

## Transcultural memory and intertextuality in fred khumalo's *seven steps to heaven*

Kgomotso Michael Masemola

University of South Africa, RSA

### Abstract

Enriching the mise-en-scene of a South Africa in transition with everything ranging from the music of the famous Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes troupe and South African trio dubbed 'Joy' to movie titles, this novel by Fred Khumalo is propelled forth by its play on the ambitions of a young black struggling writer and the vicissitudes of the publishing world which, by chance, celebrates his postmodern novel-within-a-novel *The Oneness of Two in Three* and a prize-winning trans-cultural short story called "Ramu the Hermit". This experimentation, however, simultaneously holds up and tests the virtues of the writing vocation exemplified by great poets of the Irish town of Limerick in a space where all things avant garde enjoy commercial success.

**Keywords:** Intertextuality, transcultural memory, 'double-voicedness', multiplicity

In the fashion of Carli Coetzee, who recently made a strong case for "activating other intertextual fields, to make other trends in the text and our responses to it visible"(2013: 63), Khumalo's transitional novel is replete with transcultural references and influences that range from Miles Davis's album of the same title to Joy's "Paradise Road", right through to Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes' "Wake Up Everybody", as well as chapters that carry an association with Hollywood titles such as "I Know What you Did Last Night", the novel evinces what Rita Barnard, following Twidle (2012: 24), aptly describes as cross-writing, namely, approaches that "play across different genres and modes of address rather than remaining trapped within those protocols of symbolic exchange that thrive on an endless series of tired oppositions: 'the novel' versus 'history'; 'aesthetics' versus 'raw experience'; 'committed' versus 'formalist'" (Barnard, 2012: 2).

Although there are strong historical resonances of township violence in the description of Sizwe the protagonist's political awakening in KwaZulu-Natal during the running battles between the United Democratic Front and the Inkatha Freedom Party, Khumalo's novel marshals allochthonous memory and transcultural intertextuality to the extent that race, gender and masculinities are represented through a multiplicity and temporality that are sophisticated enough to transcend and/or implode the binary oppositions between men and women, gay and 'straight', educated and lay, South African and Zimbabwean, black and white, rich and poor, per-urban Durban and urban Johannesburg, etc., without kowtowing to the conciliatory imperatives of master narratives of Nation-Building overmuch. Such deliberate blurring indexes the complex character of a transitional, if intractable, Rainbow Nation inasmuch as it attests to multiplicity in the novel. Khumalo's narrator, Sizwe Dube, is introduced to us

as connected to a wandering cockroach in the drab mise-en-scene of a Hillbrow a barely furnished shebeen:

The walls were garishly adorned with a menagerie of posters featuring liquor advertising, half naked black models, soccer stars, famous musicians—and the flavour of the century, Nelson Mandela, in various poses (2007: 2).

The foregrounding of poster pastiche calls to mind Mishra's attention to Gerard Genette's delineation of paratextuality as one of the five forms of intertextuality that refers to "title, epigraph, preface, epilogue, footnotes, *photographs*, drafts, acknowledgements, illustrations etc. which are somehow related to the main narrative" (Mishra, 2012: 211, emphasis added). Yet, significantly, the same Sizwe Dube, later on makes bold to state to meld his struggle as a writer to that of his alter ego, Freedom Cele, whose photo's appearance in newspapers (*Seven Steps*, 2007: 2008) goes beyond the memory of Sizwe's journalistic assignments in Zimbabwe as a South African. Rather, he indexes his struggle as both transnational and ontological as opposed to chalking it down to dipsomania and writer's block:

So, taking the leaf from the book of Nelson Mandela who saw good sense in a negotiated settlement for his country instead of an all-out war, he spoke slowly and clearly: 'Gentlemen of Zimbabwe, comrades who fought in the chimurenga, I have no fight against you. I realise that you are justifiably concerned, even paranoid, about the safety of your country. After all the world is crawling with spies and terrorists, and one has to go the extra mile to protect the citizenry of one's country. I salute and respect you, comrades. You and our comrades from our liberation movements fought side by side against the colonialist oppressors at Wankie and in many other battles. All I am asking you is this: Do you realise what I have been through? I've been through hell and back. And shit!' He raised his brows challengingly and said, 'Do you know what you're dealing with? Do you know who I am?' (*Seven Steps to Heaven*, 2007: 2005).

Taking its cues from Cheryl Stobie's (2007) oft-muted observation that there is an element of 'doubling' in this novel, the paper conclusively endorses the view that invariably all characters have at least a double in the form of an alter ego as focus of unification necessary for decoding the novel's transnational allochthonous memory, which is encapsulated in the elusive authorship of the novel-within-the novel entitled *The Oneness of Two in Three*. Interestingly, Miłosława Stępień (2012: 79) mobilizes 'doubling' via the Bakhtinian term 'dialogism' to elucidate a constant interaction between meanings that bear an influence on each other.

With due regard to the titular significance of the novel-within-the novel, as well as the influence of music on the meaning of lived experience from the very onset of the main novel's plot, I would like here to also think of the double in the three characters of Sizwe Thulani and Patrick in from the perspective of how childhood is remembered through stories real and imagined. How they met and fought and wrote through each other is evenly matched by how the memories are enmeshed with stories such as the award-winning "Ramu the Hermit". The latter story of a black, Swahili-speaking Hindu of Zanzibari ancestry living in politically turbulent Durban renders these memories allochthonous; for it comes as the "movie of his life as a boy continued to play in his mind's eye" (*Seven Steps to Heaven*, 2007:11).

The heteroglossic making of these memories, however, has to be further understood in two senses of "a permutation of texts, an intertextuality in the space of a given text," where it becomes possible for

a textual temporality to arise where “several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and naturalize one another”(Kristeva, 1980:36). In the childhood memories recast through not only the movie of the mind’s eye, but also the short story plus the persona who is the nom de plume author who exists between Sizwe and Thulani it becomes possible to have a holy man, in fact “the first African sanyasi in the whole of Chatsworth township, a residential area inhabited by people of Indian extraction”(2007: 123) who spectacularly finds the full vitality of his humanity through a prostitutes who saves him then fulfils what his mantra supresses:

His long-suppressed desire whirled around his groin and exploded out of his penis in torrents, like preserved oil from a burst pipe. The sheets were flooded by the deluge of wasted human seed. The woman tittered, feeling the warm oil bathe her thighs. Ramu grabbed her impulsively, and let out a deep sigh (2007: 129).

Besides the obvious reference to the Thulani’s father, the ‘holy’ Reverend Tembe of the Anglican Church and his wayward ways with a shebeen femme fatale Sis Lovey, the short story also concretizes a life-changing fact that gains significant because of a historical fact: “I lost my virginity on the same day that Mandela was released from prison.”(2007: 94). Ejaculation is not necessarily synonymous with release in *Seven Steps to Heaven*, because it alludes to antinomial relations between the two, as evidenced in the case of Ramu and Sizwe both of whom feel dirty after ‘the release’. This structure of the narrative of allochthonous memory is better understood as metalepsis: “a trope-reversing trope, a figure of a figure” (Gates, 1983: 586).

Read within the scheme of metalepsis, then, ‘holy’ Nelson Mandela himself is indexed through his poster that hangs in a shebeen and is described as “the flavour of the century, in various poses”(2007: 2) alongside “a menagerie posters featuring liquor advertising, half-naked black models, soccer stars, musicians”(ibid). The deliberate vulgarization and pedestrianization, as it were, of the respected political figure is as much iconoclastic as it is antonymic. This other side of Mandela, his unholy double, comes up in a conversation that disavows his heroism:

‘Mandela did fuckall for you and me. In fact his release is the beginning of a long process of betrayal of our cause. He was released on their own terms, on the terms of the white world.’ ‘Of course no one is saying Mandela was the be-all and end-all of our struggle,’ Kokoroshe ventured, but he is a very important symbol of it...But of course no single individual holds the key to our liberation, not the name of Steve Biko, not Sisulu...’(2007: 94).

As the title of the *Oneness of Two in Three* suggests, even in the textual scheme of things no one individual holds the key. Beyond Sizwe having a double in Thulani Tembe who, in turn, has a double in Freedom Cele, Sizwe finds a trope-reversing double in the Irish Patrick McGuinness, whose perceived literary virtues are extolled by the parents of his middle-class black girlfriend Thembi. For Thembi’s parents are fully convicted that he is descended from the heritage of a respectable tradition associated with the Limerick town of poets. Through the voice narration of Thembi, who is averse to the autochthonous collective memory of struggle being contemplated by other black students in the predominantly white campus of the University of Natal, she captures the anticipation of her family thus:

My parents were thrilled to hear that I was going out with Patreick McGuinness. A gallant Irishman, my father called him. Then he started regaling me and Mama with

stories about an Irish town of Limerick. A town of poets and writers, he said. Irish people were like black people. They had suffered just like us black people.

But they are still white my mother countered later on, to me. They are better than these black monkeys in our country, monkeys who don't want to work and blame all their misfortunes on the white government, she said. Look where we are now, despite our black colour. We took it upon ourselves to work hard, that's why we have no truck with these monkey faces who are forever whingeing about oppression, apartheid. Damn! It makes you wish you were born another colour, in another country! I can't wait to see Patrick McGuiness sitting with us at dinner table. You say he is doing his master's in Irish literature; he must be a bright boy (2007: 145-6).

This harks back to reflections on influence and the best of traditions, and no doubt Sizwe himself majors in Accounting and, most importantly English and philosophy, to support his vocation as a serious writer. It is, we suppose, by design and not default serendipity that they meet and forge a common interest around the student magazine. Indeed, it is Patrick who introduces him to the sexy publisher Shiree Leroux, who buys into Patrick's idea of a postmodern novel called the *One of Two in Three*. But is the literary influence Irish, in a true and palpable sense? Not at all. If anything, Patrick is the trope reversed—anything but Irish in deportment and all, which fact makes it utterly impossible for Thembi to bring him home to dinner and so meet the parents. He signifies the double-voicing of the black writer. To be sure, Patrick rouses Sizwe—who seems lost amid what he sees “a sea of white humanity raging”(2007: 149)—with a black hip-hop sounding voice ‘Yo, brother, whassup?’...’Yo, bro, I'm talkin to you, huh!. We are here given to understand that it was for Sizwe's benefit, this talking black; a talking black that patronizes and alienates Sizwe by its foreignness; a talking black that disallows Sizwe the black man to talk back without being either defensive or rude to the tall young white man “in baggy jeans that threaten to fall off his tiny body, sneakers and Lakers shirt”(2007: 141).

Wearing his Lakers backwards, too, he proceeds to introduce himself ‘Man, Patrick McGuiness is the name...This here is my queen Thembi. And wha's your moniker, dude?’(2007:141). No sooner had they shook hands than Patrick switched to a white South African accent, which Sizwe could better understand and for which he was grateful no doubt. It does not last for long: right after Thembi leaves, Patrick comments that she is ‘a good bitch’, to which Sizwe objects. He responds with a smile “Yo nigger, where you from, huh?...nah, nah, nigger, you from the sticks you don't dig the lingo”, which infuriates Sizwe to a point where he says: “Man, don't call me a nigger”(2007: 142). That there is a relationship that ensues after this confrontation deliberately refers to his childhood friend and alter ego, Thulani Tembe, who is his also his writing double after a *ménage à trois* with Nolitha. Remarkably, he holds hands with him rather intimately in way that could only confirm his feelings for Patrick without guilt or disgust. Here Thulani is displaced by Patrick as a double: for Thulani is now Freedom Cele and publishes his stories under the pseudonym Vusi Mntungwa. Patrick thus becomes the double of a double of Sizwe's light-skinned childhood friend whom Sizwe remembers differently.

Such symptomatic doubling of characters as Stobie indicates above in the allochthonous scheme of things is not limited to characters such as Thulani Tembe and Sizwe Dube or Sis Lettie or Sis Joy. The mirror leitmotif also functions to highlight the figuration-cum-apparition of Thulani his alter ego in it, thus becoming less an object of narcissism but a reflection of existential angst associated with the fear of the tragic persona he is at once developing into and denying. Each time the desperate adult

Sizwe drifts into a Thulani Tembe phantasmagoria, the reader can almost hear the subtly referenced the allusion to the refrained chorus of a song by Michael Jackson, that is, 'Man in the Mirror':

I'm starting with the man in the mirror

I'm asking him to change his ways

And no message could have been any clearer

If you want to make the world a better place

Take a look at yourself, and then make a change (<http://www.metrolyrics.com/>)

For Sizwe Dube the writer to change himself into a success story or rehabilitated self, he has to consider the man in the mirror, viz., his double Sizwe Tembe author of *Ramu the Hermit* and nom de plume for churning out *The Oneness of Two in Three*. The Michael Jackson song is in effect part of musical score of the narrative that is operationalized as a transmuted bricolage 'under erasure' (to borrow from Heidegger and Derrida somewhat): both absent and present. To be both present and absent means that is not written into the text, yet its presence is everywhere ubiquitous in sober moments of self-reflection and also during dipsomaniac ruminations at Hillbrow bars. It is always the man in the mirror he has to confront with a purpose to either defeating the retrograde persona or banishing from his thoughts the apparently dead Thulani who is a haunting apparition.

Thulani is an alter ego and, as such, remains inextricably a part of Sizwe's split self. He is part of the layered onion necessary for the formulaic cooking of soup in the life of the protagonist. This layerdness, as it were, is understood as an indelibly encoded aphorism from Sizwe's mother:

People are like onions, his mother used to say, they come in layers. 'When I was young, if I made soup and I was chopping onions' – that's what she would be thinking. Layers, everyone has layers. You have to see them in yourself and others (2007: 28).

The same holds true for *The Oneness of Two in Three*, the novel within the novel, which is a ploy to 'do a postmodern thing' but also *Seven Steps to Heaven's* double. I would here like to point out that the recognition of cross-writing in this paper forms the basis of the symptomatic reading across genres which, for all intents and purposes, follows the premise of Miłoslawa Stępień, who in her "*Truth and Reconciliation*" in *English Language Novels of South African Writers* (2012) consciously makes "the primary assumption that meaning is always to be looked for both 'inside' and 'outside' the text" and, in so doing, returns "to some of Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts such as the dialogic nature of novels, complemented by such concepts as 'double-voiced discourse', 'heteroglossia', and 'hybridization'" (2012: 77).

A significant part of the double voiced discourse and heteroglossia in Fred Khumalo's *Seven Steps to Heaven* reveals itself through signifiers outside the text, especially musical lyrics and cross-references that form the basis of both intertextuality and multiplicity. In the first instance, the two shebeen settings in urban Hillbrow and in a suburban KwaZulu-Natal location of Exclusive Park are associated with a milieu defined by meanings gleaned from the lyrics of music at play. The narrator, by creating a double-voiced discourse, sees fit to create a double signature, such that the tough Sis Joy character—owner of the eponymous Sis Joys's Oasis on the roof of Hillbrow Heights—holds in counterpoise the figure of sensually ethereal Sis Lettie of the Paradise Road shebeen.

Inasmuch as Khumalo's narrator frames the story as the "[t]he movie of his life [that] continued Khumalo to play in his mind's eye" (2007:11), adult memories invoke visual metaphors that are indexically associated with film noir and the femme fatale figure. Elizabeth Bronfen's findings shown that heroines or, as the case may be, "heroes of film noir repeatedly find themselves penetrating into the darkness of a fascinating, and at the same time threatening, counterworld of corruption, intrigue, betrayal and decadence from which they can only escape by death" (Bronfen, 2004: 104). A recent study has shown that this kind of cross-writing and hybridization has been used by writers like Bloke Modisane and filmographers to ostensibly bring to view a tragic entry into "unpredictable settings and debauched existence in the cinematic idiom of film noir" (Masemola, 2011: 2).

It is worth noting that it is the femme fatale who, despite the forcefully professed tragic sensibility of film noir, is the very encapsulation of "an attitude that addresses the limits of modern dreams of perfectibility" (Bronfen, 2004:104). A description of Sis Lettie at the Razzmatazz recalls film noir femme fatale of the 1950s genre in no small measure:

Then an apparition, a thing from heaven, appeared at the entrance to the club. She was tall on her silver stiletto heels, sparkling in her red sleepless evening dress. She had on gloves that reached to her elbows. Large earrings dangled from her lobes, their beauty enhanced by a dark Diana Ross wig she had on. There were murmurs: 'Who's this?' (*Seven Steps to Heaven*, 2007: 88-89).

The grand entrance of the femme fatale character of Sis Lettie is pinned on the erotic masts of a temptress whose moving presence inspires the deejay to stop playing a Brenda Fassie number and, in its place, "put on the queen's favourite, 'Paradise Road':

Come with me down Paradise Road  
This way please, I'll carry your load  
This you must believe (2007: 90).

A kind of redemption or indeed lightening the tedium of latter day burdens suggestively offered by Sis Lettie is rendered both utopian and metaphysical when the song continues:

Come with me to paradise skies  
Look outside, and open your eyes  
This must believe  
There are better days before us (2007: 90).

This highly favoured song by the Joy trio mollifies and tempts its shebeen audience, on the one hand, and intertextually prefigures (by discursive nomination) the contrasting character of Sis Joy in her Hillbrow Oasis. Her choice of song by Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes, in contrast, is an exhortation that caloges Sizwe and other patrons to self-saving and civic duty.

Wake up everybody no more sleepin' in bed  
No more backward thinkin' time for thinkin' ahead  
The world has changed so very much from what it used to be  
There's so much hatred war and poverty

Wake up all the teachers time to teach a new way  
Maybe then they'll listen to whatcha have to say  
'Cause they're the ones who's coming up and the world is in their hands

When you teach the children teach 'em the very best you can  
The world won't get no better  
If we just let it be  
The world won't get no better  
We gotta change it yeah, just you and me (<http://www.metrolyrics.com>).

The terms of 'waking up', 'teaching', 'healing' and 'building the land' above or indeed rebuilding a tumultuous South Africa in transition serve the purpose of discursively consolidating a new dispensation through codifying hard work into the everyday consciousness of all shebeen patrons present. According to Miłoslawa Stępień "all these terms tie in closely to an approach which perceives textual meaning as being dependent on the social context, thus introducing a conceptualization of the novel as being always dialogic and of meaning as emerging from the text's dialogic place within culture and society" (2012: 78). The approach of reading across and between the heteroglossia of the text allows readers to draw the link between words or characters that could easily be read in isolation. As per the exemplary reference to the paradigmatic selection of the word "Joy" as the name of the trio, and the name of a shebeen queen, as well as the goal of the *Seven Steps to Heaven*, it is clear that within such an approach, no interpretation is ever final "because every word is a response to previous words and elicits further responses [that are] constantly entering into dialogue with past, present and future utterances" (Allen, 2000: 28—quoted in Miłoslawa Stępień, 2012: 78).

Miłoslawa Stępień (2012: 79) makes a note of the fact that in the glossary entry to the term 'dialogism' within the English-language publication of four of Bakhtin's essays entitled *The Dialogic Imagination*, Holquist writes that according to the Russian theorist "there is a constant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others". In *Seven Steps to Heaven*, the title of the song "Paradise road", conditions the journey of Sizwe from childhood outside Durban to Hillbrow in Johannesburg and then Harare in Zimbabwe as everything but paradise. In fact, it indexes the journey cannot be understood as a bildungsroman proper or what Carli Coetzee calls an inspirational chronicle of self-actualization" (2013: 68).

Primarily, then, Miłoslawa Stępień notes that within such a conceptualization, the meaning of words is constantly and dynamically changing, as well as being dependent on spatial, temporal and situational factors. Take for instance, the protagonist's tendency to take solace in *Kaffir Boy*, an autobiography by Mark Mathabane that decries not only the banal and trite life of a black youth, but also inspires confidence in a young man who is determined to supersede soured relations between himself and his cavalier father. In this sense, the 'Kaffir' boy in question is not used in an invidious or delirious sense of notorious South African race relations: "he paused and realised that what the book was saying was almost true of his current circumstances, except that his own household had simply broken down because his parents simply had no confidence in each other any more", despite his status as an Anglican man of the cloth (*Seven Steps to Heaven*, 2007: 77). Heteroglossia, then constitutes, a moving aside as well as crossing over:

Various kinds of crossings occur in the novel: the White man adopts the mannerisms of a Black persona, while his Black former girlfriend sounds White; a lesbian delights in wearing ultrafeminine, sexy clothing to confound stereotypes. Some wry humor attends the suggestion by the White man that Sizwe should write an academic article on "The Politics of Being Gay in the Black South African Community," and Sizwe's crisp rejoinder that this could be published alongside an article by his partner, titled "Confessions of a White Male Prostitute in a Changing South Africa." Overall,

however, the lessons learned by the characters are bitter, and issues of doubling, rape, drug addiction and failure despite promise are explored. (Stobie, 2011: 485).

Given the fact that the allusion to the Anglican Priest Tembe's infidelity is written as a form of 'doubling' into the short story of "Ramu the Hermit", it is reasonable to infer that Thulani Tembe's utterance, true to intertextuality, is 'heteroglot': that is, it refers to "the presence within it of other utterances, past utterances and future responses or redeployments" (Allen 2000: 213, quoted in Stępień 2012: 78), "thus it is a term which takes into account that meaning is constantly fluctuating and is dependent not only on how it was understood when it was uttered/written down but also on how it is later read and re-used" (2012: 79). We therefore observe that *Seven Steps to Heaven* is fully amenable to the concept of 'heteroglossia' such as it primarily used in its Bakhtinian sense of intertextual polyphony in terms of which writing contains multiple voices or origins (Mishra, 2012: 3). It is here worth looking at the way in which the heteroglossic registers of the novel highlight the elements of parody involved in the description of Rev Tembe's return to his church in Biblical terms after eloping with Sis Lovey yet the congregation is duped to have been a political kidnapping:

'The Lord works in mysterious ways,' Elder Mahlangu shouted at the congregation, his mouth foaming. 'The Lord opened the gates of the dungeon and allowed his son to walk free. It reminds me of those gates behind which Daniel had been languishing, hallelujah, don't we have a friend in Christ?'

'We have a great friend in Christ!' the congregation chorused enthusiastically.

On the strength of this story the faithful had come out in their numbers to see this holy man of God who had defied the evil forces and was back with them in the world of the living, gallantly spreading the word of God (*Seven Steps to Heaven*, 2007: 104).

Considering that this passage is drawn from a passage from a chapter of *Seven Steps to Heaven* that carries the title "The Return of the Shepherd", it is worth returning to what Bakhtin (1981) frames as the intertextual capability of an utterance to arise out of dialogue "as a continuation of it and as a rejoinder to it" (Bakhtin 1981: 276-277—quoted in Stępień, 2012: 79). This is the fundamental basis on which Cheryl Stobie (2007) characterizes of Khumalo's novel as double-voiced. It is noteworthy that Sizwe the protagonist finds love with a complex Irish character Patrick McGuinness who, besides studying towards a Masters degree in Irish Literature, also speaks with an Afro-American accent, dates a middle-class black girl with a posh English accent, and yet is bedeviled by tendency to walk the streets as a prostitute. Likewise, Sizwe is strongly attracted to the same girl and, ironically, it is Patrick and Sizwe who end up together in a near-obsessive interracial, bisexual conundrum. Given that Sizwe has an alter ego in his friend Thulani, he leads a double life as a heterosexual and a bisexual man, a dipsomaniac writer and a freedom fighter straddling the two countries of South Africa and Zimbabwe, and a black and white man—all these being played out in the surface of the leitmotif mirror that reflects the present angst and defies autochthonous cultural memory or what Chimamanda Adichie calls "a single story" of African masculinity.

Instead of the single story, a double-voicedness that defies stereotyping becomes manifest in the words of Patrick McGuinness in the novel:

'That's a dangerous approach. You see, me the darkies don't like me because I get on well with the black dolls. The honkies don't like me either 'cos they say I am letting them down, trying to be black, always voting with the black students in the at SRC meetings. Me I go hip-hop when my white brothers are getting high and puking and

smashing each other with baseball bats at their rowdy rock sessions' (*Seven Steps to Heaven*, 2007: 103).

Sizwe's alter ego Thulani is as complex as Patrick, to the extent that the single story is replaced by multi-layeredness:

But every now and then, he wondered what awaited him at the other end. Now and then his other persona, Thulani Tembe, would try to take over, asking questions about where Sizwe Dube was at the moment, how he was coping, but the dominant Freedom soon wrested control from the Thulani, putting himself at centre stage, cracking jokes with colleagues. What a simple straight-talking guy, they told each other (*Seven Steps to Heaven*, 2007: 191).

In sum, therefore, "the dialogic nature of language must be emphasized" more than the single story of the simple, 'straight talking guy'. Rather, *Seven Steps to Heaven* demands to be read symptomatically in pretty much the same way that Sizwe is doubled through Patrick, or Sis Lettie through Sis Joy, or indeed Thulani through Freedom Cele, with Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes 'signifying upon' Culture Club, and Irish Poetry upon the South African novel, and the novel upon the Hindu-inspired short story. The foregoing are the hallmarks of transcultural memory. The alter ego in the paratext of Oneness of Two in Three vacillates between Thulani Tembe and Freedom Cele, further to think about Sizwe Dube. The three characters constitute the intertextual writing vortex, as it were, from which creativity springs. All told, *Seven Steps to Heaven* is a multi-layered text with characters that are as multiple as they are multi-layered themselves. Here the recurring leitmotif of "if I made soup..." carries a sense of hold, in that it signposts that "people are like onions"; indeed Freedom Cele is like an onion with Thulani Tembe beneath him, inasmuch as Sizwe Dube has Vusi Mntungwa and Freedom Cele lurking beneath him. This multi-layeredness crosses over from being a Zulu boy to being a lover of an Irish man who doubles as a male prostitute. Suffice to conclude that the ability of the text to present itself in heteroglot terms, such that the mirror does not show the protagonist facing, in the same manner that one's story is affiliated to another, renders the texts amenable to intertextual readings that are allocthonously transcultural in their character and genre composition.

## References

- Barnard, Rita .2012. 'Beyond Rivalry: Literature/History, Fiction/Non-Fiction', *Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Studies* 13(1-2), 1-4.
- Bronfen, Elisabeth .2004. 'Femme Fatale: Negotiations of Tragic Desire', *New Literary History: Multicultural Essays* 35(1): 103-116.
- Coetzee, Carli .2013. 'Sihle Khumalo, *Cape to Cairo*, and Questions of Intertextuality: How to Write About Africa, How to Read About Africa', *Research in African Literatures* 44 (2): 62-75
- Gates, Henry Louis. 1983. "The "Blackness of Blackness": A Critique of the Sign and the Signifying Monkey", *Critical Inquiry* 9 (4): 685-723.
- Eagleton, Terry. 2002. 'Maybe he made it up', A review of *The Forger's Shadow: How Forgery Changed the Course of Literature* by Nick Groom, *London Review of Books* 24, (11), 6 June: 3-6.

Mervin, Harold & The Blue Notes.1975. 'Wake Up Everybody', written by Leon Huff, Kenny Gambel, John Whitehead, Gene McFadden and Victor Carstaphen, Warner Chappell Music Inc. [<http://www.metrolyrics.com>, accessed 3/10/13]

Khumalo, Fred .2007. *Seven Steps to Heaven*. Sunnyside: Jacana.

Jackson, Michael.1988. 'Man in the Mirror', written by Glen Ballard and Siedah Garrett, Universal Music Publishing Group, BMG RIGHTS MGMNT US, LLC).

[<http://www.metrolyrics.com/>, accessed on 3/10/2013]

Kristeva, Julia. 1980. *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. Leon S. Roudiez (ed.), T. Gora *et al* (trans.). New York: Columbia University Press.

Masemola, Kgomotso Michael. 2011. 'Between Tinseltown and Sophiatown: The Double Temporality of Popular Culture in the Autobiographical Cultural Memory of Bloke Modisane and Miriam Makeba', *Journal of Literary Studies* 27(1): 1-27.

Mishra, Raj Kumar. 2012. 'A study of intertextuality: The way of reading and writing', *Prime Research Education (PRE)* 2(3): 208-212.

Stępień, Miłoslawa (2012). "Truth and Reconciliation" in English Language Novels of South African Writers, Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Faculty of Oriental Studies, Warsaw: University of Warsaw.

Stobie, Cheryl. 2011. 'Reading Bisexualities from a South African Perspective—Revisited', *Journal of Bisexuality*, 11(4): 480-487.

-----2007. *Somewhere in the double rainbow: Representations of bisexuality in post-apartheid novels*, Scottsville, South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.

Twidle, Hedley. 2012. 'In a Country where You couldn't Make this Shit up'?: Literary Non-Fiction in South Africa', *Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Studies* 13(1-2): 5-28.