of history, as Heidegger proclaims, is itself put into movement when one interrogates hinge words, for history can always be determined in at least two very different, and perhaps incompatible ways - as descriptive knowledge and as an actual event. In fact, Heidegger says that such a kind of history is simply arrested for the time being between the words and concepts of history and history. The potential of this type of history consists in that it could somehow stir the truth (at rest in the description) towards becoming a true occurrence. However, only by asking about the kind of truth that could still be happening in every historical event, continually reinterpreting every text, would it be possible to avoid falsifying the truth of their historical occurrence in empty formulae. Deconstructive critics do not simply want to parrot opinion and insist that the totalizing schemes of explanation are henceforth redundant since nothing could intelligibly count as supporting their truth-claims.

Derrida pleads that historians must be attentive to rhetoric, to the type and state of utterances, at the very least to their grammar. He insists that his method in general is deeply historical, indeed deconstructive readings are political and institutional interventions that transform contexts. Historical and social meanings in literary texts, are constructed by representations and discourses; they are not of the nature of a pre-discursive 'truth' that appears in an unmediated luminousness to the mind. There is no unity or natural meaning or truth to those conflicting historical or social relations, they consist of separations without any closure. Closure in deconstruction is simply a conclusion of a literary work, and reflects a desire “to create an enclosure, make the definition coincide with the defined ... close the circle” (Spivak, 1976:xx). However, Derrida rejects closure. A work of art is never complete, but open-ended as Spivak explains:

Deconstruction seems to offer a way out of the closure of knowledge. By inaugurating the open-ended indefiniteness of textuality - by thus 'placing it in the abyss' (mettre en abîme) ... it shows us the allure of the abyss as freedom. The fall into the abyss of deconstruction inspires us with as much pleasure as fear. We are intoxicated with the prospect of never hitting bottom (1976:1xxvii).
As a result, one is to view the following poem as a nominal 'closure' from which one has to evince an 'opening'.

In the poem 'Inkondlo kaMkabayi' both social and historical relations are encountered. The poem's historical figure forms part of the oral traditional past, and as such presents the critic with new obstacles and insights:

_Inkondlo kaMkabayi_

1 Ntombi zakwaZulu,
2 Ngivumiseni le ngoma;
3 Ntombi zikaMalandela,
4 Ngihayiseni le nkondlo;
5 Yinkondlo yomzwangedwa,
6 Yinkondlo kaMkabayi,
7 Yinkondlo kaLamula.
8 Ngikhumbula mhlaphumuka
9 Eziqongweni zezintaba,
10 Imizwilili yathshiloza,
11 Iminduzi yahlabelela,
12 Kwakusengathi yihubo
13 LikaNomkhubulwana.
14 Ngilamleleni wemathong' ohlanga,
15 Ngilamleleni nakhu sengemuka,
16 Ngibambe, ngibambe weNobamba,
17 Ngibambe, ngibambe weMalandela.
18 Zintab' ezinhle zakwaZulu,
19 Enakhe uNdi nangikaka,
20 Msitheni kimi uLamula,
21 Ngilamleleni zintaba kuLamula,
22 Gugu likaZulu nithi mangithini?
23 Gugu lobusha nithi ngenzenjani?
24 Zinhle izintaba zakwaZulu!

This poem is based on a historical figure, Mkabayi. Msimang states his reason for writing this poem as:

(In 1983, once more, this friend of mine, Mzilikazi, having just read my novel entitled Buzani kuMkabayi, pleaded with me that I write a love poem of Mkabayi and Lamula with the heading: Inkondlo kaMkabayi. This, in short, is the explanation for the inspiration for writing this poem in the first chapter.)

Msimang explains the plot of the story as follows:


(They loved each other with a complicated love, all that was left was for Mkabayi to give Lamula love-beads. But, that was extremely difficult, further it created conflict which encompassed Mkabayi. Indeed, she swore off her new love together with her maidenhood to be given to the kingdom of her grandfather, Ndaba. There was nothing else that she would live for except Nobamba that held men and the beautiful mountains of Zululand. She was forced to deny the young man of the place of Ngcolosi.)

What can be deduced from Msimang’s objective is that, although it contains a true historical character, the content concentrates on the relations between the main character and a fictitious lover, rendering this poem as pure fiction. Thus, the poem finds itself cleared of any charge of historicity. De Man asserts that any language that tells the reader that it lies, reveals the truth about language, and is literary. However, any language that does not tell its lie, lies with respect to itself (Fineman,
De Man further complicates the matter by asserting that even the knowledge of this lie raises it to a new figural power, but nonetheless a lie. By asserting in the mode of truth that the self is a lie, we have not escaped from deception. We have merely reversed the usual scheme which derives truth from the convergence of self and the other by showing that the fiction of such a convergence is used to allow for the illusion of self-hood to originate (1979a:112).

Mkabayi's historical character differs from the fictional character. However, finding any factual historical data about this particular character seems to prove a difficult objective, for there are no written records in the form of historical texts where research can be done. The Zulus had no means of conserving these fascinating relics other than by word of mouth, passed down the ages from one generation to another. As stated in a previous chapter, Derrida valorises visible writing over audible speech. Deconstruction suggests that the real problem with such oral traditions is not that they are fictions with no claim to scientific standards or truth, but rather that they do not know, or have allowed themselves to forget that they are such fictions. Even when recorded, traditional oratory history is given a negative thrust by deconstruction, for not only does it deny language the status of performance and of knowledge, but claims that language keeps continually oscillating in an aporia between trying to assert and act.

The only oral forms in which any data could be found were traditional poetry, oral narratives and one of the first texts published in Zulu, i.e. Magema Fuze's Abantu Abamnyama Lapho Lavela Ngakhona. Traditional praise poetry could be seen as a somewhat true reflection of character during the praised person's era. Msimang, however, remarks in his article on izibongo (1980:233), that the praise poem cannot be viewed as a strict biographical account of an individual. It can also not be considered as furnishing accurate historical records, as many historical allusions are made up without any explanatory details. Nevertheless, in Mkabayi's praise poem,
she is addressed as 'Usqili (Father of Guile). She is addressed as a man, as the prefix uso- indicates a male. This is significant as a reflection of her character. She is described in her praises as a cunning person, a dangerous morass, who destroyed many people. Cope (1968:110) relates the following regarding her praise poem:

She is supposed to have encouraged the ambitions of Shaka, which resulted in the murder of his brother Sigujana, to have inspired the plot against Shaka in the conspiracy with his brothers, Dingane and Mhlangana, which resulted in the assassination of Shaka, and to have supported the claim of Dingane, which brought about the murder of Mhlangana.

Also in her praise poem reference is made to the fact that she refused to marry, a very uncustomary circumstance for traditional Zulu times:

*Intomb' ethombe yom' umlomo,*  

(Maid that matured and her mouth dried up,  
And then they criticized her amongst the old women.)

Although this praise is extremely obscure, and interpretation can be anything, it seems to refer to her rejection of men and marriage. It is also said in her praise poem that she determined the course of Zulu history. Raymond Kunene (1962:97-98) gives a short summary regarding Mkabayi kaJama’s life history. His information is based on oral narratives. Mkabayi was the sister of Senzangakhona, daughter of Jama and his chief wife, Mntaniya. She played a very important role in shaping Zulu history. When Jama died, it was she, as the crown-princess, who along with her cousin Mudli, looked after the kingdom whilst Senzangakhona was still a minor. She is very often described as the terrible woman of antiquity. She, together with her nephews, Dingane and Mhlangana, planned the murder of Shaka. Desirous to put Dingane on the throne, she later devised the murder of Mhlangana. She is described as a crafty, powerful woman, who had her own district called eBaqulusi (Mkabayi’s followers were called the abaQulusi - meaning: those people who live
in the veld without sufficient covering). She built her own house from which she wielded great influence in the affairs of the country. She detested being controlled and especially her masculine qualities drew admiration from the poets. She died aged about 95 in the year 1825, having survived five Zulu kings.

The poem, however, is based on Msimang's novel *Buzani KuMkabayi*. In it he reflects how a certain fundamental choice of the main character, Mkabayi, of not marrying but to dedicate herself to her father and the Zulu nation, initiates disparate development. She devises a political career for herself, and in doing so, influences all the Zulu kings and their decisions during her life time, which is sometimes not to their advantage. She rearranges her life as political manipulator, first of Senzangakhona, then Shaka and lastly Dingane. And while she is working for apparent peace and political reconstruction she, inadvertently, brews social ferment and political unrest. Ironically, she engineers destruction of the kingdom she has arduously laboured to preserve. Throughout the text, Mkabayi is mainly seen exhibiting male qualities in action, in thought and in personality. One has to consider that Mkabayi was never really deemed a woman in the general sense of women in Zulu society of the time. In Zulu culture the father's sister is acknowledged as 'Baba', thus Mkabayi was addressed as 'Baba' (father) by all her nephews and subjects. In addition, her praises are very similar to the *izibongo* written in honour of men. By giving her male names; e.g. "Baba" (father), "Jama", "Mageba", etc. she is accepted as a male in Zulu society. She was the girl who did not become a woman, but a man, dutifully tied to tradition.

In the reading of the poem, one has to 'forget' about the above historical references. The forgetting of what is achieved or past is necessary in order to concentrate on the text itself. One should try to disclaim all referentiality in the text, however, the poem becomes a portrait of its own deconstruction of referentiality and thus restores, although in a negative way, its referentiality. The failure to remove all the referential restrictions from a text is not simply a failure. Indeed, the relapse of the rhetoric of
figuration, or of rhetorical reading into the referential, into meaning and truth, represents the deconstruction of the totality rooted in lexis, to which all rhetorical reading is prone (De Man, 1979a:49-52). Forgetting is an ongoing process that is never complete because of the reader's own act of reducing the violence of language's positing by imposing meaning on the text in order to recuperate. De Man recapitulates:

What is it one 'forgets' when consciousness bends back on itself in this way? It is not being, for it was never known in the first place, it is not the source ... Rather, we have to forget the fullness of our thought itself when it has been put back on the path of truth - especially in its almost uncanny understanding of the past and its concrete anticipation of the future ... (1984:44).

It is further possible to distinguish chains of connection that are material elements in the text, however, none of these chains has priority over the others as the true explanation of the meaning of the poem. Each is a permutation of the others rather than a distinct realm of discourse. For de Man poetic language is a language which denounces and disrupts all these possible totalizations, those of figurative language included. Miller states that rather than figures of speech being derived or 'translated' from proper uses of language, all language is figurative at the beginning:

The notion of a literal or referential use of language is only an illusion born of the forgetting of the metaphorical 'roots' of language. Language is from the start fictive, illusory, displaced from any direct reference to things as they are. The human condition is to be caught in a web of words which weaves and reweaves for man through the centuries the same tapestry of myths, concepts, and metaphorical analogies, in short, the whole system of Occidental metaphysics (1976:11).

Rhetoricity provides a way to move beyond the closure of referentiality - a way to break through the tradition of presence.

The poem has as its title the simple statement: 'Inkondlo kaMkabayi' (Mkabayi's
song). This suggests a dual meaning, either the song is about Mkabayi or the poem is (belongs to) Mkabayi's. The name "Mkabayi" is ironic, for it contains the possessive formative "-mka-", meaning "the wife of:" (but it can also connote "the husband of:" in the Doke-Vilakazi dictionary) since she never married. It is also significant in view of the fact that Mkabayi's name exhibits an identification problem. Kunene (1981:xxxv) says that

Names... have a close relationship to the meaning of their functions. This is common in the Zulu tradition where the meaning of a name is often an expression of a wish that an individual will meet an ideal. Names are thus more than labels; they are in themselves part of a socialization process.

The question also arises to whom the second part of her name refers to. No known person by that name exists, but explanations could be that "-bayi" refers to "bhayi", an ideophone connoting acting confusedly, without plan. The speaker in the last stanza seems confused, and does not know what to do. The name could also be a compilation of "Mka + abayi". In this case it would refer to those (people) who do not go. Ironically, Mkabayi is trapped in a situation where she feels she can go nowhere. A further irony is that the noun "inkondlo" also signifies a dance used on important occasions such as a wedding, funeral or coronation. In this word is tied already most of the binary oppositions which will be discussed later. Her yearning for the mountains: "Zinhle izintaba zakwaZulu!" (Beautiful are the mountains of Zululand!) equates the longing for Lamula (and a wedding) but her bondage at KwaNobamba is associated with reigning (and coronation). Both of these associations are found in the word "inkondlo".

At first reading this seems to be one of Msimang's historical poems which he had structured as a lyric. It is a highly formalized construct in which rhythm is strong and regular. The repetitive elements, so familiar in song (the poem was set to music and sang by a women's choir), is also present in traditional praise poetry or izibongo. But poetically his strategy is complicated and provocative. This sweet
and simple lyric is ordered around a moment of conversation and conversion that entails an increased awareness in poetic consciousness. The speaker lives in a captive world, burdened by her memory, by the dead weight of all the past names which prevent her from seeing herself in her true being. Ironically, the only way in which she can escape her misery, to experience a truly new beginning, is to be free of the burden of her memories of the past. She attempts to do this by hiding behind the mountains.

The poem recounts a longing - possibly the coming to life of a love story and the loss of love - although nowhere in the poem the verb or noun 'love' is encountered. This longing seems to be directed towards a certain 'Lamula', a name directly mentioned three times in the poem and implied several times. But no clue is given to whom this Lamula is. It could be said that the core word of this poem is this verb "lamula", which has the meaning of making peace between contending parties, mediating or giving help. The poem is not only a representation of her physical love, but also her love for the Zulu people. The speaker in the poem could be the poet himself, a third person outside the occurrences, but most conceivably it is Mkabayi herself. Throughout the poem she has different audiences; the girls of Zululand, the ancestors, the mountains and lastly, the cause of her longing. The poem seems set in Mkabayi’s youth at a critical time of her life, when she was to depart for KwaNobamba, although the poem could also be timeless.

She addresses the "izintombi" (unmarried girls) in the first stanza. There may be different reasons for this; for example to offer them advice, but it appears to be something more profound. She requests not only the girls’ attention, but also their concurrence by calling on their shared forefather, Malandela, who binds them into a unity as Zulus. The first stanza is an imperative and interlocutionary utterance which can be likened to the primordial elocution of biblical diction: 'Hear O Israel'. This is a communication which in effect tells its addressee, 'Get yourself into a situation where you are ready to hear me'. It also resembles the introductory
salutation of a Zulu praise poem, which consists of an alternate address and plea followed by three assertions:

_Ntombi zakwaZulu,_  
_Ngivumiseni le ngoma;_  
_Ntombi zikaMalandela,_  
_Ngihayiseni le nkondlo;_  
_Yinkondlo yomzwangedwa,_  
_Yinkondlo kaMkabayi,_  
_Yinkondlo kaLamula._

(Girls of Zululand,  
Sing this song with me;  
Girls of Malandela,  
Compose this poem with me;  
It is the song of personal pain,  
It is the song of Mkabayi,  
It is the song of Lamula.)

In the second stanza the speaker remembers a certain occurrence. Not only does this recollection include personification (canaries and lilies sing) but it is also masked in a metaphor. This faunal and floral importation seems purely descriptive, but enhances the metaphor to follow. The speaker has a special fondness for the mountains and she places the object of her longing on the mountains’ peaks on an early summer day when the Cape canaries sang and the Crinum lilies bloomed. These objects are not only perceived by a sense of sight - the mountains’ tops are visual, the canaries are not only seen but also heard, while the lilies are seen, heard and possibly smelled in an euphoria which saturates the multiplex.

This appearance is equalled to the song of Nomkhubulwane. Nomkhubulwane is said to be the daughter of _UNkulunkulu_ (the Great One). Krige (1988:197-198) explains Nomkhubulwane, her appearance on earth and her songs as follows:

_When the valley mists of spring appear they are believed to enshroud Nomkhubulwane, the _Inkosazana yasezuluwni_ or the Princess of Heaven. She seems to be a kind of goddess of the corn, virtually a_
Zulu Ceres presiding over the growth of the grain ... It is she, too, who has the power of bringing rain ... Every year in or about the month of October, she is thought to visit the earth, and there are celebrations and a feast called uNomdede in honour of Nomkhubulwane. ... Girls sing songs in her honour. It is customary to make use of the opportunity to entreat the princess of Heaven to relieve the people of hardships or difficulties, such as drought. If there is drought, the fathers of the girls will instruct them to take their brothers' loin coverings, sticks and small shields and go out and herd the cattle on the morning of the feast.

With this image, the speaker is trying to align Lamula's arrival with the advent of Nomkhubulwane (which precipitates her songs), an attempt that succeeds only in part. A metaphor/simile supposes, when it substitutes one property for another on the basis of resemblance, a necessary link or an organic link between the poles of exchange. The representation of the nature in the poem correlates satisfactorily with Nomkhubulwane's macrocosm. She makes her visit to the earth in spring and is said to present the appearance of a beautiful landscape with verdant forests on some parts of her body, grass-covered slopes on others and cultivated fields on the rest, or a very little animal as large as a polecat and marked with little white and black stripes; on one side there grows a bed of reeds, a forest and grass; the other side is that of a man (Krige, 1988:197).

All similarities are produced out of differences. Thus difference is constitutive of resemblances, repetitions and similarities. Most basically, differences are established in the dissimilarity between word and referent. The relation of the sign Mkabayi to another sign like Nomkhubulwane or this text with Buzani KuMkabayi (source-text) is likewise encompassed as difference. To say then that the two events resemble each other is to affirm their initial difference. But because they are thought to be similar, their differences are erased and all the interchangeable terms become parts of one whole. This aspect is suggested by de Man when he accentuates that the resemblance which seems to have been "made possible by a proximity or an analogy so close and intimate that it allows the one to substitute for the other without revealing the difference necessarily introduced by the substitution" (1979a:62), is not
only a preclusion of this inescapable difference, it is in particular a "way to disguise difference" (1979a:16) between the poles of the metaphoric exchange. Since the relation which exists between the parts of a metaphorical system is one of mutual resemblance, and since this resemblance binds them necessarily into a whole, the relation in question is organic, a link, as de Man (1979a:62-63) argues, which must be endowed with attributes of naturalness.

The concepts, figures and stories of the Zulu culture, incorporated as materials in their language and in this poem, contain both logocentric metaphysics and its displacement. This subversion is forged into the conceptual words, the figures, and the myths. The extraordinary occasion on which Mkabayi visualized her mystery person resembles the hymn of Nomkhubulwane because this myth embodies the strange potential to be readily transformed into a phantasmal vehicle. But this image tells one more about the speaker herself than the one visualised. Strange similarities exist between the two characters: Nomkhubulwane's songs are incorporated in Mkabayi's song; both Nomkhubulwane and Mkabayi are daughters of a regent; both have special intercourse with the girls of Zululand. Mkabayi is confined by Nobamba and cannot have a normal relationship with Lamula or any other man, and it is said of Nomkhubulwane that

if she meets a man she conceals herself and speaks to him, for it is said that if a man looks upon her, face to face, he will be ill and very soon die. ... Everyone is afraid to disobey her word lest he should die, and therefore her wishes are made known and obeyed (Krige, 1988:282-283).

It is as if Mkabayi's wish for freedom is transferred onto Nomkhubulwane whose field of play exists outside the fences of Nobamba, in nature. But with this traditional binary opposition of nature versus culture, the existence of hidden articulations and fragmentations within this hypothetical totality is revealed for this binary is illusory. Mkabayi yearns for something which is unattainable for nature turns out to be a self-deconstructive term. As Derrida illustrated in Of
Grammatology, culture is initially beneficial - nature comes first and culture comes afterwards; culture is grounded in and added to the natural state. As culture lingers on, it comes to substitute for nature, thereby creating a detriment. In other words, culture supplements nature in two ways - as addition and as substitution. But the notion of an unsupplemented nature has no truth-value, it is only the expression of a desire - an illusion. Nature is shown to be always already supplemented; that is, nature from the start is structured as differential. The concept of nature is a concept produced, as are all concepts, by culture, and furthermore nature's identity is constituted as that which is not culture. Nature is dependent upon there always already being culture before it in order for it to be what it is. In short, nature comes after and is derived from culture. The system has been reversed, the hierarchy collapsed. Far from denoting a homogeneous mode of being, nature signifies a process of deconstruction redoubled by its own misleading retotalization.

Complementing the nature/culture binarism is the antithesis between inside and outside. To the extent that the denotation of any term is always dependent on what is exterior to it, the inside/outside polarity is an essential example for understanding the intricate workings of this poem. Inside/outside functions as a perfect figure for signification and the mechanisms of meaning production. The unsustainable opposition encapsulates everything concerning the structures of alienation and identification which together produce a self and an other, a subject and an object, an unconscious and a conscious, an interiority and an exteriority. As the following chapter will explicate, one of the cardinal insights of Lacanian psychoanalysis is the concept that any identity is founded relationally, formed in reference to an exterior or outside that which defines the subject's own interior boundaries (Lacan, 1977:1-7).

Mkabayi is trapped 'inside', and longs to be 'out'. This opposition unravels in exactly the same way as the nature and culture binary. The perspective of the outside is played off against the inner space. These oppositions are rendered
inadequate, aside from their incorporated inadequacies of endless perspectivism. The figure inside/outside can be turned inside out to expose its critical makings. ‘Out’ cannot help but to carry a double denotation for the subject. To be ‘out’ conjures up the elimination of her negative experiences. On the other hand, it suggests the process of coming out - a movement into presence, speech, and cultural visibility. Because of the infinitely permeable and shifting boundaries between insides and outsides, the risks of being outside are always incalculable. The word ‘outside’ does not only entail being with Lamula and nature. Mkabayi has to choose to be inside or outside a system of power, authority, and cultural legitimacy as well. To be on the ‘outside’ envisions Mkabayi’s fall from power and privilege, just like to be ‘inside’ facilitates her rise to a position of influence and authority. The succinctly formulated ‘either/or’ choice not only asks the subject to take a stand but foregrounds for her a fundamental rift, the poem seems to imply that it is demanded from her that she chooses one tradition or another.

In this poem, one begins to recognize that any outside is formulated as a consequence of a lack internal to the system it supplements. The greater the lack on the inside, the greater the need for an outside to contain and to defuse it, for without that outside, the lack on the inside would become all too visible. To protect herself against the recognition of the lack within herself, she erects the borders against an other which is made to represent that same lack. The mountains are not only beautiful because of her figural vision there once, but in view of the above inside/outside polarity also because they enclose and protect her. The mountains serve as the border between herself and the outside, but they also form part of both inside and outside which renders them undecidable. She is on the ‘inside’ because she chooses to be: “Ngibambe, ngibambe weNobamba” (Hold me, hold me oh, Nobamba). Mkabayi however yearns for the lost love object of her youth, and her ego compensates for this unobtainability by repressing this desire. Another misplaced signifier of desire for Mkabayi is the place itself, kwaNobamba, which again is just a substitute for her lost object, acceptance and love. Any misplaced
nostalgia for or romanticization of the outside as a privileged site immediately gives her away, for in order to idealize the outside she must already be, considerably, comfortably positioned on the inside.

The prepositions 'in' and 'out' generate a host of other associations which often exceed even this simple tension. The usual sense of invisibility (in) and visibility (out) is reversed in the poem in a confused entanglement. The metaphysics of gender identity, has, until now, depended on the structural symmetry of these seemingly fundamental distinctions and the inevitability of a symbolic order based on a logic of limits, margins, borders and boundaries. Sexual object choice is not even so simple a matter of psychical identifications and defences, it is also a result of the complex interaction of social conflicts, historical pressures, and cultural prohibitions (Fuss in Caruth, 1985:234). But borders are notoriously unstable, and sexual identities rarely secure. Being 'inside' for Mkabayi means abandoning her youth, maidenhood, marriage, lover, etc. in order to labour for her people, which, according to the Zulu tradition, is a man's task. On the surface, it seems as if Mkabayi is demarcated according to traditional patriarchal thinking: stereotypically, she is passive, quiet and emotional - illustrated adeptly in the last stanza. However, the choice she makes delineates her in masculine terms: active, rational and brave. With her changing position in society, she is being freed from traditional oppressive gender restraints. But this constructs and fixes her identity as possessing qualities considered appropriate to a man. This perpetual displacement (mise en abime) constitutes a fluidity of identities that suggests an openness to resignification and recontextualization.

One is aware of a sense of how order imprisons the speaker. Not just physical constraints but the whole fabric of life which keeps women closed in. Although marriage is viewed in Zulu culture as the central embodiment of order and harmony, the idea is reversed in the poem. The order that marriage brings in a Zulu woman's life is one of submission which would rob Mkabayi of her pride and movement. It
is ironic that in the poem she bewails her entrapment, but a choice to the other side would have set greater limits on her life. The vision of freedom she has is wholly illusory. She is trapped inside and out. The figure is a captive, but it is herself rather than the mountains or Nobamba which appears to be the captor. She could break her limitations by an act of will but she chose her situation consciously, she is illustrated as a votary of power and a splendid and sterile lady of pain:

Yinkondlo yomzwangedwa,
Yinkondlo kaMkabayi

(It is the song of personal pain,
It is the song of Mkabayi)

It could be said that Mkabayi has chosen the tradition of difference over the tradition of presence. With her choice she challenges the canonised tradition of her culture. She wants to be in control of her world through her words, but language is in control of her. Mkabayi is trapped in this poem within the system of linguistic signs. The condition of man is to be caught in language, as Miller (1976:11) would have it or putting it differently, language constitutes for man the world - reality. Rather than saying man employs language as an instrument, Miller suggests that language uses man: “language is not an instrument or tool in man’s hands, a submissive means of thinking. Language rather thinks man and his ‘world’; including poems” (1977:444). It is language that determines consciousness and human intentions rather than the reverse, which is the traditional explanation of the relation of language and the self. Miller (1976:345) states that “the self is a linguistic construction rather than being the given”. As emphasized by all deconstructors, there is no literal language of consciousness, the self of any author as well as of any literary character is mere figurative construction. Mkabayi is an effect of the text, there is not any Mkabayi herself.

As such, Mkabayi exists in a prison-house of language (Miller in Rajnath, 1989:21). Language in the prison-house is differential as well as referential and rhetorical. The
disturbing discontinuous aspect of language comes about because words are really figures - substitutions or displacements - which stand for something. Insofar as language is rhetorical, her world is text. Contrary to those seemingly radical bounds beyond Mkabayi, bounds which invariably only lead her back deeper into what she was trying to escape, slight deviations carry the promise of some fundamental displacements. This is not determined by "'coercive sources' which have imposed themselves century after century, but is a matter of concepts, metaphors, and myths, each generating the others, which are latently there in the lexicon, the grammar, and the syntax of our languages" (Miller 1972:10). As soon as a thing or a thought or a feeling is mentioned, it enters a system of words where it joins the forces already at play in language. The poem is furthermore an utterance to convey her choice to Lamula, she wants to convey her decision through words, she is already mediating herself.

But the figure inside/outside, which encapsulates the structure of language, repression, and subjectivity, also designates the structure of exclusion, oppression and repudiation. The wisdom of the text is self-deconstructive, but this self-deconstruction is infinitely displaced in a series of successive rhetorical reversals which, by the endless repetition of the same figure, keep it suspended between truth and the death of this truth.

The force of the past, the strength of her own poetic tradition drives Mkabayi on to the next threshold, the disjunctive gap that she leaps between the poem's second and third stanzas. The transition is from a dreamworld to an anguished appeal for arbitration. The third stanza is critical, not only because of the concentration of the subject concord "ngi" (I), but also because of her repetitive plea to be mediated for. She beseeches the ancestors to acquiesce for her as intercessors, a function she fulfilled all her life with disjunctive consequences. It appears that the traditional belief in 'amathongo' (ancestral spirits) plays a very important role in Mkabayi's life. She as well as the rest of the Zulu nation feared and respected the forefathers, and
complied with their every law. All Zulus are aware of the importance of the direct and indirect intervention of the amathongo in one's life. There are four distinct and definable rites connected with the times of crises in life, i.e. birth, puberty, marriage and funerals, which are related to the brooding of the amathongo (Berglund, 1976:129). These four rites are also present in the dance “inkondlo”. The ancestors serve as symbol of Mkabayi’s consciousness. The question to be asked at this point is why and for what she wants to mediate for. She considers herself a mere vassal of the ancestors, however, she could unconsciously only use the ancestors as tools to manoeuvre her own decisions.

The third stanza is structured as repetition, yet such repetition is ultimately liberated and hollowed out by difference. Her utterances seem like a gesture of restitution. Mkabayi oscillating between her two desires (Lamula and Nobamba) diffuses the sense of a coherent subject into indeterminacy. The indeterminate effect seems to give her space to operate in, momentarily opening the prison of determinism. Mkabayi as a performative subject asserts her ability to act, opens herself up to chance and escapes determinism by placing the responsibility on the shoulders of the ancestors. Nevertheless, she had made her choice and the act stands, unjustified by any moral or ethical imperatives, braced only by a historical placement of herself. Mkabayi represents a self that is a situated body, simultaneously subjected to determination by forces of history, culture, and language.

The fourth stanza is structured as repetition, beginning and ending with a syntax reversal. The poet departs from his previous syntactic pattern by means of an inversion of the word order for the purpose of emphasis and to draw attention to the contrived nature of the utterance. In this light, the ending with the questions both notes and splits the fragile solidarity Mkabayi has established at the beginning, replacing her firm stance with one balanced precariously on the edge. Her figure is seeking, failing or falling, and seeking again. She does not know what to do or what to say. Knowing depends on the substitution of a semiotic, metonymic mode of
reference for a substantialist, metaphorical one (De Man, 1979a:122-123). This pressure compels her to ask rhetorical questions out of desperation in order to find meaning in her life:

_Gugu likaZulu nithi mangithini?_
_Gugu lobusha nithi ngenzenjani?_

(Zulu favourite, what must I say?
Darling of youth, what must I do?)

Her questions indicate the undecidable, pointing to difference, change, the unknown future - all the things necessary for a politics of liberation. The all-too-human questions posed by the poem's narrator takes the form of a trope which is the impossible imposition of meaning (illusion of meaning) on language. The loss of the stability of the figure is never recuperated in the text. This dramatic final stanza effects a deliberate reversal. She becomes speechless, not knowing what to say.

When deconstruction criticism focuses on questions of writing and voice, it does not deny that at another level this poem speaks of love. It merely tries to elucidate the most general sources of authority on which the work relies and the sorts of articulation on which it claims to base meaning. The critic has to undertake the difficult task of understanding these complex webs of meaning, which are not dependent on a speaker or situation, but signify broadly, giving the reader not just a situation but a world. Deconstructively seen, the critic has to make connections between these webs of meaning that one will not have thought of, and offering suggestions that some readers may be able to develop further in interesting ways. Deconstructive rhetoric, then, is not a science of truth: "the study of rhetoric leads to the abyss by destroying, through its own theoretical procedures, its own basic axiom" (Miller, 1976:345).

Msimang's indeterminate subject, his move from history to rhetoric, his evasion of recognizable historical or ideological statements all contribute to the effect of the
poem. The spirituality of his discourse manifests itself in writing, which frees one from the visibility and limitation of situations by opening up a world for the reader, that is, new dimensions of one’s being-in-the-world. Viewed traditionally, it was believed that poetry forces the reader to share the life of others at the deepest possible levels. There is an attempt to experience life in a total fashion, to involve oneself in the business of life in order to come at some external truth. Whatever this poem knows, its knowledge is not that of a heightened, progressive self-consciousness. And whatever this allegory of unreadability does, it is not to get one further from error and closer to truth. There are no final answers to questions about the nature of this text and how it relates to its person, although it seems to create a much more uncertain sense of self and a disturbing view of the power relations of society.

Thus far, remarks about truth and reference regarding historical texts were ventured into. The same strategy will continue into theological particularities. As complex as the post-structural theoretical texts on deconstruction are, the nuances of the Christian theological writings can be just as challenging. By looking into poems written by Msimang concerning religious issues, one does not offer a set of probable claims or solutions regarding truth and reference in the Bible. The challenge is to engage the details of religion - and in this case, specifically Christianity - with that of deconstruction.

Both Christianity and deconstruction make a person see things anew. Christianity is a religion of conversion, or turning away from one life orientation toward another from which the prior stance looks different. The world as a whole becomes subject to such a reseeing or revision in Christianity. In the rereading of the Old Testament, the turn of Christian conversion takes the literary form of a trope - a word or phrase that turns away from one meaning (often regarded as the literal meaning) toward another. Words become figures of meaning other than those that once seemed obvious.
Although largely unconcerned with religious conversion, literary theorist Paul de Man is much concerned with the character of tropes. De Man’s words are that “as soon as one is willing to be made aware of their epistemological implications, concepts are tropes and tropes concepts” (1978: 23). This leads to “the recognition of language as trope” (1978:23) and finally to the view that it is “impossible to maintain a clear line of distinction between rhetoric, abstraction, symbol, and all other forms of language”(1978:28). The implications of this for a philosophy of knowledge, meaning, and truth are obviously disruptive. Writing is disruptive in that it exposes the emptiness of the word. Far from referring to a self-evident meaning contained in the word, writing refers only to itself.

Paul de Man makes a distinction between tropological and persuasive functions of language. The epistemological relation between de Man’s image of the trope and its meaning is essentially the same as that between a metaphor and its meaning, or between an Old Testament shadow and its New Testament reality. In all the cases, the reader is fundamentally a knower, either remaining blind to the true meaning of a text, or overcoming blindness with insight. It makes little difference to the similarity between tropes, metaphors, and shadows that where Christian readers discover knowledge, de Manian readers discover only the absence of knowledge.

De Man’s debate over the nature and function of tropes intersects in various illuminating ways with religious Christian reflections. Deconstruction’s very nature points to reading as disfiguration. Deconstruction employs language in such a way as to reveal its contradictory, and ultimately illusory, character. The implication for theology or even poetry containing biblical references is negative. Even Jesus’s name is dissected according to deconstructive tactics. The name Jesus comes from the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua, meaning ‘Yahweh is salvation’ as predicted by the angel in Matthew 1:21. This already confirms something unusual. By uttering the above words, the angel is implying that Jesus himself will assume an activity hitherto assigned to God alone. The name Yahweh was abbreviated as the
Tetragrammaton YHWH, the most sacred name of God revealed to Moses. Although the pronunciation of the four consonants was banned by the Jews, a secret pronunciation of the name may have been imparted by Jesus to his disciples who confirmed the meaning of the divine name as ‘He who is’ (Guinness, 1990:284).

The presence in the name of Jesus is put under erasure. This is done in order to escape the closure of traditional metaphysics, for deconstruction asserts that presence is illusory. De Man seeks to avoid idolized conceptions of presence as found in the name of Jesus. Again it must be taken into consideration that deconstruction focuses on the way signifiers are not only set free from reference to the world, but also from any literary system or structure (like the Bible) that might seek to contain or control them by giving them determinate meanings. By means of erasure, Derrida makes use of words and terms which he feels to be inadequate but for which he finds no viable alternatives. Communication is thus impossible without the evocation of this erased presence. Derrida apparently adopted the practice after noting Martin Heidegger’s use of it:

He lets the word ‘being’ be read only if it is crossed out ... That mark of deletion is not, however, a ‘merely negative symbol’ ... That deletion is the final writing of an epoch. Under its strokes the presence of a transcendental signified is effaced while still remaining legible ... this last writing is also the first writing (1976:23).

This ‘erasure’ cannot be done to any word, it can only be done to a written word, obviously, and is meant for words which are suggestive with existential permutations, that is ‘being’. The word ‘is’ in the description of Jesus’s name above which has been, still remains in a shadow in the present; the word seems to be the same thing, yet it is not, it is a sign transformed by new significance which displaces the old, yet does not censure the former connotations of the word. Derrida refers to such words as the ‘arche’, and those words which may be ‘Xed’ over, as ‘the transcendental arche’. For Derrida, the outcome of erasure is that “the sign is that ill-named thing, the only one, that escapes the instituting question of philosophy:
Deconstruction, with its dissociations of language from reality and the emphasis on pure temporality, expresses by implication faith in the ‘disappearance of God’. Furthermore, Nietzsche’s view was that Christianity’s desire for truth can (Nietzsche went further and claimed that it not only could, but did) turn against itself, rendering Christianity a kind of self-consuming artifact. Theologians lament the antihumanism or nihilism of deconstructive theory, deconstruction theorists take the Christian theological tradition to task for a naive faith in the sacramental presence of meaning in texts. It is suggested that the two oppositions can however learn from each other:

Ever since Ludwig Feuerbach announced that theology is an inverted anthropology (God is humanity writ large), or Kenneth Burke observed that, whatever else it might be, theology is always logology (talk about God is always talk about language), we have had the modern starting points needed for theorists and theologians to be able to begin to talk to one another about their meanings, if not their truths (Dawson, 1995:3).

Derrida and de Man would not completely agree with the statement above, because they view all language as inhabited with no constant presence, truth or meaning. De Man makes assumptions about language and meaning only in order to undermine them. De Man reduces all meaning (and ultimately, all reality and all truth) to modes of textuality - modes of the intrinsic linguistic functioning of language as such. Bible scholars recognise that, if one imagines meaning as logos and text as human being, de Man’s insistence that textuality reveals only the perpetual absence of meaning indicates that Christ is, has always been, and will always be merely human (Dawson 1995:120).

De Man insists that meaning is simply not to be found while the Christian account insists that ultimate meaning has become integrated with all material of life. This dissension is observed in a deconstructive reading of the poem ‘Indlela’ (Msimang, 1980:39). In this poem no explicit Biblical names are cited as in ‘Insimbi yesonto’
(Msimang, 1980:16) where the name of Maria, mother of Jesus, is mentioned. This poem can however be read as agreeing with religious principles:

**Indlela**

1. *Nanxa ilukhonjwana,*
2. *Iyokuhatha iye ikubeke.*
3. *Iyozombeleza nave,*
4. *Igwincigwincize njalo,*
5. *Ibuye ithi thwi,*
6. *Ize ikuthi qithi.*

7. *Ngibelethe sigoduke*
8. *Wena ongesabi mahlathi,*
10. *Wena ongeyiswa mahlathi,*
11. *Yiqophe uyiqombole.*
12. *Ngikhwexele emhlane,*
13. *Ungibelethe ngembeleko,*

15. *Angazi ekhaya,*
17. *Angikwazi okungale,*
19. *Angibagondi abangaphesheya,*

21. *Hamba nami ungitotobise,*
22. *Angiwuphangele undaka,*
23. *Ngiphokophele ukuyoqika zwi;*
24. *Ngihole.*
25. *Dabula izinkungu namafu obumnyama;*
27. *Wena ongukwenziwa kwezinto;*
28. *Bamba isandla sami.*

29. *Kungaziba umeno,*
30. *Kungasitha amazolo,*
31. *Angedukelwa ngaba zi bendlela.*
32. *Nampaya! Bahamba ngendlela,*
33. *Habe! Bawela ngezibuko.*
34. *Nebala! Bangena ngesango.*
When attesting that this poem reads according to spiritual aspirations, this must not be seen as its only meaning or interpretation. By concentrating on these aspects, the aim is only to tease out those features of the inner logic of de Man's views as associated with that of a doctrinal reading. By means of the language of poetic imagination a specific illustration of de Man's more general theoretical claims regarding language - and indeed, truth and reality - will be given.

The poem 'Indlela' mirrors certain passages from the Bible. The noun "indlela" has the meanings of path, road, way, journey of even manner of action. The first stanza is reminiscent of Psalm 23 and Matthew 7: 13, 14 where it is stated that the road to eternal life is narrow and difficult and the way to destruction is wide. The stanza however contradicts this as well, for the road is not only narrow, but winds in and out:

\[
\text{Iyozombeza nave,} \\
\text{Igwincigwincize njalo}
\]

(It shall wind in and out with you, 
It meanders about continually)

In the Old Testament (Isaiah 40:4, 45:2, 59:8, Psalms 125:5, Proverbs 2:15, 10:9, 21:8) the claim is again that the way of the guilty is crooked. This contradiction is confirmed by the use of the verb "-gwincigwincize", connoting not only zigzagging or meandering, but also indulging in immorality, following a morally crooked path. In this contradiction, deconstruction sees a 'fault line', a discontinuity, where language is shown its unreliability and the adequacy of language itself as a medium of communication is called into question. The critic is given the freedom to play with the text by means of this irresolvability revealed at its stress points or fault lines. In the second stanza a relationship between a dependent "ngi" (I) on a fearless "wena" (you) is encountered:

\[
\text{Wena ongesabi mahlathi,}
\]
Traditionally, the Zulus do not fear a forest - it is a symbol of sanctuary and shelter, so much so that even God is identified with this place of protection: "Ulihlathi lami" (Thou art my refuge). The action awarded to the object of the poem "thubeleza" (dodge about or continually shifting one's place to avoid capture) has equally contradictory aspects. Although the implication is here that the 'you' on which the speaker relies, is not trapped by the entangling forest, there is a further meaning of 'being unreliable'.

At this stage, the entity being relied on is embellished as a female figure; specifically that of a mother carrying her dependent in a carrying-skin on her back. The third verse, which is placed in the midst of the poem differs structurally from the rest. The speaker professes his not-knowing of a specific location "ekhaya" (at home), "okungale" (that far away on the other side). The third verse continues the knowing/not knowing opposition, but the ignorance diminishes for the 'you' is qualified for the first time directly as "wena ongukwenzwi kwezinto" (you the maker of things). Although the speaker needs to be guided "ngihole" and carried on the back "ngibelethe", the paradox here is that he/she aims to complete the journey alone "zwi". There is a constant fluctuation between the ignorance of the speaker and the omniscience of the second person singular. This being knows the dwelling, what exists on the other side, because he is responsible for taking those across to the other side. De Man criticizes certain subjects for having a naive confidence in their ability to know things. They have made an unwarranted substitution of thing for sign instead of recognising a purely metonymic link between sign and a thing, a link that is other than the 'thingness' of the sign itself. They operate with what de Man calls "misinterpreted systems of relationships" (1979a:123). Both the absence and presence of knowing are rooted in the same naive confidence in the ability of a sign
to signify. De Man insists that there can be no continuity or development from the situation of not knowing to that of knowing: "the reversal from denial to assertion in deconstructive discourse never reaches the symmetrical counterpart of what it denies" (1979a:125). Instead of the continuity of a reversal that reaches its counterpart, there is only an interminable oscillation back and forth between knowing and not knowing, between the presence and absence of meaning.

Christian faith agrees that one cannot grasp the truth of things as they presently are apart from what they are destined to be. Christians, however, claim that the Word of Scripture is a means through which believers can grasp certain truths. However, in his early deconstructive essay, Paul de Man attacks what he regards as the Romantic symbol's illicit assertion of the presence of meaning in an image. He explicitly dismisses the possibility that a divine will might generate a form of language that was simultaneously symbolical and allegorical. After contrasting the temporally cognizant allegory with the time-denying, spatially dependent symbol, de Man rules out a mode that would somehow combine the two in a single figure:

The secularized thought of the pre-romantic period no longer allows a transcendence of the antinomies between the created world and the act of creation by means of a positive recourse to the notion of divine will; the failure of the attempt to conceive of a language that would be symbolical as well as allegorical, the suppression, in the allegory, of the analogical as well as the anagogical levels, is one of the ways in which this impossibility becomes manifest (1979b:206-207).

If Christian faith is true faith, it is a sure trust and firm acceptance in the heart. Christ is the object of faith, or rather not the object, but, so to speak, the One who is present in the faith itself. Thus faith is a sort of knowledge or darkness that no-one can see. Therefore one's righteousness is not a love that informs faith, but it is a faith itself, that is, a trust in a thing one does not see. These aspects are reflected in the text. In answer to the request of "bamba isandla sami" (hold my hand), the Bible answers: "I am the Lord, your God, I will take your hand, saying to you: Fear
not, I will help you” (Isaiah 41:13). “Izinkungu” means mists as well as ignorance. Cutting through the mists and the black clouds in order to see clearly as encountered in the poem, follows de Man’s conviction that naive ignorance needs to be eliminated. A similar trope is that of the dew “amazolo” where the speaker implies that the dew is shaded from view and light in the jungle “umenno” (referring back to the forest image). With this image, the speaker attempts to delineate the thickness and deception of the thick brush, but inherently this trope dismantles itself. This shielding ironically ensures the existence of the dew, for if exposed to the sun it disappears, becomes non-existent.

The last stanza concentrates on “ngabazi bendlela” (those who know the way). The spiritual speaker knows that things are signs “izibuko” (crossing), “isango” (door), but do not expand on what they signify. He has one kind of knowledge and lacks another for he is situated on the one side of the ‘crossing’ and the others on the other side. They know: “ngabazi bendlela” while he is just an observer. In contrast, de Man’s oscillation describes a situation in which “we cannot say that we know ... [the thing] nor can it be said that we do not know it. What can be said is that we do not know whether or not we know it” (1979a:123). The possibility of a performance that is not epistemological (knowledgeable) reflects the basic Christian insistence that faith, while it properly seeks knowledge, is not itself an act of knowing.

De Man seeks to erase all connections with a knowledge or meaning that might be present to the text, or which the reading of a text might make present to a reader. His rejection of presence as an obvious religious cast to it: presence is a kind of seduction or temptation, which the lucid reader must renounce or sacrifice (Brooks, Felman and Miller, 1985:81). It is, in short, simply a false view of reality, and anyone taken in by it will lead a life of self-mystification, of blindness. To recognize this truth is to gain a kind of sober lucidity or insight into one’s inevitable site - and the fated but always futile means that one will use to try to evade that state. De Man
links the state of blindness or self-mystification to an aesthetic perspective that is, in his view, a self-mystifying appropriation of an incarnationalist sensibility (Dawson, 1995:79).

The poem’s representations of self-knowledge has a reflecting structure, a structure in which the text serves as a mirror of one’s own knowledge and one’s knowledge mirrors in its turn the text’s signification. Such tropes express those notions of identity, unity and continuity which are very important to the recuperative sensibility. The last stanza can be seen in the light of a ‘crossing’ to heaven after death or even as the second coming. However, self-knowledge becomes erased when the material or literal articulation by language comes to “extinguish and bury the poetic and philosophical light” (De Man, 1984:113). The stance of Christian faith reflects the confidence that the most truthful accounts of reality are not the accounts that a reality uninformed by an eschatological (concerning death and final destiny) vision gives of itself.

Deconstruction again proclaims an essentially meaninglessness dimension of existence. Death by itself can bring no meaning forward nor provide any conclusion. Christian faith however presupposes that existence on earth is already meaningful. However, perceiving the truth of everything on earth only comes from the perspective called the Kingdom of Heaven. Only from that stance could one gain a view of sufficient ‘otherness’ to understand the full truth.

Christianity simply does not rely on the category of representation which de Man is devoted to undermining. Where Christians see the presently productive superimposition of seemingly irreconcilables, de Man sees only an undecidable alternation between irreconcilables across an unbridgeable void - the “gap that cleaves Being” (1979a:245). As such, the target of de Man’s critical deconstruction is seen by Biblical scholars as a rather serious misconstrual of the Christian reflection on Biblical texts and presence.
A similar binary situation of knowledge/ignorance is continued in the poem ‘Luthando olungangiyekiyo’ (Msimang, 1980:58). The content of this poem of the way human beings fail to know all they wish to know echoes something of de Man’s view of the continual absence of meaning and truth. Although only the first stanza will be looked into, a summary of the plot of the poem, while by no means the key to its internal textual dynamics or deep pathos, may nonetheless help orient readers. The dominant image in the poem is that of Love seeking destruction. This negative vision is intertwined with images of hate, adultery, neglect, distrust, death. The poem’s narrator tells of certain situations in which Love enters only to destroy relationships. Whereas every stanza ends in the similar question “Ungifundiseleni ukuthanda?” (Why do you teach me to love?), the last stanza contains multiple questions and the text ends with a statement: “Ungafundisi mina ukuthanda / Fundisa isintu ukuthandana” (Do not teach me to love, teach mankind to love each other). The poem bristles with negative evaluations: the non-act in question is arbitrary, fictional, artificial, unwarranted, illusory and illegitimate.

The visions of the speaker, though severe and disenchanted, seem recognizably and courageously in touch with actual human experience. Each stanza projects an intensification of estrangement as the speaker gradually rejects the object of his disillusionment. He seeks understanding as the Christian denomination which has often defined itself as faith seeking understanding. However, God’s word and works proceed in a way incomprehensible to all reason. The Christian perspective, though immediately rooted in concrete historical communities, strives to be universal in scope - the understanding sought by the speaker is equally universal, seeking to interpret everything called reality. The speaker appears as a questioning entity, standing within the pathos of his/her own indetermination. The structure of the text is not one of question and answer, but of a question whose meaning, as a question, is effaced from the moment it is asked. There is no answer, no explanation, no true meaning. One can however argue that this very unattainability of meaning and significance has a meaning and significance all on its own.
One could presume a failed love relationship for this poem, however the poem mostly reflects a disillusionment with the situation of the world in general:

**Luthando olungangiyekiyo**

1. Zaphuma izinkomo zamabheka
2. Bakikiza ungeni' umakoti
3. Umakoti eseshaye ezimhlophe
4. Ngababona ababili beguqa
5. Umfundisi wabanika izibusiso.
6. Ngambona eqhamuka uLuthando
7. Echichima inzondo, ebopha esonga.
8. Ngesandla wayepeth' inkemba,
10. Ngesandla wayepeth' umkhonto,
11. Wagwaza laphophoza igazi.
12. Obevethe ezimhlophe usembetho emnyama.
13. Luthando olungangiyekiyo
14. Ungifundiseleni ukuthanda?

One form a relationship might take is temporal - critics might conceive of a relation between a past and a present, and then seek to deduce the past from the present to which it bears some essential relation. Or, as will be seen in this poem, the relationship might take a spatial, synecdochic form, joining a fragment to something whole, such as this poem to a larger idea like the Bible. But, as the deconstructionists warn, it would be naive to assume that such continuities actually exist in the poem. On the contrary, the poem warns that there are no relationships in reality, only random occurrences, and that the reader’s efforts to evade this chaotic circumstance by the imposition of pseudo-continuities, despite recognition of their fictionality, is inevitable. This is viewed as the readers’ impositioning of meaning on the text, however, the poem performs its own “imposition of meaning... in the form of the questions that served as point of departure for the reading” (De Man, 1984:118). This, however, proves illusory for although language posits, and although language means, language cannot posit meaning. De Man indicates that both the positing and the erasure of positing by the imposition of meaning are acts of language. “Positing” says de Man “‘glimmers’ into a glimmering knowledge that
acts out the aporias of signification and of performance” (1984:119). The reader’s awareness of this aporia is an awareness of a perpetual and undecidable struggle within language itself between language’s violent positing power (performance) and language’s forgetting of that positing power (by imposing signification). This poem acts as an aporia itself by expressing those irresolvable doubts and hesitations.

Stanza one of the poem starts out with a beautiful image of a traditional Zulu wedding with lobola cattle and the bride performing her cultural obligations. This image is transposed onto a Westernized type of wedding with a minister and a kneeling couple. Then Love enters:

_Echichima inzondo, ebopha esonga._

(Overflowing with hatred, cursing and threatening.)

This description of love is conflicting with a preconceived notion of what is customary or reasonable. It is a paradox, on which the whole poem is built. This paradox reflects the way the world of this poem is simultaneously a recognisable version of the world one lives in, and an inversion of that world. For the deconstructionist, again, such moments are symptomatic of the way language doesn’t reflect or convey the world but constitutes a world of its own.

De Man replaces all paradoxes with aporia because his vision is monistic: though it can allow for two oscillating perspectives on the same thing, it can tolerate no true doubleness. De Man’s notion of textuality obliterates any dualism in language that would make a place for meaning. What remains is the text’s own trampling over those who mistakenly think that they use language to mean, rather than recognising that they are used by language.

What can be furthermore deduced from the above paragraph is that deconstruction for de Man is utterly violent. Aporia pertains to two apparent incompatibles which
cannot occupy the same space, and yet, since they are versions of the same thing, are equally entitled to that space. As such, they will compete for it - and such competition will generate a continual violence. The violent, positing power of language to which de Man points, though it can be interpreted religiously as manifestation of sin, is rooted theoretically in the theorist’s commitment to an essentially monistic conception of reality. This monism clashes head-on with Christianity, which proclaims neither a monistic nor a dualistic view of things but rather a complex, paradoxical difference-within-unity in which differences turn out to be the necessary means to the self-constitution of the integrity of the whole. In contrast to de Man’s vision, in the Christian view of things the only reason for ‘the other’ is the expression of love. Paradoxical phrases in this poem such ‘hateful Love’ show the signifiers at war with the signified and reveal its repressed unconscious (which is the subject of the following chapter). Even the poem’s binary oppositions, such as love/hate, life/death, groom/bride, white/black, learn/teach are violently overthrown, making the second term, rather than the first the more privileged. The poem itself has already reversed the polarity of the common opposition of love/hate. This chaos continues in the poem itself in the very violent lines 8 - 11:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ngesandla wayepheth' inkemba,} \\
\text{Wagadla zaphophoza izinyembezi.} \\
\text{Ngesandla wayepheth' umkhonto,} \\
\text{Wagwaza laphophoza igazi.}
\end{align*}
\]

(In his hand he carried a sword,  
He struck and tears gushed out.  
In his hand he held a spear,  
He stabbed and blood flowed.)

The lines above could be a reference to the sacrifice made to the ancestors at a traditional wedding, but it is also very indicative of certain passages in the Apocalypse. In Revelations 6:4, 6:8 when the four seals are opened, God (the original Love) gives power to the red horseman “to take peace from the earth, and
that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword". The complete Revelations is reminiscent of the poem: those who wear white clothes (Rev. 6:11, 3:4, 7:13,14) will be spared, Death on a pale horse wears black robes (Rev. 6:8, 6:12); tears flowing (Rev. 7:17). All the abominations present in the poem such as killing, hunger, cheating, promiscuity, neglect - even false prophets are encountered in this last book of the Bible. The second stanza of the poem is evocative of "Babylon, the great, mother of harlots, and of earth's abominations"(Rev. 17:5) which is described as a woman drunk with the blood of saints, filthy because of her fornications.

Although it is possible to infer meanings such as the above, meanings are not stable and present, but forever deferred. Christians believe that human life is not about the recognition that meanings are not to be found (though it must include something of that insight), but it is rather about the way all those things do receive unification, integration, and wholeness. For de Man, there is no need of any other at all, people are all equally the pawns of language, and everybody will suffer their own private fates at its hands. De Man sees differences as only negatively related, Christians challenge that vision, for, a resistance to idolatry that entails the absence of love is no virtue.

The life described by the speaker seems much the sort that Nietzsche celebrates - a life of ceaseless, vigorous struggle rather than condescending, morally superior pity. Nietzsche displays a weak understanding of Christian love when he confuses it with pity, but he speaks with religious insight when he remarks that the reverence (not contempt) that the noble feels for his enemy is a bridge to genuine love of neighbour (1967:39). Lovelessness, indifference, will never be able to generate sufficient power to heal wounds - only love is capable of being productive, but only in correlation with the loved is fullness of the manifold possible. The paradox is that only by means of understanding the concept of love, can one teach others to love. Ironically, the speaker is accomplishing exactly that which he accuses Love of doing:
'Luthando olungangtyekiyi' (Love which does not let me be). Although his view is that Love is misrepresented (in language), by dwelling on the subject, he is the one not letting love go. Finally, the speaker rebelliously utters:

_Ungafundisi mina ukuthanda  
Fundisa isintu ukuthandana._

(Do not teach me to love,  
teach mankind to love each other.)

Christians would argue that the negative attitude of the speaker in this poem already demonstrates the greatest love of all: God's condescension of man's ability to turn his/her will against others or even against the deity. However, in the Old Testament another adversary of God was cast from Heaven for being rebellious and thus become evil incarnated. The consequence of this action was the creation of the binary opposition God/Satan. This contrariety is illustrated in the following Petrarchan sonnet (Msimang, 1980:22):

_Ngiyamazisa_

1. Lapho sezigwaba ezevangeli,  
2. Lapho sezikhokhelwa ngokuzidela;  
3. Lapho sebefakaza abavangeli;  
4. Lapho sezivuma izindela;  
5. Ziboshwe bhande linye lezwi,  
6. Zikhwele sihlenga sinye sikamoya,  
7. Ziyowela ulwandle ngomoya,  
8. Zimpampa ngamagagasi kamoya,  
9. Uqhamuka engasadle nkobe,  
10. Ekkihlaza nezithelo zakwamhlaba,  
11. Abethembise igolide lakwamhlaba.  
12. Uyawqaqa amafindo awagqabule amagoda.  

The antithesis of God/Satan has to be handled with extreme care. The Hebrew word, Satan, was used originally as a common noun for adversary (2 Sam. 19:22;
Satan was disposed of because of his desire to be like God, or rather to be God. He aspired to claim God’s autonomy for himself, or in deconstructionist terms, he wanted to transpose the binarism. But Satan cannot be a true opponent of God, for he is subject to God’s authority and except for the absence of divine intervention, unable to carry out his evil purposes. As such, the boundary is already transgressed. Furthermore, as emphasized by deconstructionists, oppositions cannot confront one another as fixed presences because differance calls the notion of oppositions into question. For de Man, the extremes endlessly converge only to diverge, producing an undecidable oscillation in an aporia.

The endeavour to express wholeness (presence) creates a pressure, a force that dissipates it. This degeneration is already noticeable in the title ‘Ngiyamazisa’ where the verb “-azisa” has conflicting meanings. Not only does it denote to be acquainted with or to be anxious about an entity, it also implies showing appreciation, respect or honour towards somebody. One is also unsure of whom the object concord refers to, the speaker could honour God, or keep a watchful eye on Satan, or even vice versa. This ambiguity continues in the poem itself. Ironically, the typical pattern of the Petrarchan sonnet is reversed in this poem. Traditionally, the octave sets out disorder and problems in life, and the sestet is used to resolve those problems, concentrating on the possibility of creating an ordered response. In this poem, the first eight lines concern religious activities, while the last six lines are troubled.

Derrida’s deconstructive interpretations are in essence not anti-religious via a negative path. He even admits that

Only infinite being can reduce the difference in presence. In that sense, the name of God ... is the name of indifference itself (1976:71).
De Man, however, is very explicit about the way deconstructive reading, in its very resistance to idolatry, opposes Christian concepts such as the incarnation of the Son of God in Jesus of Nazareth. De Man's opposition seems entirely negative; the lesson he teaches is that one endeavours not to be taken in by the false god of apparently present meaning - not because there is a true god that deserves one's regard, but because it is a good characteristic to be the kind of person who is not fooled (Dawson, 1995:83). De Man insists that texts do not signify meanings, rather, the rhetoricity of language - the play of signifiers - continually works to ensure the absence of meaning. The result is a futile epistemological situation in which, although nothing substantive can be known, but the reader is constantly seduced into thinking that it can.

The Bible is alluring to deconstructionists because of its implicit and explicit reference to language such as 'the Word (logos) of God', etc. According to the book of Genesis, God created the earth and the surrounding universe with words, and Adam domesticated the animals of the world by naming them. The deconstructors reverse this process: by decreating the world to reach logos. Miller even altered the Genesis saga by claiming that in the beginning was the system of discontinuous words making up language, and these words were with man (1972:143).

The category of Biblical text enters in this poem as "ezevangeli" (those who value the Gospel) referring to the Scripture:

Lapho sezigwaba ezevangeli,
Lapho sezikhokhelwa ngokuzidela;
Lapho sebefakaza abavangeli,
Lapho sezivuma izindela;
Ziboshwe bhande linye lezwi,
Zikhwele sihlenga sinye sikamoya

(When those who value the Gospel preach,
When they are counselled about the significance of sacrifice;
When the evangelists testify,
When devotees sing;
They are united by the cord of the word,
They climb on one raft of the Holy Spirit)

The phrase "ngokuzidela" (sacrifice) obviously refers to Jesus Christ, while "sikamoya" (of the spirit) attains to the Holy Spirit. The placement of spirit opens up a place for the action of God in the person of the Holy Spirit upon the inner lives of Jesus’ followers. Satan enters in line 8 by way of an elliptical proverb, disrupting the calm of the previous lines:

_Uqhamuka engasadle nkobe,_
_Ekhihlaza nezithelo zakwamhlaba,_
_Abethembise igolide lakwamhlaba.
_Uyawaqaqa amafindo awaggabule amagoda._

(He suddenly appears ablazed with anger,
Overloaded with the fruits of the earth,
He promises them the gold of the earth
He unties knots and breaks off ropes.)

The full idiom appears as "ukungadli nkobe zamuntu" which describes a situation of being extremely angry or spirited, or as someone who does not plea or is indulgent. The devil is fully prepared and ready to act, and ruthlessly draws upon whatever worldly ways to coerce humans to his side, whether by means of material seductions or pain, distress and torment. The poem concludes with a repetition of its title making clear that the object referred to in the predicate is indeed the Devil. Finally (and quite fiercely), in the mode of the Psalmist the speaker appeals:

_Siphe amandla simnyathele._

(Give us strength so we can crush him)

This request of God to steer man in the way of moral righteousness is again rejected by de Man who refuses to accept the interdependence of intention and action that
lies at the basis of moral character. De Man wants to avoid idolatry, but the absence of meaning that is the cost of that denial seems unavoidably connected with a sort of violence. De Man insists that signifiers never merge, or achieve a synecdochic relation, with any larger meaning, truth, or presence; he counsels instead an ascetic renunciation of all such idolatrous seductions. Scholars of religion again, have never accepted de Man's views but still fear that de Man's post-structuralistic thought might systematically lead devotees away from distinctively Christian forms of spirituality and textuality.

4.3 Résumé

Whereas the previous chapter centred on poems concerned almost exclusively with an introspective self-scrutiny, this chapter focussed on Msimang's writing concerned with socio-historical and socio-religious issues, as seen in the two historical and three religious poems. As concluded from this chapter, the self-avowed language scepticism that deconstruction cultivates, its self-proclaimed resistance to the tendencies toward positive and exploitative truth built into any critical system - be it historical, Marxist, semiological or theological - obviously have grave institutional consequences.

In focussing on the problems of the representation of history, religion and truth, the deconstructionist' position that truth is not something which already exists and therefore only to be discovered, was presented. Derrida's point is that truth, and its various correlates such as being, consciousness and presence, "are produced effects ... which do not find their cause in a subject or a substance, in a thing in general ... [but] in the play of différences" (Derrida, 1982:11). One consequence of this is that the meaning of these terms is never self-evidently there but dispersed in the discourses that produce them. In addition, the mention of each term, for example truth, is partly conditioned by a sense of other contexts in which it has appeared and
those in which it may appear. Bearing within itself “the mark of its relation to the future element” (Derrida, 1982:13), truth is divided both from its present and self-presence.

De Man especially remains the most arduous of anti-philosophers, demystifying and undermining the traditional truth-claims of epistemology only by way of a rigorous thought-out rhetorical critique. De Man offers a construal of all reality (including human subjects) as modes of textuality. De Man offers a hyperkenosis (or complete emptying out) of self and meaning into letter. Religious critics, especially, regard his theories as antihumanistic bleakness. De Man calls for a reading as disfiguration, which stands opposed to the kind of reading it more typically elicits - ‘monumentalization’, as was illustrated in the poems, especially ‘Inkondlo kaMkabayi’. This, according to de Man is a futile, self-mystifying evasion of disfiguration. Disfigurative reading undermines any recourse to system, method, or theory, all of which presuppose the presence of unities and continuities that ground claims to knowledge; instead, it brings one face to face with the dark inevitability of the slide in all reading, away from any understanding, toward an abyss of mere repetition, a ‘madness of words’:

...to read is to understand, to question, to know, to forget, to erase, to deface, to repeat - that is to say, the endless prosopopoeia by which the dead are made to have a face and a voice which tells the allegory of their demise and allows us to apostrophize them in our turn. No degree of knowledge can ever stop this madness, for it is the madness of words (De Man, 1984:122).

The resulting de Manian aporia marked out by the poles of the representational spectrum, will, then always be a matter of undecidability or indeterminacy. The creation of a critical reading is the production of failure. Trying to ground the interpretation in some element of the text, the critic always discovers that the ground collapses into the freeplay of figure. But even though “reading as disfiguration” is “historically more reliable” than the recuperative reading it resists, “to
monumentalize this observation into a method of reading" (De Man, 1984:123) would again result in regressing from the essence of deconstruction:

Deconstruction is the enigmatic relation between truth and history. Or rather, since it tests the limits of knowledge and power, this kind of questioning has as its object the truth of history, the truth that actually does happen in preference to the one that is merely believed or described or promised. What would seriously miss the point, on the contrary, would be to believe that deconstruction somehow tries to privilege itself in naming the truth of history - for in that case it might just as well call itself pure ideology from the start (Newmark in Caruth, 1995:162).

Lastly, it was evident in this chapter that poems do more than signify, they also refer. Words are not only interpretable figures, they are also signs of that point. The self-reflexive language of poetry has been identified as the source of meaning and its undoing in the poem. As such, it becomes possible to suggest that the referent of modern poems could be precisely the historical event of a change in the way that poets think about language and poetry, the event of the establishment of a new and more modern understanding of literature and literariness (Burt in Caruth, 1995:128). In this sense, as Hamacher, Hertz and Keenan (1988:128) observe, history is what is happening to us ... Even when it seems to go back to a buried past, what comes about always comes from the future.
CHAPTER 5

DEATH AND DESIRE IN MSIMANG'S POETRY

5.1 Introduction

Deconstruction is a natural continuity, not a conversion of literary theory. As such, it seems to have a remarkable affinity for especially the psychoanalytic literary theory. The writers associated with post-structuralism and deconstruction seem to favour the gloss of psychoanalysis, perhaps more cautiously in the case of Derrida and De Man. Both theories share a common negativity directed against it. The reaction to deconstruction is synonymous to a still persistent reaction to psychoanalysis -

an irrational fear that, if this sort of analytical activity is pursued, the subject of it, be it literature, the personality or even the person himself, will veritably disappear, be analysed, as it were, out of existence (Felperin in Rajnath, 1989:185).

These anxieties that literature or human personality have believing that their very existence are endangered by the way these two theories scrutinize them, are viewed by deconstruction as having in common a superstitious or sacramental view of language, within which words mean exactly what they say. Hence the primal terror aroused in some quarters by the very term ‘deconstruction’. After all, the word has the same root-meaning as ‘analysis’ and ‘unmaking’ - quite apart from the actual disintegrative thrust of deconstructionist thinking, in which that fundamental relation of language is seen to be problematic (Culler, 1989:274). However, deconstruction engages in the same activity as a post-structuralist psychoanalytical criticism which attends to conflicts in texts’ rhetorics and in psyches and explores how texts are structured by the psychic and rhetorical operations they theorize.
5.2 A working relationship between psychoanalysis, deconstruction and Msimang’s poetry

Although the analysis focusses on deconstruction, many of the ideas in this chapter are elaborated on in terms of psychoanalytic terminology. The predominance of psychoanalytic concepts and terms in deconstruction, require some further explanation. The notion of application will be replaced by the radically different notion of implication. This entails bringing analytical questions to bear upon literary questions, involving psychoanalysis in the scene of literary analysis, not to apply to the text an acquired science, a preconceived knowledge, but to generate implications between literature and psychoanalysis - to explore, bring to light and articulate the various (indirect) ways in which the two domains do indeed implicate each other, each one finding itself enlightened, informed, but also affected, displaced, by the other. The idea is still, however, that deconstruction is simply still a rhetorical strategy and in no way the positing of a self-present structure within the text.

Psychoanalytic practice is based upon specific theories of how the mind, the instincts, and sexuality work, developed by the Austrian, Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). Freudian psychoanalysis has effected a revolution in the ideas about it, by radically questioning the validity of the hierarchies. Freud, for example, upset the conscious/unconscious hierarchy by showing how the unconscious influence the conscious life. The famous Freudian slip was Freud’s discovery revealing that what interrupts the speaker’s intentions has deeper and more shocking truth effects than the intended thought. Lacan says of this that Freud discovered that truth manifests itself in the letter rather than the spirit, that is, in the way things are actually said rather than in the intended meaning.

All of Freud’s work depends upon the notion of the unconscious. By opening signs to the unknown unconscious, Freud gives one, as it were, a grammatology of the psyche, a deconstruction of the consciousness. He illustrates how conscious items in their apparent clarity are interwoven with the unknown world of the psyche. Linked with this is the idea of repression, which is the forgetting or ignoring of unresolved conflicts, unadmitted
desires, or traumatic past events, so that they are forced out of conscious awareness (ego) and into the realm of the unconscious (id) (Bowie, 1988:38). The self is a text entwined with absent texts. So the self is decentred, and it seems that the self is not present in itself, not identical to itself, not in possession and control of itself (Lodge, 1988:101). The unconscious should however not be represented as singular or simple but as a concealed reality whereby one gains access to understand the consciousness.

Freud regards literature, with its ambiguities resulting from the use of figurative language, as an important gateway to the unconscious. The paradoxical character of the compilation of a literary text, i.e. that on the one side it functions consciously, and on the other side it contains unconscious utterances, makes it equal to the structure of the dream (Skura 1981:142). The operations of the dream-work are condensation (i.e. the manifest dream has a smaller content than the latent one, and is thus an abbreviated translation of it) and displacement (i.e. elements in the latent dream-thoughts are replaced via a chain of associations with elements in the actualised dream), which are prevalent in literary works. Displacement and condensation disguise the repressed fears and wishes and fashion these into images, symbols and metaphors.

Freud devised the contextual method of ‘free association’ as an alternative to the cryptographic method of interpretation, which treated the dream as a message in cipher from the unconscious and sought to decode it by reference to a dictionary of typical (or even universal) symbols. Although Freud allowed some typical symbols, he cautioned that an analyst should never presume that he knows what a dream means but should instead induce the dreamer to interpret the dream by means of free association. According to Freud, this was the only way to allay the suspicion that a specific interpretation was simply an arbitrary construction on the part of the analyst.

Freud later modified some of his earlier views, by placing more emphasis on literary talent and skill. His greatest contribution was probably in the subtle application of his theories and discoveries to individual writers and artists. Freud’s original remarks have been expanded, developed, modified, and transformed, in an enormous mass of writing, turned
out by psychoanalysts of various schools and by different kinds of critics.

Although a student of Freud, Carl Jung (1875-1961) differs extensively from the first-mentioned. Freud confined his theories largely to instincts and their satisfaction or repression. The events of psychic life were for Freud the result of environment or chance. The pleasure principle was directed to material ends, because, as he saw it, human beings are basically enemies of civilized life, since it puts restraints on their sexual and animal urges (or libidos). Jung thought that psychic energy results from a tension between the two poles of man's natural instincts and traditional religious principles. Whereas Freud regarded the unconscious as the dustbin of unfulfilled desires, Jung (1963:298) saw it as an instrument of creative personality, liberating the psyche from the domination of the conscious mind.

Jung’s archetypal psychoanalytical criticism solicits for the existence of universal symbols, specific neither to the individual nor to his immediate cultural setting. The stress falls on the ‘collective unconscious’ common to all cultures; a phrase which signifies a deeper layer than the personal unconscious, in being a psychic disposition shaped by the forces of heredity. ‘This third realm of the psyche is made up of archetypes, potential images which each man inherits from his ancestral past and which enables him to respond to certain experiences in the same way that his forebears did. The text is thus explored for its revelation of the images, myths and symbols of past cultures: texts are found to contain recurrent figures, which are produced to compensate for psychic impoverishment in human beings and society. The images used in myths are sometimes magnanimous and remote from experience. In these there is overwhelming support for the magical power of words to attract and convince. The Jungian critic does not, therefore, explore the personal unconscious of the writer or look at the text for neurotic symptoms of its author’s repressed desire, but characteristically, sees a common quest motif in works of literature.

Jacques Lacan’s (1901-1981) psychoanalytic theory declares that the operation and effect of the text is determined by the unconscious. The unconscious is for Lacan more than the
source of primal instincts that are casually connected to ideas and images. Lacan’s work, the *Écrits* in particular, can be read as a ‘translation’ of Freud’s theories in terms of the Saussurian model. Hereby, the unconscious is to Lacan the so-called ‘floating signifier’, of which the definitive meaning cannot be determined. As Selden (1988a:82) puts it:

In Lacan’s version of the sign, the signified ‘slides’ beneath a signifier which ‘floats’.

That is, words and meanings have a life of their own and constantly override and obscure the supposed simplicities and clarity of external reality. If signifiers relate only to one another, then language is detached from external reality, and becomes an independent realm, a crucial notion in post-structuralist thinking.

Lacan argues that the two dream-work mechanisms identified by Freud, condensation and displacement, correspond to the basic poles of language, i.e. metaphor and metonymy. The use by the unconscious of these linguistic means of self-expression is part of Lacan’s evidence for the claim that the unconscious is structured like a language, and at the same time it is the product of language. Language usage is therefore actually a translation of hidden discourse. The source for searching and understanding of the meaning is thus situated in the desire or longing of the subject to know and understand his own unconscious and suppressed messages.

Like Freud, Lacan pays close attention to unconscious motives and feelings, but instead of excavating for those of the author or characters, he searches out those of the text itself, uncovering contradictory undercurrents of meaning, which lie like a subconscious beneath the ‘conscious’ of the text. This is another way of defining the process of deconstruction. Lacanian psychoanalysis offers a much more direct engagement with the whole idea of the structure of the self, the ideas of the split human subject with its desire for unity. With Lacanian thought, psychoanalytic criticism can move from the fringes to the centre ground in considering the whole notion of the construction of the subject.

Central to Lacan’s conception of metaphor is the idea of repression. According to Lacan,
“every successful symbolic integration involves a sort of normal forgetting” (1988:192) and “one word for another: that is the formula for metaphor” (1977:157). Substitution is very much the act of metaphor. But Lacan has a more radical notion of metaphor, which is that it precipitates “the formations of the unconscious” (1977:200). The relevant point, in a highly complex argument, is that the unconscious comes into existence with the acquisition of language. What is most important in this process is that the subject is not even aware of what has been repressed in the formation of the unconscious. This is because of the dialectic between need, demand and desire (1977:285-287). It is the split between need and demand, this difference between physiological basis and linguistic expression that gives rise not just to desire but to its “eternalization” (1977:104).

Lacan views desire as an important psychoanalytical concept. Desire is eternal because “it is not articulable” (1977:302) and therefore has no possibility of being satisfied or being expressed, constituted by language it continually escapes it. Desire constantly unsettles the subject’s attempts to use language to create a unified and settled identity. Desire means that language can never be closed and hence texts can never be self-contained and, since this is the case, criticism can never reproduce them. And, since language cannot capture its object - an object which, according to Lacan, it consistently misrecognises as its true desire, so criticism cannot coincide with or reproduce the work.

The relevant consideration here is Lacan’s claim that “man’s desire finds its meaning in the desire of the Other ... because the first object of desire is to be recognized by the Other” (1977:58). This means that the subject wins recognition by naming his or her desires in language, what in his early writings Lacan calls the ‘symbolic system’ and in his later ones ‘the Other’. In naming his or her desires in language, the subject names them as ‘Other’ to him or herself. And although this implies that the subject has ‘true’ desires which languages cannot express, this is not in fact the case. What happens instead, according to Lacan, is that

something of the subject’s becomes detached in the very symbolic world [language] that he [she] is engaged in integrating. From then on it will no longer be something belonging to the subject. The subject will no longer
speak it, no longer integrate it. Nevertheless, it will remain there, somewhere, spoken, if one can put it in this way, by something the subject does not control (1991:191).

Lacan’s theory furthermore comprises of various stages of development. The development begins at birth, and then moves in turn through the mirror stage, access to language, the development of desire, and the Oedipus complex. In the mirror stage the child sees its own reflection in the mirror and begins to conceive of itself as a unified being, separate from the rest of the world. At this stage the child enters into the language system, essentially a system which is concerned with lack and separation - crucial Lacanian concepts - since language names what is not present and substitutes a linguistic sign for it. This is the realm of the Imaginary, a world in which language gestures beyond itself, beyond logic and grammar, rather in the way that poetic language often does.

A notion important to this development is that of self-loss or lack. Loss is always connected to deeper unconscious losses. Eagleton (1983:85) explains how Freud’s and Lacan’s interpretations differ:

In Lacanian theory, it is an original lost object - the mother’s body - which drives forward the narrative of our lives, impelling us to pursue substitutions for this lost paradise in the endless metonymic movement of desire. For Freud, it is a desire to scramble back to a place where we cannot be harmed, the inorganic existence which precedes all conscious life, which keeps us struggling forward: our restless attachments (Eros) are in thrall to the death drive (Thanatos).

Jacques Lacan deals with the general problem of representation in the following way: he says that “no signification can be sustained other than by reference to another signification”, and that “if we try to grasp in language the constitution of the object, we cannot fail to notice that this constitution is to be found only at the level of the concept” (1977:150). Accordingly, the essence or constitution of the object can never be grasped as such by language. The psychoanalytic theory of Lacan can be variously utilized in literary criticism, and Lacan appears in the literature of critical theory in diverse contexts.

As the father of deconstruction, Derrida’s thinking is often close to Lacan’s. Derrida
attended Lacan's seminars in Paris, where he was perhaps first introduced to Lacan's ideas. However, it is not that Lacan has influenced Derrida, but rather that Derrida and Lacan have reached almost similar conclusions by different and independent means. It might be said that while reading Freud, Derrida elaborated on a notion of writing best characterized by the well known statement of Lacan's that the unconscious is structured like a language. The idea of deferred action, deferral, as posited in the word différance, is also from Freud. Derrida's return of the unconscious adds new elements of 'play' in the interpretation of language.

Derrida rescues writing from what he calls the colloquial, reductive view by proposing a broader view of writing than the traditional, empirical one - a view that sees writing as including the content and workings of the psyche. With the word 'psyche' placed under erasure, the rather generalized representation of Derrida's thinking on the subject finds support in the following statement: "The 'objectivist' or 'wordly' consideration of writing teaches us nothing if reference is not made to a space of psychical writing" (1978:212). Derrida seems dedicated to the combination of space and time.

At this point, one has to take note that the term 'writing' is extended in the way to include the psychical apparatus and thus the very means of human existence. Rorty comments: "Derrida thinks that the proper moral to draw is that language is not a tool, but that in which we live and move" (1978:150). This holds equally, and perhaps even more emphatically, for writing. To this end Derrida borrows Saussure's concept of the psychic imprint and relates it to "the idea of articulation" (1976:66):

... it should be recognized that it is in the specific zone of this imprint and this trace, in the temporalization of a lived experience which is neither in the world nor in 'another world', which is not more sonorous than luminous, not more in time than in space, that differences appear among the elements or rather produce them, make them emerge as such and constitute the texts, the chains, and the systems of traces. These chains and systems cannot be outlined except in the fabric of this trace or imprint (1976:65).

For Derrida, the psychoanalytic model is a metaphorical structure, not a literal one. He
is opposed to adopting any one specific model of interpretation, even a psychoanalytic one, because it represents a stable point of reference and a closed system. Accordingly, he takes Jacques Lacan to task for postulating the phallus as a transcendental signified. For Derrida, Lacan is guilty of phallogocentrism (combination of phallocentrism and logocentrism) because Lacan sees the letter unproblematically as phallus, rather than recognizing that meaning cannot exist in such unproblematic one-to-one relationships. Finally, however, Derrida points out that it is also possible to believe in a transcendental signifier, and he gives as example the phallus, when seen "as the correlate of a primary signified, castration and the mother's desire" (1981b:86).

The attempt to work out the relationship between de Man's non-psychoanalytic accounts and an analytical discourse inspired by Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan is a challenging task for criticism and theory. With de Man, the generative forces of textuality are grammar and rhetoric with no linkages to the body, the unconscious, and the social order. Predictably, de Man displays no abiding interest in psychoanalysis, sociology, or political theory. His mode of reading appears, consequently, obsessive and puritanical. Questions of gender, race, unconscious, etc. receive no special emphasis:

The symbolic (mis)representations within the social order, the (mis)constructions of the body-self, the (counter)forces of will, power, ideology, and praxis, the (de)formations enforced by institutions - all such concerns wait at the threshold of grammar/rhetoric, the space where phenomena come into undecidable being (Leitch, 1992:153).

De Man's account of the character and functioning of the relationship invalidates psychoanalytical criticism in the traditional sense, for him this relation is structural, not psychological. The mode of analytical atomization developed by de Man can be used to deconstruct and demystify questionable theories, political practices, institutions and social arrangements. But de Man himself permanently defers cultural critique. Certain followers of de Man like Shoshana Felman and Barbara Johnson have reemployed his categories and tactics with overt psychoanalytical and political interests in their work of cultural analysis.

To recap, the point of contact between psychoanalysis, deconstruction and literature is
obviously the nature of certain language utterances. Also, the earlier Freudian and the more sophisticated Lacanian readings share an undeniable application of interpretation to literature. Freudian readings interpret literary texts to show, for example, anal drives or negative oedipal complexes, while Lacanian readings show symbolic fathers and signifying chains. As illustrated, certain models of the psyche, certain psychological truths discovered in psychoanalysis operate as the revealed latent content of a work of literature. What is of importance though is that deconstruction is an effort to counteract the pervasive tendency to interpret the image, that is, to reduce it to a concept - to what it 'means' in hermeneutic terms. (In deconstructive jargon, the image is, of course, the signifier and the concept, the signified). Interpretation, as both Freudian and Jungian analysts practise it, is invariably a reductionistic conceptualisation of the imagination. In short, interpretation (whether by free association or by amplification) is an attempt at demystification, which deconstruction is against.

In his lyrical poem ‘Uze ungiphuzise amanzi’ (1980:12), Msimang traces the theme of an inaccessible longed-for beloved. In this poem, a (male) speaker strives to unite with the female figure. He aims, upon waking, to search for and captivate her. The female figure represents the ‘Other’ in the psychological dialectic of Self and Other. (The word 'dialectic(s)' is used here to mean something similar to dynamic interaction. It is used to denote a process in which there are no fixed points of reference, or rather, in which the points of reference are displaced). Around this dialectic the poem envelops complex and elusive notions involving desire and language, life and death:

**Uze ungiphuzise amanzi**

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 
6. 
7. 
8. 
9. 
10. 

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1. *Ngiyovuka kanye nekhwezi*
2. *Ngiphehle ubulawu obuhmhlophe,*
3. *Ngithake ngomthole novuma*
4. *‘Ze ungithole ungingumwe.*
5. *Ngiyophuma nenhlamvu yelanga*
6. *Lapho ukusa kuhukaze amazolo*
7. *Ngikubone uza, ukhashwa*
8. *Amakha amnandi kusasa;*
9. *Ngiyokulindela ngisemthonjeni,*
10. *Ngikulindele, ngikulindele.*
Umoya wakho ngiwubone
Uphakama kunye nomlalamvubu
Kuphakame ithemba lami,
Lapho uthwele imbiza
Emnyama eyindilinga
Phezu kwekhanda eliyindilinga
Namehlo ayindilinga,
Nami ngawe ngiyadilingana;
Ngiyokumaka ngomnako wenyosi
Uze ungiphuzise amanzi.

Ngokhangelwa inxuluma lakwenu
Elitshalwe lamila entabeni;
Ngeke ngize ngimagange
Hleze ngibe ngisakhwele ngidilike,
Hleze ngiqanze imithambo,
Umqansa ungime esifubeni,
Ungikhendle ungigqib' ithemba,
Nawe ungishinglele
Kumbe ungishalazele
Kumbe ungibhembesele.

Ngiyogcakela noNokubekezela
Ngingqume neqele noSineke;
Ngishaye ugubhu ngihaye
Ngivume inkondlo kaNomathemba
Ngigudle izintaba ngihaye,
Izintaba zingisondeze kuwe.
Uyokuzwa inkondlo usexhibeni
Inqongqoza esifubeni sakho,
Inqongqoze ingqongqoze,
Uze ungivulele ngingene.

Wena ophezu kwezihlaha
Noma uphezulu kwelenyoni,
Inhliziyo iyonombela
Nomphefumulo ubambelele
Kuwo amagatsha emithi
Ngitibile ngizabalaze
Ngezikhwepha zokunxanela,
Ngesibindi sokulangazelela,
Ngikunxuse ngikunxuse,
Uze ungiphuzise amanzi.

Wena ophansi ekujuleni
Ngyojula ngithubelele nami
Njengezimpande zomthombe
The poet gives the picture of someone prepared to go to any lengths to win someone's love. This includes using love potions, climbing mountains, singing songs, ardently pursuing the object of love to the highest tree, the deepest depth, across the oceans, to all extremities in order for the speaker to gain her love and acceptance. The poem thus
envisions an introspective quest which will lead to an encounter with a woman. This figure is regarded by the speaker as the personification of natural beauty and the incarnation of an ideal self. Furthermore, she is the divine female which is seen as a figure of signification.

For the sake of perusal, it is useful to divide the poem into three parts. In the first, the narrator reveals the fervid agitation with which he has to attract the attention of his beloved or desired object. This section comprises of a focus more on the speaker’s intentions, hesitations, hopes and despairs. Dawn shall resuscitate the speaker while the morning star “ikhwezi” is still shining and in this still sleepy hours of nighttime, the revived speaker plans to concoct love potions to entrance his beloved. Here the conventional figurative association between darkness and despair, between light and hope, has been made use of as the poem manages to equate light with the memory of new beginnings, fresh starts: “Ngiyophuma nenhlamvu yelanga” (I shall go out at sunrise). He plots to spy on her as she goes to draw water. Everything about her hypnotizes him: her water-pot, head, face, eyes. Her homestead lures him, but he is afraid of failure and rejection: “Hleze ngibe ngisakhwele ngidilike,/Hleze ngiqanse imithambo” (Lest each time I climb and slide down, / Lest I bulge the veins). In the third stanza, after it seems as if the speaker has been plunged into despair, he rejuvenates with a sense of freshness.

The identification and delineation of the beloved coexists with the manifestation of nature, which also refers to the phenomenal world in general. This heightened sensitivity to the natural phenomenon suggests that the narrator desires to acquaint himself with the deep mysteries of nature, personified in the beloved. In loving the person with such intensity and single-minded devotion, the speaker cannot but follow the promptings of his soul, just as he cannot resist the allure of her head, eyes, etc.

The second part starts with the salutation to the wanted “wena” (you). This section consists of three stanzas, basically depicting the person high on top of the trees and below in the depths. However, these extremities of nature and her powers will not stop him, he is determined to endure. The narrator pursues the secret underground, he projects himself
into substitutive figures - "njengabavukuzi begolide" (like miners of gold), "njengabavukuzi bedayimane" (like diamond miners) - seeking ecstatic union. He compares his dedication as akin to two enduring trees. The wild fig tree's roots grow over rocks to reach a source of water which sustains the tree. Those of the willow go very deep, for the same reason. Patience, perseverance, hard work, hope and determination can lead to fulfilment and achievement.

In the third part, there is a shift to a more religious tone. This shift is exhibited in the last two lines of the seventh stanza and following two stanzas. This is also marked by a change of imagery from natural phenomenon to Biblical imagery "phezu kweJolidane" (top of the Jordan river), "ulwandle oLubomvu" (Red Sea), "njengo-Elija" (just like Elijah), "emasangweni ezulu" (at the gates of heaven), etc. Consequently, the personality of the addressee is dubious, one is uncertain whether it is still the human 'you' who is invoked. Here, it seems as if the narrator relinquishes his physical longing for his beloved. Though the possibility still remains that she might unveil herself, teasing his desire, she desists from revealing to him her innermost sanctuary. His pleas remain unanswered in the poem. In the eyes of the narrator she is therefore both object and non-object of desire, and his desire is then transformed onto a more divine crusade. This intensity of the poem rises until the end. These three parts correspond to the three phases of the narrator's quest.

As previously recognized, deconstruction places a question mark over a compartmentalised conception of time as effected in the above summary. This reading fails to account for the literary qualities of the poem, which must be accomplished forthwith explicitly in correlation to a psychoanalytical tract. In deconstructive reading, though, one of the first moves is, of course, to identify in the poem interrelated sets of binary oppositions. It is natural to categorises phenomena into oppositions. These oppositions also seem to be genuinely exclusive, with a distinct boundary line between them: male against female, hope against despair, acceptance against refusal, high versus low, up and down, light against dark, hot against cold, soul against body, man and woman, human being versus nature, good against evil, superior or inferior, heaven and earth, life against death. However, these oppositions are subjected to scrutiny and the reduced images are revisioned to concepts.
There are furthermore in this reading a number of oppositions mentioned that exert a further subliminal influence on the analysis. One can illustrate this perhaps with the famous psychological opposition of ego against id, which Freud immortalised: 'Where the id was, there shall the ego be'. His id (unconscious) is controlled by the ego (conscious) and superego (conscience). The id accounts for the instinctive drives that originate from the needs of the body; the ego develops from the id, and governs and opposes the instinctive drives. Freud thus privileged the ego over the id. With most of the other oppositions, both Freudian and Jungian analysts have established an order of priorities that privileges the conscious over the unconscious, the rational over the irrational, the normal over the abnormal.

What Derrida would rather have, is a logic of differences rather than oppositions. This would result in a nonviolent communication rather than violent confrontation between the Self and the Other (Adams in Rajnath, 1989:140). He does not want one side of an opposition to be assimilated into the other, or that one should be inferior or superior to the other. This attitude seems very close to the African view of the binary man/woman, where the man represents the right and the woman the left. However, the “Zulu claim that women, and therefore the left side, are not regarded as necessarily inferior to men and the right side. Nor are men superior to women. It is rather a matter of opposites which complement each other” (Berglund, 1989:363). They simply appreciate and respect the other as different from, yet equal to the self.

As Christopher Norris observes, deconstruction is “not simply a strategic reversal of categories” (1982:31). De Man (1979b:269) also argues that the two terms of a binary opposition are played off against one another, are interchanged and inverted, displaced, and finally undermined. This does not mean however, that the binary opposition is discarded. It is retained as an indispensable structuring principle, but one that is dynamic, decentred, and necessarily tentative. Neither of the terms of the binary opposition is granted self-identity; each finds its identity in the other; each is postulated solely in terms of displacement and difference.
In the poem, a contradiction is evident right from the start. Desire for unity with the female is founded on an insistence of dualism: man/woman, Self/Other, etc. The presupposition of presence is merely the outcome of a fundamental dualistic opposition between body and spirit (with all its ramifications of outside and inside, existence and essence, language and thought, conscious and unconscious). Msimang undermines this dualism: his poem has precisely this function of erasing the barriers erected by dualism. Not only does he achieve this through his imagery, casting the beloved in the role of one high in the heavens as well as deep in the earth, but the opposition between body and soul is also erased in the poem. Although the soul is privileged over the body, it is the body that the speaker covets. This is confirmed by the round imagery as well as the repeated requests to open up “Uze ungivulele ngingene” (until you open for me so that I can enter). This is even more significant if one considers where the beloved is situated at the time of the request - in the hut “usexhibeni” - and the entrance or doorway of the hut is associated with the female organ (Berglund, 1989:228).

Similar to Western philosophy, the earth is viewed as feminine by the Zulus “the earth is a mother” (Berglund, 1989:34) and the sky as a man:

The sky is like a husband because the sky is above the earth ... they are twins, but they are also husband and wife. We call them twins because we do not know which one is the more important .. we do not say that one is greater than the other (Berglund, 1989:34).

The above interpretation contains interesting possibilities of an ‘incestuous’ relationship. Initially, the beloved is mainly associated with the earth. Even when she is associated with a high entity like the top of the highest branches, the tree is still firmly planted on the ground. In the second last stanza however, this aspect changes dramatically. She is transposed now as a being high up on the clouds - the dominion of the masculine. The speaker himself is connected (quite rightly) to the realm of the heavens, “Ngimpampe phezu kwesibhakabhaka” (I move swiftly above the heaven). This blurring of the boundaries which categorise the beloved exists throughout the poem. As such, the poem deconstructs itself. The poem signals a divergence in its effort to overcome dualism. It brings out into the open the hidden nostalgia for presence, which is suppressed and
paradoxically, intensifies this nostalgia, makes it an end in itself through sheer intensity of concentration and feeling.

One image to be dealt with at this stage is that of circular objects; like 'water-pot', 'head', 'eyes', 'kraal', 'hut'. The circle is implicit throughout the poem in the images depicting the beloved as 'round'. These round images are representations of the fertile womb (like mind) which receives the divine seed of revelatory knowledge - the conception being the goal of his desire. This is confirmed by the prominent motif of water, as found in the title and throughout the poem. The significance of the water image in the proposed transformational process becomes apparent if it is borne in mind that water and thirst represent not only bodily needs, but also intellectual needs - a thirst for knowledge. Man is born thirsty, created with certain wants which demand immediate slaking if life is to be sustained. The request for a drink of water can thus be read in these terms, as well as a desire for sexual intercourse. This is substantiated by the traditional Zulu view of water:

Conception comes through water (of men). Clarity comes through water ... always drinking the water of the vessel (Berglund, 1989:178).

... life (impilo) comes from the one above. He was giving fertility to the woman (Berglund, 1989:143).

It is interesting to note that the verb "-vuka" (awake) in the first line of the poem also constitutes the noun "ukuvuka" associated with alertness, and which is also related to the erection of the male member (Berglund, 1989:354). But water is also a healing and cleansing symbol as well as a carrier of power. It is not only a fertility symbol and medium of purification from evil, but

it is also a carrier of life itself in that semen is described as water and it is from 'the water of the womb' that the child is born (Berglund, 1989:338).

Considering the view that the earth is female and the sky male, the water image enhances the picture as follows:
The husband fertilizes the wife. It is the water of the sky which causes something to happen on the earth. Like no woman can bear a child without the assistance of a man, so the earth cannot produce food if the sky does not work with water on it (reference to sexual act) (Berglund, 1989:62).

It is furthermore significant that the poem consists of nine stanzas of ten lines each. The number ten is extremely symbolic in Zulu tradition, as well as the number nine, both relating to a woman’s pregnancy period before giving birth. Water places a role here again. The child grows for nine months (or moons) and is born in the tenth. The Zulu tend to compare the child in the womb to a snake (symbol of ancestors):

It (the snake) is like the child when it comes out of the womb. The snake discards the skin as the child discards the placenta. That is the first thing. The second is that it does this thing in water, in the time of the dew. When the grass is wet and the water is on it, then the snake does this thing, discarding the skin. The dew is like the water of the womb. ... The third thing is that the snake discards (its skin) in the night. That is in the darkness. The child is moulded in the darkness. The darkness is the womb (Berglund, 1989:94-95).

What the speaker desires is a perfect relationship, but the imagery suggests how a sensual thirst and desire is something that has to be taken account of in his feelings. There is a repeated pattern of something ideal set against the complexity of feelings and experience. This is done with increasing subtlety. However, perfection is transient, like the waves of the sea. For example, in the stanza describing the crossing of the great and tumultuous oceanic divide, the depiction of the surrounding sea mirrors at the same time a psychological state:

*Lapho umsinga udloba okwendlondlo
Namadlambi edlangile ngolaka,
Ngiyokweneka inhliziyo yami
Ibe isihlenga sokuwela*

(When the whirlpool rages unrestrained like a horned viper
And the waves are overpowering with wrath,
I shall spread out my heart
To become a raft to cross)
The speaker believes his inner faculties to be so calm that he will be her saviour or lifeboat. The impression gained from the previous stanza, however, argues against this statement. He is agitated, on an emotional joyride - "Kuphakame ithemba lami" (my hope is raised), "ungigqib’ ithemba" (you annihilate hope) - like the indlondlo in these lines, an old and overgrown venomous imamba, very quick and easily irritated. Even the noun "ulaka" is ambiguous, for anger, wrath and passion are all termed "ulaka".

It is clear that, what excluded the future usefulness of the metaphor of ‘water’ is the fact that an aporia was revealed through it. If he does drink her water, the speaker will become an illuminary, impregnated with divine knowledge. However, his desire is not satisfied, his quest not at an end, even though he has reached fulfilment and is pregnant with the word (as a compiler of poems and songs):

\[
\begin{align*}
Ngishaye & \text{ ugu}h\text{u ngihaye} \\
Ngivume & \text{ inkondlo kaNomathemba} \\
Ngigudle & \text{ izintaba ngihaye}
\end{align*}
\]

(I play the harmonium and compose
I sing a song of Hope
I skirt the mountains and sing)

The knowledge is not illuminative but illusionary. De Man concurs with this and specifies that “there is no longer such an illusion as that of knowledge but only feigned truths” (1979b:272). He suggests that one adopt a sceptical attitude to experience, saying that “we can no longer hope ever ‘to know’ in peace” (1979b:273). In so far as the speaker wishes to fulfil his desire and achieve a permanent condition of ideal love, he is doomed to failure. At the very moment of the closing of the circle of desire and fulfilment, the object thus enclosed loses its efficacy and the circle is immediately erased.

Repetition is observed in this stanza, but the whole poem moves in the same direction, emphasizing the permanent cyclical repetitions of natural temporality. Each repetition regarding roundness is however not another circle going around and around in the same grove, but rather is in the form of a ‘widening gyre’ like the image of the whirlpool
"umsinga" in the poem. Jacques Lacan explains that

the key to this insistence on repetition is that in its essence repetition as repetition of the symbolical sameness is impossible ... it assures the difference only of identity - not by effect of sameness or difference but by the difference of identity (1977:192).

Every stanza is thus a repetition which encompasses most of what has previously been brought to light, and moves the entire framework forward slightly, into a new field, where new things can be brought to light, and the old items restudied in light of this new understanding.

The narrator’s avid search for the female figure and her hidden knowledge, which could be of the meaning and origin of life, is first shrouded in the imagery of magic and enchantment. The speaker depicts himself as a herbalist engaged in pounding white powder "ubulawu obumhlophe" to be used as a love potion. Krige (1988:117-118) affirms that this practice is not unusual among the Zulu:

Right from the time of puberty love-making plays an important part in [the man’s] life; and there is no medicine that is in greater demand than the love-charm. There is a great variety of love-charms in use among the Zulus ... Medicines can be used by a man to make himself attractive to the girls, but most of them are administered to girls to cause them to love him, and there are some medicines that make girls dream about a man and others that cause hysterical fits in a girl, so that she will cry for the man who has administered them.

This preoccupation to possess the desired being encompasses the whole poem. The herbalist-poet professes to making love potions which should generate a positive response. An ambiguous confluence of opposites is established, which is to be developed in the poem in the subsequent equivocations of good and evil, truth and falsehood, vision and illusion. If successful, what the use of the medicinal love-charms will result in, is gaining influence over the female. But in ‘fixing’ the female, her power of choice will be erased. This would not be a positive outcome (for her). The question, however, is not whether the notion of the spell-casting speaker and procedures is morally correct, but, rather, what it means and
how it contributes to an understanding of this poem. In other words, the efficacy of his spell is at stake.

It appears, moreover, that the narrator himself is doubtful of acquiring the secret knowledge he aspires to. Although he professes to be inspired, he is nonetheless desperate, staking his life on some hope. There is no suggestion here of calm certitude:

\begin{verbatim}
Nawe ungishingilele
Kumbe ungishalazele
Kumbe ungibhembesele.
\end{verbatim}

(And you turn away from me
Perhaps you shun me
Perhaps you treat me inconsiderately.)

The purpose of the ritual is to make manifest that which is hidden from the speaker, to make visible what is invisible. This is first taken to be the female’s declaration of love to him. He has perceived the evidence of her absence, and by pursuing these signs endeavours to arrive at the full presence of her being. Furthermore, the potential fullness of sexual union resides in its promise to overcome the duality of subject and object. But the envisaged fullness is delusive and what opens up between the self and other is the void of death. Fullness is actually emptiness. The magic that would have exposed the female’s secrets proves to be impotent. The revelation never occurs, the mystery remains veiled and the answer is deferred.

Language offers a tantalizing promise of full satisfaction of desire, of merging with the ‘Other’ who is the centre of speech. Language presents itself as self-consciousness, the identification of self with consciousness and the transformation of the divided self to become the unitary self. This is the allure of language. But language is différence: the displacement and deferral of self-presence, fulfilment, identity. The projected transformation is transgressive and remains at the level of potential and promise. Instead of containing the identification of consciousness and expression, idea and representation, and thus effecting a germination of transformational meaning, language disseminates meaning in consequence of what, in psychological notation, can be termed castration, its
failure to be the organ of penetration into the mystery and impotency of being (Derrida, 1981a:86). The trauma of castration condemns language to perpetual and futile repetition and thus orientates it towards death (De Man 1979b:108). The aim of language is death: there is a significant configuration of desire and death.

The speaker's pursuit leads him to the threshold of death, beyond which he cannot explore in person, bounded as he is by his physical state. The only way in which this point can be transgressed is with the aid of an intermediary operating between these exclusive realms, and this is found in the figure of Elijah:

*Njengo-Elija wasendulo,*
*Ngigibele ingola yomlilo*
*Ngingqongqoze emasangweni ezulu,*

(Just like Elijah of antiquity,
I ride the chariot of fire
I knock at the gates of heaven)

As such, the speaker seeks to bring about a transformation from one state to another: from the state of finite, phenomenal existence to the state of ideal, infinite existence found with his love. The subject/object union, striven for, is unachievable, and the self is always prevented from fulfilling "an illusory identification with the non-self" (De Man, 1979b:207). The motivation for seeking this union is that the existence of natural objects, or at least nature altogether, is not time bound, like that of a human being, who has "an authentically temporal destiny" (De Man, 1979b:206). Humankind, for whom "understanding can be called complete only when it becomes aware of its own temporal predicament" (De Man, 1979b:32), yearns to escape time, to "take refuge against the impact of time in a natural world to which, in truth [the self] ... bears no resemblance" (De Man, 1979b:206). Humans exist only in time, that is their definition, their destiny and their tragedy, since time must bring with it death. The quest of poetry, as Bloom will repeat again and again, is the quest for eternity, the overcoming of death. This awareness of death is ever present. "The intermediary of death" states Lacan, "can be recognised in every relation in which man comes to the life of his history" (1977:104).
The rest of the poem can also read in the light of this perception. The spell-casting speaker gambles on the possibility of eternal life which, in his idealistic conception, is the only life. This analysis also explains why the narrator should be oppressed with misgiving and uncertainty as to the success of his pursuit. Subsequently, the desired penetration of the depth of the deep mysteries never occurs. The act never materializes and the narrator is, in fact, no closer to the secret than he was earlier at the start. The last line of the poem echoes a desperate plea:

*Ungivulele, ungivumele ngibuse.*

(Open up for me, allow me to enjoy life.)

Language cannot but collapse under the weight of this mystery. The only change that is possible at this point is not transformation but substitution; that is, the replacement of one image or verbal configuration by another. The supplementary, phenomenal chain of signification fails to be interrupted by the intrusion of an absolute, transcendental meaning of origins. There is a sense, however, in which the transformation of the phenomenal into the ideal does occur. But in order to perceive this, the poem needs to be read in a different register. In this register, the frame of reference is not primarily the effects of magic and the secret of eternal life but incestuous desire and sublimation. Reading the text as such, helps to endow it with a diversity of contradictory sexual significations.

It has already been noted that the poem makes use of natural images: earth, ocean, air. The speaker declares his desire for his love via nature, identifies his love with nature and aspires to recompense nature’s love with his own. However, both the sensitivity to perceive and the power to give such love is contingent on the will of the mother (Lacan, 1994:11). As conceived in especially Jungian literature, it is the ‘Great Mother’ who determines the affections which binds all nature. The mother is the force behind nature, the mysterious original power holding it all together. It could therefore be the mother to whom the pleas are then addressed. The possession of the female form could then be a replacement for this lost mother. Through his mother he establishes a direct filial bond to nature, and the poem is thus a re-enactment of that search for the lost bond.
When viewing the text in this manner, one has to accept Freud's doctrines about the unconscious attitudes of a male to his mother, father and lover and the disguised manifestations of these attitudes in the mode of symbolic displacements, condensations and inversions. The mother is seen as the parent of the unfathomable world. In an attempt to penetrate the unfathomable mystery of the world the speaker therefore invokes the mother from whose womb the world issued. The narrator is thus in search of the secret of the womb. She is the earth, he is the sky, just as a husband and wife. In other words, the speaker's desire could be interpreted as 'incestuous'. However, this desire is incapable of being fulfilled because its object is denied. Consequently it must seek transformation, it must undergo sublimation whereby a new object replaces the forbidden one. His sexual energy is diverted into a culturally higher activity, that of religion, as seen in the last two stanzas. The 'incestuous' wish remains the source of desire, but the love object is indefinitely displaced.

However, the notion of the mother should be placed under erasure as well. It is not the mother as such who is the object of desire, she is simply a metaphor, an image, an arbitrary and shifting collection of emotional needs. Desire attaches itself to the idea of the mother, as it is attached to the idea of an originary truth - and, by extension, to the idea of the beloved who fulfills the lover by conferring wholeness and meaning on his experience of incompleteness and meaninglessness. Desire is not primarily for the mother, for truth, or for the beloved. It is, before all else, desire for the undefinable 'Other' (Lacan, 1991:221). Desire constantly transfers its attention from one object to another, as the Other changes and assumes a variety of faces: "Wena ophezu kwezihlaha" (you on top of the shrubs), "Noma uphezulu kwelenyoni" (or high up on the highest branch), "Wena ophansi ekujuleni" (you below in the depths), "Wena ongaphezu kwamafu" (you across the oceans), "Wena ongaphezu kwamafu" (you above the clouds). In Lacan the subject constantly seeks for unity with the imagined source of truth, with the 'Other'. But because this 'Other' is not available, the result in the subject is unrelieved desire, a desire occasioned by its own lack (Lacan, 1994:11).

Otherness is both an inner condition (the relationship between the conscious and
unconscious systems) and an outer condition (the relationship between the subject and the external world). And because of this flexibility of the term, as well as the ease with which it can be displaced in the dialectical formulation, it serves at the same time to break down rigid dualistic oppositions between, for example, inner and outer, subject and object, conscious and unconscious, thought and language, spirit and matter, ideal and phenomenal. One encounters the 'desire for the Other' especially with Lacan. One’s relation with oneself is constructed from the outside. As such, one learns who one is because others tell one. Eagleton (1983:174) puts this as follows:

We desire what others - our parents, for instance - unconsciously desire for us; and desire can only happen because we are caught up in linguistic, sexual and social relations - the whole field of the 'Other' - which generate it.

Lacan brings together the two notions of otherness and desire, which consequently makes the semantic and syntactic strains become even more evident:

Desire is that which is manifested in the interval that demand hollows within itself, in as much as the subject, in articulating the signifying chain, brings to light the want-to-be, together with the appeal to receive the complement from the Other, if the Other, the locus of speech, is also the locus of this want, or lack (1977:263).

This bottomless abyss of desire is here represented in the very idea of the beloved as idea, is a projection of the speaker longing for complete communion. She is the complement and completion of his discourse with himself: the beloved Other to whom the Self addresses its speech and in the process creates in its own image. Ideal love is the perfect communion of the lover and the beloved, of Self and Other. On closer inspection such a love betrays itself as ideality - the very concept of love includes the notions of knowledge and truth, notions exposed by deconstruction as fallacious.

The Self engages in a discourse with the Other because of an enigmatic experience of absence - of that which would confer on it fullness of being. It is therefore a restless, searching discourse. The Self speaks, but its speech is situated in and directed towards the
Other, since the Self is voice. Conversely, the Self is eloquent in its discourse of absence and lack. Nowhere in this poem does the Self and Other unite in speech. The Self speaks to the Other only to erase the Other, between whom there is an unbridgeable gulf and thus in reality speaks only to itself. This illustrates the insufficiency of the Self and its displacement in the Other. The subject’s failure to recognise this means that he will not be able to escape the captivations of the imaginary. That is, the subject will continue to assume lack of fulfilment and a false sense of being are the result of identifying with the wrongly named desire, something that can be remedied by renaming it correctly. The subject, says Lacan, “exhausts himself in pursuing the desire of the Other” because he does not realise that his “own desire is the desire of the Other” (1991:221).

For a Freudian interpretation, one can furthermore focus on the longing of the incomplete self (psyche) for fulfillment: “The mind (psyche) imaginatively creates or envisions what it does not have (epipsyche), and then seeks to possess epipsyche, to move towards it as a goal” (Baker, 1948:35). The speaker’s mind is suddenly awakened and thirsts for intercourse with an intelligence similar to itself. He emulates to himself the Being whom he loves. Conversant with speculations of the sublime and perfect nature, the vision in which he embodies his own imaginations unites all of the wonderful which the lover could depicture. The perfect (but impossible) ideal Being is a projection in which is embodied the speaker’s imaginations. He seeks in vain for a prototype of his conception. The awakening to love is thus defined as a sudden realization of absence, which then gives rise to longing. The speaker is certainly not at peace after his encounter. It leaves him with a feeling of uncertainty since he cannot extract from it an unequivocal meaning.

A Jungian reading of the poem would see this desire to penetrate the realm as a desire to penetrate and be absorbed in the unconscious mind, from which the archetype of the eternal woman had surfaced and briefly revealed itself to the conscious mind. The motive of this subliminal journey would be the quest for selfhood. In Jungian terms selfhood is brought about by the reconciliation and integration of psychical opposites - and more especially by the reconciliation of the masculine and feminine aspects of the psyche. This alternative view would see the poem as revealing the fallacy and futility of this Jungian quest for selfhood.
To support this contention, there are in the poem unmistakable references to the doubts and possibilities of self-delusion accompanying the speaker's quest. The speaker fails to realize this ideal of integrated selfhood. The principle objection to this type of reading, from the deconstructive point of view, is the postulation of selfhood as a determinable, stable, unified, and self-identical entity.

Given this ambiguity and uncertainty, together with the suggestion of self-negation, the conditions and objectives of the quest are seriously questioned. It is clear, moreover, that self-knowledge is a hazardous goal to attain, as the quest for it leads the speaker into the perilous depths and vertiginous heights of experience. To repress self-knowledge is to avoid the dangers of the quest, but in so doing the possibility of mastering experience is lost. Knowledge of self is linked with the development of the imagination and the potential for creative action in word and deed. Far from indicating that selfhood is a determinable goal, the implication is that it is always receding, always doubtful. The quest is never at an end.

Thus far the general picture painted regarding this poem reads as follows. The narrator is in search of what he lacks, the lost object of desire, the female figure, the mother, the Other. This object is polymorphous, representing an open field of play in which desire is given limitless gratification. The narrator, as subject, is a discursive, written subject, and therefore seeks the lost object of desire in language. Hence language is both the object of desire and the expression of desire. As discursive subject constituted by desire, the narrator discovers himself only in relation to the Other. He is structurally displaced as a dialectic of Self and Other. His desire is deflected from the figure, the open tropological field of play, onto a seemingly infinite object, yet this also turns out to be a closed trope.

So far in this discussion the dialectic of Self and Other has been deployed in what is perhaps a bewildering variety of contexts. The purpose, however, is to attempt to dislodge the reader's habitual thought structures and set in motion a resonance and amplification of dialectical play. Deconstructive strategy requires this kind of conceptual flexibility to bring about the liberation of the signifier from metaphysical and textual closure. In particular,
it is Lacan who gives sanction to this specific rhetorical device. Malcolm Bowie comments:

More consistently than any other of Lacan’s terms ‘the Other’ refuses to yield to a single sense; in each of its incarnations it is that which introduces ‘lack’ and ‘gap’ into the operations of the subject and which, in doing so, incapacitates the subject for selfhood, or inwardness, or apperception, or plentitude; it guarantees the indestructibility of desire by keeping the goals of desire in perpetual flight (1979:134).

Through imagery of nature, the speaker attempts to decipher the mysteries. However, his perseverance is never rewarded in the poem. Deconstructively seen, what is offered to his sight as presence immediately, then, becomes a figure of absence. He is deluded by a dissimulation of truth, by a simulacrum of an originary essence or centre that is determinate, comprehensible, and unchanging - for all eternity. Truth is ambiguous, indeterminate, and displaced - never identical with itself - truth without centre: knowledge and meaning are deferred and postponed indefinitely by the intervention of language. In summary, the search for truth and the search for the lost object of love are governed by the same mechanism of substitution. In both, blindness, not insight, governs expression.

Analogous to previous chapters of this thesis, one observes that Msimang’s verse displays a logic of substitution corresponding with that proposed by deconstructive theory and therefore aligned with the notions of ‘self-effacement’, ‘différance’, and ‘play’. In its most subtle form, the logic of substitution (which is also the logic of the trace) requires a suspension of linearist thinking in favour of what Derrida terms pluri-dimensional thinking. In this poem, there is also a continuous play of substitution traversing and going beyond the text - a flutter of innumerable veils beyond which there is nothing but more veils. When something definite and originary seems to present itself, it turns out that this is only a deceptive substitute of presence.

Msimang’s poem is a flexible, open indeterminable realm of shifting and elusive perceptions; a realm without centre and without limits, founded upon a dialectic rather than a dualistic assumption. And finally, permeating the text is the free-play of desire - the
forbidden discourse of desire; discourse structured as desire - displaced, substitutive, indeterminate, founded on a lack, an absence of presence, a longing to create presence, and issuing in a passionate drive to unite with the Other.

Another poem with similar echoes of desire and death is 'Langa lami' (Msimang, 1980:1):

\begin{quote}
\textbf{Langa lami}
\end{quote}

1 \textit{Siphethu sempilo yami nentokozo},
2 \textit{Ngiyini ngaphandle kwakho?}
3 \textit{Nxa bekusitha kimi}
4 \textit{Ngiyoggqokwa yithunzi lobumnyma...}
5 \textit{Nokufa!}
6 \textit{Lapho ungikhanyisela}
7 \textit{Umphefumulo uqhakaza injabulo,}
8 \textit{Inhлизiyo yembathe impudumalo.}
9 \textit{Umoya wezinsunsu}
10 \textit{Namathunzi emishwabulo}
11 \textit{Kushabalala njengamazolo.}
12 \textit{Ungashoni langa lami,}
13 \textit{Sihambisane sixhakene}
14 \textit{Size sehlukaniswe...}
15 \textit{Ukufa!}

In this poem, the speaker professes an utter dependence on his/her "langa" (sun), avowing that this entity is his/her life and without this being, he/she is nothing. This confession is constructed on certain conspicuous imagery and oppositions. One can deduce that it is a male speaker addressing his female beloved, since the subject is the male poet. Again, as in the previous poem read, it would however, be more acceptable to regard the addressed person or entity simply as the Other, and, in so doing, to accept rather than attempt to suppress the ambiguity this status embodies.

The first section of the poem delineates the Other as of an earthly nature "Siphethu sempilo" (spring/fountain of life). In the second part, this being is transformed to a celestial body, the sun. The sun is customarily regarded as a source endowing objects with splendour. The sun is the primary source of light and life, just as woman is traditionally a metaphor of love and beauty. In this poem the two are fused visually as well as
conceptually. But the poem starts off with the image of a spring - the result is a complex image offering in terms of meaning the multi-dimensionality it embodies visually. In the first line of the poem, the Other already has an identifiable form which is an intermixture of light ("ilanga") and motion ("siphethu").

A deconstructive reading, however, complicates this by questioning these distinctions which are all dependant on the determining metaphor "ilanga" of the division between the invisible and visible worlds (Self/Other, day/night, light/dark, inner/outer, ideal/fallen, perfect/imperfect, spirit/matter, permanent/transitory, union/division, whole/fragmentary). By simply glancing at the oppositions listed, it is apparent that they are not stable, for Other (which is placed as the subordinated second term) is paralleled to dark, imperfect, fragmentary, etc. This is not the intent which the poem imparts. Additionally, by reversing the hierarchy of domination of certain binary oppositions in the poem, the other binarisms also collapse.

The day/night opposition, for example, is a tried and tested deconstructive archetype. Derrida himself stresses the reliance of traditional philosophical systems on certain metaphors or 'tropes' such as day/night, in which terms for the visual sense-perception in the presence or absence of light are applied. The sun, as the source of light, constitutes the necessary condition for the very opposition between seeing and not-seeing, hence between presence and absence:

Such mental tropes, like their visual correlates, must assume a source of light, which is ultimately the sun; and with his customary wit, Derrida names this key trope of Western thought - which as metaphor is also an instance of what are traditionally called 'flowers of rhetoric' - the 'heliotrope' that is, a kind of sunflower of rhetoric (Abrams in Rajnath, 1989:59).

As such, this metaphor in which the sun or day are equated with light undoes itself in the duplicity of its equation. The visible sun, itself ever turning, rises only to set again, similarly light only appears to disappear. For as a new day arises, so will the night also set in, and the cycle will begin again, for ever keeping the idea of a beginning in alternate
freeplay with the idea of a return.

The sun serves Derrida as a classic trope for the founding presence, or logos, which by logocentric language is ever needed and always lost. The poem thus allegorically re-enacts the inescapable dilemma of logocentric language, and that is the reliance on a logos, or ground outside the system of language which is always needed, always relied on, but never available. By following a logical track through the poem by means of undoing oppositions, the reader arrives at blank contradictions. The reader is caught in an irrepressible vacillation unfulfilling to the mind and incapable of being grounded in anything outside the activity of the poem itself.

It is curious to notice that in this poem the sun is assumedly equated with a woman, while the normal human association will be a man. One of the meanings of “ilanga” is then also a fine, handsome fellow. Traditionally, the sun is symbol of the direct son and heir of the god of heaven, the sun is also associated with the hero and the father who comforts the heaven, the father-sun as logos, as head, power and source of meaning. The water-metaphor enhances the muddling of the margins more; “isiphethu” (spring) is described as living waters and is associated with a man and his virility. However, the spring is earthly bound, and the earth is female, endowing the figure with androgynous characteristics.

The poem thus enacts a version of a constantly repeated drama of the lost sun. To possess the Other would be a means of rejoining the source of light. To the speaker, death would mean the loss of both light and the source of light:

\[ \text{Ngiyogqokwa yithunzi lobumnyama...} \]
\[ \text{Nokuja!} \]

(I shall be covered by the shadow of darkness . . .
And death!)

This represents the loss of the logos, willing his words weak. This is typified by the dots in the fifth and fourteenth lines. The dots tempt the reader into picturing some reality
outside themselves, but the picture is finally another sign or text that perpetuates the chain that it promises to end. The dots inspire the longing for something there, yet render arbitrary whatever appears. Accordingly, every thought is cancelled out and erased - made void by the three dots on the page - instead of the expected revelation, there is a break in the sentence, followed by the single revelation of death. This affirmation of death is deliberately suspended in uncertainty and equivocation, so that the poem does not yield to a simple interpretation. The life and death antimony is interwoven with the oppositionary pair light and darkness. As the embodiment of life and light, the Other represents an animating and glorifying principle producing happiness in his soul and warmth in his heart: “Umphefumulo uqhakaza injabulo, Inhliziyo yembathe imfudumalo.”

The death image effectively conveys the sense of rupture and the feelings of absence and longing which will haunt him if they part. Without the Other, the speaker is without being, without substance, in despair. His conviction then is that his centre does not lie in himself but in something beyond him, in the Other. Therefore, and this is the important point, it is in the Other, in that which is not him, that he must find himself. As such, the poem itself undoes the Self/Other opposition. The Other is the substantive reality, the speaker is simply a reflection of this Other. The Self is perceived in the Other, just as God perceives himself in creation. He is not an originary and autonomous subject, his existence is derivatory. The notion of the sun as an originary source of course defines the speaker as supplementary, with its usual associations of addition, replacement and usurpation. In this way the dialectic asserts itself as a complex and inconclusive process of inversion and reversion - a process in which the dualistic opposition serving to increase the dialectical play is erased.

What the speaker has striven to do is to achieve a transformation of himself whereby he is permanently united, fully merged with the Other, until “sehlukaniswe . . . ukufa” (we are parted by . . . death). In this poem he seeks a divine oneness, in order to overcome the dualism of subject and object, man and woman, Self and Other. The speaker sees himself as light-dependent and the Other as light personified, this union achieves self-sufficiency in that he is sustained exclusively by the Other:
Ngiyini ngaphandle kwakho?
Nxa bekusitha kimi
...
Lapho ungikhanyisela
Umphefumulo uqhakaza injabulo,
Inhliziyo yembathe imfudumalo.

(What am I without you?
If they shade you from me
...
When you give light to me
The soul bursts into happiness
The heart is enveloped in warmth.)

Their relationship constitutes neither one of symbiosis nor antibiosis, but could be parasitical on behalf of the speaker. As such, one has to conceive of the unity as simultaneous with the diversity, and the transformation stated here is therefore chimerical. The coexistence of difference and unity is of course a paradox, since it contradicts logical reasoning to conceive of such a thing. This paradox (or paralogism) is, moreover, evident in deconstruction theory as well. The deconstructive phrase ‘differential network’, used to describe language, also contains a paradox - the paradox of difference and unity. The differential network of signification exists as a play, a dialectic of difference and unity.

In the presence and/or non-presence of the sun, language, as a play of differentiation, is reduced to shade and shadows. The shadow is an interesting concept. It is an image of presence and absence, a shadow cast is present, yet precisely as a shadow, it is also absent. It is there, but not really. Some of the explications given of the word “ithunzi” (shadow) are ‘dimness’, ‘dullness of light’ even a type of ‘transparency’. The poem is governed by the imagery of light and shadow, or of light differentiated within itself. Any reading of the poem must thread its way through repeated configurations of the polarity of light and shadow. Ironically, the polarity constantly has to reform itself as light turns into shadow in the presence of a light.

The poem also represents a moment of psychic defence on the part of the speaker, who is manifesting a death anxiety, a defence against a repressed desire, in this case, death,
imagined as shadow (or darkness, which is the absence of colour). The poem takes the form of a reaction against that desire, in this case, the perpetuation of life as illustrated in the sun, light, the presence of colour. Psychically, the poet has here turned against the result of death with an image of light as reaction formation (life).

Language remains inextricably bound up with the metaphysical system (presence, dualism, origin, non-contradiction). One cannot move out of language without moving out of metaphysics. And the possibility of escape, of transgression of the limits of metaphysics is dictated by language, for language is the very fabric of desire. Its role is that of the Other. To seek to merge with the Other is to seek to and merge with language and desire.

In these merely fifteen lines of the poem, the speaker tries to define what the Other represents to him, but language is still inadequate for the task. This is contemplated in the application of the diacritical dots. This inability of language to characterize the Other stems from the fact that she is the embodiment of empyrean life, while language is inextricably bound to earthly existence, which is death. Above all, the Other is a metaphor. This term effectively embraces the others: ‘spring’, ‘light’, ‘sun’, which can be regarded as the characteristics, the defining features, of the metaphor of the Other. However, if the Other is to be regarded as a metaphor, it means she is a linguistic construction. Conversely, language is metaphor, for as Iginla (1978:30-31) observes “language ... is a metaphoric machine in which bodies and objective are transferred, transposed, displaced, substituted, and repressed”. The significance of the addressee lies in her alleged otherness; she is a mark of absence. She cannot be reduced to a single signification and as such is an idealistic figure representing a play of presence and absence, resemblance and difference, sameness and otherness, transformation and change, and thus to the perpetual deferment of meaning.

Death is not portrayed in the poem as a liberating and affirmative occurrence. Death is here simply a trope, and has been deployed as such throughout this reading. What is of special concern is the different forms or meanings of death encountered - its multiple metaphorical connotations. Hope is linked with the promise of life - the promise of a more
intense and abundant life. On the other hand, despair is linked with death, with a feeling of the emptiness and separation. However, this death impulse is given the character of inevitability and necessity. Just like day leads night, the speaker is naturally progressing towards the portals of death by a relentless and irresistible force, called life. It is his destiny to die, a fate against which he is powerless to exercise his free will. Nietzsche (1974:49) makes the following observation:

Let us beware of saying that death is opposed to life. The living is merely a type of what is dead, and a very rare type.

This reference effectively illustrates cryptically that life is contained in death, not set against it. In terms of this thinking, life is governed by death and, conversely, death is immanent in life. What is important in this conception is that the dualism of life and death is erased. The noteworthy point is that death is not a negation, a negative value to be contrasted with the positive value of life. Rather, life is a type of death. That is, it is of the same order as death, and this order is that of the trace. Derrida takes his use of the word trace from a Freudian essay ‘Note on the Mystic Writing Pad’:

The writing-pad in question was a toy sold for children on which messages could be written with a hard stylus, but apparently removed by detaching its double covering sheet from the wax slab on which this rested. What interested Freud was that although this operation rendered the writing in question invisible, it did not remove it utterly. The written message was still there, imprinted on the wax, hidden but not completely erased. Thus the wax base could be compared with the unconscious, from which (as Freud repeated on several occasions) nothing was ever completely erased, while the outer layer of celluloid and translucent waxed paper would accordingly be taken to represent the conscious mind which sends information on to the unconscious without retaining it. Moreover, the writing that becomes visible on the pad as a result of the use of the stylus was already there, in the sense that the use of the stylus only makes visible part of the wax block that pre-existed the act of writing (Hawthorn, 1992:7).

When the words written on the writing pad are removed, a slight scratch or trace of them remains on the surface. Freud sees this to be representative of the manner in which a trace “is left in our psychical apparatus of the perceptions which impinge upon it” (quoted by
But the perceptions themselves are more than this trace: they are constituted by the relation between this trace and that which makes them visible. For Derrida, the trace would thus be

the erasure of selfhood, of one’s own presence, and is constituted by the threat or anguish of its irremediable disappearance, of the disappearance of its disappearance. An unerasable trace is not a trace, it is a full presence (1978:220).

Articulated psychoanalytically, a stimulus which lands in the unconscious, leaves a permanent trace, which much later surfaces as delayed action in the consciousness. Not as ‘original’ stimulus, but as trace which is absent in its presence because it is transcribed in a texture/weave/web which exists out of traces:

The unconscious text is already a weave of traces, differences in which meaning and force are united - a text nowhere present, consisting of archives which are always already transcriptions (Derrida, 1982:21).

That is why an analysis of the traces in the psyche is unending: “The dream-thoughts ... cannot ... have any definite endings: they are bound to branch out in every direction into the intricate network of our world of thought” (Freud as quoted by Spivak in Derrida, 1976:x1vii). A continuous and permanent renewal of differentiations and interpretations is thus necessary.

In this sense, neither life nor death is originary nor present in and of itself, referring only to itself. The presence-absence dichotomy dissolves into a structure of difference, the play of differences and of the trace of difference. Life and death as positivist concepts thus give way to the notion of life and death as differentially related, with neither being ontologically secure. Derrida (1976:71) touches on this relationship when he speaks of “death as the concrete structure of the living present”.

It seems here, at least, that the originary proto-writing is almost analogous to Jung’s collective unconscious: in the trace may be found the memories of the human race. One might call the poem self-deconstructive in the sense that the despair at absence questions
the inception of presence which its metaphors generate. The speaker’s endeavour to lift
the surface veil of language and thereby discover a depth of meaning and reality is
parallelled by his endeavour to discover her essential being, comprising ‘light’, ‘love’, and
‘immortality’.

The knowledge conveyed by language is illusionary, an entanglement of inner wishes and
external impressions. If language is identified with the unconscious, and if it is irreducibly
figurative, one is forced to conclude that the division between illusion and knowledge,
internal processes and external perceptions, unconscious promptings and conscious
understanding, is tenuous indeed.

De Man would describe the condition of the poem as a celebration of the word’s “pure
anteriority”, which surrenders “the desire to coincide” with “another sign that precedes it”,
instead assenting to its “temporal difference”, “its authentically temporal predicament”
(1979b:190-191). However, the word “predicament” in the last citation unlocks and
releases language forth to mankind:

the fate of being only temporal starts by belonging to a sequence of words
but shifts to the consecutive, unrepeatable moments of our lives. And with
the prohibition against the spatiality of a return, against any simple
repetition, the moments can only run out, following one another to death
(Krieger, 1989:21).

The human condition is to fall into “the temporal void” (De Man, 1979b:203), just as the
consciousness of death is in each moment. As such, one is compelled to concede to the
alienation of the human subject confronting the “unbreachable distance” (De Man,
1979b:209) in his/her transient deadlock, and with it the void, in effect his/her own death
(Krieger, 1989:21). Death is the sole certainty in life.

Death is acknowledged and confronted in the following poem by Msimang (1990:12-13),
‘Leso sivakashi’ (that visitor). The dominant image of death in this poem is of an uninvited
guest, literally at the expense of the host:
When reading the above text against itself, one uncovers certain unconscious dimensions, which its overt textuality glosses over or fails to recognise. This repressed unconscious within language is sensed, for example, heretofore in its title. The noun “isivakashi” (visitor) derives from the verb “-vakasha” meaning not merely visiting, but also to keep watch at night, patrol or be on sentry. This hints at the potential double aspect of “isivakashi”, as either welcome or unwelcome, or as changing from one to the other. This insinuation is further confirmed in a synonym of “isivakashi”, that is “umhambeli” (visitor) which has the same original root as “isihambeli”, which again is cognate with “tsihambi” (passer-by, visitor, stranger). All these words thus also contain the meaning of someone unknown, against whom must be guarded, thereby inadvertently manifesting the potentially unwelcome status of the visitor. Similarly, the English word visitor or guest is etymologically cognate with the Latin word ‘hostis’, which also means a stranger or an
enemy. This notion of hostility, then, is like the repressed unconscious of the word, and the process of deconstruction, in revealing the unconscious of the text, draws upon such disciplines as etymology in this way.

The above categorisation of “isivakashi” (visitor) and ‘host’ has further consequences for the life and death binary. By means of word association, ‘host’ connects with its opposite ‘parasite’, an additional manner of describing the relationship between the two opponents in the poem. Parasite is one of those words which calls up its apparent opposite, there is no parasite without its host. It has no meaning without that counterpart. According to the two main meanings in English, a parasite is any organism that grows, feeds, and is sheltered on or in a different organism while contributing nothing to the survival of its host, or a person who habitually takes advantage of the generosity of other without making any useful return. The image of host and parasite no doubt also describe

the way some people feel about the relation of a deconstructive interpretation to the obvious or univocal reading. The parasite is destroying the host. The alien has invaded the house, perhaps to kill the father of the family in an act which does not look like parricide, but is (Miller in Rajnath, 1989: 218).

The invader is as parasite so close that it cannot be noticed until it is there, an alien who has the ability to invade a domestic enclosure, consume and kill the host. The host is viewed again in the sense of enemy rather than host in the sense of open-handed dispenser of hospitality. The word ‘host’ is also the name for the consecrated bread or wafer of the Eucharist, from Middle English oste, from Latin hostia, sacrifice, victim. The host may then become host in another sense, not etymologically correlated. The host is himself the food, his substance consumed without recompense. For the host, the speaker, there is no asylum, no place of refuge from the invader.

Still surveying the historically verifiable sources of the formation of words and the development of their meaning, in the second line, the sentence “wayengalayezanga” (he had not given a message/warning), the verb “-layeza” (give a message/instructions) has cross-references to alternative renderings and to words where fuller information is to be
obtained. This verb is analogue to "-laya" which derives from the Ur-Bantu form "-laya" meaning 'to take leave'. Nowadays this verb "-laya" also conveys the connotation of teaching by painful experience, correcting or admonishing. This meaning is considerably removed from the context of giving messages, forewarn, etc. In such style of derivational reading, the impression is given that the speaker deserved his punishment for previous wrongdoings. Furthermore, the verb "-layeza" is dialectically akin to "-yaleza", to which again the verb "-yala" is equivalent. This verb has the same meaning as "-laya", plus additional meanings of 'to impose an untoward happening', as well as 'to warn, put on one's guard'.

Connecting with above-mentioned ill-conceived happening, is the subject of the poem. The previous paragraph insinuates that the speaker seemed to invite violation. However, it was the desire of the intrusive character to penetrate, grasp and possess the speaker. As illustrated already, in all psychoanalytic criticism there must be an accounting of the presence of sexuality in the text. The desire to dominate suggests an aggressive male sexuality in relation to a female and this again reflects masculine ambitions and anxieties. This necessarily affects the sexuality that is a constitutive factor in the construction of the poem's subject, however it should not be taken for granted that the speaker is female, as it is nowhere explicitly cited in the poem. The poem appears to import that the speaker was raped and murdered:

Wala/a nami ngendlovuyangena.
Wangibeka endlini yamakhaza.

(He forcefully slept with me.
He put me in the cold house [mortuary].)

In this narrative the violence of rape is illustrated graphically. Baker (1995:104) suggests a "rape culture" in which the idea is that sex is something that women have and that men try to get. The ways in which the incident is addressed reveal some interesting details. The verb "-lala", of course, not only means sleep, but also having sexual intercourse. The
simile used to describe the action is even more telling: "ngendlovuyangena" (literally, like an elephant enters). Not only is this image visually befitting, but the verb "-ngen" in the composite noun also comprises the meanings of invading, or getting to know intimately. Other words implicating this rape culture is the verb "-hlek" (laugh), which also betokens opening up, gaping open or spreading open, until at last, the speaker falls apart, into pieces, which is implied as the invader had to gather her/him up "wangiwola".

As such, the emphasis in the poem as a whole falls more on the torments of the body than of the soul. The sufferings of the soul is scarcely mentioned (when it is, it is in terms of bodily terms: "ngaqhaqhaqazela", "ngikweqa amhlophe"), while the body is articulated significantly. The visitor is described in physical, corporeal terms - he/she has oversized hands and feet "ngezandlakazi", "ngezinyawokazi". His/her coldness and cruelty is visible in his mocking arrogance, his grinning "inhlinini" - a term described in Zulu as "ukuhlek ungahleki" (to laugh while not laughing) - an action ironically resembling deconstructive activity. It seems that with these carnal cogitations, the idea is given that the urges of the body are harmful to the soul and thus emotions and feelings must be repressed. The result is that the body lies in pieces, while the soul can still recount the occurrence.

And it is this recounting of the death experience which presents the poem's greatest challenge. Although the poem is an account of the death of a person who speaks in his/her own voice and laments his/her fate, at a deeper level it projects the Self's fear of isolation and death:

_Babengammemanga..._  
_Wayengalayezanga..._  

_Ilanga lase lizihambele,  
Lase lingishiyi nginedwana._

(They had not invited him...  
He had not given a message...  

The sun was just moving about freely,
It simply left me behind all on my own.

In these first four lines, the speaker’s feelings professed are at odds with those expressed. The claim is that ‘they’ (whoever they may be) had not invited the unexpected guest, and ‘he’ (the guest) did not give notice of his visit. In these two lines already, the speaker seems to blame the visitor for being impolite, for causing a disturbance. The sun then joins the queue of guilty by being blamed for abandoning the speaker. This deed affiliates the sun with the visitor, for not only does the sun move about freely “ukuzihambela”, but his action constitutes him to be an “isihambeli” (visitor). As such, the sun is equated with the visitor, which is a transgression of the usual ‘sun symbolises life’ trope.

Again, the life/death opposite is addressed. The creation of biological life is coupled with its attachment to death. It has been shown, on the basis of previous discussions, that life is not a seamless continuity. It has a boundary, which make for parts, fragments and supplements. Life in its fullness and depth is correlative to death, which may either be the delicious promise of release or it may cause terror at the prospect of the abyss.

It seems as if the speaker views death as the second option, as a negative. Freud (1991:438) notes that a “negative judgement is the intellectual substitute for repression”. The question then arises as to what it is that is repressed. It is not possible to identify any specific desire, so it might be more useful to consider the general character of desire. For Lacan, it is “paradoxical, deviant, erratic, eccentric [and] scandalous” (1977:286). Desire has little respect for boundaries and dividing lines. If the disruption of unity is a mark of desire, then its presence is very much a feature in this poem.

Death as impersonator of a visitor causes the principal disruption of unity. The unexpected call of the visitor surprised the speaker, as he/she did not invite him/her. Similarly, no one knows about death until one is there. However, when one is there, one is no longer in a position to know anything at all - one is dead, drawn out of the network of possible relations that constitutes the world of knowledge. The speaker therefore cannot have a determinate relation with death, for death is the disruption or stoppage of life and the absence of all relationality. His/her death prompts one to ask what the point
of living is, if death can intervene so cruelly in life. All living organisms are confronted by
the inevitability of death, just like everybody battle the painful disorder of life. However,
by the end of the poem one expects that the speaker would have come to some terms with
his or her fear. This does not happen, as nothing is acknowledged.

The speaker’s non-relation of death to life is precisely why death has to be mastered by
dialectical thought, it must be brought into a (productive) relation with life if there is to
be any ‘progress’ for the speaker. Death is productive in this poem as that which fuels
dialectical thinking, that which allows the very movement of progress. The dialectic
moves forward only when it procures the negative moment of death. Death or non-
actuality is of all things the most dreadful, but one who truly lives does not shrink from
death and keep him/herself untouched by devastation, but rather endures and maintains
him/herself in death:

if death did not dwell within him as the source of his anguish ... there
would be no man or liberty, no history or individual. In other words, if he
revels in what nonetheless frightens him, if he is the being, identical with
himself, who risks (identical) being itself, then man is truly a Man (Hegel

When death, the absolute Other, as that which cannot be understood, appears and comes
to thought, thought must find a way to master that death, to find some way to make it
productive, or at least to preclude its potentially interruptive or dismembering effects.
Thought will try and make sense of death through the comfort of the poem. In short, the
poem tries to produce comfort in the face of death, if in no other way than through the
knowledge that humans can (re)produce death (in words), control its randomness (through
language), make death’s negativity productive (in a poem), put it at the service of a cause
or a useful end, in a determinate relation with life.

Language, of course, does not ‘know’ death. But it is only in language that the dimension
of the death can loom up as a subject. One way in which death functions rhetorically is
within deconstructive analyses. Jacques Derrida has attempted to reread and revalue the
association of speech with life and writing with death, demonstrating that even ‘living’
speech is based on a split between signifiers and signifieds, on self-difference and deferral (différence) rather than immediacy. Derrida pursues the analysis of différence - which is incorporated in the human even in contexts where it is the mind itself that is being described - finding ‘writing’ to be the central figure Freud uses to describe the functioning of the mental apparatus:

No doubt life protects itself by repetition, trace, différence (deferral). But we must be wary of this formulation: there is no life present at first which would then come to protect, postpone, or reserve itself in différence. The latter constitutes the essence of life. ... Life must be thought of as trace before Being may be determined as presence. This is the only condition on which we can say that life is death, that repetition and the beyond of the pleasure principle are native and congenital to that which they transgress (Derrida, 1978:203).

In other words, without memory, both conscious and unconscious, human beings could hardly be what they are. But with memory as its ever more complex constitutive structure - the structure that underlies learning, loving, and loss - the ‘living’ psyche derives its specificity from its own ‘dead’ traces. For De Man, the association between ‘death’ and ‘linguistic predicaments’ was perhaps even more central. He analyses the underlying reversibility of the two modes in a fashion which seems to bring the dead back to life and threatens to strike the living dead:

The fiction of an apostrophe to an absent, deceased, or voiceless entity ... posits the possibility of the latter’s reply and confers upon it the power of speech ... The dominant figure of the epitaphic or autobiographical discourse is, as we saw, the prosopopoeia, the fiction of the voice-from­-beyond-the-grave ... Such chiasmic figures, crossing the conditions of death and life with the attributes of speech and silence ... evoke the latent threat that inhabits prosopopoeia, namely that by making the death [sic] speak, the living are struck dumb, frozen in their own death (1984:75-76).

To read this poem is to be drawn into an experience of voice as irreducibly plural - past but present. The past tense opening of the poem freezes the reader in time - suspending him or her before the stoniness of the first words into the frozen world of the dead. The one who narrates is the one who dies, but also the one who is present, lives on:
Living on, the very progression that belongs, without belonging, to the progression of life and death. Living on is not the opposite of living, just as it is not identical with living. The relationship is different, different from being identical, from the difference of distinctions - undecided (Derrida, 1979:135).

This living on is phantom revenance (the one who lives on is always a ghost) that is noticeable and is represented from the past tense beginning, from the moment that the declarative, posthumous, testamentary character of the narrative comes to unfold. Yet, if the poem is a general statement about how everybody has to face death alone, one would rather expect the present tense rather than the past. If the speaker is both dead and alive, he contains in himself the double antithetical relation. He/she is hauntingly present as a voice from the dead (prosopopoeia).

This state of being at the uneasy border of live and death is also observed in the figures of half-aliveness that the use of personification provides. (Perhaps it is the other way round - that personification gives the speaker/poet conventionalized access to the boundary between life and death). In the first part of the poem, a state of transferred correspondence or equivalence is experienced between the narrator's inner nature and the surrounding outer nature "indlu" (house), "iziko" (fire-place). His thoughts and the house have an equal apprehension, the hyperbolic state of the house reflects the later terror felt by the narrator:

*Indlu yaqubuk' uhlevane,*  
*Iqhuqhiswa yilowo ngqoqwane*

(The house bristled with gooseflesh,  
It was caused to shiver by that frost)

This premonition is not at first conveyed to the speaker, in this sense the house acts as a deaf-mute "isiduli", a synonym for the condition of "uhlevane". Personification culminates in the appearance of the visitor of death, which is both a figure of self-knowledge, the figure of thought, but also of the element in thought that destroys all thought.
The visitor is a symbol of the unconscious itself. Nothing is communicated about whom the visitor truly is: one merely sees him/her affecting the actions of the speaker in the poem. Likewise, the content of the unconscious is, by definition, unknowable, but everything done is affected by it. One can only guess at the nature of this content by observing its effects, just as one can deduce the general nature of the visitor from the anxiety that he/she generates. Freud’s investigations resulted in confident assertions about the precise nature of the content of the unconscious, but Lacan is much more sceptical about the possibility of such certainties. Like the host, the pieces which might make sense of one’s inner mental universe have been purloined, and one has to learn to operate without them.

The narratorial voice of the poem is the voice of a speaker recounting something, remembering an event, knowing who he/she is and what he/she is talking about. The speaker and subject of the poem is merely identified as ‘I’ ("ngi-" or "nga-"). This ‘I’, which the speaker uses to refer to him/herself, is an objectification of him/herself, it is not itself equivalent to the speaker, who, being constituted by language, cannot unequivocally be signified by it. “Discourse of self, then, is a perpetually distanced speech, emptied of the real, elusive subject” (Said, 1985:299). The narrative voice is utterly neutral vocalizing “the work from the placeless place where the work is silent” (Said, 1985:299). The silent voice, then, is withdrawn into its voicelessness.

It is as if a force of desire is absent in the speaker, he/she shows no defensive resistance in his/her account. The speaker’s voice presents purely spiritual depletion, and this is most evident in his/her passive, emotionless voice which indicates subjection to forces beyond his/her control. He/she is speaking with the silence of the grave. This silent discourse of the speaker reveals a voice of solitary suffering, muted by being directly communicative. The first few lines of the poem still illustrates signs of strain in the speaker’s uneasiness, however, with an increase of violence all resistance is erased. The speaker merely echoes the visitor’s actions and his counteractions in a dragging, staccato-like delivery:

Wangen’ endlini ngingamvulelanga,
Wahlala nami ngendlovuyangena,
Walala nami ngendlovuyangena.

Wangihlek' usulu ngipaqupaquza
Wangihlek' inhlinini ngijilajileka,
Wangincish' umoya eqhosha,
Wangiqhoshela ngikweqa amhlophe.

(He entered the house, I did not open for him,  
He stayed with me by force,  
He slept with me by force.

He cynically laughed at me as I wriggled about  
He grinned at me as I tossed about,  
He stinted me in an air of arrogance,  
He boasted as I turned up the white of the eyes).

Most noticeably in the excerpt above is the monotonous repetition, which links again the 
view of the visitor as the unconscious, since Lacan described the unconscious as 
repetition:

The function of repetition is of immense importance ... the beginning self 
of the structure of the unconscious implicates repetition ... (Macksey &

Repetition is also the connection between negative judgements and the death instinct. In 
'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', the death instinct is used to explain the compulsion to 
repeat. Negative judgements thus come to be representative of a force, a desire for death 
(Freud, 1991:311). The fact that it is also associated with life gives it a transcendent 
quality which means it constitutes something more. At the same time it is also very 
opposite since, precisely because it is transcendent, it cannot be contained by the boundary 
lines which are established. Force, in short, threatens to dissolve the dividing lines that are 
necessary for literary criticism to exercise its function. Thus in desiring something more, 
it desires its own dissolution.

Although Derrida suggests that all humans have a 'desire of presence', this does not 
happen to the speaker; rather, "as the subject's relationship with its own death, the 
becoming is the constitution of subjectivity" (1976:69). Subjectivity is constituted by a
relationship to its own not-being, as the sign is constituted by its difference from that which it is not.

What remains of the speaker after the visit is what is most fictive and impossible, a spirit which is left behind, yet gone without trace, beyond knowledge. The speaker’s remains are as the burnt-out ashes in the fireplace: “Nomlilo eziko waqal’ ukulotha” (and the fire in the hearth died out). All of Derrida’s work can be read as an attempt to respond to this question of ‘remains’ - especially, but not only, to the question of “remains as a written thing” (1992:37). This is evident from the consistent deployment of a number of terms across his oeuvre, including trace, remainder (restance), remains (reste), cinders (cendre), ruins and ghosts. Derrida argues that the notion of remains calls to be thought in terms of what was never present. The trace, for example, is not the remains of something that was once present and might be rendered present once again: rather it is that which prevents any present, and any experience of presence, from being completely itself, from ever coinciding with itself. Remains are always and only the remains of remains, just as there are always and only traces of traces.

In the final analysis, in any reading regarding death, one is tempted to bequeath the subject as having died to bring about some greater revelation. But death by itself can bring no meaning forward nor provide any conclusion. It may be alluring to claim that the multiplicity of meaning and the alterities of human subjects subside only in death. But not even death brings an end to différance. Death is pure and simple elimination. Without trace or residue, the subject is burnt up, but is left no possibility for a Phoenix-type rising from the ashes. The poem only supplies an affirmation of a radical unconscious or essence, a ruinous sense of what is not known and of what one will never know.

5.3 Résumé

The psychoanalytical approach caused a Copernican revolution, a Freudian metaphor used to suggest a range of decentring processes presumably corresponding to the way in which
the theories of Copernicus rendered a belief in the earth as the centre of the universe invalid. In a similar manner, deconstruction decentred the text which is no longer seen as source and centre of its own meaning; instead, the meaning of the text is detached from a fixed centre and thus deprived of that fixity that comes from self-identity.

In this chapter I have sought to unfold some of the implications of the work of the deconstructionists in relation to the question of psychoanalysis, and to sketch a kind of re-thinking of the relations between these two theories and Msimang’s poems. As seen from the three selected poems and the texts of Lacan and Derrida, the core of deconstruction’s problematic is situated in the attitude towards life of man, as well as in the language certainty confronted with the biological involvement with death.

Deconstruction sees all poems as dealing as much with the nature of poetry as with their ostensible subject which are in all three cases, the relationship between the speaker/Self and the Other. In fact, this relationship could be seen to be a figurative commentary on poetic discourse. The transformation is only achieved, however, through an equivocal play of resemblance and difference: that is, through the deployment of a mobile army of tropes which follow the indeterminate path of differance.

It is evident that in the first two poems ‘Uze ungiphuzise amanzi’ and ‘Langa lamí’, the poet actively transformed received ideas. The way in which he uses the notion of likeness between man and woman as a basis of a fulfilling relationship and transforms it into a visionary, spiritual concept on the one hand, and a figure of signification on the other, while at the same time subtly exploring the psycho-sexual dynamics of love, lack and separation with its three levels of physical, emotional, and intellectual response, is thought-provoking.

In the allegory of death, ‘Leso sivakashi’, an equivocal richness is found, which resides in part in the fact that there is no conceptual expression without figure, and no intertwining of concept and figure without an implied narrative, in this case the story of the alien guest in the home. But in contrast to the action of the speaker who sleeps with the enduring
dead, deconstruction attempts to resist its own tendencies to come to rest in some sense of mastery over the work. It is always in movement, a going beyond which remains in place, as the parasite is outside the door but also always already within, the eeriest of guests (Miller in Rajnath, 1989:218).

In realising the work, criticism behaves in a manner akin to psychoanalysis; it makes manifest what is latent. However, many critics of psychoanalysis have stated that the interpretations produced are utterly predictable exercises comprising a veritable monotony of concepts. When images cease to surprise the reader, when the reader can expect what they mean and know what they intend, it is because the reader has a preconceived index of established meanings. For example, if long things are penises for Freudians, dark things are shadows for Jungians. So also, virtually every female figure and image could become symbols of the Great Mother. Images can be turned into predefined concepts and indicate one dominant hypothesis such as power, sexuality, anxiety, and so on. These factors were mentioned but resisted in the three poems read.

Deconstruction finds the fact that psychoanalytical critique has to rely on concepts in order to interpret or define images disconcerting. Even Freud’s free association culminates in an interpretation, a translation of images into concepts - into what the dream ‘really’ means. In deconstructive terms, analysts have, in effect, opposed the concept to the image and privileged the one over the other. They have regarded the concept as primary and originative, the image as secondary and derivative. Derrida would substitute hermeneutics for dissemination. The ‘sem’ in dissemination refers to semen, or seed - but, by means of an ingenious derivation on the part of Derrida, it also alludes to *semeion*, or sign, found in polysemy. Thus Derrida puns on the infinitely regressive dispersion of the sign or seed. Interpretation according to deconstruction is a sterile product, while dissemination is a fertile process, a proliferation of signs or seeds that regress to infinity. (A Freudian could make much of Derrida’s sexually punning terminology; ‘hymen’, ‘dissemination’, etc.).

Derrida advocates a regressively infinite, logically indeterminate member of possibilities which is remarkably similar to the trend in psychology proposed by Lacan.
complements Derrida's claim that the movement of différance "puts into question the authority of presence [and] its simple, symmetrical opposite, absence or lack" (1982:10). Consequently meaning can never be regarded as being simply 'there'. Lacan makes a similar point when he notes that the action of the signifying chain is such that "the ring of meaning flees from our grasp along the verbal thread" (1977:166). The poem is never quite established, partly because there will always be "differ[ences] about what precisely it is" (1977:166) and partly because there is an ambiguity in analysis itself. Being cast in the mould of deconstructive différance, and entwined in the threads of psychoanalysis, the poem presents an inexhaustible source of imaginative possibilities.
CHAPTER 6

THE WEB OF WORDS WOVEN IN THE POETRY OF MSIMANG

6.1 Introduction

The Preacher or Ecclesiastes once exclaimed that nothing new is brought forth in this world -

the thing that have been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun (Eccl. 6:12).

This perpetual re-expression is explicitly noticed in the relation between texts. For a long time, at least since Aristotle, criticism has recognised that each text implicates other texts. Aristotle saw poetry as an ‘imitation’ and by that he meant that poetry imitated any subject in words. In modern times imitation in poetry came to mean something quite different, that is the copying of a master. B.D. Ntuli aptly observed in the early 1970s: “the term ‘imitation’ is falling into disuse mainly because of its negative implication of the spurious. In practice, however, the principles of imitation are operative” (1973:11,12). The trend then was to make use of the term ‘influence’. In recent years, the idea of intertextuality has increasingly replaced that of influence as a way of describing the status of texts within a tradition. However, according to some critics, the new intertextuality has ended up doing very much what influence did.

As such, one may see intertextuality either as the enlargement of the idea of influence or as an entirely new concept to replace the outdated notion of influence. In the first-mentioned possibility, intertextuality might be taken as a general term, working out from the broad definition of influence to enclose unconsciously stimulated types of text configurations, modes of conception, styles, and other
previous restrictions and possibilities for the writer. In the latter case, intertextuality might be used to remove and replace the types of issues that influence addresses, and specifically its central concern with the author and the authorial intentions and skills (Clayton & Rothstein, 1991:3). In deconstruction, however, influence assigns intertextuality - the concept of intertextuality makes the source of influence into a text that is already within a chain of textual substitutions.

The concepts of host and parasite return with intertextuality as Miller describes a text as both host and parasite. The text is occupied by, as Miller would have it, “a long chain of parasitical presences” - allusions, imitations, echoes, plagiarisms, sources, archetypes and “guests, ghosts of previous texts” (Miller, 1989:225). The older texts are the foundation of the new text but also that which the new poem must eliminate by assimilating them, in order for the text to become a text in its own right:

Any poem, however, is parasitical in its turn on earlier poems, or it contains earlier poems within itself as enclosed parasites, in another version of the perpetual reversal of parasite and host. ... The new poem both needs the old texts and must destroy them. It is both parasitical on them, feeding ungraciously on their substance, and at the same time it is the sinister host which unmans them by inviting them into its home (Miller, 1989:225).

All these texts form links in the chain of intertextuality, and every link played and still plays the same role, that of - in Miller’s words - “host and parasite, in relation to its predecessors” (1989:225). Thus from the Old to the New Testament, from Genesis to Revelation, to Dante, to Spenser, to Milton, to Shakespeare and Wordsworth - from izingane kwane (folktales) to izibongo (praise poetry), to Vilakazi, to Ntuli, the chain leads ultimately to Msimang. In this chapter, intertextuality will be discussed in order to indicate the importance it has on the composition of Msimang’s poetry.
6.2 Texts and intertexts in Msimang’s poetry

Intertextuality is an ambiguous term which has undergone a continual and cumulative development and which still causes considerable controversy in literary research. Although Julia Kristeva is sometimes credited with being the inventor of the term, the idea of intertextuality is not new. Kristeva herself awards Mikhail Bakhtin the distinction of having 'introduced' the concept (not the neologism), but the notion of intertextuality itself emerges from the cross-fertilization among several major European intellectual movements during the 1960s and 1970s, including Russian formalism, structural linguistics, psychoanalysis, Marxism, and deconstruction. Yet, it is possible to argue that any system carries with it the idea that the individual text is read in a manner determined by its relations with other texts. Furthermore, commentaries on literary works from the earliest times have also generally involved cross-references to other texts which have served as models or contrasts.

Expounding on the concept of intertextuality, Leon Roudiez claims that the term has been generally misunderstood and abused. According to him, intertextuality has nothing to do with matters of influence of one writer upon another, or with the sources of a literary work,

it does, on the other hand, involve the components of a textual system such as the novel, for instance. It is defined in [Kristeva’s] *La Revolution du Language Poetique* as the transposition of one or more systems of signs into one another, accompanied by a new articulation of the enunciative and denotative position (Roudiez in Kristeva 1980:15).

One of the contributing factors which leads to the misunderstanding of intertextuality is that the term 'intertext' enjoys no single, agreed meaning in current usage and the many definitions assigned to it. Kristeva views the text as a complex of intertexts - it is produced by the transformation of various signifying systems into language. She presents several explications for this notion:
a permutation of texts, an intertextuality: in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another (1980:36).

any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another (1980:66).

... [view] writing as a reading of the anterior literary corpus and the text as an absorption of and a reply to another text (1980:69).

The one who writes is the same as the one who reads. Since his interlocutor is a text, he himself is no more than a text rereading itself as it rewrites itself. The dialogical structure, therefore, appears only in the light of the text elaborating itself as ambivalent in relation to another text (1980:86-87).

Since intertextuality has too many operative definitions to fix on one only, one has to start with the generalization that intertextuality has to do with an impersonal field of crossing texts. The broadest definition of intertextuality allows for the text to be generated by various systems in order to produce a multiplicity of sources. The text itself points to objects, events, memories, and representations as stimuli to the process of writing. The textual fragments that are introduced and integrated into the central text never exist only as fragments; they are pieces of a whole, and it is consequently the entire world from which they have been sifted that enters the text along with the fragments.

Intertextuality is fundamentally an attempt to conceive - or redefine - the concept of the 'text' dynamically, as an ongoing operation (what Derrida calls 'structuration') involving the continual play of referentiality between and within texts. This means that intertextuality defines a text as always in process, continually changing its shape. In this view, a text is a fabric simultaneously being woven and unwoven, not made up uniformly but by the traces of other texts. At an extreme, this definition projects all texts as further divisible into other texts, and these into yet other texts (or signifiers), ad infinitum.
This concept of intertextual weaving describes the relationship between particular texts as well as the relationship of literary texts to the diffuse cultural network. Thus, in Culler's opinion, it articulates both the weak and strong forms of intertextuality. He declares that these two understandings of intertextuality are, at one extreme, the precise intertextuality of reference to "a single anterior action which serves as origin and moment of plenitude" (Culler, 1981:110) - reference to some preceding text which, at the utmost, becomes the influence study of traditional intertextual readings. Still others spring the text free of its referential bounds, reading between the lines. This is an intertextuality of discourse, an intertextuality of the diacritical generation of signification in the Saussurean tradition.

It is from this tradition that one views intertextuality as seen in Derrida’s formulation of *differance* (deferment and different). However, if one accepts from the definition that the signifier occurs never simultaneously with the signified, then the formal analysis of the structures of a text can never be adequate to its virtual significations. The signified, or the final meaning of the text, will remain forever deferred by this *differance* within the sign itself. What Derrida’s deconstruction amounts to, then, is a radical theory of the necessary intertextuality of all discourse. Every text, every utterance, is an "interweaving" or a "textile" of signifiers whose signifieds are by definition intertextually determined by other discourses (1981a:26). Derrida elaborates in an interview conducted with Kristeva:

> no element can function as a sign without referring to another element which itself is not simply present. This interweaving results in each "element" ... being constituted on the basis of the trace within it of other elements of the chain or system. This interweaving, this textile, is the text produced only in the transformation of another text. Nothing, ... is anywhere ever simply present or absent. There are only, everywhere, differences and traces of traces (Clayton & Rothstein, 1991:62).

For Derrida, every script is a script of another script. Each utterance holds the trace of another utterance; everything written carries the mark of a gap with something else that is, or was, written. Even the ultimate signifier itself is a text of another.
text. In a sense, all writing is a collage of other writing, of language, and of tradition. It follows that each interpretation of a text is thus merely a temporary and partial “supplement”, since the signifiers of a text bear only the “traces” of their multiple signifieds. At the same time, each supplementation of a text has itself already been contaminated by previous discourses on that text and by other, presuppositionally related texts. In short, the play of différence in the sign ruptures the very project of intertextuality, because the text itself is an unstable process of infinite intertextual transformations. Intertextuality turns out to be a mise-en-abîme, an abyss of infinite semiosis.

Derrida continually addresses this procedure of textualization throughout his work. Textualization - including the appropriations of the intertextual - is always violent, in a violence that Jacques Lacan figures as “murder” (1977:104). Yet such violence, Derrida argues, responds to an even greater violence in a kind of panic rush to meaning. Derrida (1978:130) would rather advocate the choice of intertextuality over discourse without discursive (meaningful) contexts, a discourse of the moment.

Derrida’s much quoted statement that “there is nothing outside the text” (1976:158), contains an obvious paradox. His own project, as Spivak points out, is to open “the textuality of a text” (1976:x1ix) and thereby link it to texts in general. This assertion has to be read in the light of his attack on logocentrism - the text cannot be assigned a meaning that is underwritten by an origin, a presence, which resides in self-validating isolation beyond the confines of the text:

A text is henceforth no longer a finished corpus of writing, some content enclosed in a book or its margins, but a differential network, a fabric of traces referring endlessly to something other than itself, to other differential traces. Thus the text overruns all the limits assigned to it so far (not submerging or drowning them in an undifferentiated homogeneity, but rather making them more complex, dividing and multiplying strokes and lines) - all the limits, everything that was to be set up in opposition to writing (speech, life, the world, the real, history, and what not, every field of reference - to body or mind, conscious or unconscious, politics,
Although Derrida endorses the idea of not depending too much on reference, he acknowledges that presence is always representation. In Derridean terms, there is no getting around the inscriptions of writing and their intertextual sedimentations.

Derrida has influenced Roland Barthes to explore the feasibility of semiotics in literary analysis. Like Derrida, Barthes, too, denies the possibility of reference to a reality beyond the intertextual network. Literature refers "not from a language to a referent but from one code to another" (1974:55). Barthes also adopted Kristeva's notion of the intertext, and seems partly in agreement with her. But his usage of the term seems significantly more diffuse and all-embracing than Kristeva's. According to him, any text is an intertext or plural text:

Any text is a new tissue of past citations. Bits of code, formulae, rhythmic models, fragments of social languages, etc. pass into the text and are redistributed within it, for there is always language before and around the text. Intertextuality, the condition of any text whatsoever, cannot, of course, be reduced to a problem of sources or influences; the intertext is a general field of anonymous formulae whose origin can scarcely ever be located; of unconscious or automatic quotations, given without question-marks (1981:39).

As archetype for the deconstructive path of *aporia* and the reader's play, Barthes detects the fissure in the apparent closure of the text - the irretrievable and permanent cleavage between sign and meaning - and reveals the chain of substitutions that characterizes the text and links it to all other texts. According to Barthes, the text "practices the infinite deferral of the signified [it] is dilatory; its field is that of the signifier" (Harari, 1979:76). It is, however, made clear that "the signifier's infinitude does not refer back to some idea of the ineffable (of an unnameable signified) but to the idea of play" (Harari, 1979:76). The result is that the

engendering of the perpetual signifier within the field of the text should not be identified with an organic process of maturation or a hermeneutic process of deepening, but rather with a serial movement
of dislocations, overlappings, and variations. The logic that governs
the text is not comprehensive (seeking to define 'what the work
means') but metonymic; and the activity of associations, contiguities,
and cross-references coincides with a liberation of symbolic energy
... In this way the text is restored to language: like language, it is
structured but decentred, without closure (Harari, 1979:76).

Barthes insisted on a text that achieves an irreducible plurality of meaning: "The text
is not coexistence of meanings but passage, traversal; thus it answers not to an
interpretation, liberal though it may be, but to an explosion, a dissemination" and "it
can be itself only in its difference" (Harari, 1979:76-77). Barthes demonstrated that,
in order to appreciate the ramifications of a plural literary text, a "semiotics of
nuances" must be developed that will unlock univocal interpretations of a text,
explode its meanings, and map out the organization of its literary space.

Barthes's vision of intertextuality also highlights the frequent anonymity of the
'sources' of intertextual quotations. The text is traversed by language "in a vast
stereophony" (Harari, 1979:77) where "the citations which go to make up a text are
anonymous, untraceable, and yet already read" (Barthes, 1977:160). The "already
read" in Barthes encompasses more than the idea that everyone possesses
conventional knowledge whose sources one cannot recall. It extends toward a
notion of the reader as constituted by the texts of its culture, the subject as the
already read. Barthes states: "This 'I' which approaches the text is already itself a
plurality of other texts, of codes which are infinite or, more precisely, lost"
(1974:10). The idea of self-expression is meaningless when the 'self' in question is
itself only 'a ready-formed dictionary'.

Barthes announces the death of the author, which is a rhetorical way of asserting the
independence of the literary text and its immunity to the possibility of being unified
or limited by any notion of what the author might have intended, or 'crafted' into the
work. He declares the text independent - it is not determined by intention or
context. Barthes' author is stripped of all metaphysical status and reduced to a
location (a cross-road), where language, that infinite storehouse of citations, repetitions, echoes and references, crosses and re-crosses (1977:142). All the author can do is to imitate, re-mix, and fabricate "a tissue of quotations drawn from the unnumberable centres of culture" (1977:142). Barthes replaces the author by a "scriptor" (1977:146) who is merely the owner of an immense dictionary (1977:146). The scriptor is a socialized figure because the heterogeneous intertext constitutes his medium: "It is language which speaks, not the author" (1977:143).

And elsewhere in the same essay, he asserts that

... by refusing to assign a 'secret', an ultimate meaning, to the text (and to the world as text), literature liberates what may be called an anti-theological activity, an activity that is truly revolutionary since to refuse to fix meaning is, in the end, to refuse God and his hypostasis - reason, science, law (1977:147).

Deconstructive skepticism puts in question the unity, meaning, coherence of texts which are all tropes of both theology and epistemology. Barthes advances a theory of intertextuality that depends entirely on the reader as the organizing centre of interpretation:

A text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focussed and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author. The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination. Yet this destination cannot any longer be personal: the reader is without history, biography, psychology; he is simply that someone who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted (1977:148).

Readers are free to open and close the text's signifying process without respect for the signified. They are free to connect the text with systems of meaning and ignore the author's 'intention'. In 'Pleasure of the Text' (1975), Barthes explores this reckless behaviour of the reader. He begins by distinguishing between the two senses of pleasure - pleasure and bliss. Within pleasure there is bliss (jouissance) and its diluted form, pleasure. The general pleasure of the text is whatever exceeds
a single transparent meaning. As one reads, one sees a connection, an echo, or a reference, and this disruption of the text’s innocent, linear, flow gives pleasure. The reader is thus free to enter the text from any direction, there is no correct route:

this ideal text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; it has no beginning; ... we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one; the codes it mobilizes extend as far as the eye can reach (Selden, 1988a:77).

As the reader adopts different viewpoints, the text’s meaning is produced in a multitude of fragments which have no inherent unity. Instead, mutations of prior identities succeed one another as they are presented to readers of different generations. Those readers then unravel the anomalies, as one would unravel an onion with many surfaces and no kernel - each surface is a fragment of that onion and constitutes a viable reading.

Still, deconstruction denies the independent or substantial existence of the text - they doubt or deny that the text in or of itself has presence. The American deconstructionist Harold Bloom also subscribes to this assumption, but with the regret of a disappointed believer in presence:

The sad truth is that poems don’t have presence, unity, form, or meaning. Presence is a faith, unity is a mistake or even a lie, form is metaphor, and meaning is an arbitrary and now repetitious metaphysics. What then does a poem possess or create? Alas, a poem has nothing, and creates nothing (1975a:122).

Similar to Barthes and Derrida, Bloom’s version of influence dismisses nonliterary references just as decisively. However, Bloom’s critical method is not that of Derrida or de Man. Though often categorized as a full-blooded deconstructor, Bloom sees meaning as coming from outside the text, rather than, as deconstructors see it, solely from within it. He also does not perform deconstructive readings and he attacks the French post-structuralists. Nevertheless, certain issues that he raises, usually sporadically, are those advanced by deconstruction, particularly as these
concern the self and creativity. For example, to interpret a poem, according to Bloom, is not to elucidate its subject, not to discuss what the work is about, but to look at its connections with other poems:

To study what poems are about is to interpret their outside relationships ... To interpret a poem, necessarily you interpret its difference from other poems (1975a:75).

Though Bloom denies that poetry is a source of knowledge, truth or faith, he does not declare himself a skeptic in either the epistemological or the theological sense. Bloom cultivates illusions without illusion:

Where the precursor was, there the *ephebe* [new or latecomer poet] shall be, but by the discontinuous mode of emptying the precursor of his divinity, while appearing to empty himself of his own (1973:91).

Bloom develops a theory both of intertextuality and of indeterminacy that relies upon the consideration of the poem as human action. Intertextuality and indeterminacy become psycho-linguistic terms, attributes of the dynamics of human interaction through language, rather than attributes of language, or of a single text, itself:

The meaning of poem can only be another poem (1973:94).

Influence, as I conceive it, means that there are no texts, but only relationships between texts (1975a:3).

Literature, for Bloom, is generated through critical influence, by a writer's creative revision of his or her predecessors' works. Such revision Bloom calls 'misreading', noting that its purpose is to clear "imaginative space" so that the newcomer author will have room to assert his or her originality (Bloom, 1973:5). The young artist creates his or her work by attempting to improve upon, to rewrite in fresh and original terms, themes and images of past greats. A new poet feels the anxiety of his coming afterward, after important things have been said, and this evokes his rebellion "against being spoken to by a dead man (the precursor) outrageously more
alive than himself" (1975a: 19), more alive because recognition and homage through historical time bequeath a form of immortality, which the new poet may crave but cannot count on.

Bloom calls this concept the anxiety of influence which sees the struggle for identity by each generation of poets, under the ‘threat’ of the greatness of its predecessors, as an enactment of the Oedipus complex. Authors are cast in the Freudian role of ambitious sons who anxiously desire to eliminate the powerful, oppressive, and seductive presence of their literary fathers in order to establish their own identities and dominance. Bloom expresses this ambiguity in terms that are at once Oedipal and theological: “Satan is the modern poet, while God is his dead but still embarrassingly potent and present ancestor, or rather ancestral poet” (1973:20).

Bloom’s theory tries to map out the way the patterns of imagery in any strong poem express the psychological defences and rhetorical tropes of the poet against the influence of a precursor’s poem. For example, when a reader encounters imagery of inside and outside in the poem, he or she is often also confronting the trope of metaphor and, at the same time and in the same place, so to speak, uncovering a moment of psychological sublimation on the part of the poet.

It is important to note that in Bloom’s view the poet, which is the term he uses for all types of writers, need not actually have read the precursor text by which his or her work is influenced. A poem is a response to some “central poem by an indubitable precursor, even if the ephebe never read that poem” (1973:70). This is because, as Peter de Bolla explains, the Bloomian text functions as if it were the author’s conscious revision of another text, even if such conscious intent does not exist. Bloom, in effect, posits two different notions of ‘poet’. It is the poet as a voice incarnated in the text that may always be seen as jealously responding to the voice in some prior text. The poet as a living human being, who creates the textual voice, may or may not consciously experience the anxiety of influence exemplified
by the poet incarnated in his or her text (De Bolla, 1988:18-20).

Finally, Bloom argues that most ‘so-called accurate’ interpretations of poetry are worse than mistakes, and suggests that “perhaps there are only more or less creative or interesting misreadings”, because every reading is necessarily a *clinamen* (Bloom’s term for a poetic misreading). There are no interpretations, only misinterpretations, and true “criticism is the art of knowing the hidden roads that go from poem to poem” (1973:96).

In the discussion that follows, Msimang’s use of intertextuality (conscious or unconscious) is essential to an understanding of the deconstructive and reconstructive processes that govern his texts. This is because intertextuality functions as a mechanism for challenging and subverting the literary ideologies that dominate the writing, reading and criticism of most contemporary fiction. In determining the connections the intertextual reader draws among texts, one does not want to give a value judgement concerning either the borrowed or alluded to material of the poet’s work. The task simply will be to indicate a diffuse penetration of his texts by certain memories, echoes, transformations of other texts.

Msimang is furthermore an intelligent writer who seeks to appropriate his antecedent texts so fully that they appear as his own products, while demanding a thorough rearrangement of the source material. As such, it is sometimes very difficult to detect the traces of other texts present in his poems. The most obvious way of determining intertextuality is of course by comparing two or more texts with one another, or even stanzas, phrases or lines with each other. The most recognizable traces are of course direct borrowing (plagiarism) of another author’s work. T.S. Eliot bluntly states that “minor poets borrow, major poets steal” (Plottel, 1978:xvi) while Paul Valéry justifies literary borrowings more subtly as follows:

> Plagiarism is as natural to literature as the eating of tame sheep is to
a lion. ... writers feed on other writers and that strong writers [lions] are those willing and able to digest fully the sheepish literary flock around them. Writers read and borrow from their readings when they write (Plottel, 1978:xvi).

The reader of the poetic text is the person who determines the extent of intertextual influences in the specific work. This is a rather subjective matter, as Jabbi so appropriately remarks: "influence itself is generally a matter of degree and its assessment also depends upon personal taste, a thing which enjoys a proverbial privilege of non disputandum" (1987:109). The itinerary of the reader, which is shaped by individual interests and experiences (such as conscious and unconscious desires, literary training, religious background, nationality, familiarity with popular culture, class, gender, race, world-historical events, etc.), determines the direction of the relation between text and intertexts. This direction can change over time as the reader develops new interests and accumulates further experiences.

As will be witnessed in Msimang's poetry, every one of his texts is constituted by intertextuality because the word stock, the grammar and the syntax of language embody innumerable sources and influences. As such, the notion of a unified work is inconceivable in that all his texts are unavoidably the production of his language, which is always conditioned by a chain of predecessors:

We combine words, combined a thousand times before. ... Our whole style of expression and sentiment is infected with the tritest plagiarisms. Our words are dead, our thoughts are cold and borrowed (Rhys, 1971:117).

It is evidently impossible to track down every single source and influence in Msimang's works to their precise points of origin, nor is it the objective of this chapter to do so. Not only is the actual place of inception of any word, concept, idea or myth indeterminate, but space and time do not allow for this venture as well. Accordingly, this exercise will merely demonstrate a fraction of the exploratory possibilities of Msimang's poetry. A given text repeats, contains and refers to other texts which in turn refer to other texts ad infinitum. A deconstructive reading thus
searches the text in order to find the points at which the latter's constitutive codes 'undo' themselves. It entails a reorganization of the corpus of texts that preceded the text's appearance, whereby a modification is created in the manner in which these texts are read. Thus, the critical concepts of 'origin' and 'unity' are undermined by the inescapable operations of intertextuality as well as by the omnipresent forces of deconstructive differance.

The cradle of modern Zulu poetry is traditional praise poetry. These indigenous oral traditions were and still are a great source of inspiration. Before the advent of writing, Zulu poetry was considered communal possession. A brotherly spirit of cooperation existed, where one could leave out any undesirable element in a praise, or one could borrow from another without acknowledging the source - indeed, this was seen as an implicit compliment. The liberal outlook towards borrowing inherited from the traditional poets has influenced the modern Zulu poets, who then take excerpts from well-known izibongo, usually omitting quotation marks. Traditional poetry has become to them a national legacy from which anyone can freely draw whatever will suit his/her composition.

The vitality of the Zulu oral tradition in all respects remains the major Zulu artistic achievement. The early writers recognized this, and eagerly sought to preserve it. Later writers were heavily influenced by the patterns and these images of the oral tradition. Mzamane maintains that the distinction between traditional oral modes and Western literary forms is not clearly demarcated nowadays and that "black writers often operate, unconsciously most of the time, within both traditions" (1984:147). This can clearly be seen in Msimang's poetry, for when he composes written poetry, he unconsciously utilizes a pre-knowledge of izibongo in composing new, transformed lines.

Msimang's designs are borrowed from a wide range of objects, but mostly from izibongo and other traditional oral forms such as folktales, fables, myths, legends,
etc. In both poetry collections of Msimang, it is interesting to note that the amount of his praise poetry exceeds the other types of poems by far. In *Iziziba ZoThukela* the following titles address praises - 'Ku-D.B.Z. Ntuli', 'Umntwana wakwaPhindangene', and 'Nge-UNISA eminyakeni elikhulu'. In *UNodumelezi KaMenzi* one encounters more: 'Inyosi yakwaGwegwazangene', 'Onoziqu bakwa-UNISA', 'UBhambatha KaMakhwatha', 'KuMzilikazi', 'Intonga yoSindiso', 'Inkondlo yezinggaabalutho' and even 'UShaka kaSenzangakhona' which the poet describes as an epic, but which contains praises as well.

Msimang's choice of linguistic features manifests itself at various levels such as in the syntax, semantics and phonology. All these aspects may be borrowed from other sources, however in this chapter only the lexical level - the poet's choice and assortment of words will be examined. The patterning of imagery by means of repetition, the structure and development of an argument through praises and the balance of such images will not be considered.

Repetition, resulting in a variety of parallelistic structures, is a salient feature of African oral tradition. As can be expected, Msimang makes use of this stylistic device quite often to foreground what he intends to emphasize in his message or theme:

*Kunamhla lokhu ningikhumbuz' izingqalabutho;*
*Ningikhumbuz' oLangalibalele benoVilakazi,*
*Ningikhumbuz' oJabavu kumaXhosa;*
*Ningikhumbuz' oMofokeng kubaShweshwe;*
*Ningikhumbuz' oKhama noMoloto kubeTswana;*
*Abokhel' ubhaqa basikhanyisela. (Onoziqu bakwa-UNISA)*

(On this day, you remind me of the pioneers; You remind me of Langalibalele and Vilakazi, You remind me of Jabavu among the Xhosa; You remind me of Mofokeng among the Shoeshoe people; You remind me of Khama and Moloto among the Tswana; They who lit the torch and enlightened us.) (1990:43)

As can be ascertained from the excerpt above, each name listed comprises a history
of its own which again can be alluded to. This regression repeats endlessly. However, by isolating a familiar fixed image or even an idea or motif associated with praise poetry or a certain poet in Msimang’s work, one can analyse the extent of intertextuality in his poems. It must furthermore also be acknowledged that many ideas are universal. Certain themes, like death is common and a poet, like Msimang, may create this type of theme in accordance with his own particular vision, which could be completely different from those in his source. Or Msimang may adapt a borrowed element to the requirements of a specific context in his own work. Again, the extent of adaptation or the exact role played by various fragments of other literary texts integrated in his work will not be assessed, only the various types of intertexts will be touched on.

There are certain traditional symbols which are repeated throughout the history of praise poetry in Zulu as well as in other cultures. Such traditional symbols are the sun, for example. Msimang also makes extensive use of this image in his poetry:

_{Ilanga elikhanye eLangeni_} 
(The sun that shone at Langeni) 
_{(UShaka kaSenzangakhona)_} 
(1990:54)

_{Ulang’ eliphume linsizwa,_
_Lithe liphezulu lansasa_} 
(Sun that came forth shining brightly,
And when it was high it spread out its rays) 
_{(Senzangakhona, Shaka)_
(Nyembezi, 1968:12, 21;
Cope, 1968:77)_}

In praising Inkosi Buthelezi in one of his poems, Msimang likens his eyes to sunrays, as in the following adapted lines from Dinuzulu’s praises:

_{Libhekise amehlo eMpumalanga,_
Abesehenaba okwemisebe yelanga_} 
(It turned the eyes towards the east,
They pierced like the rays of the sun) 
_{(Umntwana wakwaPhindangene)_} 
(1980:34)

_{Ufana nemisebe yelanga._
..._} 
_{Uliso lifana nonyazi lwenzulu_} 
(Dinuzulu)
(He is like the rays of the sun. 
Eye that is like lightning). (Nyembezi, 1984:107)

Someone who crosses a river also seems like a traditional universal symbol, for this concept also is found in early Greek mythology as well as other cultures:

Mweli weliphesheya, Owel’ uphindelela (Umntwana wakwaPhindangene) 
(Crosser of the other side, who crosses and repeats again and again) (1980:34)

Mwelela kweliphesheya 
(He who crossed over to the other side) (Langalibalele) (Cope, 1968:135)

Umwelela kweliphesheya 
(He who crosses over to the other side) (Ndlela kaSompisi) (Cope, 1968:187)

Msimang’s poetry further abounds with local symbolism, used by the Zulus specifically, but also sometimes found in other African cultures. The most prominent image of the poem ‘Amadwal’ aseMhlathuze’ is the treacherous flagstones on which one could slip and fall:

Madwala abushelelezi aseMhlathuze, Akubambeleli nto kini niyashelelela. (Slippery flagstones of the Mhlathuze, Nothing grips on you, you are slippery.) (1980:15)

Umzila ungushishiliza, ngokubeshelelisa Ngokushelelisa oNomavila noBhocobala (Path, you are slippery, to make them skid To cause those Lazybones and Exhausted to slide down) (1980:2)

Izibuko likaNdaba, Elimadwal’ abushelezi (Ford of Ndaba, which has slippery flagstones) (Dingane) (Nyembezi, 1984:48)

Izibuk’ elimadwal’ abushelezi (Ford with slippery flagstones) (Zwide, Khondlo) (Cope, 1968:129, 141)
Ntuli (1973:91) observes that the same image is used by other African peoples, such as the Batswana as well, e.g.

\[
Pilane ketlapa lantswépilwane, \hspace{1cm} \text{(Pilane is a rock of ironstone,)} \\
Ketlapa lelebotshélédi \hspace{1cm} \text{(He is a slippery rock)}
\]

Similar to the traditional Zulu poets, Msimang also draws his ideas and images from diverse natural phenomena and other related fields based on his expansive knowledge of Zulu culture. Livestock, especially cattle, is very important to the traditional Zulu existence, and to be praised as one is an accomplishment:

\[
Inkom' ekhal' eSangoyana \\
Yakhal' umlomo wayo wabhoboz' izulu \hspace{1cm} \text{(Mnkabayi)} \\
\text{(Beast that lows on Sangoyana,)} \\
\text{It lowed and its mouth [voice] pierced the sky)} \hspace{1cm} \text{(Cope, 1968:173)}
\]

This pattern is also repeated in Shaka's praises (Nyembezi, 1984:20) and Dingane's praises (Nyembezi, 1984:47). Msimang utilizes the same pattern to praise Buthelezi in his poem 'Umntwana wakwaPhindangene':

\[
UNdaba yenziwe yinkomo yasoSuthu \\
Yon' ekhal' iphezulu kwaDlamahlahla \\
Umlomo yawubhekisa kithi kwaShenge \hspace{1cm} \text{(1980:34)} \\
\text{(Ndaba, the beast of the royal house of Suthu)} \\
\text{He who lows above at Dlamahlahla} \\
\text{It turned its mouth [voice] towards us at Shenge)}
\]

Shaka is praised as a calf, a form which recurs in almost every other praise poem:

\[
Ithol' elinsizwa likaNandi \hspace{1cm} \text{(UShaka kaSenzangakhona)} \\
\text{(Powerful calf of Nandi)} \hspace{1cm} \text{(1990:62)}
\]

\[
Ithol' elinsizwa lakokəMbenəgi \hspace{1cm} \text{(Shaka)} \\
\text{(Powerful calf of the daughter of Mbengi)} \hspace{1cm} \text{(Cope, 1968:115)}
\]

Although only royalty is referred to as "thole" or "inkonyane", one finds the same
praise for Sir Theophilus Shepstone (Cope, 1968:195). This praise is very popular and is also found in Dingane and Dinuzulu’s praises (Nyembezi, 1984:50, 105). In the poem ‘KuD.B.Z. Ntuli’, the poet employs the techniques of this traditional praise in commending Ntuli for his achievements in education:

\[
\text{Umahlats’ ebuhleni njengethole,} \\
kodwa wena uhlabana ngosiba. \\
(\text{He who is always wounded in the face like a suckling calf, but you fight bravely with a pen.})
\]

\[
\text{Umahlats’webuhleni njengethole} \quad \text{(Ndlela kaSompisi wakwaNtuli)} \\
(\text{He who is always wounded in the face like a prince}) \quad \text{(Cope, 1968:187)}
\]

The simile literally means ‘like a calf’, but according to Cope (1968:187) a member of the Zulu royal family must be addressed as \textit{mntwana} (child, i.e. prince). Other examples of the beast imagery are:

\[
\text{Iguqa elikhonye lingakamili nampondo} \\
... \\
\text{Ivukan’ elithe ukusuka langqabashiya} \\
... \\
\text{Inkunz’ ehlab’ usentu phakathi eMalanihili} \\
... \\
\text{Uvava lwenkunzi yakith’ eMvoti} \\
\text{Uvava olubilo layisilikithi} \\
\text{Uvava olulunda lingangentaba} \quad \text{(UBhambatha kaMakhwatha)} \\
(\text{The bull calf which bellowed before it had horns}) \quad \text{(1990:46, 47)} \\
... \\
\text{The bullock which started to frolic about early} \\
... \\
\text{The bull which tossed up the soil inside Mariannhill} \\
... \\
\text{The upright-pointed horned bull of our place at Mvoti} \\
\text{The upright-pointed horned bull with a dewlep like a plume} \\
\text{The upright-pointed horned bull with a hunch as big as a mountain)}
\]

The poet compares B.W. Vilakazi to a sharp upright-pointed, well-experienced bull by means of a set of terms concerning a bull at different stages of its development. The bull is used by the Zulu as a symbol of manhood, virility, achievement and courage. Bulls never accept defeat. This is a common motif in praise poetry as seen
in the following praises:

Inkunzi yakith’ eMkhontweni
...
Wena nkonyane kaPhunga noMageba.
Inkunz’ ebomvu kaShaka
(Our bull at Mkhontweni
...
You calf of Phunga and Mageba.
Red bull of Shaka) (Dinuzulu)

Descriptive praise poetry imagery is extremely popular amongst all Zulu poets and Msimang is no exception. Shaka’s most memorable praise has also found its trace into Msimang’s poetry, first as an adapted version and secondly as a direct quote:

Lokhu ubeseyindlondlo,
Yebo, esedlondlobele
(Umntwana wakwaPhindangene)
(Since you were a horned viper,
Yes, he was in a great rage) (1980:38)

“Udlondlwane’ oluva lublezi
Oluya ludlondlobele.”
(UShaka kaSenzangakhona)
(The young viper who grows as it sits
who is always in a great rage) (1990:54)

Udlondlwane luya lublezi,
Luya ludlondlobele
(Shaka)
(The young viper grows as it sits,
Always in a great rage) (Cope, 1968:97)

The image of “ingqwayingqwayi” or “ingqungqulu” (bateleur eagle) from Dinuzulu’s praises is adapted in the following lines of Msimang:

Namhla lokhu useyingqwayingqwayi
Ngokugoq’ amaphikophezu kweMuckleneuk (NgeUnisa eminyakeni elikhulu)
(Today since you are an eagle
By gathering your wings above the place of Muckleneuk) (1980:3)

Ingqwayingqwayi yaseGcotsheni,
Ebhul’ amaphikw’ ibhek’ eMpumalanga (KuD.B.Z. Ntuli)
(Bateleur eagle of Gcotsheni, which flaps its wings flying towards the East) (1980:9)

*Ingqungqu' ekoq' amaphiko*

(Bateleur eagle gathering its wings) (Dinuzulu)

*Ingqwayingqwayi ebomvu nezinyawo*

(Red bateleur eagle with red feet) (Nyembezi, 1984:109)

*La kuqhwakel' ingqwayingqway' uDokhi*

(Where the eagle Doke sits up)

Kwabandlebe zikhany' ilanga

(Among those whose ears shine in the sun [Whites]) (1990:48)

The last line again alludes to a praise given to Mbuyazi:

*Umhlophe wakithi ondlebe zikhany' ilanga*

(Our white man whose ears shine in the sun) (Henry Fynn, 1968:193)

The references to bird imagery continues:

*Ukhoz' olubhul' amaphikw' eKapa*

(Black Mountain eagle which flaps its wings in the Cape) (1980:2)

*Lukhozi lukaNdab' olumaphikw' abanzi*

(Black Mountain eagle of Ndaba with wide wings) (Nyembezi, 1984:66)

Water imagery has frequently been applied to Dingane in other versions of his *izibongo*, which Msimang again utilized in his poem *'Iziziba zoThukela'*

*Ezizibeni ezizonzobele*

(At the pools which grew overpowering) (Dingane)

*Isizib' esinzonzo, sizonzobele*

(Silent pools, they grew overpowering) (Dingane)

*Ziziba ezizonzobele*

(Zolani ningisondezele.

(Pools which grew overpowering

Become still and bring [it] close to me.) (Isiziba zoThukela) (1980:64)
The analogy of an axe in Shaka’s praises not only describes his strength and violence, but also refers to his sharp tongue. Shaka was outspoken and quick-witted, more so than any leader before or after him:

\[
\text{WeLembe eleq’ amanye} \\
\text{Alembe ngokukhalipha} \\
(You Axe that surpasses other Axes in sharpness) \\
(UShaka kaSenzangakhona) \\
\text{(1990:53)}
\]

\[
\text{Ilembe’ eleq’ amANY’ amalembe ngokukhalipha} \ (\text{Shaka}) \\
(\text{Axe that surpasses other axes in sharpness}) \ (\text{Cope, 1968:89})
\]

In ‘Umntwana wakwaPhindangene’, Msimang uses a unique image found in izibongo of Dingane:

\[
\text{Uhlunguhlungu olubabayo,} \\
\text{Balulume baluphimis’ okwesibhaha} \\
(\text{Peppery shrub which is bitter, They bite it and spit it out like the fever-tree bark}) \\
\text{(1980:37)}
\]

\[
\text{Indiha lebabayo enjengesibhaha,} \\
\text{sona sibaba kuMahashanga} \\
(\text{The bitter herb that is like the fever-tree bark, which is biting to the Mahashanga}) \\
\text{(Nyembezi, 1984:49)}
\]

Buthelezi is described as a peppery shrub “uhlunguhlungu” as well as an “isibhaha” whose very hot and ginger-like root and bark is used for medicinal purposes, as a remedy for malaria. This reflection captures both the benefit and the diabolic in one phrase. This image also describes a domineering, fiery-tempered person, which is a further indirect allusion to Buthelezi’s personality.

In ‘Ubani omkhulu’, again a traditional personification of a rushing wind:

\[
\text{Ekhethelwa uSivunguvungu benoSiphepho} \ (1980:45) \\
(\text{For whom Gailwind and Stormwind are dancing})
\]

\[
\text{Usiphepho-shunguza ngaseMkhandlwini} \ (\text{Shaka})
\]
Direct quotes also occur in his poetry where Msimang acknowledges the praise by placing it in quotation marks as in the following examples:

"Utshikizane lwakithi koGcabashe,
Obeyalale wangangemifula,
Obeyavuke wangangezintaba."  
(Young girl of our people of Gcabashe, who when lying down was the size of rivers, who when getting up was the size of mountains.) (1990:54)

Obeyalala wangangemifula,
Obeyavuka wangangezintaba.
Utshezikazana lwakithi lwakwaGcabashe  
(Ndaba) 
(Who when he lay down was the size of rivers, Who when he got up was the size of mountains. Precious little amulet of our people, of Gcabashe’s people) (Cope, 1968:73)

"Ibhidi elimathetha nangezinyembezi,
Ibhicon’ elimzimba buthaka,
Obemzimba muhle nangendial’ enkulu,
Obesiyaka singamanz’ endlela;
Ophoth’ intamb’ ende umntakaJama,
Wayiphotha yayofinyelel’ ezulwini”  
(Variegation like a multi-coloured animal, Tree with fragile trunk, He whose body was beautiful even in the great famine, He whose head-dress was wet with the journey; He who plaited a long rope, son of Jama, Who plaited a rope which reached right up into the sky) (1990:54)

Ubhid’ elimathetha ngezinyembezi  
...
Obesiyaka singamanz’ endlela.
...
Ibhicongo elimzimba buthaka;
Obemzimba muhle nangendial’ enkulu  
...
Owaphoth’ intamb’ ende mntakaJama,
Owaphoth’ intamb’ ende waya phezulu  
(Variegation like a multi-coloured animal...
He whose head-dress was wet with the journey.

Tree with fragile trunk;
He whose body was beautiful even in the great famine

He who plaited a long rope, son of Jama,
Who plaited a rope and climbed up) 

(Shaka)

(He who beats, but is not beaten, unlike water) (Cope, 1968:89)

"Usishaka kasishayeki kanjengamanzi"

(He who beats, but is not beaten, unlike water) (1990:56)

Usishaka kashayeki kanjengamanzi

(Shaka)

(He who beats, but is not beaten, unlike water) (Cope, 1968:89)

"Isizib’ esiseMavivane,
Siminzis’ umuntu eth’ uyageza,
Waye washona ngesicoco.”

(Deep pool which is in the Mavivane river, (1990:61)
It drowns a person as he is washing,
So that he disappears even as far as his head-ring).

Isiziba esiseMavivane,
Eseminzis’ umuntu eth’ uyageza,
Waze washona nangesicoco.

(Deep pool which is in the Mavivane river,
Which drowns a person as he is washing,
So that he disappears even as far as his head-ring.) (Cope, 1968:113)

"Udlungwane kaNdaba,
Udlungwana woMbelebele,
Odlung’ emanxulumeni
Kwaze kwas’ amanxulum’ esibekelana.”

(Dlungwana son ofNdaba!
Ferocious one of the Mbelebele brigade,
Who raged among the large kraals,
So that until dawn the huts were being turned upside-down.)
The praise listed above last is again manipulated by Msimang in extending his ideas. UNISA is compared to the power that Shaka had as a pioneer, the power of changing things:

*UDlondlwane lwakithi eMzansini,*  
*Lwanga uDlondlwane loMbelebele,*  
*Lon' eluhlomis' uZulu ngemikhonto;*  
*Wen' ohlomise izizwe ngezijula zohwazi.* (1980:3)  
(The homed viper of the South, which resembles the ferocious one of the Mbelebele kraal [Shaka], He who armed the Zulus with spears; You who arm nations with the long-bladed assegais of knowledge.)

The tertiary institution is also given the praise:

*Mthombo wolwazi ogobhoze ngemihoshahosha*  
*Gobhoza ngiphuze, uz’ uphuzise nabezayo.* (1980:3)  
(Spring of knowledge which flows in numerous gorges, Flow so that I can drink, and give a drink to those to come.)

This praise has whispers of Sobhuza II’s praise:

*Amanz’ amnandi,*  
*Amanz’ asekolishi.*  
*Mthombo gobhoza siphuz’ amanzi* (Nyembezi, 1984:150)  
(Nice water, Water of the College. Spring, flow, so that we can drink the water)

Although Msimang does make use of direct borrowings, one mostly finds traces of praises intermingled with adaptations of his own in his praise poetry collections, such as Shaka’s praise poem:

*Sebemcoboshis’ abaseMthandeni* (USHaka kaSenzangakhona)  
(They now have crushed entirely those at Mthandeni) (1990:55)  
*Kalokhu iiphahl’ eliseMthandeni.* (Shaka)  
(For the present it eclipsed the one of Mthandeni) (Cope, 1968:91)
Kuze kwenanel’ abafazi bakaNomgabi,
Bathi kayikubusa, kayikubankosi.  
(UShaka kaSenzangakhona)
(Until they showed delight, the women of Nomgabi,
Saying he would not rule, he would not become chief.) (1990:55)

Uteku lwabafazi bakwaNomgabhi,
...  
Beth’ uShaka kakubusa kakuba nkosi 
(Shaka)
(The joke of the women of Nomgabhi,
(Cope, 1968:91)
...
Saying that Shaka would not rule, he would not become chief).

Ngoba liyinkosi yaseMashobeni  
(UShaka kaSenzangakhona)
(Because he is the chief of the Mashobeni kraal) (1990:62)

UShaka kuyinkosi yaseMashobeni.  
(Shaka)
(Shaka, he is the chief of the Mashobeni kraal). (Cope, 1968:89)

Usomlilo eseshisa ubuhanguhangu  
(Ubani omkhulu)
(Fire which burned with scorching force) 
(1980:45)

Umlilo osh’ ubuhanguhangu  
Uzihangulil’ izibaya zamakhosi. 
(UShaka kaSenzangakhona)
(Fire which burned with scorching force 
(1990:65)
It scorched the kraals of the chiefs.)

Umlilo wothathe ubuhanguhangu  
(Shaka)
(Fire of the long grass of scorching force) 
(Cope, 1968:91)

Sambon’ uLusiba-gojela  
Egojel’ amaf’ ezulu  
(UShaka kaSenzangakhona)
(We saw him, Feather that bobbed down 
bobbing down the clouds in the sky) 
(1990:67)

Ulusiba-gojela ngalaphaya kweNkandla,  
Lugojela njalo ludi’ amadoda.  
(Shaka)
(Feather that bobbed down on the other side of Nkandla, 
Bobbing down always and devouring men.) (Cope, 1968:95)

The idea of Shaka being a pillar of the Zulu - as seen in Msimang’s poem - is also
not new. Msimang repeatedly describes Shaka as:

\[
\text{Ngisho kuwe Nsika kaZulu} \quad (UShaka kaSenzangakhona) \\
(\text{I mean you Pillar of the Zulu}) \\
\text{Kunjalo Nsika kaZulu} \\
\text{Ngibuza kuwe Nsika kaZulu} \quad (UShaka kaSenzangakhona) \\
(\text{It is so, Pillar of the Zulu}) \\
\text{Wangikholisa Nsika kaZulu} \quad (UShaka kaSenzangakhona) \\
(\text{You make me content Pillar of the Zulu}) \\
\text{Uthi mangithini Nsika kaZulu?} \quad (UShaka kaSenzangakhona) \\
(\text{What must I say Pillar of the Zulu?})
\]

In an 1842 version of Dingane's praises, the French writer Arbousset cites a number of unusual allusions and references, for example the description of Dingane as the 'pillar of the house of Nandi'. Although the inclusion of this praise could be a mistake, it could also refer to the rumour that Shaka himself ordered that his mother should be killed, and that Dingane, by killing Shaka, revenged Nandi's death (Rycroft, 1984:261).

Msimang makes use of Dinuzulu's praises in describing the stature of Inkosi Buthelezi:

\[
\text{UMashesha unjengoMamonga} \\
\text{UMashesha unjengonyazi} \\
(\text{Fast one, he is like Mamonga} \\
\text{Fast one, he is like lightning})
\]

He is as fast as lightning, a praise given again to Dinuzulu:

\[
\text{UMashesha njengezulu} \\
\text{Ephikelele kwaNdunu} \quad (\text{Dinuzulu}) \\
(\text{Fast one like the storm} \\
\text{As he rushed towards Ndunu}) \\
\text{(Nyembezi, 1984:106)}
\]
The praise name Mamonga was originally given to Dinuzulu:

\[UMamonga woSuthu,\]
\[UMamonga kabulali, uyasizila\] (Dinuzulu)
(Mamonga of the royal house of Suthu,
Mamonga does not only kill, he wipes out) (Nyembezi, 1984:105)

There are certain passages in his poems borrowed from praises, such as Dinuzulu’s praise which remain unacknowledged:

\[Mlomo owodwa\]
\[Sukum’ ukhulume,\]
\[Uyayibona imilomo eminingi\]
\[Iyavunana phakathi kwezwe.\]
\[Kuvunane abasenhla eMtshezi,\]
\[Kwavunama abasezansi eMbumbulu\] (Umntwana wakwaPhindangene) (Dinuzulu)
(Lone Voice
Rise and speak,
Many people in the country
Agree with one another [form an alliance]
It was allied with those higher up at Mtshezi,
It was allied with those downwards at Mbumbulu) (1980:35)

\[Mlom’ owodwa, suk’ ukhulume,\]
\[Uyayibon’ imilom’ eminingi\]
\[Iyavunana phakathi kwezwe,\]
\[Kuvunan’ oZibhebhu benoHhamu,\]
\[Kuvunan’ oZiwedu benoMnyamana.\] (Nyembezi, 1984:107)
(Lone Voice, rise and speak,
Many people in the country
Agree with one another [form an alliance]
It was allied with Zibhebhu, son of Hhamu,
It was allied with Ziwedu, son of Mnyamana.)

The striking image of the white bleached bones on the battlefield of Isandlwana (1980: 42) is reminiscent of a description in Rev. Owen’s diary concerning a hill which Dingane referred to in a distance, claiming it was white with the bones of his victims (MacKeurton in Rycroft, 1984:266).
In ‘KuD.B.Z. Ntuli’ (1980:9), one encounters allusions as well as quotations of certain izibongo (praise poems) and izithakazelo (clan praises):

\[
\text{Ugwabini wemikhonto} \quad (1980:10) \\
\text{(The rattler of spears)}
\]

\[
\text{Gwabini wemikhonto!} \quad (Ndlela) \\
\text{(Rattler of the spears!)} \\
\text{(Cope, 1968:187)}
\]

Ntuli is portrayed as an expert in using the spear through the use of reference to one of his famous ancestors, Ndlela son of Sompisi of the Ntuli clan. The same ancestor gives him the praise:

\[
\text{Ingwazi kaNdlela benoSompisi} \quad (1980:10) \\
\text{(Hero of Ndlela and of Sompisi)}
\]

Implicit references are also made to two of his other clan names - "Mphemba" and "Mbhele":

\[
\text{UNomangcwemb' abikel' amaBhele} \quad (1980:11) \\
\text{...} \\
\text{Abaphemba ngenkomo} \\
\text{(Nomangcwembe reports to the Bhele people)} \\
\text{...} \\
\text{Those who kindle by means of a beast)}
\]

When Ntuli is described as a climber, reference is made to an obscure eulogy of Dingane as found in Arbousset’s text:

\[
\text{UNomakhwela ngokukhwela izintaba.} \quad \text{(Dingane)} \\
\text{(Expert climber through climbing mountains)} \quad \text{(Rycroft, 1984:253)}
\]

\[
\text{UMakhwela ngokukhwela izintaba} \quad (1980:10) \\
\text{(Expert climber through climbing mountains)}
\]

Ntuli also receives a portion of Dinuzulu’s praises:

\[
\text{Izizwe zonke zabuza,} \\
\text{Zathi kanti uBheki ungakanani.} \quad (1980:10) \\
\text{(All the nations asked,)}
\]
Saying, but how great is Bheki.)

*Izizwe zonke ziyambuza,*  
*Zith' uMamong' ungakanani?*  
(All the nations asked him,  
They say, how great is Mamonga?)  

(Dinuzulu)  
(Nyembezi, 1984:110)

Strongly reminiscent of the “shikizela” refrain in Cetshwayo’s praises is the following lines:

*Wayikhulekel' uMbombosh' omnyama,*  
*Owashikizela washiy' impi yakhe*  
(He saluted them, the black Mbomboshe,  
He who moved on, he left his army behind)  

(UShaka kaSenzangakhona)  
(1990:68)

*Cetshwayo*  
(Cope, 1968:215)

The praise name “Mjokwane” (the persecuted one) which is given to Shaka in Msimang’s poem, already appears as Senzangakhona’s nickname (Cope, 1968:75, Nyembezi, 1984:59, 60, 69):

*Imbizo yajub' uMjokwane*  
(The convocation ordered Mjokwane)  

(UShaka kaSenzangakhona)  
(1990:54)

In ‘Umntwana wakwaPhindangene’, Msimang makes repeated use of the Buthelezi clan’s izithakazelo (clan praises) “Shenge”, “Sokwalisa”, “Mnyamana” in the poem:

*Umlomo yawubhekisa kithi kwaShenge*  
...  
*AmaShenge aqala ukumkhiyazelela,*  
*AmaShenge ashay' ihlombe avuma*  
...  
*Bezith' uShenge kakulutho,*  
*Bezith' uShenge kakumholi*  
...  
*Kant' uShenge ebengaxabene namuntu*  
(Mouth [voice] turned towards us at Shenge  

(1980:34-35)
The Shenge people started to respect him,
The Shenge people applauded and agreed

...  
Saying Shenge is nothing,
Saying Shenge is not a leader

But Shenge did not quarrel with anybody)

USokwalisa owaliwayo

...  
Othande inkatha uSokwalisa (1980:36)
(Sokwalisa who is rejected

...  
Who formed a grass coil [Inkatha], Sokwalisa)

Inyath’ emnyama yawoMnyamana (1980:36)
(Black buffalo of Mnyamana)

Iguqa elimnyama likaMnyamana

...  
Athi inkosi yiMbabazane kwabakaMnyamana. (1980:34)
(The black bull-calf of Mnyamana

...  
Saying the inkosi is a Stinging Nettle of the people of Mnyamana)

According to Gunner & Gwala (1991: 88), these izibongo have a number of praises in common with those attributed to ‘Sophandase’, an uncle of Chief Buthelezi who travelled with him and acted as one of his praisers until his death. As such, the last praise listed from Msimang concurs with the following of Buthelezi:

Shenge! Sokwalisa!
IMbabazane kaMahaqa ehaq’ amadoda
Kwaze kwasa engabulel’ ubuthongo. (Gunner & Gwala, 1991:88)
(Shenge! Sokwalisa!
Stinging Nettle Tangler that entangled men
And kept them sleepless the whole night long.)

There are further allusions made to the history of Buthelezi via clan names. Buthelezi is related to the royal house hence “yasoSuthu” on the following line:

UNdaba yenziwe yinkomo yasoSuthu (1980:34)
Buthelezi is referred to as “USibamba” (1980:38):

\[\text{USibamba siyephula silibhubesi} \]
\[(\text{Catcher who crushes, he is a lion})\]

Shaka is repeatedly praised as such (1990:57), a praise dating back to Dinuzulu (Nyembezi, 1984:112). As can be expected, there are many more praise names and clan praises intermingled in the poetry of Msimang, for he specializes in praising important figures like J.S.M. Khumalo, and B.W. Vilakazi. The aim here is not to supply a full list of every praise used, but only to emphasize the fact that none of these praises are new, they are indeed very old, dating back long before Shaka’s time.

Msimang skillfully infuses traditional modes of expressions into his creation as a whole. In the following expression, incorporated from praise poetry, the moral is offered that discretion is the better part of valour:

\[\text{Waba ngumbebe kamame,} \]
\[\text{Beba kemame sigoduke. (UShaka kaSenzangakhona)} \]
\[(\text{He became a mother’s baby, Get on mother’s back and let us go home.)} \]
\[(1990:55)\]

\[\text{Umbebe kamama beba simuke} \]
\[(\text{Senzangakhona, Shaka}) \]
\[(\text{Mother’s baby, get on the back and let us be off})\]
\[(\text{Nyembezi, 1984:12, 71})\]

Msimang himself admits that proverbs and idioms are used in his poetry but “they should not stand apart as jewels or ornaments, but must be part and parcel of, and also harmonise with the writers’ work” (Msimang 1986a:179). In the poem written in honour of Ntuli, Msimang utilizes a proverb which derives from Dinuzulu (Nyembezi, 1984:110):

\[\text{Umthente ohaba usamila} \]
\[\text{Ithole likamaShezi} \]
\[(\text{An achiever at a very tender age}) \]
\[(1980:10)\]
MaShezi’s calf

The adapted proverb above refers to the *umthente* grass which is very sharp when young. Similar to human beings, a child may exhibit in youth what he is likely to be when older (Nyembezi, 1974:8).

The full proverb used in the following allusion is “*Imbila yaswela umsila ngokulayezela*” (the dassie lacked a tail by giving directions to others). A dassie or rock rabbit in a folk-narrative ended up without a tail because he relied on the other animals to choose one for him and bring it back to him. The lesson is when one wants something, one must do it for oneself. Many poets still use traditional images such as these, but add or adapt these to their own individual taste.

*Hlomani izikhali niye ekulweni*
Makangabikho kini oyimbila
(Insimbi yesonto)

(Arm yourselves and go to war
Let there be no one of you who will be a rock rabbit) (1980:17)

Among the many other proverbs are: “*Angelahle imbeleko ngokufelwa*” (1980:21);
“*ithemba alibulali*” (1980:20). The first-mentioned saying derives from the proverb “*Akulahlwa mbeleko ngakufelwa*”, meaning the child’s carrying-skin is not thrown away because of (its) death. This expression is used as an encouragement that there is no reason why disappointment should make one lose hope. The second proverb ‘hope does not kill’ expresses disappointment - for even if one’s hopes do not materialize, one does not die because of that.

In Shaka’s praise poem composed by Msimang, the image of plaiting a rope to heaven comprises a hidden proverbial connotation:

*Wayiphatha yayofinyelel’ ezulwini* (1990:54)

(Who plaited a rope which reached right up in to the sky)

The proverb “*wophoth’ intamb’ end’ eyifik’ ezulwini*” (you will plait a long rope which reaches the sky) is used of a person who has done wrong, and is trying to
make an escape in order not to face the consequences. It means that there is no way of escaping, that wherever this person goes, he will be found. All the proverbial traces in his poems deposit further meaning which has to be taken into consideration. Most of the times the meaning contributed by these expressions effects a total *aporia*, as was observed above with Shaka’s praise and proverb.

Msimang’s language is furthermore interspersed with numerous idioms - the following examples “*kwelenyoni*” (on the branch of the bird; highest point), “*wukhonto amaafu*” (to lick the clouds; attain eminence), “*zaqhilika izihlathi*” (shake the cheeks; laugh) are found in only one stanza of ‘Nawe Goli’ (1980:5). He has even made use of traditional songs and lullabies in ‘Uyadela juba’ (1980:27) where the traditional dove effigy appears prominently in this biblical poem:

> “*Amdokwe amabele avuthiwe!*”
> (The sorghum is ready/ripe!)

The above-mentioned song refers to the cooing sound a dove makes. Although orality is a definite formative element in Msimang’s texts, the most apparent traces in his poems concerning non-indigenous sources invariably derives from the Bible. This is not surprising since religion has had a profound impact on the indigenous literature of the Zulu. Many modern poets such as Msimang were either educated and developed, or else influenced either directly or indirectly, by missionary outposts or missionary-run educational establishments. There is furthermore a close affinity between the style of traditional poetry and that of the Bible, especially the earlier translations. Similar imagery in both the Bible and Zulu praise poetry, is also encountered like springs of water (Rev. 7:17, John. 4:14), and the morning star (Rev. 22:16).

His Christian themes mostly represent not a homogeneous kind of Christianity but one that was tempered by a particular Zulu experience.

In presenting a particular fact, Msimang finds it often necessary to quote almost directly from the Bible. Some of these quotable phrases are:

"Bonani izinyoni zezulu
Azihlwanyeli azivuni
Kodwa antzedluli"
(1980:27)
(Look at the birds of heaven
They do not sow, they do not reap
But you do not surpass them)
(Matt. 6:26)

"Lo uyindodana yami
Engikholwa yiyo,
Izweni".
(1980:29)
(This is my own son
in whom I believe,
Listen to him.)
(Matt. 17:5)

"Uthuli othulini,
Umlototho emlotheni"
(1980:46)
(Dust to dust,
Ashes to ashes.)
(Gen. 3:19, Job 30:19)

According to Ntuli (1973:63), the last-mentioned excerpt is an adaptation from the Bible as adopted in The Book of Prayer. In his poems that display Biblical traces, a fondness for certain books like Psalms and the book of Job are prominently detected. References to certain Biblical episodes are made as the description of the last judgement:

Ephethe inkemba yokwahlulela;
Izu zulu liyondindizela lingqangqazele ngovalo,
...
Unyazi lunyalize ngobunyampunyampu nonya 'Nawe Goli'
(Holding his judgement sword;
the heavens will thunder in fright,
...
Lightning will play with cruelty)
The above scene from Revelations 19:15, 19 predicts that on judgement day the wrong will be judged and found guilty. The judgement scenes again are reminiscent of Rev. 20:12, 13. Johannesburg is also described as a towering entity removed from everyday miseries which befall the workers in the city:

\[\text{Waze wayoqhwakela kwelenyoni,} \]
\[\text{Wangibuka ngiphansi ngiyintuthwane.} \quad (1980:5)\]
\[(\text{Until you sit up high at the highest point,}\]
\[\text{You looked down at me below and saw a small ant.)}\]

Ironically, God is also described in the following manner in Isaiah 40:22:

\[\text{It was made by the one who sits on his throne above the earth and beyond the sky; the people below look as tiny as ants.}\]

The David and Goliath episode appears again in Msimang’s poem ‘Ubani omkhulu’.
The story of the Philistine Goliath being slain by David (I Sam. 17: 4) is well-known and rampant amongst writers:

\[\text{Ngisakhungathekile kwaqhamuka amaFilisti,} \]
\[\text{Ekhaza izaga ehuba elokunqoba,} \]
\[\text{Ekhethethwa wubhongoza uGoliyathi.} \]
\[\text{Wabheka uSirayeli kwaxhaphazel’ izisu,} \]
\[\text{Ngovalo bwezinkemba nezinsabula.} \]
\[\text{...} \]
\[\text{UDavida isikhundlwana,} \]
\[\text{...} \]
\[\text{Ehlome ngendwayi namatshana,} \]
\[\text{Waphonsa lainyinye} \quad (1980:46)\]
\[(\text{I was still astonished when suddenly appeared the Philistines,}\]
\[\text{shouting war-cries, chanting claims of victory,}\]
\[\text{Goliath was their leader.}\]
\[\text{Israel looked on with stomachs a-sputtering,}\]
\[\text{with nervous anxiety for spears and stakes.}\]
\[\text{...} \]
\[\text{David, an innocent child before the age of discretion,}\]
\[\text{...} \]
\[\text{arming himself with a sling and small stones,}\]
\[\text{hurled one)}\]

Certain images are taken directly from the Bible, as these from Ezekiel 36:9, Daniel
8:8, Revelations 7:1, and others:

Umoya waseMpumalanga
Nomoya waseNingizimu,
Umoya waseTshonalanga
Nomoya waseNyakatho,
Emagumbini omane omhlaba
Uyafinyelela kuwo.  
(The wind of the East,
And the wind of the South,
The wind of the West
And the wind of the North,
From every four corners of the earth
You reach to it.)  
(Insimbi yesonto)

The parable of the sheep and the goats as encountered in the New Testament is also alluded to. Goats in the New Testament figuratively represent the wicked, that is why the Lord, as shepherd, sorts the sheep from the goats by placing the sheep on his right hand. Symbolically, sheep denote God’s people or Christians:

Wozani kimi zimvu zami
Dedani kimi zimbuzi zomubi  
(Come to me my sheep
Get out of my way, goats of the evil one)  
(Matt. 25:31-46)

Other biblical borrowings include:

Uyoyazi kanjani indlela wemuntu?
(How will you know the way, oh man?)  
(Psalms 121)

Kuwen Mariya onenhlahla
Izilokotho nezibusiso esifazaneni
Isisu sakho sibusisiwe.  
(To you Mary of good fortune
Favoured and blessed among women
Your womb is blessed.)  
(Luke 1:28-31)

Wena owakha umkhumbi kaNowa.
(You who built the ark of Noah.)  
(Gen 6:14, Gen 8:19)

Iso lezulu elimnjonjo  
(1980:25)
(The eye of heaven is sharp, penetrating) (Prov. 15:3, Rev. 1:7)

*Inyoka iyawazi umuthi wolwazi.*
(The snake knows the tree of knowledge) (1980:33)

*Ngingqongqoze bangqongqoze,*
*Siyangqongqoze kanisivuleli.*
(I knock, they knock,
We knock and you do not open for us) (1990:23)

(Rev. 3:20)

The door remains closed as in Luke 13:24-30. In the following Biblical story retold by Msimang, he not only fuses two images from the Bible, that of Noah and the ark compared to the exiled Israelites, but also incorporates a proverb:

*UNowa wakheth’ ujuba*
*Ayohlol’ amanz’ ukujula.*
*Ngesathunywa ugiatanyi*
*Sabuya nobulongo*
*Esasingabuyela eGibhithe*
*Kanti bese siseKhenani*
*Bakufunza inkululeko* (Uyadela Juba)
(Noah chose a dove
To explore the water’s depth.
It is only a person who is sent to fetch snuff
But returns with cowdung
Who could return to Egypt
After reaching Canaan
They gave you freedom) (1980:28)

The line "*ngesathunywa ugiatanyi*" is an abbreviated rendering of the full proverb "*ngesathunywa ugiatanyi sagijimela iboza*" (he was sent for tobacco and hastened with the herbal medicine). As this saying suggests that a fool always does the opposite, the poet implies that the Israelites were wise.

Again, the imagery in Genesis 18,19 where Sodom and Gomora are delineated, as well as those scenes from Revelations 18 where the city Babylon is represented as a woman, synthesize to give the essence of the poem ‘*Hhawu! NgoMaganedlula*’ (1990:25-26). The poem ‘*Luthando olungangiyekiyo*’ (1980:58) is reminiscent of
the Methodist hymn no. 234 'O Love that wilt not let me go' (Klepper, 1987:409).
The poet closes the poem off with the negative of the great commandment in Matt.
22:39, which is also a verse in the Methodist hymn no. 38:

\[\text{Ungafundisi mina ukuthanda}\
\text{Fundisa isintu ukuthandana}\
\text{(Do not teach and try to convince me about love}\
\text{Teach humanity to love one another)}\]

The image of a hen incubating her eggs or sheltering her chicks also derives from the
Bible (Matt. 23:37):

\[\text{Fukamela ngokufukamela kwesikhukhukazi}\
\text{Fukamela amaqhawe kaZulu,}\
\text{Fukamela uZulu.}\
\text{(Hatch by harboring like hens do}\
\text{Brood the heroes of the Zulu,}\
\text{Give warmth and aid the Zulu people.)}\
\]

Msimang's image of life as a flower in 'Yimpi' insinuates to the words of David in
Ps. 103:15-16:

\[\text{Izimbali zomhlaba, mbunce, goqe, lothe!} \text{ (1980:30)}\
\text{(The flowers of the earth are shrivelled, twisted, finished!)}\]

The poem 'Uthando' (1980:8) reverberates the essence of Ecclesiastes 7:26:

\[\text{I found something more bitter than death - woman. The love she}\
\text{offers you will catch you like a trap or like a net; and her arms round}\
\text{you will hold you like a chain.}\
\]

Although Msimang incorporates allusions to Biblical characters or sayings, he does
not as such concentrate on devoting a complete poem to Biblical themes or
episodes. Msimang further cautions readers not to expect replicas of Western
poetry in his collections (Msimang, 1990:80). This is more or less true, for there are
no full length translations or duplication of any detectable Western source in this
collections. However, any one text can connect significantly with a virtually
unlimited set of other texts. As encountered in the imagery of Zulu izibongo and the
Bible, culture itself is radically intertextual. As such, one can expect that certain images concur with Western images, or particular images alluded to by contemporary Zulu poets actually derives from Western poetry.

The application of European influence ranges from making use of isolated lines, producing identical sequence of ideas. Zulu poets may also borrow isolated images. D.B. Ntuli (1973:19-20), for example, regards Vilakazi's poem 'Inqomfi' as recalling Keats's 'Ode to a Nightingale', because of the similarities with Keats's line 'Away! Away! for I will fly to thee' in the following lines of Vilakazi:

\[
\begin{align*}
  & Suk' uphele phambi kwami \\
  & Funq ngipampe nami nave \\
  & \text{(Go away from me completely Lest I fly with you)}
\end{align*}
\]

(Vilakazi, 1982:15)

Other critics find 'Inqomfi' reminiscent of Shelley's 'To a Skylark'. Msimang's poem 'Ndiza Nyoni' is evocative of Vilakazi's poem, which entails that his intertextual source is indirectly an English poem. Msimang repeatedly requests the bird to go:

\[
\begin{align*}
  & Suka kulengatsha uhlale kuleya. \\
  & \ldots \\
  & Suka kwelontulo \\
  & \ldots \\
  & Suka kuleli gumbi uhlale kuleliya. \\
  & \ldots \\
  & Suka uphele ezigodini zobunyama \text{ (1980:50)} \\
  & \text{(Go from this branch and perch on that yonder} \\
  & \ldots \\
  & \text{Go away from the place of the lizards} \\
  & \ldots \\
  & \text{Go from this corner and sit at that yonder} \\
  & \ldots \\
  & \text{Go from the valleys of darkness)}
\end{align*}
\]

Other corresponding likenesses are:

\[
\begin{align*}
  & Tshiloza nyoni yamahlungu \text{ (Vilakazi, 1982:14)} \\
  & \text{(Sing, bird of the black burnt veld)}
\end{align*}
\]
Although European works obviously influenced Zulu modern poetry, the trend currently is to blend this form with the indigenous oral tradition, as seen in many contemporary poems.

Of all the poets in Zulu, Vilakazi, the first outstanding modern Zulu poet, attained the most recognition. Many aspirant writers modelled their works around those of Vilakazi's. The reason for this is, of course, that Vilakazi's work is of an exceptionally high standard, but also because his work was prescribed at schools for a very long time. Just as Vilakazi was influenced by the Romantic poets at school, present day pupils are being influenced by Vilakazi. A poet, such as Msimang, may not even know that he is using an image employed by Vilakazi. This does not mean
that he is imitating Vilakazi, merely that Vilakazi used the image before him. As such, Vilakazi was and remains the parent text for many of the modern Zulu poets’ intertexts: his texts function as source and resource. One of Vilakazi’s well-known poems entitled ‘Impophoma ye Victoria’ contains the lines:

Unjengesandla somzanyan’ ekhanda,
Sethl’ iminwe sithungath’ unwele
Silulalisa, siluvusa phansi.
Nemihambim’ ithol’ isiphephelo  (1982:21)
(As though the hand of a wet-nurse of the head, 
Spreading the fingers searching the hair 
Smoothing it, stroking it up and down. 
And the desolate obtain a place of refuge)

Although Vilakazi personifies the Victoria waterfall as a nurse-maid, the same idea is encountered with Msimang when he addresses the night:

Ngigone ngezingalo zokuthula,
Wena mzanyana wezintandane,
Mangiphumule esifubeni sakho.  (Ubosuku)
(Embrace me with arms of peace, 
You nurse-maid of orphans, 
Let me rest at your breast.)  (1980:20)

In the preface to Vilakazi’s Inkondlo KaZulu, I.B. Gumede quoted what Vilakazi wrote concerning the nature of his own poetry, which was:

Zinjengezinkanyezi
Ziland’ ubusuk’ ikhwezi
Elibik’ ukusa  (Vilakazi, 1982:viii)
(They are like stars 
Fetching at night the morning star 
Heralding the dawn)

The Xhosa poet, St. J. Page Yako, echoed this sentiment in the opening line of his preface to his anthology, Ikhwezi:

Le nkwenkwezi iliKwezi iyinto enkulu kamaXhosa ithetha ukuthi kuyasa.  (1967:iii)
(This bright star is a morning star, a great thing of the Xhosa, reporting dawn.)
Msimang continues the tradition:

\[
\text{Indonsa kuhle kwenkwenkwezi yokusa,} \\
\text{Indons' edons' umthala nesilimela,} \\
\text{Inkwenkwez' ekhanye phansi eSifuleni} \\
\]

\[
\text{Ethi khanya nkanyezi yokusa! (Ityosi yakwaGwegwazangene)} \\
\text{(The morning star which is like a big bright star of dawn,} \\
\text{The morning star which pulls the milky way and the Pleiades,} \\
\text{The bright star shining down on Sifuleni} \\
\]

\[
\text{When he said, shine you morning star!) (1990:41) } \\
\]

Many of Msimang’s similes are compounded and extended with great ingenuity. They develop into sophisticated metaphors. In the lines above “indonsa” refers to L.B.Z. Buthelezi, whom the poet calls a morning star. Msimang extends this metaphor with a simile, duplicating the meaning, a pattern which adds to the aesthetic value of Msimang’s poetry.

One of Vilakazi’s most notable metaphors can be found in the following lines of ‘UMamina’:

\[
\text{Ungikhumbuza phansi kwaNongoma} \\
\text{Laph’ izintombi zingazalwa,} \\
\text{Ziqhibuka phansi njengamakhowe.} \\
\]

(1980:44)

(You remind me of that place at Nongoma 
Where the girls are not born, 
They spring from the earth like mushrooms.)

This mushroom image has been duplicated by other Zulu poets as well (Ntuli, 1973:127-128), and Msimang also adopts this symbol in his poem ‘UShaka kaSenzangakhona’ where he described Nandi’s unexpected pregnancy:

\[
\text{Abembes’ amathongo ngesiphuku sothando,} \\
\text{Bekuleso siphuku laqhibuk’ ikhowe,} \\
\text{USishaka ophikwe ngabasekhaya,} \\
\text{Bath’ ulishaka kanti yikhon’ ezobashakazisa.} \\
\]

(1990:55)

(The ancestral spirits wrapped them in a blanket of love,
From out of that blanket came a mushroom,
Sishaka who was denied by those at home,
They said he was a small beetle whereas he would shake them.

According to Ntuli (1973: 133) many images from Vilakazi's work can be found in other Zulu poets. Vilakazi especially valued water symbolism, which again can be traced back to historical traditional praise poetry. Msimang also treasures the water imagery as the title of his first poetry collection *Isiziba ZoThukela* reveals. He sees water as life-giving, which causes the drinker thereof to become succour to all humanity:

\[ Kwabhok' isiphethu solwazi \\
Esigobhoze ngomthombo kwa-UNISA \]
(There erupted a fountain of knowledge which flowed with the spring of UNISA.) (1990:42)

\[ Wabe ecibela isiphethu sesiminya solwazi \]
(Mthombo wolwazi ogobhoze ngemihoshahashe elikhulu)
(It was shooting into space the source of knowledge Spring of knowledge which flows in numerous gorges.) (1980:3)

The recurrence of these terms in Msimang's poetry and the contexts in which they are used makes it clear to the reader that they mean much more than their normal everyday usage. Msimang reiterates the above image in two rhetorical questions:

\[ Lomthombo awusoze washa noma nini \\
Lomthombo ungashiswa yini nje nempela? \]
(This spring (source of water) will never run dry anytime. What could possibly cause this spring to run dry?) (1980:19)

This poem on B.W. Vilakazi is exemplary of Msimang's style of merging the praised subject's works into his poem. Msimang foregrounds the publications *Noma Nini* and *Nje Nempela* by using their titles in the two lines. By assimilating these texts into the poem, Vilakazi's books act as foundation for Msimang's new poem (as parasite), but as host he absorbs and adapts them for his own poem to act as a text in its own right:
Khangelani amal’ eZulu
Nizomboka eziqongweni zezintaba
(Gaze upwards towards the blue horizons
You will see him on the top of the mountains.)

This seems a favourite method for Msimang as he repeats the same mode of operation in poems for D.B Z. Ntuli - author of *Amangwevu, Izikhwili, Imicibisholo, Amehlo KaZulu, Uthingo Lwenkosazana, Ithemba, Indandatho Yesethembiso, Imvunge Yemvelo*:

*Okhiphe amangwevu osiba,*
*Wahloma ngezikhwili,*
*Wahloma ngemicibisholo,*
...
*Aphendukisa amehlo kaZulu,*
*Akhangwa wuthingo lw enkosazana,*
*Uthingo lwawanik’ ithemb,*
...
*Indandatho yesethembiso,*
*Aqala ukuvuma imvunge yemvelo*  
(He who delivers with skilful strokes [Amangwevu] of a pen,
He armed himself with fighting sticks [Izikhwili],
He armed himself with bows and arrows [Imicibisholo],
...
They caused the eyes of the Zulu [Amehlo KaZulu] to turn,
They were attracted to the rainbow [Uthingo Lwenkosazana],
The sweet fragrance gave them hope [Ithemba],
...
Ring of promise [Indandatho Yesethembiso],
They started to admire the murmurs of nature [Imvunge Yemvelo])

This approach is reiterated for the writer L.B.Z. Buthelezi, who penned *Izagila Zephisi, Uhlanga Lwezwe, Igula LikaNondlini* and *Khla Nkomo KaZulu*:

*Nglobu uyiphake ngezagila zephisi,*
...
*Nglobu ikhale ngenkomo yakwabo enco,*
...
*Kwagcwala ngisho igula likanondlini,*
...
*Ingqwele eyelus’ ezohlanga lw eswe.*  
(Because you distribute with the club of an expert hunter [Izagila Zephisi],
Because the speckled red and white beast weeped [Khalal Nkomo KaZulu] at their place,

It became full, I mean the milk-calabash of Nondlini [Igula LikaNondlini],

Leader who herds, who is the original stock of the nation [Uhlanga Lwezwe].

Many of Vilakazi's sayings and poems have found widespread acceptance in Zulu, so that they were taken up and repeated in everyday speech by people. When Msimang exhibits an image that corresponds to another poet, it could be likely that the specific poet was also influenced by Vilakazi. However, Vilakazi himself was inspired by writers and those writers were affected and so on. All poems, present and previous, contain earlier poems within themselves as enclosed parasites. As O'Connell and Con Davis (1989:xiv) state - the intertextual relation generates the deferral and rewriting of 'parent' texts, themselves 'bastardized deformations' of the texts that came before them. The image of a milking cow echoes through Zulu poetry:

Nibon' ukuth' amankonyane
Osapho lukaMlungukazana
Asencel' izinkomazana
Ezazimiselw' abantwana
Benzalo kaSenzangakhona?
(You see that the young calves
Of the race of the despoiling white man
Are now sucking dry the milk-cows
Destined for the children
The offspring of Senzangakhona?)

(Vilakazi, 1982:19)

M.S.S. Gcumisa extended the above image in 'Insengakwazi yakwethu' (Our prize milking cow) in which he complains that the whites drain the land of resources:

Kant' uzongemuka zonk' ezakwethu zegula.
Uthath' umondlini wakwethu wamguda   (Msimang, 1996:67)
(But he took away the whole herd of our milk-cows.
He took our heavy-milking cow and milked it without
letting the calf suckle first)
Msimang also treasures this image of a milk-cow, but he uses the image more positively as in his poetry; e.g. ‘Isibaya esikhulu se-Afrika’:

\[
\begin{align*}
Afrika & \text{ usinesibaya,} \\
& \text{...}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Namhla} & \text{ zibuyil’ emasisweni,} \\
& \text{...}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Zeqelen’ emapulazini zizodl’ ekhaya} & \quad (1990:37)
\end{align*}
\]

(Africa you now have a kraal,
... Today they have returned from being loaned out for milking,
... Turn them back from farms, they should graze at home)

The big kraal under discussion here is the African Bank. The acquisition of the kraal of this nature ensures better living standards for those who will put their ‘izinkomo’ (cattle, i.e. money) in it:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Beze namathunga, ye} & \text{hlisile,} \\
\text{Ongenathunga ez’ azokleza.} & \quad (1990:38)
\end{align*}
\]

(They should come with milk pails, the cow is yielding freely,
He who is without a milkpail, should milk into the mouth.)

The tertiary institution UNISA is also seen by the poet as a prize milk-cow that lows in ‘NgeUnisa eminyakeni elikhulu’. A cow lows when her udder is heavy, full of milk and when she is ready to feed the calves. UNISA nourishes the mind similar to a cow which provides milk for a healthy body:

\[
\begin{align*}
UNondlinikazi waseMzansi & \text{ obhonse kwenanela} \\
Izintaba nemimango, kwatshakadula & \text{ inivemve} \\
Namaguqa & \text{asephusa aphindela ayokwanyisa.} \\
& \quad (1980:2)
\end{align*}
\]

(Prize-Milking cow of the Southern continent which lowed and was echoed By mountains and hills, the calves frolicking leap down And the grown-up beasts which ceased suckling, resume to suckle.)

One of Vilakazi’s poems ‘Ezinkomponi’ (At the mine-compounds) contains a simile in which the mine workers are compared to cattle being herded:

\[
\begin{align*}
Sivumile ukuphum’ eqhugwaneni, \\
Sazoluswa njengezinkabi & \quad (Vilakazi, 1980:62)
\end{align*}
\]
(We agreed to leave the hut,
To be herded like oxen)

This concept is enveloped in Msimang’s poem ‘Zindonga zalo muzi’:

Enibaqoqe ekhaphelweni okwezinkomo,
Bengezinkomo nabavalela ngemivalo,
Balal’ esibayeni bengezinkomo

([People] whom you rounded up like cattle in the grazing fields,
Although they were not beasts, they were shut in with cross-bars,
They slept in the kraal, although they were not beasts)

Death is a common theme in all poetry. Vilakazi addresses death in an animated account:

Wagwegwesa wathint’ izinwele
Zafongqeka, wangen’ engqondweni
Wayisanganisa wayishiya.
Wasuqhela uyakud’ ubuka
Wenamile ngomsebenz’ omkhulu

(You went round and touched the hair
It shrivelled up, you entered the mind
disarranged it and then left.
Then did you move away and looked
basking in your mighty work)

Death to Msimang is a visitor in ‘Leso sivakashi’, one who enters the house uninvited and violently annihilates the inhabitant:

Wangihlek’ usulu ngipaqpaaqua,
Wangihlek’ inhlinini ngijilajileka,
Wangicish’ umoya eqhosha,
Wangiqhoshela ngikweqa amhlophe.

Wangiwola ngezandlakazi, uNoliqhwa
Wangithinta ngezinyawokazi, uNoliqhwa

(He cynically laughed at me as I wriggled about
He grinned at me as I tossed about,
He stinted me in an air of arrogance,
He boasted as I turned up the white of the eyes.

He gathered me up with his great, big hands, Noliqhwa
He tipped me with his great, big feet, Noliqhwa)
In his poem 'Wena Kufa', D.B. Ntuli (1969:84) also personifies death as a ruthlessly destructive man, breaking the pillar of the hut. Msimang's description of his 'deadly visitor' is reminiscent of Ntuli's delineation of the gigantic “isiqhwaga” (fearsome person):

Namagqikolo ezandlakazi nezinyawokazi
(And colossally massive hands and feet)

In E. Zondi's drama Ukufa KukaShaka, Mkabayi regrets the waste of Zulu youth in the Shakan wars, which she regards as senseless. She utters the following words:

Yeka ngekhaba lesizwe elicekelwa phansi kungakabikho mbila kusezimpepha. (Zondi, 1960:1)
(Alas, that the young plant of the nation should be hewn down before it bears fruit [mealies] in its bloom).

A similar image is encountered in Msimang's poem 'Isihlava':

Maye! Wabugweda ubukhaba bekhaba,
Labhungana ithemba lobuhle bobusha,
Lakhendlek' ikhaba lakhawul' ukukhihliza (1980:5)
(Alas! You have stunted the good growth of a maize plant, put an end to the freshness of youth, The mealie plant stopped growing and will not bear fruit)

This historical drama also proclaims Shaka's vision and objective of unifying the clans as one nation, an echo of which can be detected in Msimang's praise poem for Shaka:

Ngoba uqoq' izinhlanga wakh' uhlanga;
Ngob' uqoq' izizwe wakh' isizwe;
Ngoba uqoq' abantu wakh' isintu. (1990:66)
(Because he integrated tribes to form one tribe; Because he merged races to form one race; Because he unified humans to form humanity.)

Msimang (1996: 62) reiterates L.T.L. Mabuya's poem 'Nkosi sikelel' lAfrica' (Lord, bless Africa) in which the poet describes “the language storm” (impi yolimi)
that is, the Soweto riots regarding the medium of instruction in 1976, where bullets instead of hail rained down, and guns thundered instead of a natural storm:

\[
\begin{align*}
&Liyan' izulu lezinganono nezibhamu \ldots \\
&Kazi kuhlezi kemithiswe ngezinhlamvu;
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\text{It is a rain-storm of cannons and guns} \ldots \\
\text{Everything is impregnated with bullets;}
\]

One wonders about the outcome of the language war.

Msimang makes use of the same image:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Impi yanamuhla yimpi yosiba;} \\
&\text{Impi yanamuhla yimpi yamabhuku!} \\
&\text{(Modern warfare is that of the pen;}  \\
&\text{Modern warfare is that of books!)}
\end{align*}
\]

Msimang has made use of satire in his poem 'Nawe Goli' with devastating aesthetic effect. When one compares the poem with Mongane Serote's 'City Johannesburg', one encounters similarities. Both poets are disgusted by the exploitation and they forecast doom on Johannesburg. Serote exclaims:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{My hand like a starved snake rears my pockets} \\
&\text{For my thin, ever lean wallet,} \\
&\text{While my stomach groans a friendly smile to hunger,} \\
&\text{Jo'burg City.} \\
&\text{Where death lurks in the dark like a blade in the flesh,} \\
&\text{Listen when I tell you,} \\
&\text{There is no fun, nothing, in it,} \\
&\text{When you leave the women and men with such frozen expressions,} \\
&\text{Expressions that have tears like furrows of soil erosion,} \\
&\text{Jo'burg City, you are dry like death,} \\
&\text{Jo'burg City, Johannesburg, Jo'burg City.} \\
\end{align*}
\]

Another poem reverberating the agony of Africa and its people is Msimang's 'Afrika ngingowakho'. In this poem the distress of the African people are captured as they saw themselves losing their country:
Wathalalisa okwendiki Afrika na?
Awukasizwa yini isililo?

... 
Uyibonile imihosha Afrika
Iphenduka izimpophoma zegazi.
Ubonile emathafeni akho
Ingwaba liphezu kwengcwaba.

Uyothula kube nini Afrika? (1980:48)
(Why are you so quiet, like a possessed person, Afrika?
Can you not hear the lamentation?)

... 
You saw the ravines Africa
They turned into waterfalls of blood.
You have seen on your plains
Graves stacked on top of other graves.
How long are you going to remain silent Africa?)

In a similar manner, P. Mamogobo’s Northern Sotho sonnet ‘Afrika, nagasello’ (Africa, land of sorrows), the continent is personified and directly addressed vocatively and interrogatively:

Afrika nagamasotosoto, o le ramalwetsi bohloko o kwa kae?
Naman’e bohloko go baba kae, o lla sa moganolide nongyamahlomola?
O gatilwe ke maswena dira matlakagothopa,
Mabala a tšerwe o tšenetišwe ke phehli o fetolotšwamola,
O pherekantswe kgopolo bana bengšako ba bolawa ke tlala.
Afrika bowa, kgola merithi bana ba dule ka boiketlo.

(Ntuli & Swanepoel, 1993:57)
(Africa, land-of-fortune, being a weakling, where do you feel the pain?
Sick calf, where does it hurt that you weep like a blue-crane, bird-of-sorrow?
You are being trampled by the enemies, armies aiming to plunder,
Your plains are being invaded, you are being penetrated by a borer-worm,
your intestines torn,
Your mind is contorted, children, owners of the land, are hungry.
Africa, come back, clear up the shade so that your children may live in peace. (Translated by D. Mampuru)

There is an appeal not to forsake the speaker throughout the poem:

Afrika ungangilahli. (Afrika ngingowakho)
(Africa, do not desert me) (1980:47)
The same repeated request is encountered as a motif in D.B. Ntuli's poem 'Umhlobisi wesiganga' (Decorator of the veld), though this request is directed to a butterfly:

*Ungangilahlilo bo!*
(Don't desert me!) (Ntuli & Swanepoel, 1993:101)

In praising D.B.Z. Ntuli for his writing and other achievements, Msimang made use of his clan praise. At an earlier time, D.B.K. Mhlongo also composed a praise poem on Ntuli and adopted a slightly variated form of the Ntuli izithakazelo almost similar to Msimang:

*Mphemba!*
*Wen'opheomba ngebele*  
*Abanye bephemba ngezibi.*  
(Mphemba!  
You who kindle with sorghum  
Others light a fire with pieces of straw.)  
(Mphembwa wamaBhele)  
(Msimang, 1988:27)

*UNomangcwembe abikel’ amaBhele*  
*Wona eh/a eLenge ngesilulu;*  
*Abaphemba ngenkomo,*  
*Kanti abafokazana baphemba ngezibi*  
(Nomangcwembe reports to the Bhele people  
Who descended by means of a grain basket down Lenge mountain;  
Those who kindle with a beast,  
But the worthless men kindle with pieces of straw)

Seen in the Bloomian context, Ntuli is certainly Msimang's Oedipal father. Msimang admits his admiration for this predecessor in one of his poems:

*USontandwase umntakaNtuli,*  
*Ngiebe ngiyambheka ngamthanda,*  
*Kanti sengingenwa lugqozi,*  
*Ngabe ngiyambheke ngamthande,*  
*Ngaphindla ngangenwa lugqozi.*  
(KuD.B.Z. Ntuli)
(The beloved one, child of the Ntuli's,  
When I look at him, I love him,  
For that is where I procured inspiration,  
Whenever I happen to look at him, I love him,
Ntuli as well as Msimang, make extensive use of the ideophone in a highly effective manner. Both poets selectively and intentionally use ideophones to evoke different senses:

_Haxa! Phoqo! Bhidli!_

...  
_Balindelwa, balindelwa,_  
_Cwe!_  
_(Inhlekelele yaseCoalbrook)_

(Collapsing, snapping through, falling down!)  
...  
They were waited for, they were waited for,  
Nothing!)  
(1969:81)

In Msimang’s poem, a similar use of ideophones are encountered:

_Umbani, bani!_

...  
_Qhu . . ! Ngqofo!_  
_Ngardla!_  
_Khilikhihi!_  
_Saqanda, qa!_  
_(Yimpi)_

(Lightning, flash!)  
...  
Explosion! Ferocious attack!  
A killing!  
Falling precipitately!  
Suddenly seeing him brought down!)  
(1980:30)

A favourite image of Ntuli is honey (_uju_) which he uses to describe any intoxicating emotion, whether audible, tactile or sensory. The harmonious melody of song influences him thus:

_Ngidakwe uju hwezekhethelo_  
(I am drunk with the finest honey)  
(Ngilalele uMesiya)  
(Ntuli, 1975:64)

_Izindlebe zenu zivuleni_  
_Ukuse kunge kazo uju_  
_Lokwethabisa izinhliziyo zenu_  
(Open your ears  
So that honey can enter)  
(NginguLanga)_
which will make your hearts exultant)  
(Ntuli, 1972:49)

... ngilethelwe uju,
Lwaconsiselwa olimini lwami
(...) I was brought honey,
It was dripped on my tongue)  
(Ntuli, 1972:27)

Msimang also exhibits a fondness for the same image:

Noju olumtoti lwaconsel' ulimi nganambitha  
(Ngiyakhumbula)
(And sweet honey dripped on my tongue, I smacked my lips)(1980:55)

Uju lwengoma yakho lumtoti,
Ilunambithe inhliziyo yanethezeka  
(Umculo)
(The honey of your song is sweet,
The heart is at comfort when it tasted it)  
(1980:56)

This symbol is infused, depending on the immediate context, throughout Msimang’s oeuvre, with diverse associations. Msimang’s poem ‘Inkondlo kaMkabayi’ which derives from the novel Buzani KuMkabayi is a borrowing from a poem by C.S. Ntuli entitled ‘Buzani kuMkabayi’ (Ntuli, 1978:60). In Ntuli’s poem, Mkabayi is set to marry Dingiswayo, whereas in Msimang’s poem she has to forsake Lamula.

Msimang’s flower image in ‘Yimpi’ is reminiscent of M.J. Khumalo’s poem ‘Impilo yomuntu’ in which a section is found where the arrangement of ideas and the wording coincide with that of David in Ps. 103:15-16:

Impilo yomuntu ngempela ayilutho,
Ifana nembali enhle eqhakazile  
(Nyembezi, 1963:77)
(The life of man is indeed nothing,
It is like a beautiful flower which is in bloom)

Izimbali zomhlaba, mbunce, goqe, lothe!
Amanoni omhlaba ncibilikiyane!  
(1980:30)
(The flowers of the earth are shrivelled, twisted, finished!
The fat of the earth melts into liquid!)

The phrase ‘Uthuli othulini’ (dust to dust) used by Msimang as mentioned in the
Biblical intertexts, also occurred as a poem by P. Myeni (1974:29) entitled 'Uthuli othulini, umlotha emlotheni' (dust to dust, ashes to ashes). The title of Msimang’s poem ‘Ifu elimnyama’ (the black cloud) describing the incidents of violence in South Africa during the years 1984 - 1986, was already used by G. Nyanda in 1959 as the title of a novel. Ntuli also wrote a poem called ‘Ifu elimnyama’ (1969:42), though his dark cloud is of a more personal nature. Also, Msimang’s poem ‘Muhle ngempela lo msebenzi’ (1980:60-63) connects well to the Sotho poet, K.E. Ntsane’s poem ‘Dumedisa Base’ (Greet the Boss). Both poets are satirical in tone when discussing their subject matter - that of the superior attitude the white employers have over their menial workers:

Rola katiba, o dumedise Base,
O siye dieta keiting,
O hahabe ka mpa seka-noha,
O pate mohwasa, Base a kgahlwe,
Mmisisi a tshehe, a uithe monate,
Le botlelempase ba tlo bona.

(Take off your hat, and greet the Boss,
And leave your shoes at the gate,
Come crawling on your belly like a snake,
Move noiselessly, so that the Boss might be pleased,
And the Missus laugh and be amused,
And the small bosses also entertained.)

Bangena behubazela bayazincengela,
Kuqhamuka mfanyan’ omhloshana
Bashay’ isaluthe: “Mey’ Basil!”
Kube ntombazan’ emhloshana
Bashay’ isaluthe: “Misisi!”
Bhek’ ekhishini, uyoathi wabonani?
Abanumzane bashay’ amaphinifia

(They apologetically enter in a pleading manner,
Suddenly the little white boy appears
They shout a salute: “My Boss!”
Then for the little white girl
They shout a salute: “Missus!”
Look in the kitchen, what will you say you have seen?
Respected headmen dressed in pinafores)

There are many more intertextual crossings in Msimang’s texts, however the
examples supplied are illustrative of the bulk of traces observed.

As was ascertained from the aforegoing discussions, Msimang's texts is a network of texts, replete with echoes of earlier texts which could alter the meaning of his imagery. These observations should, moreover, suffice to caution against any attempt to discover a consistent pattern in Msimang's deployment of symbols. The values and significance with which any given symbol is endowed are determined by the poetic context and intertexts and not by a transcendental, coherent, closed system.

6.3 Résumé

In this chapter an attempt was made to explore the dynamics of intertextuality as found in the poetry of Msimang. From a post-structuralist perspective, nothing is really new; each text refers back differently to the infinite sea of the already written. In the words of Umberto Eco, deconstructionists claim to have

> discovered what writers have always known (and have told us again and again)- books always speak of other books, and every story tells a story that has already been told (O'Donnell & Con Davis, 1989:20).

As was stated, the term intertextuality which has emerged within the past three decades encompasses not only influence, allusion, reference, parody, and imitation, it also includes ideas, images and words never encountered by the poet. Although the discourse of deconstructive intertextuality blends and clashes with the discourse of influence, intertextuality contains within it a reference to and quotations of the older term.

Intertextuality challenges the monopoly of the finite, semantically consistent and autonomous work. According to post-structural positions, texts are at best regarded as collages, rewritten or rearranged versions of already existing texts, but not as
ingenious masterworks of aesthetic text production. A given text may appear singular and unique, but every syllable, every word and utterance set to paper reflects amalgamation and repetition of countless types, stereotypes and precedents. Intertextuality ranges from relative unconscious allusions to the clever utilization of suggestions or features of other people, works, and modes of cultural expression.

It was not intended in this chapter to present the various post-structuralist approaches of this remarkably heterogenous theory of intertextuality, where there is only consent on one point - that intertextuality is based on the idea of relations between texts. However, a brief history of the deconstructive philosophy on intertextuality was furnished. The deconstructive intertextual position of Derrida promulgates the non-privileging of the author as persona. Although the poet may feel an intense overwhelming fervor, his poetry is made not with the affective turmoil of consciousness but with words, codes, and conventions. Thus, in Derrida’s eyes, the interrelationships that language itself produces become the major factors in the writing of a literary text, and the multiplicity of stimuli that incites the writing process replaces the author’s single identity as the source of the text. His intertextuality signals an indeterminacy regarding authorial, readerly, or textual identity. Barthes, again, learned from Kristeva that literature is by its very nature an intertext, that is, a plural series of components which have a formal semblance of unity which can only really be appreciated in their plural composition. He defined the intertext as “the impossibility of living outside the infinite text” (1981:36), thereby making intertextuality the very condition of textuality. Barthes advances the text as a complex of voices suggesting premonitions to its readers as they read and re-read the texts, and structure these visions into coherent perspectives. Bloom returns to the concept of author or ‘poet’ and incorporates psychology into his design. His poet suffers from an anxiety of influence regarding predecessors. For these views, he is constantly chided by the other deconstructionists and as such, not regarded as a ‘true’ deconstructor.
The deconstructive position on intertextuality views the author as not in control (conscious or otherwise) of his or her creation. The author, as subject, is site rather than centre or presence, in other words the subject is that to which things happen, rather than that which makes things happen. Extra-individual forces use the subject to exert their sway, the subject does not use them (although it thinks that it does). For post-structuralism the subject is secondary, constructed by language, volatile, standing in its own shadow, and self-divided.

As was observed in some of Msimang's poetic texts, intertextuality was a necessary precondition for the comprehension and interpretation of the poems as a specific interpretation strategy motivating the reader to grasp and to process the expected polyphony. This was apparent primarily in his praise poems where a broader knowledge of izibongo, izithakazelo and imilolozelo was required. Also, praise poems on prominent Zulu writers called for cognizance of the texts written by these specific authors. The postulation of a multiple overlay or intertextual overcoding in Msimang's poetry is possible in the course of constructive interpretation strategies with different results depending on the reader's decisions and his textual and intertextual knowledge.

One can characterize Msimang's poetry as entombing "the words of the dead ... by inner quotation, allusion, or the verbatim presence of a piece of precursor" (Hartman, 1981:80). Subsequent texts affect the perceptions that writers and readers have of works of the past. The lineage of a given text may precede or follow said text: sources point not only to beginnings but also to gradual evolution. Every writer creates his/her own precursors. His/her work modifies our conception of the past, as it will modify the future. It becomes clear that Zulu writers, such as Msimang, are influenced by their surroundings and by other factors like European poetry, peer prototypes, and most importantly, the oral tradition. Even prominent poets like Vilakazi borrowed from his predecessors. Certain poets, like Msimang, are truly talented, and whether they utilize borrowed contents or not, they will still
produce compositions of outstanding quality.

Intertextuality illustrates the idea that to analyze and critique texts in the light of deconstruction is to confront multiple, sometimes undecidable elements of fragile contingency enacting inclusions and exclusions. The intertextual connection of any one of Msimang's texts with any other or with many others is not a given, but an arbitrary procedure, as Miller elucidates:

The apparently solid basis for interpretation becomes a labyrinth of endless wanderings, including wanderings back to the precursors of the precursors, the labyrinths behind, within, or beneath each labyrinth (1975:26).

This procedure, however, is again deconstructed, for every analytical rendering is partial and incomplete. Most importantly, the context of intertextuality in any writer's work constantly changes and is changed by the reader's cognizance of reading, writing, and memory as components constituting a perspective of interpretation.

Intertextuality is one of the major tasks of literary interpretation today to investigate further and to define, because the study of the intertext itself is limitless. It is for the present and future generations of readers to discover the many other meanings implied in the texts of such writers as Msimang.
CHAPTER 7

GENERAL CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

While criticism has been practised for several centuries, the recent advent of deconstructive theory has revitalized and transformed it. In this context, this thesis sought to introduce this theory to African languages, showing how deconstruction offers useful supplements to reigning modes of critical inquiry.

As was illustrated in this study, deconstruction mainly explores peculiar relations within texts and between texts, often involving certain echoes that connect signifiers without giving rise to meaning that fits a unified interpretation. As such, citations and deconstructive discussions of Msimang's works were woven together with remarks on the literary significance of this theory for employment in Zulu literature. In his poems, the structure of double binds, and punning explorations of words linked by etymological chains were explored.

It was contented that there is a place in literary criticism for deconstruction and its relevance to African literature. An overview of the contents of this study as well as the results obtained in the attempt to deconstruct Msimang's poetry will now be supplied. However, this concluding chapter does not pretend to wrap up the arguments of the preceding chapters. It does not attempt to come to a conclusion, as this would deny rather than strengthen what this thesis sets out to achieve.

7.2 Main observations

The influential movement of deconstruction has not only evoked a sympathetic response but also provoked a hostile reaction. Some critics have regarded it simply
as an application of the indeterminacy principle to texts, while other critics have regarded it as the essence of irresponsibility with sinister, nihilistic implications.

Deconstructive critique was not necessarily proposed in this study as a substitute for conventional literary theory. This theory does, however, insist on regarding language as a system of signs and not a vehicle of meanings. Many critics are troubled by the evident anti-humanism of deconstruction since it rendered inoperative traditional modes of analysis, by means of its undecidability. Critics are afraid that deconstruction will lead to the death of literature and literary analysis. David Lehman in Caruth (1995:132) considers deconstruction as follows:

The impulse of deconstruction is profoundly inimical to art (which it subordinates to theory), to biography and history (whose relevance it denies), to conventional methods of critical analysis (which it considers retrograde), and to any philosophy of action (since existential choices are always transmuted into irresolvable linguistic predicaments).

Whatever else it is, deconstruction is a movement, a network of like-minded professors who fiercely promote one another's works and use their institutional power to further the cause ... Initiates are rewarded with teaching appointments ... (1995:70).

Deconstruction is a program that promotes a reckless disregard for the truth (1995:267) a programmatic scepticism (1995:77) that would paralyse the will to act upon our destiny (1995:110-111).

Bellow (in Caruth, 1995:98) exclaims that

In the name of 'deconstruction', [younger academics] have taken over ... literature itself, operating in the cockpit side by side with Shakespeare, Milton, etc. as co-pilots. These academics - good God! - suppose that a dwarf sitting in Shakespeare's lap were to imagine that he was piloting the great Shakespearean jet!

Some of these charges were hasty and ill-founded. The theory of language
propounded by deconstructors was not, in fact, anti-referential, anti-expressivism, or anti-historicism. Bloom's work pertains to matters of the poet's psyche as well as to biographical dimensions; Derrida, Bloom and Hartman's work reflect history. De Man and Miller continuously interrogated referentiality, however, without renouncing it. Since Bloom, Hartman attended little interest in the mimetic aspects of referentiality, but they did not give up the referent. Terry Eagleton furthermore remarks that hostility to this theory

usually means an opposition to other people's theories and an oblivion to one's own (1983:vii).

Eagleton backs his position with a comment of John Keynes, whom he quotes as observing how "those who disliked theory, or claimed to get along better without it, were simply in the grip of an older theory" (1983:vii).

However hostile these anti-deconstructionist critics were, it was further also observed that even among deconstructionists differences of temperament and history were reflected. Within the numerous ranks of American deconstructors, disagreements occurred between the so-called true followers of Derrida and less faithful, more independent critics. These followers have, for example, adopted different aspects of Derrida's work, and developed them in particular ways. As such, they differed from one another in their degrees of faithfulness to Derridean philosophy, their views of the relevance of psychoanalysis, their judgements about the pertinence of Derrida's later work and style, and their assessments of the political, theological and historical import of deconstruction. All these aspects were considered in this study.

De Man, for instance, is one of the more rigorous deconstructors in the Derridean vein. He is interested in the way in which the rhetorical structures of the text, particularly its metaphors, apparently construct one kind of meaning, whereas, when subjected to appropriate and rigorous analysis, they can be shown in fact to
deconstruct that meaning in favour of another whose ideological implications may be opposed to those actually articulated in the text.

This basic background to deconstruction was supplied in chapter two. It was demonstrated that although deconstructors claim not to have a method of interpretation, they do have a particular reading strategy. Jacques Derrida outlined various options for deconstructing the logocentric system. He observed that deconstructors could firstly attempt a reading without changing ground, repeating the original logocentric problematics and using the system against itself or secondly, a critic could change ground and abruptly step outside, affirming total discontinuity and difference. In the end, Derrida, recommended that both forms of reading be employed. Derrida urges a double or rhetorical reading.

This rhetorical reading is foremost a reading which shows how the grammatical, conceptual and thematic totalisations of a text are being deconstructed by the images, the tropes, the rhetoric of the text. Ironically, as soon as the rhetorical structure of a poem or piece of literature has served to debunk the mystifications specific to the thematic level of the text, it turns immediately into a new unifying principle. The totality that it confers upon the text is no longer one rooted in logos, but a totality rooted in lexis. Consequently, to deconstruct does not simply mean to escape the possibility of error and illusion distinctive of literature in general.

Derrida has coined a number of terms (which critics describe as an abundance of technical jargon) to show how a text escapes what he sees as the constraints of logic, reference, and authorial intent. 'Supplementary', for instance, describes how one sign seems to add something to its predecessors, extending (supplementing) the meaning to which the text as a whole aspires. Paradoxically, the very need for a supplement testifies to a lack or absence in what has gone before.

This necessarily cursory and introductory glance at the principal tenets of
deconstruction raised the question: why invoke this critical method at all? The corollary of this is the important question as to whether deconstruction did in any way illuminate Msimang's poetry by offering fresh insights into it. This thesis attempted to demonstrate that there is a certain complicity between the respective texts and deconstruction, deconstructive criticism does indeed provide constructive percipience into Msimang's poetry.

Chapter three explored the multiplicity of meaning and rhetoricity in Msimang's poetry. This was accomplished by engaging deconstructive strategies which generally investigate such matters as the installation of defining binary oppositions and the arbitrariness and undecidability of boundaries. Western thought, and for that matter, African thought as well, has always been structured in terms of polarities: good vs evil, life vs death, truth vs error, etc. As was illustrated with 'Iziziba zoThukela', 'Uthando' and 'Ndiza nyoni', what these oppositions do is to privilege unity, identity, immediacy, and temporal and spatial presentness over distance, différance, dissimulation, and deferment.

Msimang's texts are heterogeneous: they make, then erase, assertions, they begin and end arbitrarily. In any one of his texts, a word never sheds the multiple meanings it has acquired in different contexts, meanings that entangle it with an unlimited number of other signs and strangle its claims of reference. As was demonstrated, a word differs each time it is used, yet retains the traces of its other uses. Derrida calls the infinite regress of signifiers the anguish of language -

all possible meanings push each other ... calling upon each other, provoking each other too, unforeseeably and as if despite oneself, in a kind of autonomous over assemblage of meanings, a power of pure equivocality that makes the creativity of the classical God appear all too poor (1978:9).

However, every reading is still a misreading, an aspect which de Man (1984:123) encourages, for a good misreading "produces another text which can itself be shown
to be an interesting misreading, a text which engenders additional texts”. This misreading phenomenon (blindness/insight) occurs not because of the reader, but with the ambiguity of the language. The fault rests with language, not with the reader.

Because the meaning of a text is not unique, univocal, rigorously controllable, and transmittable, it is therefore indeterminate. It was shown in chapter four that the truth about interpretation lies somewhere between these two extremes. Texts previously regarded as unified artistic artifacts are shown to be fragmented, self-divided, and centreless. The desire of deconstruction to shatter totality, to break form and empty the text of the allusion of truth, stems from Nietzsche. It is Nietzsche who comprehended that the quest for truth emanates from motives of power impelled by desire, and that metaphysical systems yield not truth but structures of language substituting for truth in the name of truth. Truth is thus something which already exists and is therefore to be discovered rather than created. Derrida’s point is that truth, and its various correlates such as being, consciousness and presence, “are produced effects ... which do not find their cause in a subject or a substance, in a thing in general ... [but] in the play of différence” (1982:11).

In questioning the nature of history and religion, deconstruction asserted that if history is a fiction, a text subject to ideological skewings and mystifications, then it cannot be relied upon as a source of objective knowledge. These aspects were illustrated with two historical poems ‘Siwela iMoretele’ and ‘Inkondlo kaMkabayi’, and three of Msimang’s poems which have religious content: ‘Indlela’, ‘Luthando olunangiyektiyo’ and ‘Ngiyamazisa’. Deconstructive theory sometimes seems to block all access to the possibility of reading explicitly ‘referential’ documents in conjunction with literary or speculative texts. Deconstructive skepticism is opposed to logocentric knowledge and theologically, to belief or faith.

As previously explained, deconstructionists do draw on history, however, they use
it deconstructively, not to seek answers or explanations, but new questions and new ways in which all types of texts can be made to read and rework each other. Derrida himself implied that the contingencies and conventions of cultural life do not preclude the possibility of truth, rightness, naturalness within that life. Derrida even has to rely on concepts (nature, origin, intention, centre, etc.) whose truth value he suspects.

Finally, an attempt has been made to show why the concept of history as methodological orientation, as well as the deconstructive procedure of analysing texts in such a way as to explicate their partial complicity with deconstructive theory, makes possible this deconstructive readings of Msimang. The argument could further be extended that Msimang's poetry reveals this complicity even more clearly than does his prose. The reason for this is to be found in the symbolic nature of his poetry.

Chapter five concentrated on the (de)construction of stabilities and the fissures wrought by the unconscious. This fifth chapter was dedicated to a confrontation between the work of Derrida and Lacan, who in the post-structural discussion has a central role. The aim was rather to find a way of allowing deconstructive criticism and psychoanalytical critical theory to read and to be read so as to discover the parallels, differences and productive tensions between these two theories and Msimang's poems 'Uze ungiphuzise amanzi', 'Langa lami' and 'Leso sivakashi'.

Juxtaposing deconstruction and psychoanalysis allowed certain common themes to emerge; the importance of language as a model of understanding consciousness and change and the fact that language cannot be considered apart from certain unconscious motives and themes of desire and death. In psychoanalysis as well as deconstruction, knowledge of the world derives from the interaction between a primary, originally contentless, subjectivity and a language that pre-exists the user of it, which generates the 'self' (ego). In both theories language takes a central
position in their problem formulation. Since language determines what is (thought to be) known, rather than serving as the medium through which knowledge independent of language is publicly expressed, traditional philosophical ‘solutions’ lose their ground.

While a number of Derrida’s writings could be described as deconstructive accounts of psychoanalytic theory, and of (in at least a double sense) the subject of psychoanalysis, it is also clear that Derrida is deeply committed to the preservation of psychoanalysis (in whatever form this may take). Deconstruction thus aids psychoanalytic criticism both as a critical tool and by offering principles that allow one to foresee certain emancipatory cultural possibilities in contemporary practices of representation.

This chapter served as merely the basis for a ground clearing exercise, but one could conclude by suggesting that the deconstructive literary criticism has only begun the work of pursuing the positive possibilities of the psychoanalytical approach.

Although texts on intertextuality in contemporary narrative are legion, not many of these studies trace the deconstructive discourse, but rather other theories such as semiotics, cultural materialism or new historicism. In chapter six, Msimang’s poetry was briefly examined as deconstructive intertexts. A brief survey on the disciples of deconstructive intertextuality was given, since not all deconstructors agree with the notion of reference in intertextuality.

Dynamic in nature, intertextuality inevitably takes the form of boundary-crossing; it creates crises and aporiae wherever it goes. For deconstructors intertextuality designated a text’s independence on and infiltration by prior concepts, figures, codes, unconscious practices, conventions and texts.

As a crucial critical instrument, intertextuality brought to the fore in Msimang’s two
poetry collections the labyrinthine grounds of texts, facilitated dissemination of meaning, and enforced contextual instability. In Msimang's poetry traces of traditional poetry, oral sayings, Biblical allusions and modern poetry were found. By pointing to these sources, traces, references, allusions, quotations and influences of every kind in Msimang's body of literature, one was merely highlighting some of the factors which seem to have helped in shaping his work as it is currently known.

The fertility of language in generating multiple meaning establishes, in the view of deconstruction, the priority of equivocal readings over univocal readings. Having banished the constraints of writer and intention, deconstruction sanctions the richest possible play of meaning or rather the absence of meaning. The deconstructive task, of course, is to disrupt the closure, but since each gap or opening closes in a new way, the deconstructionist remains, so to speak, parasitically attached to every new version of the closure, endlessly performing the disruptive function.

Finally, it was illustrated that Msimang's poetry does not reject deconstruction, but works through it, conserving its strengths. Deconstruction’s conviction is that literary works do not lend themselves to absolutely certain interpretations that sum them up once and for all. Throughout this thesis, one has tried to show that even in the thoroughgoing scepticism of deconstruction the values and interest that determine it of necessity have their source in an undeconstructible authoritative space beyond sceptical activity itself. The task of deconstruction is endless, because the emptiness that would resolve all contradictions is unreachable within the space of language. Whether deconstruction leads into a dead end is irrelevant, as deconstruction is not a method, so clearly it can lead nowhere. It is a way of thinking, and influences the thought-processes of a reader, a critic, an analyst.

It is thus not surprising that many literary critics have been bitter in their criticisms of a form of analysis which leaves them with no 'truth' and no determinate 'meaning'. This indeterminacy affects the critic as much as the text. The critic
cannot take up a neutral or objective position from which to make a judgement or to settle the meaning of the text. Readers, too, as speaking subjects are caught up in the interminable weaving, unweaving and reweaving of the fabric of discourse.

7.3 Concluding remarks

Examining deconstruction from different angles, this study covered deconstruction versus conventional tradition, the nature of deconstruction, deconstruction and other disciplines such as psychoanalysis, the deconstruction of deconstruction, and also the future of deconstruction. It is hoped that this thesis will provide the reader with a definitive account of deconstruction and set him/her thinking not only of the aspects of deconstruction but criticism in general. Deconstruction can only intervene by displacing a mode of thinking and by developing the interpretive processes and procedures. The challenge is therefore to think differently and one way of doing that is to look at how a particular aspect of the African literary tradition can illuminate and be illuminated by deconstructive thought that has dominated and to a large extent still continues to dominate thinking in the humanities.

If this study has succeeded in posing more questions than it has answered, it is perhaps time to look, if not for an exit, then at least for a vantage point within the maze. Michel Foucault offers such a vantage point for several reasons, primarily because he does not abandon the radical insights of deconstruction. Indeed he adopts a broadly deconstructive perspective in examining historical forms of ideological coercion and in doing so paradoxically reveals the deconstructive potential of historicity.

In a chapter on deconstruction, Frank Lentricchia points out the limitations of a certain tendency in deconstruction as well as the potentialities of its most fruitful development. There is the danger, suggests Lentricchia, that the aporiae of which so much is made by deconstruction may lead to its supplanting presence or
logocentrism as a transcendental a priori, a course which is self-defeating. There is, however, another course open to deconstruction, the course taken by Foucault in his depiction of history as a series of discursive formations. Lentricchia (1980:191) phrases the argument succinctly:

Though American Derrideans almost universally ignore him, Foucault accepts Jacques Derrida's major points about decentring, difference, and free-play, and he accepts Derrida's banishment of ontology and critique of representation (as straight-forward mimesis) and, phenomenology. But Foucault is no champion of the *aporiae*, no connoisseur of *abyme*. His naked statement of his goals as a historian is not evidence of what could be (and has been) termed old-fashioned historicist naivete, but of a passionate belief that genuine history-writing is not only possible, but is made possible, by Derrida's revision of traditionalist thought in general and of, structuralism in particular.

This precursory probe is intended to suggest the possibility for further study opened by deconstruction and post-structuralist thought. The scope of the present study, of course, has been far more limited and can, at most, be regarded as a tentative step in the direction of what Foucault calls an effective history.

The highly original combination of respect for texts and suspicion of meaning will give deconstructive writing a continuing power in years to come. Nevertheless, the death of deconstruction has been pronounced many times. But to dismiss deconstruction is to reject too hastily the logic, however unfamiliar, of Derrida's writing. Derrida himself conveyed the idea that the word 'deconstruction' will not be used indefinitely. It will wear itself out. But beyond the word, this might take a little longer ...
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Wimsatt, W. & Brooks, C.


APPENDIX

Iziziba zoThukela (Iziziba zoThukela, pp. 64-65)

1 Ziziba ezizonzobele
2 Zolani ningisondezele.
3 Ngiyabesaba oben' ubunzulu,
4 Ngiphonse itshe lazika,
5 Nokho ngiyanomela
6 Ngoba ngiyanazi,
7 Ophuza kini phinde ome.

8 Ngibabaza leyo ntobeko
9 Nokuma ndawonye ngesineke.
10 Izimpophoma anizigqizi qakala,
11 Zingishayel' itholombe liphuma lishona.
12 Imithelela niyithi klabe, niphole;
13 Nazi kahle, iphangana nje umdaka,
14 Ekuphethe akupheleli ndawo.
15 Ngiphuze qede yangibangel' inkwankwa,
16 Uphuza kuyo uphinde wome.

17 Nolwandle niluhlek' usulu,
18 Lugubhi amagagasi lungaphezi
19 Lwehla lwenyuka lungenasinge.
20 Nimile ngentobeko nibheke phezulu,
21 Nimile sengathithi anisacwayizi,
22 Nikhongozele inhlakanipho yezulu
23 Ephuma ngokaphuma kwekhwezi,
24 Esa ngokusa kwelanga,
25 Intfice nikhangenzile nilindele,
26 Nilindele umyalo wengilos;
27 Eyathi babusisiwe abalindayo.

28 Kunengcebo ukujula kunobude.
29 Imifula engemi iphikelele kude,
30 Ilansa liyiilindele emadotsheni,
31 Ihwamuke iphelele ezeni.
32 Amanzi izowachitha enquatshini
33 Isale ize, nisale nimile.
34 Nami ngimile kini ngazibuka,
35 Nganibuka niphenduka isibuko,
36 Nangikhombisa ubunqunu bami,
37 Ngazibonela ubunhluza bami.
APPENDIX

Pools of the Thukela river

1 Pools which grow overpowering
2 You become silent and draw me nearer.
3 I dread your depth,
4 I hurled a stone in, it sank down and disappeared,
5 Yet for you I thirst
6 Because I know you,
7 Who drinks in you, never thirsts again.
8 I admire that humility
9 And your staying in one place patiently.
10 The waterfalls, you do not take heed of,
11 They laud me with applause at dawn and sunset.
12 The rivulets, you mockingly glance at and remain calm;
13 You know well, they rush [to plough the loam] in vain,
14 What they carry is of no significance.
15 I drank from them and experienced a strong desire [for meat],
16 You drink from them and become thirsty again.

17 And the sea, you cynically laugh at it to scorn,
18 It wildly tosses waves about unceasingly
19 It descends and ascends, it does not have a base (busily).
20 You are standing with humility, looking up,
21 You are standing as if you blink no more,
22 You extended out your hand to receive heaven's wisdom
23 That emerges at the time of the morning star,
24 Which becomes bright with the dawn of the sun.
25 It [star] finds you with outreaching hands, waiting,
26 Waiting for the instruction of the angel
27 Who said blessed are those who wait.

28 Depth, unlike length, contains wealth.
29 The rivers do not stand still but persist onwards,
30 The sun is waiting for them in the valleys,
31 It completely evaporates and ends up nowhere.
32 The river will disperse the water in the sharp bend
33 It will remain empty and you will still be standing.
34 And I too stood at the pools and looked at myself,
35 I watched as you changed into a mirror,
36 And you showed me my nakedness,
37 I saw myself stripped of all my belongings.
Inqondo seyagwala yathomba,
Ngokulalelw ngamazolo nesithathwa
Inhluzwa, ingembethe.
Khiphani itshe lelula
Nikhuhe, nihlikhile, nhlambulule.
Ziziba zokucwengeka ngicwengeni;
Uqubhu nezibhidi enhliziyweni,
Olugobhozela kunembeza,
Lugeleze lwemuke,
Sicwebe isiziba semicabango,
Ngibone izimfibho zokujula.

Ngethekeleni ezimfihleni zokujula,
Ngishiyeleni ngentshengula ethongwaneni
Ngicakuleleni ngenkezo embizeni,
Ngikhangezeni ngokhezo okhambeni,
Ngigezeni isigonogono endlebeni,
Nesule ubhici emehlweni,
Nibhucunge insila engqondweni,
Inqondo ibone yehlukanise
Amabala amnyama kwelihlophe,
Ihlanganise amnyama kwelihlophe,
Aroxele izizukuhlwane indaba
Ethi: Kwasukakulela; Zithi: Cosu!
The mind has already become discoloured with rust.
Because of dew and frost
Destitution covers me.
Take out the light stone
Rub vigorously; rub and rinse.
Clarifying pools, cleanse me
Of the muddy water and dregs in the heart,
That flows into the conscience,
It should flow away and depart,
So the pool of my thoughts may become clear,
And allow me to see the secrets of the depths.

Solicit for me from the mystery of the depths,
Give me a pinch of snuff with the snuff-spoon from the snuff-box,
Scoop up for me with the ladle from the beer-pot,
Dish out onto my hands with the spoon from the pot,
Wash the earwax from my ear,
And wipe the eye-oozings from the eyes,
Rub the dirt from the mind,
The mind will see and differentiate
The black colours from the white,
It [the mind] will join together the black and the white,
Which will tell the generations a story
Saying: Once upon a time; They say: Go on! [a little bit]
Uthando

(Iziziba zoThukela, p.8)

1 Uyimpicabadala weThabisile,
2 Uyingabakayitshelwana weDuduzile;
3 Uyindida weBathandekile,
4 Uyinkinga weBazondekile;
5 Uyingwijikhwebu Bahlukanisile.

6 Ngikubonile ulumba inkomohleleni,
7 Yakhotha enye bathi ngeyikhothayo.
8 Ngisho nezinambuzane uzihungulile,
9 Izintothoviyane zaze zafa zibelethene;
10 Abantu bona bazethuke sebakhe emkhathini.

11 Nami wangithwebula ngandilileka,
12 Ngamfoma izithukuthuku kulel'ungqoqwane,
13 Ngakhangwa ukukhanya kumnyama khuhle,
14 !Mamba nendlondlo zaphenduk' iziquzi,
15 Amagquma nezikhinsi kwaphenduk' amathafa.

16 Yebuya luthando umuka njengeqaqa,
17 Umuncu njengomhlononyane,
18 Ubaba kunesibhaha,
19 Uqanda kuneqhwa.
Love

1. You are a riddle, you Delight,
2. You are inexplicable, you Comforter;
3. You are confusing, you Loveable,
4. You are an insoluble difficulty, you Hateful;
5. You are unreliable, you Separator.

6. I saw you bewitching a beast in the grazing grounds,
7. It licked the other, they said, it is the one which licked it.
8. Even small, slow moving animals are enticed by you,
9. The locusts died carrying each other on the back;
10. People were surprised by their act of living in space.

11. And I, I too was mesmerized and became dizzy,
12. I slowly exuded perspiration whilst there was frost,
13. I was attracted by the light in the pitch darkness,
14. The mamba and the horned viper turned into lizards,
15. The hillocks and hollows changed to plains.

16. Alas! Love you stink like a polecat,
17. You are acrid like the African worm-wood extract,
18. You are more bitter than the Fever tree herbs,
19. You are colder than ice.
Ndiza nyoni

(Iziziba zoThukela, pp. 50-51)

1 Kusakuvumile wena nyoni,
2 Suka kule ngaisha uhlaie kuleya.
3 Tshilotshiloza uzixinge macala.
4 Bhula amaphiko kabili, kathathu.
5 Shiya phansi izigodi zostizi
6 Namahlangu alomhlaba ahlabayo,
7 Ujubalele ...
8 Suka kwelontulo
9 Uye kwamasi-aziphili,
10 Kwanyama-iziduli.
11 Damuza amadamu esibhakabhaka.
12 Cababa emagcekeni akwankululeko,
13 Ngale kwezintaba namafu.
14 Uyokuthola ukwaneliseka?

15 Kusakuvumile nave nhliyiyo yami,
16 Suka kuleli gumbi uhlaile kuleliya.
17 Ndizandiza uzixinge macala.
18 Bashiyi phansi abanotwayi,
19 Ungangixhawuli ngesandla nginokhwekhwe.
20 Shiya phansi elempofana
21 Uvakashele kwelawomakhomba-ngophakathi,
22 Unyenye ngonyenyengye, undize ngendiza.
23 Phezulu ...
24 Sindiza yobankulu,
25 Inwebe amaphiko ibhonge kakhu,
26 Umoya uyihubele ihubo elikhulu,
27 Umhlaba ube lingenqelana,
28 Phansi ...
29 Niyoni indiza iphelele emafini?

30 Ndiza phela nave ngqondo yami,
31 Shaya amaphiko kabili, kathathu,
32 Ngiphaphame ebuthongweni bobusuku.
33 Suka uphele ezigodini zobunyama,
34 Udabule umlamamvu bu nenkungu,
35 Uhlangabeze ilanga,
36 Nanto liqhamuka eMpumalanga.
37 Uhqwakele eziqongweni zezintaba.
38 Ushonise izinzwane phansi,
39 Uzabalaze njalo uzimelele,
Fly, bird

1. It still suits you bird,
2. Go from this trunk-branch and perch on that yonder.
3. Atwittering, dancing while looking at your sides.
4. Beat the wings twice, thrice.
5. Leave the valleys of sorrow
6. And the black-burnt fields of this hurtful world,
7. You soar away in the distance . . .
8. Go away from the place of the lizards
9. Go to the place of abundant curdled milk,
10. To the place of mounds of meat.
11. Splash the water-dams of the sky.
12. Safely descend on the wide, open plains of freedom,
13. Beyond the mountains and clouds.
14. Will you find satisfaction?

15. It is still in your favour my heart,
16. Go from this corner and perch on that yonder.
17. Fly a bit, dancing while looking at your sides.
18. Leave behind those that have scab,
19. Don't greet me by the hand, I have mange [eczema].
20. Leave the land of the poor
21. Visit the place of the well-off people,
22. Cruise with a car, fly with a plane.
23. Up . . . up . . .
24. The plane of our forefathers,
25. Stretching out the wings, rumbling intensely,
26. The wind sings a great hymn for it,
27. The world becomes a small, round object,
29. Does the bird fly and disappear in the clouds?

30. My mind you too do fly,
31. Beat your wings twice, thrice,
32. So that I wake up from the deep sleep of night.
33. Go from the valleys of darkness,
34. Tear through the thick fog and rainy mist,
35. Go out to meet the sun,
36. There it [the sun] suddenly comes into view from the East.
37. You sit up on the mountains' summits.
38. You cause the toes to move downwards,
39. You stand steadfast there, holding on tightly,
Iziphepho ziyaphephula.
Ugwinye imisebe yelanga liphuma,
Ikhanyisele imicabango yami.
Ingikhanyisele ngokukhanya,
Ngiyokhanya.
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40   Stormwinds blow.
41   You swallow the rays of the rising sun,
42   So that it [the rays] will clear my thoughts.
43   Its light will give me light,
44   I will shine forth.
Siwela iMoretele

Uquqaba olugqishelene lwaqoqana phezu kwalo mjula,
Kwanqatheni wuquqaba lwabantwana bakwa-Israyeli
Beqoqene benqwabelene phezu kOlwandle Olubomvu;
Sasiluquqaba sibalekela ulaka lukaFarо,
Sasiluququba sihlasele esigodlweni sikaFaro,
Sasingeluquqaba lwewelet' ezweni loju nobisi.

Amanzi eMoretele athenek' amandla nethemba,
Awagagamelanga okwamagagas' olwandle Olubomvu,
Awasisithelanga, azedlulela ejeqeza ebalisa,
Alila isililo sezililo nesilokozane,
Amafu phezulu ahlangana ehlukano,
Nelanga elalisho laholekela emuva.

Yasithibel' inkomodHaHaga ngenganono,
Yayithibel' imithonselela yemithelele,
Ingezithibe izikhukhula sezikhandene,
Zawela iZigagayi kwababaza ibhuloho,
Amadwala phansi abamba ongezansi,

Isikhonyane sasisetheka sisindana
Ngevuso lengebhe yomsizi wabasizili,
Banini osondonzima abahemadalonzima,
Ithemba selibashiyyile sebeiyinkundla yetwetwe;
Banini abaninga ngezinsapho ezisizole emuva,
Eziyosala dengwane sebezele kwaSaha.

Qiz! Qiz! Laduma!
Qiz! Qiz! Laphindelela!
Bani! Lamthatha! Phazi! Lamsonga!
Phazi! Lamsonga! Bani! Lamthatha!

"Maye! Kodwa bengisho!"
"Maye! Shwele, nkosi yomusa!"

Ukhozi olumaphiko azinkemba lwabasibekela,
Izigagayi zaphendo isanhlaka senhlakanhlaka.
IMoretele zayiwela amanhlanhlanhlako,
Abaningi kabayivelanga okwesibili,
Baliwona liphuma, abalibonanga lishona,
Namuhla amanzi asasilila lesi sililo.
We cross the Moretele river

The crammed crowd assembled on the top part of this river,
It was as though it was a multitude of Israel's children
Congregated, heaped up above the Red Sea;
We were the flock fleeing the wrath of Pharaoh,
We were the horde invading Pharaoh's private enclosure
We were not the crowd crossing to a land of honey and milk.

Moretele's water was discouraged and its strength and hope diminished,
It was not brash as the waves of the Red Sea,
It [the water] did not restrain us, it passed by solicitously glancing,
It wept a mourning of deep sorrow and sobbing,
The clouds above accumulated and parted,
And the sun which guided us, retreated to the rear.

The Boers suppressed us with a gun,
It warded off some tributaries,
It could not restrain the compressed torrents,
The march crossed and amazed the bridge,
The slippery stones below showed astonishment,
The fish stopped swimming and stupefyingly stared.

The locusts moved slowly and sluggishly
With heart-stopping apprehension of the destroyers' gun powder,
There were many huge ones who were reluctant,
Hope they have forsaken, they are now in a playground of fear;
There are many pondering about children who remained behind,
Those will stay alone when they are at the place of Saha (dead).

Thunder! Qiz! Qiz! It boomed!
Thunder! Qiz! Qiz! It repeated!
Flash! Pain! It took him! Sparks! It finished him!
Sparks! It finished him! Flash! It took him!
"Alas! But I had said so!"
"Alas! Forgive, lord of grace!"

A black eagle with sword-like wings covered them,
The well-organised march turned into scattered disorder.
They crossed the Moretele in different directions,
There were many who did not cross it the second time,
They saw the sun rise, they did not see it set,
Even today the waters still wail this lamentation.
Inkondlo kaMkabayi

Inkondlo kaMkabayi (UNodumehlezi KaMenzi, pp. 38-39)

1. Ntombi zakwaZulu,
2. Ngivumiseni le ngoma;
3. Ntombi zikaMalandela,
4. Ngihayiseni le nkondlo;
5. Yinkondlo yomzwangedwa,
6. Yinkondlo kaMkabayi,
7. Yinkondlo kaLamula.

8. Ngikhumbula mhla eqhamuka
9. Eziqongweni zezintaba,
10. Imizwilili yatshiloza,
11. Iminduze yahlabelela,
12. Kwakusengathi yihubo
13. LikaNomkhubulwa.

14. Ngilamleleni wemathong’ ohlanga,
15. Ngilamleleni nakhu sengemuka,
16. Ngibambe, ngibambe weNobamba,
17. Ngibambe, ngibambe weMalandela.

18. Zintab’ ezinhle zakwaZulu,
19. Enakhe uNdi nangikaka,
20. Msitheni kimi uLamula,
21. Ngilamleleni zintaba kuLamula,
22. Gugu likaZulu nithi mangithini?
23. Gugu lobusha nithi ngenzenjani?
24. Zinhle izintaba zakwaZulu!
Mkabayi’s song

1 Girls of Zululand,
2 Sing this song with me;
3 Girls of Malandela,
4 Compose this poem with me;
5 It is the song of personal pain,
6 It is the song of Mkabayi,
7 It is the song of Lamula.

8 I remember the day that he suddenly appeared
9 On the mountains’ summits,
10 The Cape canaries twittered,
11 The Crinum lilies sang,
12 It was like the hymn
13 Of Nomkhubulwana.

14 Mediate for me, oh, ancestors of the reeds,
15 Help me since I now depart,
16 Hold me, hold me, oh Nobamba,
17 Hold me, hold me, oh Malandela.

18 Beautiful mountains of Zululand,
19 You who built Ulundi and you encircled me,
20 Hide Lamula from me,
21 Protect me, mountains, from Lamula,
22 Zulu favourite, what do you want me to say?
23 Darling of youth, what do you want me to do?
24 Beautiful are the mountains of Zululand!
1. Nanxa ilukhonjwana,
2. Iyokuthatha iye ikubeke.
3. Iyozombeleza nawe,
4. Igwincigwincize njalo,
5. Ibuye ithi thwi,
6. Ize ikuthi qithi.

7. Ngibelethe sigoduke
8. Wena ongesabi mahlathi,
10. Wena ongeyiswa miqansa,
11. Yiqophe uyiqombole.
12. Ngikhwexele emhlane,
13. Ungibelethe ngembeleko,

15. Angazi ekhaya,
17. Angikwazi okungale,
18. Wen’ uyakwazi.
19. Angibaqondi abangaphesheya,
20. Wen’ ubaweze bonke.

21. Hamba nami ungitobise,
22. Angiwuphangile umdaka,
23. Ngiphokophele ukuyofika zwi;
25. Dabula izinkungu namafu obumnyama;
27. Wena ongukwenziwa kwezinto;

29. Kungaziba umeno,
30. Kungasitha amazolo,
32. Nampaya! Bahamba ngendlela,
33. Habè! Bawela ngezibuko.
34. Nebala! Bangena ngesango.

(Indlela) (Iziziba zoThukela, pp. 39-40)
The way

1 Even though it is a small track,
2 It shall take and eventually place you at your destination.
3 It shall wind in and out with you,
4 It will continually meander about with you,
5 And will become straight again,
6 Finally it will lay you down gently.

7 Carry me on the back, let us go
8 You who are not afraid of the forests,
9 Move about and let me wind my way through.
10 You who are not wary of steep roads,
11 Climb it up.
12 Let me ride on the back,
13 Carry me with a carrying-skin,
14 Go, let us go.

15 I do not know home,
16 You know.
17 I do not know what it is on the other side,
18 You know it.
19 I do not understand those on the other side,
20 You have taken them all across.

21 Slowly go with me,
22 I am not in a hurry,
23 I press on in order to reach the place;
24 Lead me.
25 Cut through the mist and clouds of darkness;
26 Walk with me.
27 You who are the maker of things;
28 Hold my hand.

29 There may be a thick overgrowth of grass,
30 The dew can obstruct the view,
31 I do not lose sight of those who know the way.
32 Yonder they are! They are walking on the road!
33 Good gracious! They cross by the ford.
34 Indeed! They enter through the gate!
Luthando olungangiyekiyo

Zaphuma izinkomo zamabheka
Bakikiza ungenil’ umakoti
Umakoti eseshaye ezimhlophe
Ngababona ababili beguqa
Umfundisi wabanika izibusiso.
Ngambona eqhamuka uLuthando
Echichima izondo, ebopha esonga.
Ngesandla wayepheth’ inkemba,
Wagadla zaphophoza izinyembezi.
Ngesandla wayepheth’ umkhonto,
Wagwaza laphophoza igazi.
Obvethe ezimhlophe usembethe emnyama.
Luthando olungangiyekiyo
Ungifundiseleni ukuthanda?

Ngiyamazisa

Lapho sezigwaba ezevangeli,
Lapho sezikhokhelwa ngokuzidela;
Lapho sebefakaza abavangeli,
Lapho sezivuma izindela;
Ziboshwe bhande linye lezwi,
Zikhwele sihlenga sinye sikamoya,
Ziyowela ulwandle ngomoya,
Zimpampa ngamagagasi kamoya,
Uqhamuka engasadle nkobe,
Ekhihlaza nezithelo zakwamhlaba,
Abethembise igolide lakwamhlaba.
Uyawaqqa amafindo awagqabule amagoda.
Maye! Ngiyamazisa.
Siphe amandla simnyathele.
Love which does not leave me

1 The lobola beasts were given
2 They [women] ululated, the bride had entered
3 The bride is clad in white
4 I saw the two kneeling
5 The minister gave them blessings.
6 I saw Love suddenly appearing
7 Overflowing with hatred, cursing and threatening.
8 In his hand he carried a sword,
9 He struck and tears gushed out.
10 In his hand he held a spear,
11 He stabbed and blood flowed.
12 The one who was dressed in white is now clad in black.
13 Love which does not leave me
14 Why do you teach me to love?

I damn him.

1 When those Gospel songs are sung,
2 When they are counselled about the significance of sacrifice;
3 When the evangelists testify,
4 When devotees sing;
5 They are united by one cord of the word,
6 They are on one raft of the Holy Spirit
7 They will cross the sea by means of the spirit,
8 They move swiftly with the waves of the spirit,
9 He suddenly appears ablazed with anger,
10 Overloaded with the fruits of the earth,
11 He promises them the gold of the world
12 He unties knots and breaks off ropes.
13 Alas! I damn him.
14 Give us strength to so that we can crush him.
Uze ungiphuzise amanzi

1. Ngiyovuka kanye nekhwezi
2. Ngiphehle ubulawu obumhlophe,
3. Ngithake ngomthole novuma
4. 'Ze ungithole ungivume.
5. Ngiyophuma nenhlamvu yelanga
6. Lapho ukusa kughakaze amazolo
7. Ngikubone uza, ukhashwa
8. Amakha amnandi kusasa;
9. Ngiyokulindela ngisemthonjeni,

11. Umoya wakho ngiwubone
12. Uphakama kunye nomlalamvuhu
13. Kuphakame ithemba lami,
14. Lapho uthwele imbiza
15. Emnyama eyindilinga
16. Phezu kwekhanda eliyindilinga
17. Namehlo ayindilinga,
18. Nami ngawe ngiyadilingana;
19. Ngiyokunaka ngomnako wenyosi
20. Uze ungiphuzise amanzi.

21. Ngokhangela inxuluma lakwenu
22. Elitshalwe lamila entabeni;
23. Ngeke ngizwe ngimagange
24. Hleze ngibe ngisakhwele ngidiliki,
25. Hleze ngigqanse imithambo,
26. Umqansa ungime esifubeni,
27. Ungikhendle ungingqib'ithemba,
28. Nawe ungishingilele
29. Kumbe ungishalazele

31. Ngiyogcakela noNokubekezela
32. Ngingqume neqele noSineke;
33. Ngishaye uguhlu ngihaye
34. Ngivume inkondlo kaNomathemba
35. Ngigule izintaba ngihaye,
36. Izintaba zingisondeze kwaxe.
37. Uyokuzwa inkondlo usexhibeni
38. Ingqongqoza esifubeni sakho,
39. Ingqongqoze ingqongqoze,
40. Uze ungivulele ngingene.
Until you give me a drink of water

1 I shall awake together with the morning star
2 And stir up white love potion,
3 I shall concoct the love potion of mihole and vuma tree-bark
4 Until I get you to accept me.
5 I shall go out at sunrise
6 When dawn reveals the dew
7 I shall see you coming, escorted by
8 Sweet-smelling fragrance at dawn;
9 I shall wait for you at the spring,
10 I shall wait for you, wait for you.

11 Your spirit I shall see
12 Rising upwards together with the thick fog
13 My hope is raised,
14 When you carry a clay-pot
15 Dark and round
16 On top of your round head
17 And your round eyes,
18 And I too, spin round because of you;
19 I shall pester you with the interest of a bee
20 Until you give me a drink of water.

21 I am going to watch over your large kraal
22 Which is planted and rooted on the mountain;
23 Never will I come eagerly
24 Lest each time I climb up, I will slide down,
25 Lest I bulge the veins,
26 Lest the steep road becomes too difficult for me
27 And beats me and buries my hope,
28 And you turn away from me
29 Perhaps you shun me
30 Perhaps you treat me inconsiderately.

31 I shall go up the hillside with Patience
32 And cut across the slope with Determination;
33 And play the harmonium and compose/recite
34 And sing a song of Hope
35 And skirt the mountains and sing,
36 The mountains will bring me near to you.
37 You shall hear the song whilst in the [cooking] hut
38 Banging in your breast,
39 Knocking and rapping,
40 Until you open for me so that I can enter.
Wena ophezu kwezihlahla
Noma uphezulu kwelenyoni,
Inhliziyo tyonombela
Nomphefumulo ubambelele
Kuwo amagatsha emithi
Ngitibile ngizabalaze
Ngezikhwepha zokunxanela,
Ngesibindi sokulangazelela,
Ngikunxuse ngikunxuse,
Uze ungiphuzise amanzi.

Wena ophansi ekujuleni
Ngijojula ngithubeleze nami
Nengezimpande zomthombe
Njengomnyezane ngijule
Njengabavukuzi begolide
Njengabavukuzi bedayimane,
Noma ngiggula phezu kwedwala
Noma izidlalda ziqundeka
Ngikuqhwebe ngikuqhwebe,
Uze ungelulel' isandla.

Nakushisa, ngisho nakuqanda
Soze kungivimbele, phinde!
Isithwathwa esembeth' izintaba
Asinamandl' okukwemboza;
Nalighwa nangqogwane,
Noma liza nesangquma
Noma liza nesiphepho
Siyontiphephetha singisondeze
Kuwe, ungibambe ngesandla
Unginike ukuphumula.

Wena ongaphesheya kwezibwandle,
Lapho umsinga udloba okwendlondlo
Namadlambi edlangile ngolaka,
Ngiyokweneka inhliziyo yami
Ibe isithlenga sokuwela,
Ngitlambe phezu kweJolidane
Ngwene uLwandle oLubomvu;
Ezweni loju nobisi
Ngakhe khona nami
Ngibuse nami nave.
You on top of the trees
Or high up on the highest branch,
The heart shall cling firmly
And the soul will hold on tight
To the branches of the trees
I shall firmly plant myself solidly
With the power of determined desire,
With the boldness of ardent longing,
I shall beg you, I shall beg you,
Until you give me a drink of water.

You below in the depths
I shall dive deep and work my way through
Like the roots of the wild fig tree
Like the willow I shall sink deep down
Like miners of gold
Like diamond miners,
Even if I thrust on top of the rock
Even if my physical strength diminishes
I shall beckon you, I shall beckon you,
Until you extend your hand to me.

Neither the hotness, nor the coldness
Will prevent me, ever!
The frost which covers the mountains
Has no power to cover you;
Even the snow and ice,
Even if it comes with the hail
Even if it comes with the stormwind
It shall blow me, and bring me nearer
To you, and you shall hold me by the hand
And give me rest.

You across the oceans,
When the whirlpool rages unrestrainedly like a horned viper
And the waves are overpowering with wrath,
I shall spread out my heart
To become a raft to cross,
I shall swim on top of the Jordan river
And cross the Red Sea;
To the land of honey and milk
I, too, will build there
I shall reign with you.
Wena ongaphezu kwamafu,
Umphefumulo wami uyakuhluma
Umile izimpiko zokhozi
Ngimpampe phezu kwesibhakabhaka
Ngidabule amagagasi omoya;
Njengo-Elija wasendulo,
Ngigibele ingqola yomlilo
Ngingqongqoze emasangweni ezulu,
Wena ongukuphila kwami
Ungivulele, ungivumele ngibuse.
You above the clouds
My soul shall grow
It shall grow wings of an eagle
I shall move swiftly above the sky
I shall cut across the air-waves;
Just like Elijah of antiquity,
I shall ride the chariot of fire
I shall knock at the gates of heaven
You who are my life
Will you open up for me and allow me into bliss.
**Langa lami**  
*(Iziziba zoThukela, p. 1)*

1. Siphethu sempilo yami nentokozo,
2. Ngiyini ngaphandle kwakho?
3. Nxa bekusitha kimi
4. Ngiyogqokwa yithunzi lobummyama . . .
5. Nokufa!
6. Lapho ungikhanyisela
7. Umphefumulo uqhabazza injabulo,
8. Inhliziyo yembathe imfudumalo.
9. Umoya wezinsunsu
10. Namathunzi emishwabulo
11. Kushabalala njengamazolo.
12. Ungashoni langa lami,
13. Sihambisane sixhakene
14. Size sehlukaniswe . . .
15. Ukufa!

**Leso sivakashi**  
*(UNodumelezi KaMenzi, pp.12-13)*

1. Babengammemanga . . .
2. Wayengalayezanga . . .
3. Ilanga lase lizihambele,
4. Lase lingishiyi ngingedwana.
5. Ekusondeleni kwakhe endlini,
6. Indlu yaqubuk’ uhllevane,
7. Iqhuqhiswa yitlo wo ngqoqwane,
8. Nomlilo eziko waqal’ ukulotha.
9. Ekungqongqozeni kwakhe ngaqhaqhaZela;
10. Wangen’ endlini ngingamvulelanga,
11. Wahlala nami ngendlovuyangena,
12. Walala nami ngendlovuyangena.
13. Wangihlek’ usulu ngipaupaqua
14. Wangihlek’ inhlimini ngijilajileka,
15. Wangincish’ umoya eqhosha,
17. Wangiwola ngezandlakazi, uNoliqhwa
18. Wangithinta ngezinyawokazi, uNoliqhwa
19. Wangembesa ngengubo yamakhaza,
20. Wangibeka endlini yamakhaza.
My sun

1. Spring of my life and joy,
2. What am I without you?
3. If they shade you from me
4. I shall be covered by the shadow of darkness . . .
5. And death!
6. When you give light to me
7. The soul bursts into happiness
8. The heart is enveloped in warmth.
9. Cold, cutting wind
10. And shadows of curses
11. Evaporate like dew.
12. You must not set, my sun,
13. Let us accompany each other, holding each other
14. Until we are parted by . . .
15. Death!

That visitor

1. They had not invited him . . .
2. He had not given a message . . .
3. The sun was already gone,
4. It had left me behind all on my own.
5. On his approach to the house,
6. The house bristled with gooseflesh,
7. It was caused to shiver by that frost
8. And the fire in the hearth started to die out.
9. With his rapping on the door, I trembled,
10. He entered the house, I did not open for him,
11. He stayed with me by force,
12. He slept with me by force.
13. He cynically laughed at me as I wriggled about
14. He grinned at me as I tossed about,
15. He stinted me of air in arrogance,
16. He boasted as I turned up the white of the eyes.
17. He gathered me in his great, big hands, Noliqhwa
18. He touched me with his great, big feet, Noliqhwa
19. He covered me with a cold cloak,
20. He put me in the cold house [mortuary].