



**UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE**

**Bientang's Cave: A Trans-disciplinary Study of Marginality in the Epic in
Afrikaans**

By
Jolyn Phillips

Student number: 2870322

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Department of English, University of the Western Cape

Supervisor: Prof. Jacobus Moolman

Co-Supervisor: Prof. Antjie Krog

November 2023

Abstract

This reflexive essay has a creative and an in-depth research component. I sought to write an Epic poem about a marginalised woman known as Bientang. Bientang was a Khoisan, or ‘strandloper’ as Khoisan people were known, in the coastal region of the Southern Cape, featured in several legends from this area. The legends tell of a woman who was supposed to have lived in a cave situated in the Old Harbour in Hermanus. Since then, the cave has had many incarnations and is currently a restaurant called Bientang’s Cave. Writing an Epic poem about a marginalised character is in some ways a contradiction. Therefore, I examine the terms ‘marginalised’ and ‘Epic’ in various ways: firstly, through research into issues of marginalization and creolization, more specifically of fishing communities in the southern Cape; secondly, through research into the characteristics, changes, and manifestations of the Epic in Afrikaans literature, in particular; thirdly, through writing my original Epic poem itself – an accepted form of practice-based research; and fourthly, through translating parts of the poem into English.

The critical component of my research consisted of an inquiry into the Epic, especially within a South African context. Various Afrikaans long poems – the long poetic idyll *Martjie* (1911) by Jan F. E. Cilliers, *Raka* (1941) by N.P. Van Wyk Louw, *Trekkerswee* (1947) by D.J. Opperman, *Zimbabwe* (1968) by P.J. Philander, *Joernaal van Jorik* (1974) by D.J. Opperman, *Lewendood* (1985) by Breyten Breytenbach and *Lady Anne* by Antjie Krog (1989) – are examined in terms of the characteristics of the Epic. Although I have read several historical examples of the global Epic, I refer only briefly to *Gilgamesh*, Homer’s Epics *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad*, as well as two South African Epics, *Castaway* (1999) by Yvette Christiansë and *Krotoa’s Story* (1990) by Karen Press, in order to determine how the character traits of the Epic manifest in these works. The idea is to explore the Epic’s function, how their respective societies manifest in the Epic, and how this would assist me as a poet writing an Epic coming from my own community.

In the creative part of my research, I drew upon my imagination as well as various historical sources such as *Travels into the Interior Parts of Africa by Way of the Cape of Good Hope: in the years*

1780, 81, 82, 83, 84, and 85 by Francois Le Vaillant (1753-1824). Through an exploration of the contradiction between the hero and the marginalised, I re-configured the traditional epic 'hero' into a "counter-epic", a literary concept that has developed in reaction to imperialist epic conventions as a means of scrutinizing the consequences of foreign conquest of dominated peoples – a form explored by Nestor Garcia Canclini's *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (1995). Importance was given to Canclini's "contra-epic" which allowed me to not only surpass the stringent expectations of the epic but also to explore the many challenges I faced in presenting a marginal character as the epic hero.

Further theoretical discussion also assisted the ethical reflection of the presence of marginalisation in my work and in the Epics mentioned above. Gayatri Spivak's "A Moral Dilemma" (2000) and "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1996) as well as Hein Viljoen's "Marginalia on Marginality" (1999) were my guides. I also explored issues related to the representation of sexual abuse, the Epic genre as subversion, and the Afrikaans language as both opposition and advantage.

In exploring these aims, a dramatic play, written in Afrikaans and English as well as a translation of selected excerpts of *Bientang* from the Afrikaans, were added to the creative output. These additions to the creative project are informed by a transdisciplinary approach, drawing on various fields such as literature, history, linguistics, applied theatre, and music.

Some of my own observations lead me into terribly ironic waters that point more to exclusion than to breaking new ground. In a list of firsts, *Bientang: 'n Inau gedig* led to my becoming the first female person of colour to write an Afrikaans Epic; the first person to write an Afrikaans Epic about a "heroine" of colour; the first person to write an Afrikaans Epic encompassing a wide variety of Afrikaans forming a kind of idiolect; the first person to write an Afrikaans Epic that actively undermines or re-questions the accepted notion of an Epic; and finally the first person to write an Afrikaans Epic as part of a PhD. This, I argue in the final chapter, is not necessarily breaking barriers but exposing exclusion.

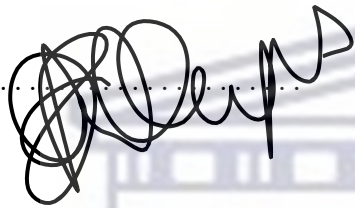
Declaration

I, Jolyn Phillips, declare that this thesis *Bientang's Cave: A Trans-disciplinary Study of Marginality in the Epic in Afrikaans* is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or assessment at any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Name: Jolyn Phillips.

Date: 30 November 2023

Signature:



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

“Pick me for a sister

In this suspicious land

I have a shovel of a face”

(Mort 2020)



Acknowledgements

Bientang will remain the defining moment of my writing journey. I never thought how irrevocably this legend would push my ability to forgive. If anything, the simple act of saying thank you or admitting to (mis)takes has really helped me gain empathy for the work I was embarking on. The patience of my supervisors Professor Antjie Krog and Professor Kobus Moolman, held space for me to be creative but also to explore suggested readings, and archival and geographical sites that introduced me to South African and international literature. This broadened my boundaries to become both a creative and academic writer. I would not have discovered or read for this PhD without the generous expertise they shared with me. It took me seven years to complete this study, but the English department kept believing that my work was worth pursuing even when I experienced various health, mental health and financial challenges. I was allowed to fully enjoy being a trans-disciplinary writer, experimenting with music, film, applied theatre, and writing workshops, which I believe has prepared me as a creative writing practitioner. I also want to thank the English department for allowing me to write in my mother tongue Afrikaans and for accommodating it in my thesis. I would not have been able to flourish without the UWC Creates and the Faculty of Arts' ethos of multilingualism.

During this process, I was also very privileged to have *Bientang* published by Human & Rousseau as *Bientang: 'n !nau gedig*. I feel truly honoured by the care and sensitivity of Nelleke de Jager and her team in preparing the manuscript for publication.

I would like to thank the following organizations for supporting my creative endeavours: The University of the Western Cape, The University of Stellenbosch, The National Institute for Humanities and Social Studies for the Working Groups Grant, The National Theatre initiative (NaTi), The Suidoosterfees, The Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees (KKNK), and US Toyota Wordfees.

I would also like to thank The Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns for the special recognition they accorded me in awarding me the Eugène Marais Prize for literature for *Bientang: 'n !nau gedig*.

I would like to express my gratitude to the cast and crew of my play titled *Bientang:bloedspoor!/nau*, in no particular order, Frazer Barry, Deniel Barry, Charlton George, Amelda

Brand, Amber Fox-Martin, Maia Lehr Sacks, Lulu Kieser, Kayla van der Merwe, Renée Cloete, Jason Jacobs, Philip Theron and Professor Louise Viljoen for all the discussions on the South African/Afrikaans literary and theatre scene.

I have mentioned in the thesis, that I have had battles around racial identity and writership but engaging with everybody mentioned above, I have come to understand the serendipity of being born from blue-collar workers, in a fishing village called Gansbaai. I am proud to be my parents' daughter and to be part of that community: that is my true archival space. I believe that all the words I will ever need are always waiting for me when I go home to Gansbaai. But concluding this project I know I can write no matter what place I call home.



Keywords

Afrikaans Epic

Marginality

Trans-disciplinarity

Counter-Epic

Bientang

Female Epic

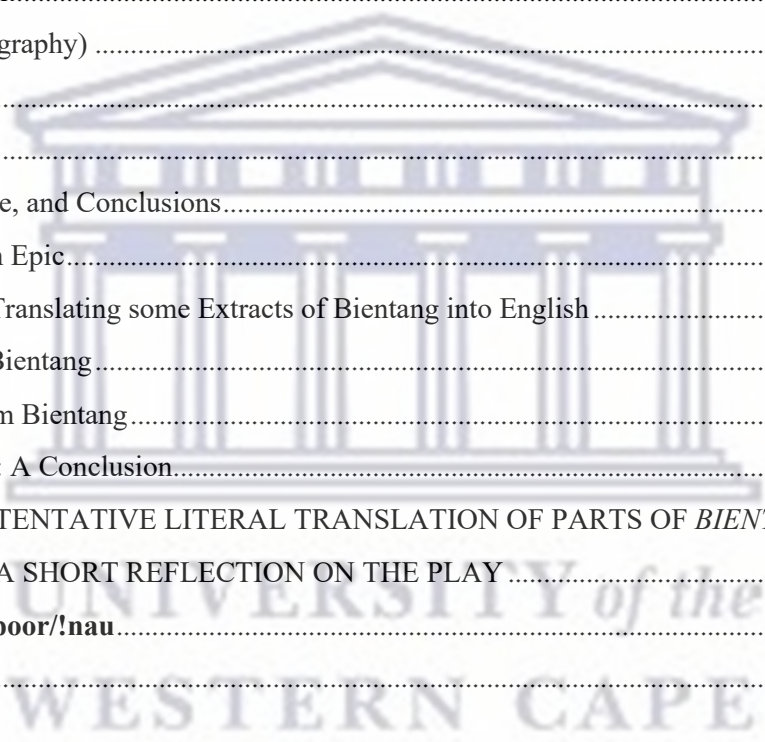


UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	i
Declaration	iii
Acknowledgements.....	v
Keywords.....	vii
List of Figures	x
Bientang: 'n Inaugedig.....	1
Chapter 1. Introduction.....	59
1.1. Writing journey.....	60
1.2. A lunch in Hermanus brought her to me!	61
1.3. Some ethical considerations for the poet/academic	62
1.4. My Afrikaans identity: From dialect towards idiolect.....	63
1.5. Subjective Considerations	65
Chapter 2. Literature Review	67
2.1. Literature Review	68
2.2. The Epic Tradition.....	68
2.3. Brief Discussion of Three Historical Epics.....	70
2.3.1. <i>The Epic of Gilgamesh</i>	71
2.3.2. Homer's <i>Iliad</i> and <i>Odyssey</i>	74
2.4. Some Afrikaans Epics	77
2.4.1. <i>Martjie</i>	78
2.4.2. <i>Trekkerswee</i>	84
2.4.3. <i>Raka</i>	87
2.4.4. <i>Joernaal van Jorik</i>	89
2.4.5. <i>Zimbabwe</i>	91
2.4.6. <i>Lewendood</i>	93
2.4.7. <i>Lady Anne</i>	94
2.5. A Brief Discussion of Two Other South African Epics.....	97
2.5.1. <i>Castaway</i>	98
2.5.2. "Krotoa's Story"	100
Chapter 3. Literature Review of Theory.....	102
3.1. Archive Material	103
3.2. Marginalisation and Ethical Questions	105
3.3. The Question of Language: Afrikaans as Foe and Friend.	107

3.4. Genre as Subversion	110
3.5. The Representation of Sexual Abuse in <i>Bientang</i>	111
3.6. Some Notes on the Trans-disciplinary	112
Chapter 4. Methodology: Writing Process.....	114
4.1. Trying to ‘meet’ Bientang the Spivak-way	115
4.2. Bientang as an Invocation	116
4.3. The Writing Process	116
4.4. Poet as Host; Poet as Problem.....	124
4.5. Rewriting the Epic hero(ine)	125
4.6. The Eyeservant.....	126
4.7. Format (Typography)	129
4.8. Looking back.....	132
Chapter 5. Results	134
5.1. Impact, Failure, and Conclusions.....	135
5.2. Bientang – An Epic.....	137
5.3. Thoughts on Translating some Extracts of Bientang into English	146
5.4. Reactions to Bientang	148
5.5. Spawning from Bientang.....	151
5.6. Failing Better: A Conclusion.....	151
ANNEXURE 1 – TENTATIVE LITERAL TRANSLATION OF PARTS OF <i>BIENTANG</i>	186
ANNEXURE 2 – A SHORT REFLECTION ON THE PLAY	199
Bientang: bloedspoor/!nau	202
Works Cited.....	204



List of Figures

Fig. 1. “Legends” from Bientang's Cave Restaurant menu,	61
Fig. 2. Standard Version, Tablet II,	71
Fig. 3. Gilgamesh and Enkidu in attack,.....	73
Fig. 4. Reproduction of cuneiform tablet from British Museum.....	74
Fig. 5. Pierneef etching on the title page of “Silwer Strale”.....	84
Fig. 6. Narina, A young Gonaqua,.....	104
Fig. 7. The KHOE family of languages.....	117
Fig. 8. Entrance to Klipgat caves, Gansbaai, Cape Province, South Africa.....	119
Fig. 9. Klipgat caves exit, Gansbaai,	120
Fig. 10. Bietou Berries.....	121
Fig. 11. Bitou Plant.....	121
Fig. 12. Gearing’s Point, Hermanus,	123
Fig. 13. Hermanuspietersfontein (photographer: Thomas Ravenscroft).....	125
Fig. 14. A Young Gonaqua.....	127
Fig. 15. Map of the Cape Whale Coast.....	128
Fig. 16. Example of the long ‘s’	131
Fig. 17. The cover page of Bientang.....	135
Fig. 16. Bingi to Bintagin.	137
Fig. 18. The description of the !nau (S. Seligman), which is included in Bientang.....	139
Fig. 19. Definition of “Bintang”.....	143
Fig. 20. Picture of Bintang beer sold on the Island of Bintang, Indonesia.....	143

UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE

Bientang: 'n !naugedig

bien

tang

'n !naugedig

UNIVERSITY *of the*
Jolyn Phillips
WESTERN CAPE

ek staan op die plaat klipgatgrot en die sandberge agter my voete is
plat my tone uitgesprei oor die skulpgrys wanneer die see terugtrek hoor
ek die ghoera die water is skoon en koud soos my bloed ek staan voor my
en kyk hoe die gety kwaad word



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

Bingī *a*-Deaf; hard of hearing.
Bingihin-*v*-To deafent make deaf.
Binhi-*n*-Seed; grain; germ; bud.
Binithay-*a* & *p*. *p*-Sifted.
Bintang-*n*.False charge; imputation,
presumption; suspicion; imposture,
Bintangin-*r*-To accuse falsely; inculpate.
indict.



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

die !nau kom vinnig aan ek moet in my hut sit
die mans suiker die elandgebied vir my eer
my troubare sal vir my met 'n klipdaskaros seën
my kinders sal altyd behoort aan sy pa'le
wat van rivier kamma-kan kamma vandaan kom

ons is die qua van duiwelsgat en ons gaan nêrens
vandag dra ek my seehondvoorskoot kapallangs mantel
ek is die heerser van my hut melk self die bokke
my broer het sy eed afgelê ek word vandag
vandag is ek nie meer 'n !naumens nie my mense sing

vandag is ek 'n vrou ek word uitgesmeer met boegoe
dit maak my vrugbaar atta'le vat my vanoggend
na die hut en sê vir my ek is nie meer ekke nie

sy buk ek kruip as sy kruip ek skil as sy skil ek
ek gaan nooit weer iets met my eie hande kan bewerk nie
my hande word toegesluit sy leer my voete saam-saam strop
atta sê van nou af moet ek wegbly van die see af
die slangdokter praat my lewe warm met die boegoe

my rooidag maak die see onstuimig in die hut
ons wag ons wag ons wag mane om sonne verby



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

ek is bang vir die !nau tog wil ek bly in die !nau
ag see! stuur swartmosselboodskappe vir my seblief
ek ruik na bietoublos ek kniel voor die ghoenavyg
hou my gonnabos steek my weg in jou keel malmok
los my af !nau toe tog! bewaar my strandlopergeite

sê pa'le ek kan nie by die water uitkom nie sê ma'le
sy bewerk my met bruinsalie haar vaalbosstampsel
sy wat my suster is kyk toe dat ek voor haar vrou word
sy's klaar deur haar fynbostyd sy's klaar ingeheuning vir my
los'le om te ontaard vir my los'le gedou

ek voel hoe die ghoenavygblom uit my trek
ek ruik na seemeeumis ruik vis tussen my bene
groei daar uintjies onder my arms word ek bokkoms
vrougoed maak my aasgoed ek berg liefs my strandloopgeit

my rooidag is op pad ek wag vir my teken
see bring woorde waarmee ek kan bid ek spoel ek vlieg
ek staan op die plaat my sing fring
jou waternaam vang my oog my oestervanger hy weenfluit
sluit die swartmossel oop hardloop sê hy hardloop strandlangs
my bene kom los maar dan draai ek terug huis toe



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

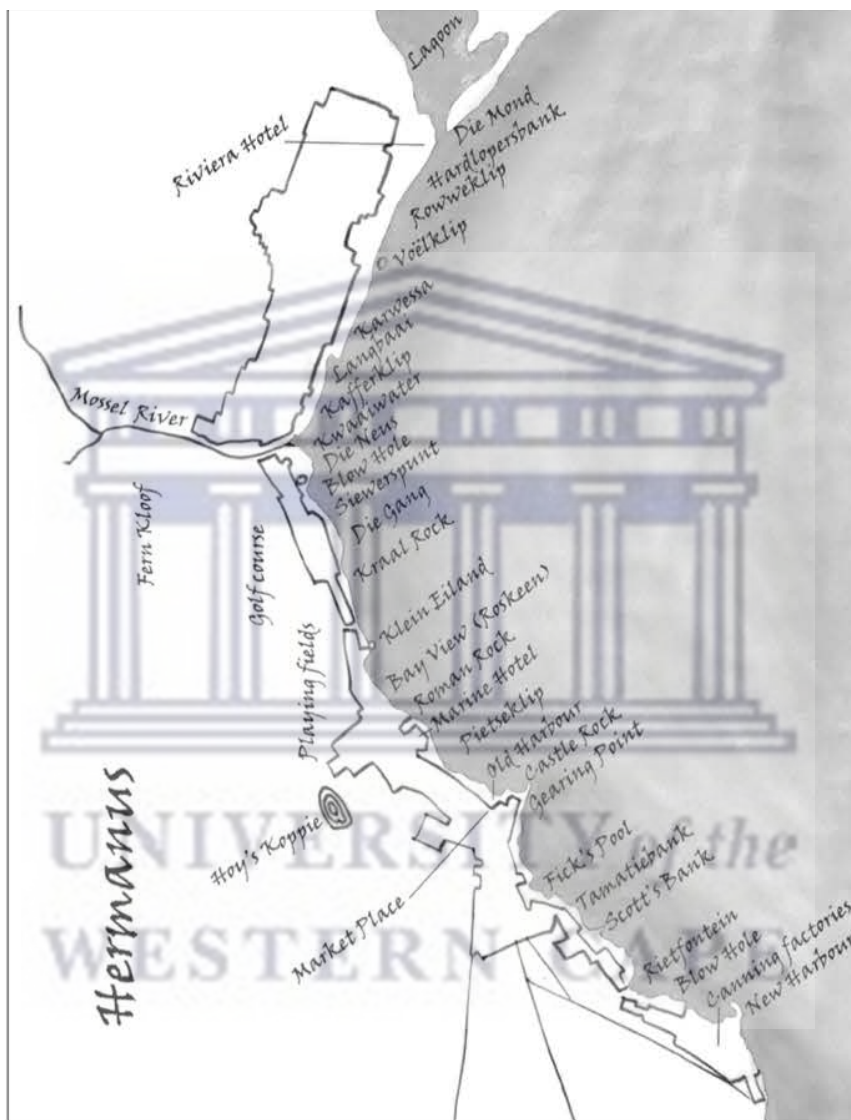
die !nau is terug my boetabessie bemin my
hy't al sy storms op my uitgehaal
hy steel my karos hy dra my steel om sy polse
ek het hom by pa gaan vermaan hy los sy storms
in my my verloofde vat sy belofte terug

ek dra 'n pot storms in my pens ma'le pa'le los
my waarheid soos weggooigoed vir die seemeue
ek is terug in die !nau sê die medisyneman
my broer maak vir hom 'n nuwe karos een
van die dae sal hy trou net ek en sy stormkind bly nou !nau

ons is hemeltergend nêrens en sonder mense



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE



//oëdienaar

jy trek oor die wêreld jy see jy stormsee jy skipbreuk
mensedood jy geweldig jy bemagtig begeer jy lok my
jy sipier my deur water bely ek see ek raak pekelwater
hier kan galjoen koraalrif in my bly see jy
is al wat oor is van my duingharrielyf



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

stratum and to those either below or above it. A person in a "state of transition" from one stratum of society to another is said to be *inau*, i.e. in a condition of taboo, dangerous both to himself and to all with whom he comes in contact. Thus, when a child attains the age of puberty he is no longer a child but neither is he a full member of the tribe, and so for a period he belongs nowhere but is removed from the solidarity and security of his former position

The logo of the University of the Western Cape, featuring a stylized classical building with six columns and a pediment.

UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

vanoggend op die walvismat vorm 'n drupklipgrot
die see die see die see my skuldbeen is 'n afgekapte wiek
ek mis jou ruggelingse wieg dis tyd vir vygiedra
atta vra ek hoe raak mens minder hoekom brand ek
raak ek donker ouer wind as ek my hakskeen lig hol ek

die rooibekvoël ken al die see
se raaisels ek ken al my pa se raaisels maar
hy ok hy word 'n dofwoord hy word skim
hy skim hy wys my hoe ek weg kan beweë
my hele lyf dans soe-soe die krale
om my enkels nek en toe



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

Atta se voorgevoel

ek het dit geweet die medisyneman het dit aan ons verklaar ek
is aangemaak met die see my !nau die groot storm roep!
dit is galjoentyd die water is my beletsel
die dood hardloop weg vir ons die biantangkind vang dit
Atta sien die kind se koliek goggo die stormse

 atta soms soek ek nog vir jou tussen die waters
 atta ek mis atta tot in die murg van my harte
 ek nodig my bloekomgeneester perlemoer
haasvel trek atta van sy vlies af en sit dit op my pa'le se bors
my atta is 'n slangeneester suie 'n gif uit soos 'n wig wie sy
 ma'te wegspoeg atta se roeping reën hael



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

//oëdienaar

ek is jou oëdienaar ek ryg skulpe ek ontskulp alkruk
ek krok ek kraak blaker ek uit ek staan op
ek steel met my oë roof met my tong ek blaai om
die spelonk die noorkapper storm die biantang tang



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

ek het my nageboorte in 'n pot gegooi
langs my bene loop my maanstone weer
oestervanger in my oë kyk vorentoe kyk
agtertoe kyk ek vlieg ek kom op vlerke
ek n!om al langs die loperbaai hy't my 'n nuwe plek gewys

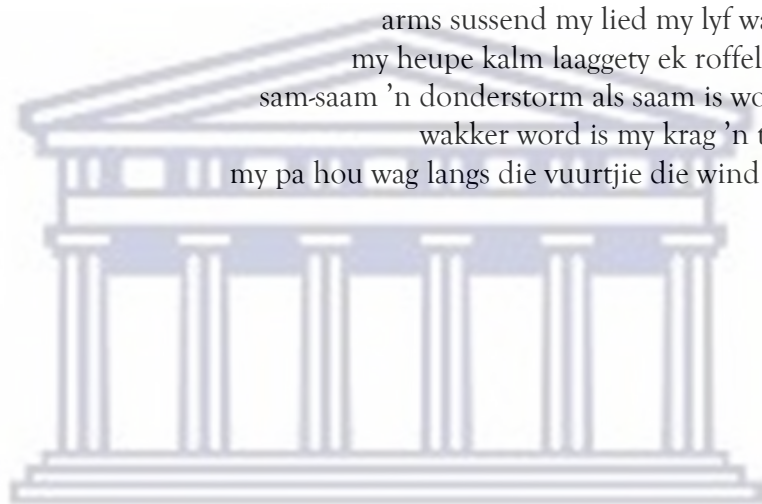


UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

die eerste storm roep my ek kan nie meer my luister inhou nie
ek sit op die plaat sit sonne en mane om ek bid vir die see
ek maak 'n storm aan ek por die see aan daar staan hy
vat hom na sy hel toe hy wat my broer is kyk hy staan
met 'n visstok hy is aas vang hom voor jou sluk hom in
een van die dae is die galjoentyd verby haak hom see

ek het my storms in jou begrawe vat die stormstoker
voor die galjoene ophou byt in stormsnaam ek verdien die guns
ek sal jou wagter wees ek sal na jou waterkinders kyk
ek sal met elke brander getuienis hou van jou
ek bientang jou visvrou vra dit tot sy sout word

arms sussend my lied my lyf wat die wind na-aap
my heupe kalm laaggety ek roffel my voete als dans
sam-saam 'n donderstorm als saam is wolk wat breek as ek
wakker word is my krag 'n toering op my kop
my pa hou wag langs die vuurtjie die wind praat die kole om



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

die dag toe ek wegloop van duiwelsgat af het ek die familiestrik afgetrap
en my geswelde enkel herinner my gedurig

ná my broer se dood staan pa'le
met sy rug na my ma'le staan met sy rug na my
wys die medisyneman die rigting van hulle af
loop

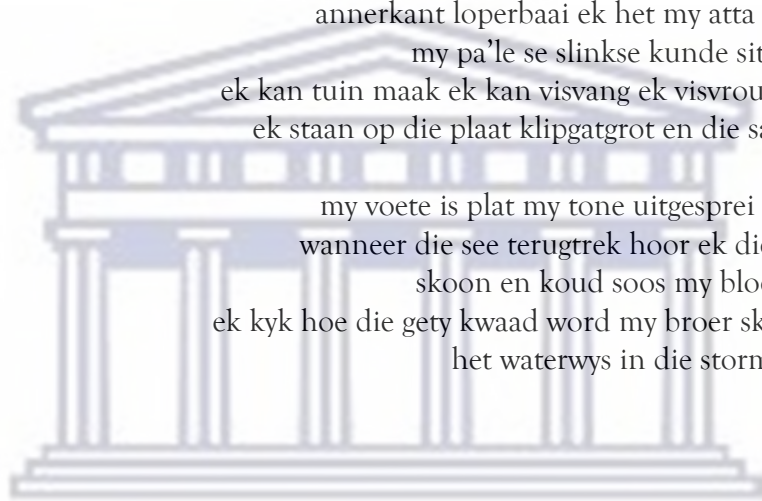
die begrafnis het ek by my los hulle my rou
pak ek weg in my agterkop dit gordelroos in my
loop

sê die oestervanger daar wag vryheid vir jou anderkant loperbaai
ek loop

ek breek julle tak vir tak van my af daar wag vryheid
annerkant loperbaai ek het my atta se mantel ingepak

my pa'le se slinkse kunde sit nog vas in my vel
ek kan tuin maak ek kan visvang ek visvrou van die loperbaai
ek staan op die plaat klipgatgrot en die sandberge agter my

my voete is plat my tone uitgesprei oor die skulpgruis
wanneer die see terugtrek hoor ek die ghoera die water
skoon en koud soos my bloed ek kyk voor my
ek kyk hoe die gety kwaad word my broer skaaier van my !nau
het waterwys in die storm se hande gespeel



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

my tog na my nuwe plek ruik na wilDEDagga

die sand sing die wit woestyn se heuwels raak kleiner
ek is amper daar ek kom al nader aan my spelonk
tree vir tree maak my voete die sandheuwels praat
gister ek het my enkel geswik en dit sleep slakspoor voetspoor slakspoor

die blou hemel staan sonder wolke dit gaan 'n koue nag word
enige boodskap van hoe ver nog soek ek asbosse ken ek aan hulle
taktoppe hulle ken maar min reën en ek het te min water saamgebring
sal ek ook uitwaai 'n spoelstroom windwaarts waai
sal my sand sang hou tot by my bestemming

watter vryheid wag vir my ná al die pyn wat in my kruis
sit want omdraai kan ek nie omdraai kan ek wragtag nie



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

daar doer sien ek 'n berg met 'n swart oog ek dank die fynbos
ek het dit tot hier gemaak in die grot gaan ek baie vuur maak

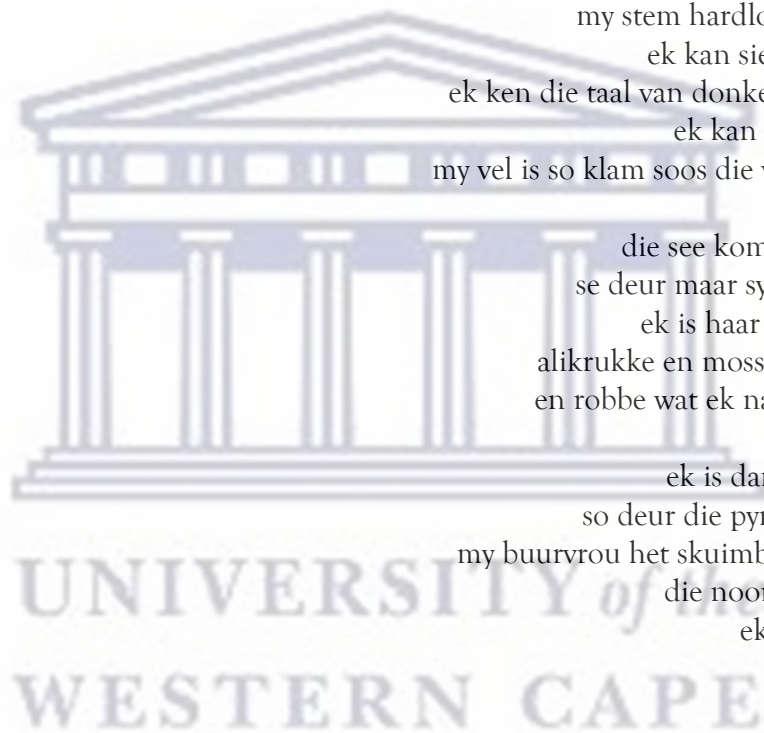
as ek sing staan ek in gebed met my liggaam in selfoorgawe
ek omskrywe reëndruppels uit die dieptes van my buik

daar is 'n waterval wat ophou ophou by varksnoetberg
daar waar my atta kruievrae los vir haar voormense
my stem pluk brandsels nag uit grot uit
my pa'le jag en gooi die as in die lug onthou ek
ek lees hulle voetspore
die maan maak ook vuur en oor ons waak hy soos bye

my stem hardloop weg uit my uit
ek kan sien in die donkerte
ek ken die taal van donkerte in my spelonk
ek kan dit nie oortaal nie
my vel is so klam soos die verbryselende grot

die see kom klop aan my grot
se deur maar sy kom nooit in nie
ek is haar buurvrou sy stuur
aliekrukke en mossels klipkouse visse
en robbe wat ek na my doodplek vat

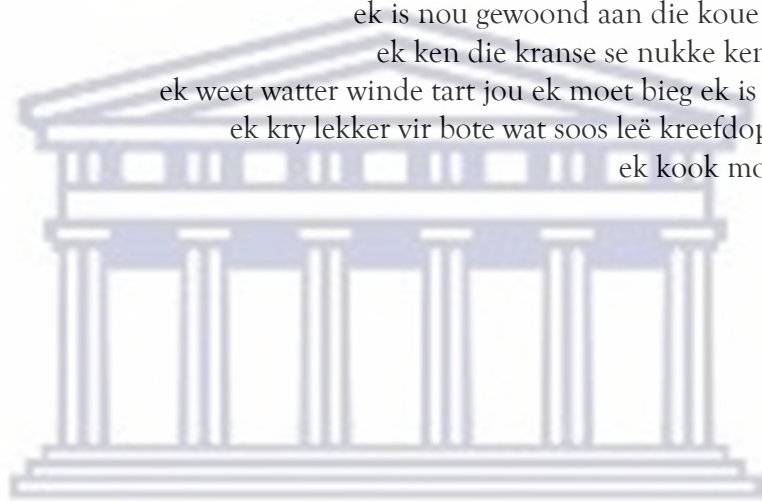
ek is dankbaar vanoggend
so deur die pyn van die swikvoet
my buurvrou het skuimbek by my kom kla
die noorkappers is op pad
ek moet my reg hou



is my bek nie genoeg souterig nie
is my ore nie genoeg ingelê van die branderbraak nie
my kop is 'n suurvygie wat eers 'n kroon gedra het
maar ek voel die son maak my hard van buite en sag van binne
en hoe het ek staat en sukkel in die begin

hier was vars water om te drink maar ek en hierdie grot is nat
hier kan nie vuur brand nie nie vir lank nie hoe moes ek nie
die mure droog hou nie maar dan die alewige geswetery die saambly
met die donkerte die plek is 'n omgedopte volstruiseier
wat in hom net middernag berg ek is agter die oestervanger aan
en ook hy het die kos uit my bek gepik

ek is nou gewoon aan die koue klam huis van my
ek ken die kranse se nukke ken die kolieksomers
ek weet watter winde tart jou ek moet bieg ek is so sout soos jy see
ek kry lekker vir bote wat soos leë kreefdoppe teen jou kraak
ek kook mossels in bamboese



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

die walvisdroom kom klim in my kop as ek sluimer deur die dag
drome wat in die dag geskied sê atta word waar

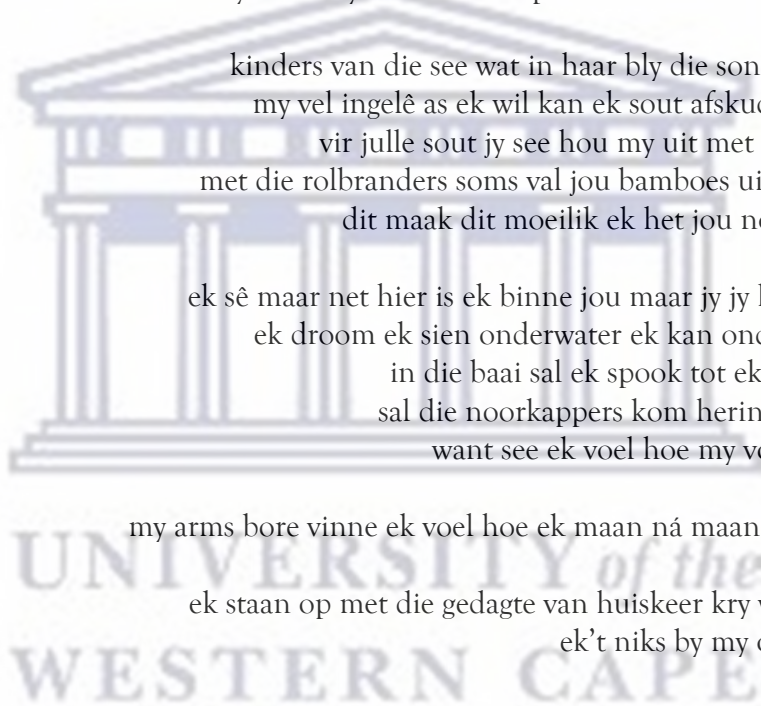
ek is 'n slaweskip wat deur die sand trek ek droom my vel word 'n net
en die see word net sand 'n hand kom en gooi die sand
dit val deur my more en ek het hande wat aan my hande gelas is
die kronkelpaaie in my palm dit het doringgting
ek lê op die water en dut ek vertrou die water in haar kan ek

opgee in my is ook water ja in my is ook donderstorms
in my is ook die harsings so groen soos seegras
in my is klippe en daar is 'n grot aan elke swelselhoek van my
lyf en hier kan ek nie sink nie hier spoel die water in my ore
in my neus my oë hou ek oop in die water is ek soos al die ander

kinders van die see wat in haar bly die son brand my donker
my vel ingelê as ek wil kan ek sout afskud visse is die water
vir julle sout jy see hou my uit met die smaak van jou
met die rolbranders soms val jou bamboes uit jou kroon uit en
dit maak dit moeilik ek het jou nodig see ek kla nie

ek sê maar net hier is ek binne jou maar jy jy hou my uit jou uit
ek droom ek sien onderwater ek kan onderwater asemhaal
in die baai sal ek spook tot ek fossiel in die baai
sal die noorkappers kom herinner ek is bientang
want see ek voel hoe my voete 'n stuur word

my arms bore vinne ek voel hoe ek maan ná maan noorkapper word
ek staan op met die gedagte van huiskeer kry wat sal my makeer
ek't niks by my ouer'le verloor nie



//oëdienaar

Bientang Atta se kind
skrik wakker
ek praat saam met jou
ek wil deur die mure breek
ek wil vir jou 'n storie vertel
van waar ons almal vandaan kom
hoekom ek met die see kan praat
hoekom jy met my waternaam sit
Bientang my kind skrik wakker
ek moet jou my storie vertel
ek wil hê jy moet my hart leeg skeep
my kind jou Atta sy sink
bodem toe skrik wakker
voor almal van ons vergeet



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

die dag kom sê weer tabè ek het nie lus vir dae nie
ek en my donkerte ons voel veilig in die grot se donker oog

wanneer staan jy 'n slag op van jou insluimer staan op sê ek
ek koggel jou met klippies wat op jou kalm waters spring
maar jy huil nie ek loop met 'n knop in my keel
maar ek wil wragtag uitbars en see en see en huil en huil
ek wil pa'le nie vashuil nie my tuiskoms was so stil

ek sing so lank in 'n ander taal sing
daar buite ek het gedink as ek eers 'n blyplek vind
sal dit maklik wees om tuis te wees in
hierdie grot is altyd die skadu's van die ander grot

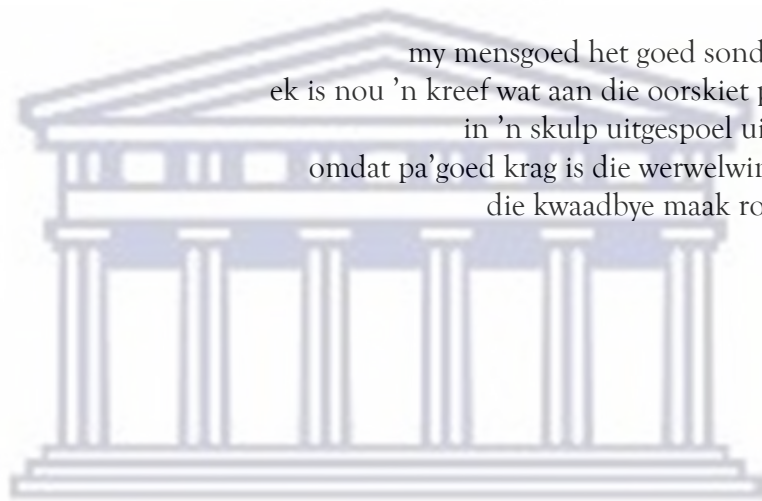


UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

ek is met die heks in my kruis weer na pa'goed se plek
toe is hulle nie meer daar nie
het pa'goed nie eerder net dagga gerook nie
het ma'goed nie net gemaak asof sy 'n leë
skilpaddop vol kruiewater skep nie hulle het
nie net met my gepraat nie jy sien hulle was
nie daar nie hulle was nie meer daar nie see hulle was

weg daar was bene van vis robbe 'n snawel
van 'n pikkewyn daar was bene van die bokke
hier hulle het goed geëet jy't vir hulle
meer vis in die vywer gelos jy't my pa se pyl en boog
weer gif gegee jy't vir sy wapens oë gegee

my mensgoed het goed sonder my klaargekom
ek is nou 'n kreef wat aan die oorskiet peusel ek is 'n slak
in 'n skulp uitgespoel uitgevreet ek is krag
omdat pa'goed krag is die werwelwinde sit in my kruis
die kwaadbye maak rolwolke in my bors



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

weet jy wat maak heimwee dit maak die grond in jou bors sag
soos sandduine as jy weer sien trap jy op die sagkante die sand sluk jou in

wat sou ek in elk geval wees wat sou ek met my
sandduinbaar by klipgat doen is ons dan nie almal hardloopmense
nie dit is in my bloed om so te wees maar ek is
ek is gemaak om alleen te spelonk ek is hier
vasgekeer in my vryheid ek is die baai se rooi

aas wat stink ek is die wurms wat die visters so
uit my volmaan uithaal is ek ook maar nie soos die vywer
wat ek gebou het nie? is ek dan nie maar hotnosvis nie
ek wil meer nie van vis lewe nie ek wil my
lippe aflek die soet van heuning en frietangs

ek bientang wil weer by die see gaan staan
en verlief wees op sy kalmte en sy blouigheid
nee die see knies my ek droom hierdie baai is my kind
ek kan haar nie in my arms dra nie my borste het verdragboste geword
agter my keel hekel my woede met bamboes

die res van die kind blom uit hier voor my
die kind wat te vroeg en bamboes gekom het
die see spoel haar elke oggend uit see is dit jou
manier om my te tart het my broer se skaduwee
ook nog 'n reg om by my te vat dankie vir sy dood



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

wat maak ek met sy skaduwee ek is
ondankbaar in die grot my oë sien die wêreld bleker
jy gaan my nie sommer onderkry nie ek is die see se wagvrou
ek laat my nie onderkry van oestervangers nie
as my oë nie kan sien nie sal my vel my voete en my hande vir my sien

as ek sonder my mensgoed kan klaarkom sal ek sonder jou
see klaarkom ek het jou nie nodig nie hoor jy jy sê
vir my in my slaap daar sal weer 'n storm kom
die dorp wegvreet ek is nie meer bang nie
ek is nie meer bang vir jou waterkrag nie
jy het my seerang gegee ek het ook sê hier



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

dition. Thus, cold water is a source of great danger to a */nau* person ; he must on no account come in contact with it, and after purification he must be reintroduced to it with much ceremony, being splashed all over by some qualified person. As an example of its powers may be cited the Hottentot witch-doctor, who never washes nor touches cold water from year's end to year's end. His potency resides as it were in the dirt and grease of his body, and this is always an ingredient in his medicine. Should he touch water his power would be diminished, and a Berseba witch-doctor who had been using his power for evil was ducked in the pond by the chief's orders and his magical powers thereby completely lost. His medicine can also be



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

die weer kom sê: tabè ek heet u ek
wens ek kon soos die visters hier op dié parrabaai koppelos
windvang liewe heiland ek is moeg om altyd agter
die wind skoon te maak ek wil sê ek's nie hulle slaaf nie
die suidooster besluit vir almal ons morestond ons doodsgety

ek is vandag hier om my hawe te kom regtrek ek vat die seepant
met my twee hande ek lig die see op tot dit bo-aan die klippe skuim
dan bring ek dit weer liefderik terug grond toe sit die see in sy
vel terug ek trek dit netjies oor met die seelaken
dan vat ek die seekussing pof dit vars op vir 'n nuwe slaap-lê en maak al

die kante plat met blou-grys spreï fyn skuimrandjies vir 'n pragtige
bruidsbed dan kom die visters en ek sien hier van my aardsholte
die hakskeenknie vanhulle bote hulle kussloep en hulle vergeet my
as hulle huis toe kom met boeties grondhaaie en karelgrootoë
langs die tafel sê die vistersgoed die vis proe sommer lekker in

toe ek huis vind in my grot toe besef ek ek ken niemand
meer hierbinne nie ek ken alles
niemand ken meer nie



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

ek het gister weer van my pa'le se plek af gekom
hulle het gestoot sonder my ek't vir hulle
'n vergifniskaros gemaak die walvisse
het al drie keer kom kalwers lewer hier by my plek
voordat ek besluit het ek sal vandag teruggaan om

my vergifnis na hulle te neem die karos
het my baie dassies gekos baie seehond
en uitgespoelde walvis ek het gelooi ek het
vir my 'n klein soutpannetjie gemaak om die vel
mee te behandel my hande het gerou van die sout

elke stuk vleis en vet uitgewerpsel en mettertyd
het my binneste weer kom lig word die geheue
van my wat eers net storms was het eendag
met lente van my mense gekom my aandag
afgetrek van ouer'le my kwaad sag gemaak
ek moet loop vrede maak as ek wil vrede wees



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

//oëdienaar

wie is lord Montagu?

hy's 'n reisiger 'n man wat plante en diere ken
opskryf Bientang het hy in sy boeke geskryf
die plante en die diere het hy afgeskryf
maar vir Bientang kan hy nie uitgeskryf kry nie

wie is Klaas?

Klaas het die lord opgetel met 'n sak tale

wat het dit met Bientang uit te waai?

al wat jy hoef te weet is dat Bientang nee gesê het
vir die lord al wat jy moet weet is dat sy ook hulle afskryf
dit is al wat ek die oëdienaar kan uitleen



Běntang, بئع

Běntang, بئع To spread, to spread out, to stretch out; to extend; to expand; to crucify. Běntang tikar, بئع تیکر To spread a mat. Note: As in Malay houses everyone sits on the floor, the first act of civility on the part of a host in welcoming guests whose arrival was not expected is to spread a mat on which they may seat themselves. To say of one's house, Běntang tikar pun tidak, بئع تیکر فون تیدق He did not even spread a mat, is equivalent among Malays to saying that he was inhospitable and shewed scant civility.

Āpa gūna kain di-běntang,
Kālau tidak gūnting-kan bāju?
Āpa gūna sārōng di-sandang,
Kālau tidak di-bānoh-kan mādu?

اف گون کائس دبئع
کالو تیدق گونتنگن کابجو
اف گون سارونگ دسئع
کالو تیدق دیبانونگن مادی

What is the use of spreading out a cloth if you do not cut a coat from it? What is the good of carrying a weapon sheath at your waist if you do not slay your rival? Māka ia pun sēgra-lah bér-siap-kan bālai mēm-běntang sēgāla hampar-an iang endah-endah, مك اي فون سگرا لاه بئر سئپان کابلاي ميم بئنتانگ سغاالا هامپاران يانغ انداه-نداه, He speedily made the hall ready and spread out carpets of great beauty. Tětapi pātek minta tian-ku būat-kan pětērāna dan běntang-kan tikar pāchar dan pērmādani, تئافي پاتئک مئتا تئوانگور پاتئران دان بئنتانگ کان تیکر پاتچار دان پئرماڈاني, But I, thy slave, beg that Your Majesty will have couches made, and cause patterned mats, and carpets to be spread. Běntang pākat, بئع پاکت To spread a fishing net. Di-běntang-kan khēmah, دبئعن کئمه Tents were pitched. Āda iang tēr-gūlong dan āda iang tēr-běntang, اد يانغ تئرگونگ دان اد يانغ تئر بئنتانگ, Some were rolled up and some were spread out. Tēr-běntang, تئر بئع has the special meaning of blunted, when speaking of a blade. Běntang-lah sáyap-nya, بئنتانگ لاه سايپنئا, Its wings were extended. Note: The forms Pěntang, فئع and Rěntang, رئع are also, though less commonly, met with, and the latter is only used as regards nets. Note: The words

Děpang, دئع To crucify by means of nails, and Rěgang, رئع To crucify by means of rope, are more generally used than Běntang, بئع in this sense. All Malay crucifixions are done on the ground and not raised on a cross or frame.

Běntang, بئع A kind of buffalo-sleigh which has no wheels, is very rough in construction, and is only used for dragging timber. Note: For other kinds of buffalo carts and sleighs in use among Malays see Āndor, اندر



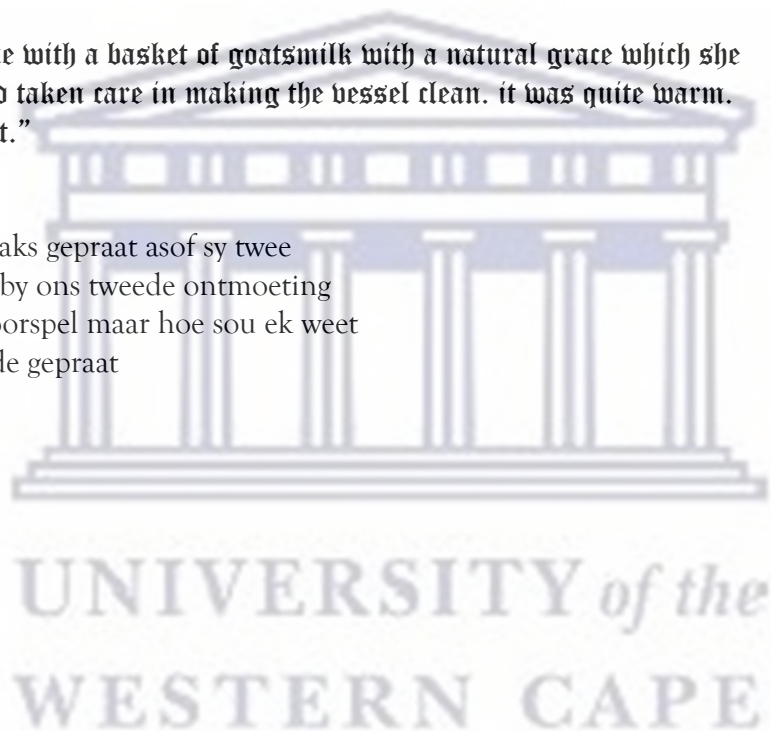
//Klaas

ek sal nie sê ons het ontmoet nie sy het ons betrap
uitgetrap en ons gevloek in haar taal toe ons haar
die eerste keer ontmoet was sy jonk en haar wangbene hoog
sy het verleidende heupe met plat voete sy het 'n mantel aangehad
gemaak van walvisvel en sy het geruik na boegoe
die plek het soos reën geruik sy het vir lord Montagu bokmelk gebring
want dit is wat vir hom lekker was bo-op die dorp is sy 'n slinksterheks
hieronder was sy soos sy gesê het god van die see -
“like Poseidon,” lord Montagu exclaimed

// lord Montagu

**“she presented me with a basket of goatsmilk with a natural grace which she
displayed and had taken care in making the vessel clean. it was quite warm.
i drank some of it.”**

Bientang het snaaks gepraat asof sy twee
stemme was laas by ons tweede ontmoeting
sy't haar dood voorspel maar hoe sou ek weet
sy't altyd in beelde gepraat



//Klaas

my tweede dag met die tang aas aan 'n vislyn
die see praat saam met 'n mens praat hy nie met jou nie?
(dit vra sy reguit vir my)
nee sê ek ek kan hom hoor maar ek verstaan hom nie

waar was ek?

jou broer

die vrou voor my het verander in 'n grys wolk
hierdie oë van haar hulle het gereën die ding
is toe sy daardie middag uit haar hut weghardloop
het haar broer gaan visvang sy het net so sonder om
haarself af te was see toe gehardloop want
die galjoene het gebyt en soos sy hardloop
het die gety hoër geword sy het vir my gesê
die see was so wild sy't gevloek dat haar bek
skuim maar hoe vinniger sy hardloop hoe hoër
die branders hoër en hoër het die see opgestaan asof
die see uit haar slaap 'n knorrige ouwrou wakker word
wat sy daardie dag gesien het was 'n stuk water wat die pant
van haar rok vat oplik en weer laat val het en met die val is
stukke aarde saamgevat so ook haar broer sy het by die Plaat
en Klipgat gestaan en toegekyk hoe die see weer haar
sit kry sy ook haar sit kry toe sy by die grot
aankom het haar ouers grond toe gekyk
haar suster het met haar rug na haar gestaan
die medisyneman het met sy vinger
na loperbaai gewys en haar stap het weg van haar mense geloop

ek was te vroeg gepluk ken jy 'n bietoublos klaas?

ja het ek gesê

as kind was ek 'n bietoublos my mense
noem my bietou na die plant wat vir hulle in die lente
biesies dra 'n bietoublos blom eers voor sy
groen biesies dra - dan in die son word sy geel
dan word sy rooi en pers as kind het ek hulle baie geëet

in my lente het my bietoublos geel madeliefies gehad
my broer kom pluk aan my maar ek dra nog groen bietous
hy kom pluk aan my en spoeg dit uit
dit was geel en hy was amper tevrede
toe die biesies rooi word eet hy klompies lentes van my af

toe die walvisse weg is dra ek 'n kalfie
ma'le pa'le wou weet wie wie
en ek sê dit is die boetabessie
my boeta sê ek is 'n vroumens
ek jok soos 'n bosluisbessie
hy herinner almal ek is aangemaak met storms

ná die derde maan kom die rooimaan weer
ek is in die hut gesit ek het geboorte gegee
aan bamboes ek is uit by die hut ek het gehardloop
ek het die see geroep ek het my bamboes vir haar gegee

ek het haar vervloek sy het my gevloek
hy is dood in die galjoentyd ek sal eendag teruggaan
klipgat toe en verskoning vra maar my hart proe nog
na alsemkruid my boeta se gifpik
daar sal nooit weer 'n enkele bietou uit my blom nie

ek het my !nau gebreek my grot gebreek
ek het my ma se beste kleed gesteel
my pa se joran en my ma se volstruiseiers
ek het vir hulle my bamboes agtergelos in my hut
ek het die loperbaai fyngekam ek is nou hier

“is dit jou grot?”

hoekom sal jy my so iets vra
julle sit om my vuur eet my kos
kan julle nie sien hoe julle in my oortree nie

sy het gemaak asof sy Montagu nie verstaan nie
maar sy was nuuskierig
hoe iemand so baie klere kan aanhet
wie se hare seegrasglad voel wie se vel soos fyngemaakte skulp is
sy't lank gevat met die vertrouery
ek was die middelman wat die vertrou help vetsmeer het
sy is 'n vorstin sy ken mense
ek was die man wat die woorde kruiwa tot in die lord se kop
ons het mekaar se vertrou gewen met 'n liegstorie
(die storie in sy boeke wat lord Montagu skryf was 'n liegstorie
ek het belowe om die woorde in my kop te bêre)
toe ons die eerste keer by die grot kom was ons gewaarsku
moet nie soontoe gaan nie
dit het lord Montagu nog nuuskieriger gemaak
hy het notas en tekeninge gemaak van die diere
die bome en heeltyd gesê **“how fascinating, how profound”**

ons het onder by haar grot gekom en ons kon sien hier
hier bly 'n vister daar was 'n klein soutpan
walvisvel het gehang 'n varswaterpoel en twee grafte
met geel blommetjies wat ons Chainouqua boetablom noem
sy perd net so bleek soos hy hy het sy stert geswaai sy perd
het van die varswater gesuip
lord Montagu het nie skaamte nie
hy het ingeklim hom met boerseep gewas
sy baard geskeer en gesê: **“I feel like a new man”**
ek het vir hom gesê ons staan op iemand se bidplek
ek het vir ons 'n geelstert in die hande gekry en gebraai
hy het tabak en brandewater baie van gehad
ons het vir vier dae daar gebly
hy maak van alles sketse en notas en sê
“how marvellous how absolutely extraordinary”
ek sal nie sê ons het ontmoet nie sy het ons betrap
uitgetrap en ons gevloek in haar taal
al wat Montagu kon uitkry was
“you are the most beautiful savage I have ever seen”

daar was storms in haar oë
haar skel het soos blits in my getref
sy het gepraat die ou praat
wat al uit my gesweep is
op my reise met lord Montagu verkwansel is
en hier staan sy en in haar skel kom ek na
vore en buig en sê tabè!
ek is Amroo van die kamma-kan kammarivier-mense
haar branders bedaar
die lug word weer blou
sy reik uit haar hand en sê:

tabè my naam is ha!ku genoem na my ma se stam
bientang van die bietoublosmense
genoem na my pa se stam
maar sjuut hieroor

mense soos die lord is vatters

ek kan ook sy taal praat

“the name was too strange to my ear, although I recognise the word bientang – celestial body – that I picked up in Suriname. I called her nerina, after my favourite flower. She promised to keep the comb I gave her as long as she lived in remembrance of me. A sentiment that was no longer a stranger to her heart.”

daardie aand praat lord Montagu

met my oor hoe ek en Bientang gesels het

dit was 'n soort behoort wat hy nie kan verwoord nie toe teken hy haar

ek het ook oor haar gedink my kop

bruis soos die see hier ek tel die sterre

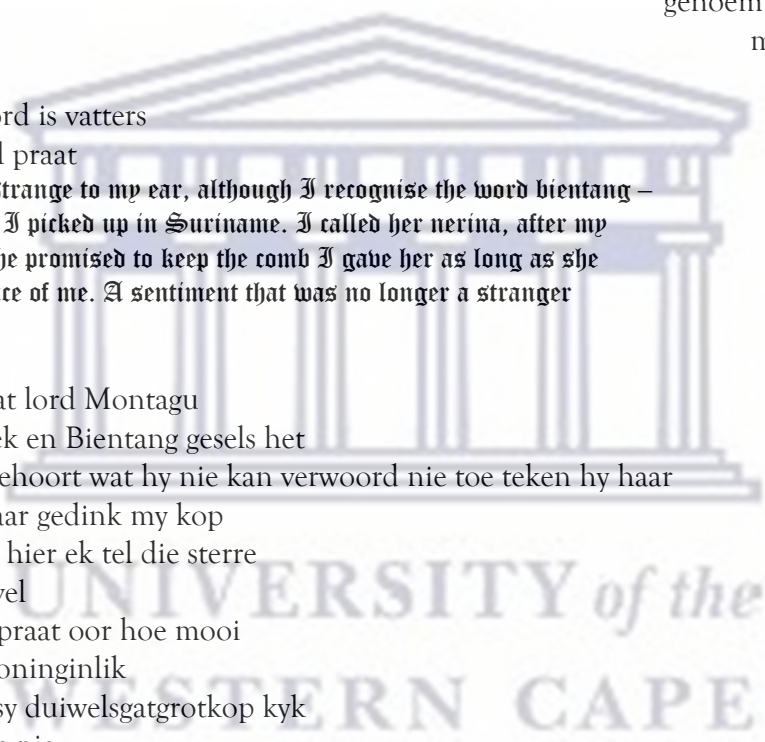
so naby soos my vel

as lord Montagu praat oor hoe mooi

die vrou wat so koninginlik

in sy oë kyk – in sy duiwelsgatgrotkop kyk

raak ek nie jaloers nie

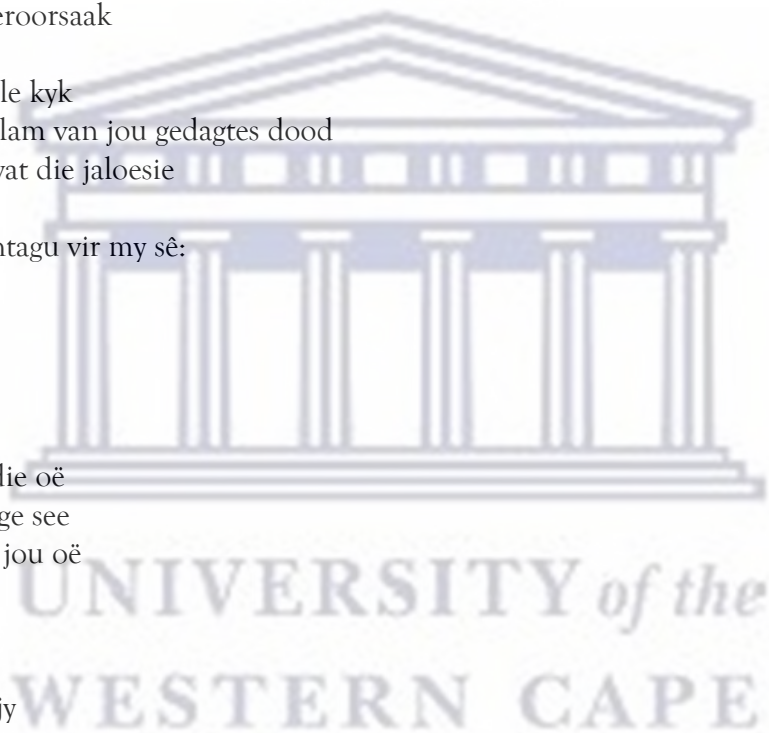


ek raak jaloers
as sy so terug in die lord
se oë in soek
as sy praat as die woorde
niks beteken vir hom nie
omdat haar oë soos skrif
in my ink die bestemming
van haar woorde 'n knippie

sout tussen wysvinger en duim vryf
ek sien jou twee syagtige tierklipoë
in jou oogkasse wat amper wil uitval
en hoe die woorde in my binnekop
'n bergstorting veroorsaak

want as ek in hulle kyk
dan blaas jy die vlam van jou gedagtes dood
dis dan dis dan wat die jaloesie
in my oor steek
veral as lord Montagu vir my sê:
kyk hoe
breek haar
wangbeen
as sy lag

vir die lord met die oë
van 'n mistroostige see
vir hulle kompas jou oë
binnetoe
hy het my gevra
van waar jy is
aan wie behoort jy
ek het jou belofte
geantwoord
she doesn't have people
she is the last one my lord



//oëdienaar

ken jy jou plek Bientang het Klaas gesê
as jy daar bo kom ken jou plek
die kleurlingvrouens kom goed oor die weg
met witvrouens want onder by die hawe ken elkeen sy plek
hulle albei vlek vis maar die een vat kuite en braai dit
met kaiings en die ander een vat snoek en verkoop dit
jy is van dié wat viskuit huis toe vat

sy onthou dit hulle het lank gesels
want die vetlampie in die perlemoendop
het uitgebrand en sy moes die volgende
dag langs die duine nog duinewasbessie
gaan pluk Bientang het rondgeloop met Klaas se gedagtes



nee lord montagu ek kan nie saam met jou gaan nie
as jy jou dood soek vat my saam los my op my plek

klaas sê mense soos ek sê nie nee vir lords nie
hulle het langer gebly as wat ek wou gehad het
maar hulle is weg lord montagu het twee goed gelos
klere en woorde dink ek nou aan hom is hy maar net woorde
ek sê k!u hy sê wolk
ek sê †hui hy sê rok

laat ek maar 'n tang wees hy wat alles ken ek vat by hom
net soos hy by my vat sy altydsegeveraery vir klaas
daar was 'n tyd toe die see 'n mooi vrou was
haar hart was kalm haar see was blou dit is 'n skoon blou
die blou wat sy nou is is 'n saliekneusing

ek het oud geword my wangbene begin insak
my sewejaarjare het ophou blom ek ken die baai
soos die palm van my hand ek is 'n droë tolbos
is die kleur van 'n stamplek onwegsterwend
die lug is pienk skemers soos die ag-dae-geneesbos

nee sê lord montagu **it is lobostemon** ek het grootgeword met die plante
lord moet nie vir plante name gee waarvoor hulle nie gevra het nie
ek het al gesien hoe bote teen die kus kraak soos 'n eier ek't al gesien
hoe perde saam met die branders land toe galop
kyk vandag se brander hardloop
soos 'n merrie wat deur die wind sny sy's lus vir mense uitspoel

UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE

//oëdienaar

ek is jou oëdienaar ek ryg skulpe ek ontskulp
alkruk ek krok ek kraak blaker ek uit ek staan op
ek steel met my oë roof met my tong ek blaai om
die spelonk die noorkapper storm die bientang tang



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

bintang 1 **stár**. **batu** – a) meteorite. b) crystalline rock. **cirit** – a) shooting/falling star, meteor. b) meteorite. **ilmu** – astronomy. **Perang** – Star Wars, aka Strategic Defense Initiative; → **PRAKARSA** **Pertahanan Stratégis**. **ramalan** – horoscope. **tahi** – → **CIRIT bintang**. **sebanyak** – *di langit* as many as there are stars in the sky. 2 any diagram or figure that resembles a star. **bendéra bulan** – a flag depicting the crescent and star symbol of Islamic nations. **Bendéra Malaysia mempunyai bulan sabit dan – pecah empat belas pada satu sudut**. The Malaysian flag has the crescent and a star with 14 rays in one corner. 3 the symbol of the PPP (party). 4 planet or heavenly body regarded as influencing a person's future. *Ia dilahirkan dalam naungan – Léo*. She was born under the sign of Leo. 5 fate, destiny, luck, fortune. *–nya gelap* and *gelap –nya*. He had a run of bad luck. *–nya naik* his star is rising. *–nya terang*. He is fortunate/prosperous/doing well. *Mulai terbuka –nya*. His star is in the ascendant. 6 constellation (showing the picture of an object or animal). – *biduk* Great Bear. – *pari*

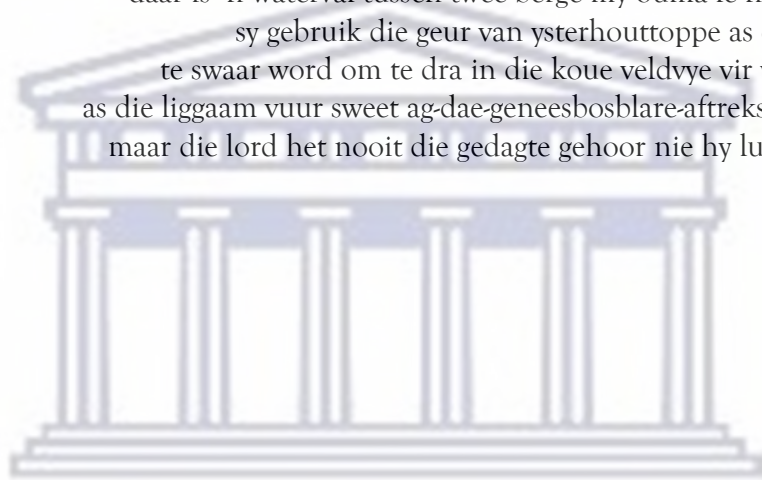


UNIVERSITY of the
 WESTERN CAPE

geld wat is geld vra ek dit is om goed mee te koop antwoord klaas
mense soos die lord vat by die aarde en ruil dit vir geld gaan hy aan
ons die attaquas jag vir kos by die see die kos ruil ons onder mekaar sê ek
hoe betaal hulle die aarde terug vra ek
ons sit terug dit wat ons nie gebruik nie

klaas sê die lord se mense vat wat hulle dink hulle s'n is
lord montagu het 'n manier om 'n mens te onderbreek
selfs 'n mens se gedagtes my ouma het haar medisyne
loop haal in die veld en in die berge die berge wat soos
mense lyk wat op hulle sye lê wil ek sê met die skaapvel
oor hulle skouers wil my gedagte klaar praat

daar is 'n waterval tussen twee berge my ouma'le noem dit varksnoet
sy gebruik die geur van ysterhouttoppe as die asemhalingkas
te swaar word om te dra in die koue veldvye vir witkeel bakbossies
as die liggaam vuur sweet ag-dae-geneesbosblare-aftreksel help elke kwaal
maar die lord het nooit die gedagte gehoor nie hy luister met sy mond



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

my kop trek my in water in
daar is niks wat ek daaraan kan doen nie
ek raak vol water maar ek verdrink nie
ek is swaar en daar sit eelte op my kroon
ek haal asem soos branders kabbelend

hoeveel keer is ek biantang nie deur branders uitgestoot nie
hoeveel keer het onderwater klippers my nie gesny nie
hoeveel keer het die bloublasies my nie gebrand nie
ek het hier in die grot ophou beginte skulpe bymekaarmaak
om my nek gedra die geluid maak my stersiek

ek dink aan my mensgoed wat ek agtergelos het vir visgoed
vir 'n grot wat my weg van die boetabessie af gevat het



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

//oëdienaar

toe sy 'n kind was het sy weggehardloop
weg van haar mense af
sy het teruggegaan maar al wat daar was
was bene
sy het dit in haar sak gesit en saam huis toe gedra

van haar afgestorwe bemindes se beendere 'n stoel
'n beker en 'n lamp gemaak
sy laat vir lord water daaruit drink
sy brand haar mense uit in die lamp
en sê haar pa se raaisel soos 'n gebedsel op

jy sit op my liefde lord montagu

jy drink uit my liefde

maar liefde lieg soos gif



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

ek het besluit laat ek maar dorp toe gaan
laat ek myself vermom en kyk wat die mense hierbo doen
ná klaas en lord se vertrek trek ek die swaar romp aan
die bloes en kappie en die stewels wat my voete so druk
ek gaan stap 'n draai ek is 'n kneg wat kag 'n klip wat kalp my voete swel

vir seewater vryheid wag agter die sandberge ek hoor
my mense beweeg die veters ryg my voete wurg as ek
in jou skoene staan skaaf my enkels maak geswelde kenne
die skoene rek na my breë voete kort tone ek staan in jou skoene montagu

ek wil jou pad verstaan ek loop kryg met die skoene
hulle's grofgeskut die lord bring leerskoene hy los pêrels
'n kam laat val hy 'n kappie 'n rok hy vergeet sy jas jy's so ver van my af
ek weet nie hoe om jou te gaan haal nie ek moet hier bly tot jy kom

dalk staan ek in jou skoene om jou te vind soos met 'n kompas
al jou stappe is geheime wat ek aftrap jy't my kom kry in my ma se mantel
jy't my 'n kleurlingmeid in die mond van die dorp gelos
ek loop in die rondte vir jou ek skop klippies van kwaadheit vir jou

vir jou gaan ek nooit kry nie ek skop jou uit ek loop my sole hard
die see is 'n wolk wat nie kan knyp nie ek laat my nie hiet en gebied nie
los my af ek moet eet ek het gister laas geëet my blaas pyn van pis-hou
ek wil onder kieselsteen begrawe word wil my oog skeel vir die son
ek gaan stap om loperbaai my woorde raak op ek wil weer mens wees
my hare knoop op my kop ek vra vir 'n veldbrand in my kop
sodat nuwe groener gedagtes ingroei los my uit om asem te haal
die jas van jou met my ronde arms ek wil losskiet ek hou asem op
voor jou was ek 'n kind met bamboes nou's ek 'n ouvrou met bloublaaspyn

ek dink aan my mensgoed wat ek agtergelos het vir visgoed
vir 'n grot wat my weg van die boetabessie af gevat het

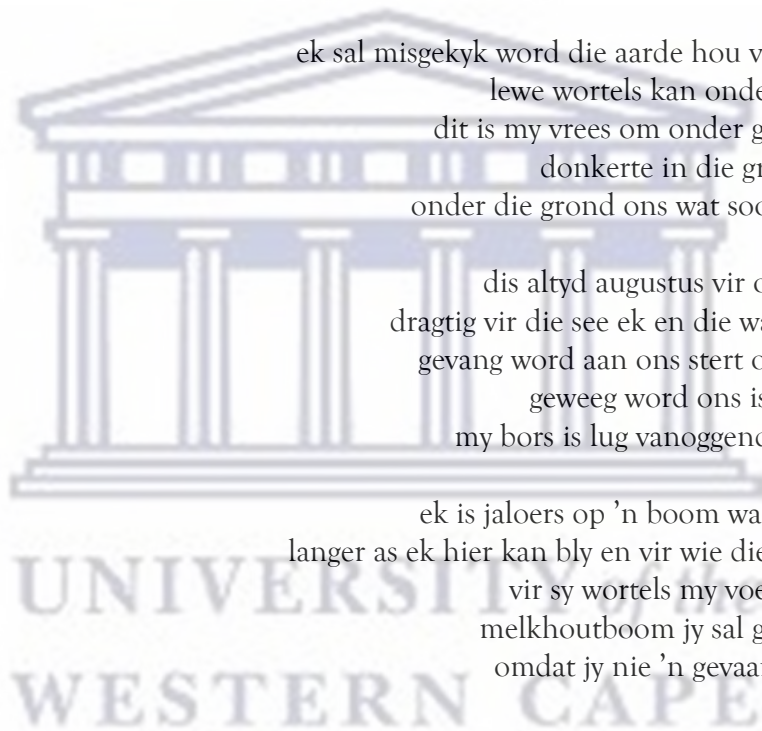
ek kom in die dorp
die noorkapper hang aan haar stert 'n omgedopte selfdood
my mense bid vir die noorkapper my mense kom van die noorkapper
ek is 'n noorkapper die woede hang vlak trane ek moet die storms roep

ek dink die melkhoute wat ek geplant het sal ouer
as ek word en hulle sal my onthou in die ringe
die dag as hulle soos ek stompe word
vir vuur die sade wat ek geplant het is kinders teen my
hierdie melkhout het meer waarde om te lewe as ek

ek sal misgekyk word die aarde hou van wortels wortels
lewe wortels kan ondergronds asemhaal
dit is my vrees om onder grond asem te haal
donkerte in die grot is my asemhaal
onder die grond ons wat soog ek en die walvis

dis altyd augustus vir ons ons is uitgehol
dragtig vir die see ek en die walvis ons kan albei
gevang word aan ons stert onderstebo gehang
geweeg word ons is iets vir die boeke
my bors is lug vanoggend - 'n witwolkbors

ek is jaloers op 'n boom wat langer as ek lewe
langer as ek hier kan bly en vir wie die grond plek maak
vir sy wortels my voetstappe sal ophou
melkhoutboom jy sal gewortel hier staan
omdat jy nie 'n gevaar is vir wat hier bo



in parrabaai gebeur nie 'n boom staan vir elke saad
wat ek in die grond gesit het waar ek lê het niks gegroei nie

soos 'n wederkaatser ek vergewe jou nie verstaan
tog dit is 'n soort liefde wat liefderik deur my lyf sytel
ek wag die bloed in van lankal af
ek tap uit soos aalwyn
ek mag nie see toe gaan nie my tiete staan kompas

oestervanger sê ek het mag ek het moed ek vra myself hoe lank nog
sy dra soos 'n mens sê pa'le maar sy lê op haar pens sê ma'le
'n bestiering van 'n vrou maar sy's niet om te vertrou hulle jaag haar
en wag die ganse lange dag nou's sy in die nood oplaas was dit haar dood



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

//oëdienaar

my kind jy moet die vertrouwe van 'n noorkapper vir die wind gooi

vanoggend gooi ek my vertrouwe vir die wind
vanoggend lê my kind in bamboes
ek is terug in die !nau ek en my kind
nie sy of ek sal ooit weer 'n vrou genoem word nie



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

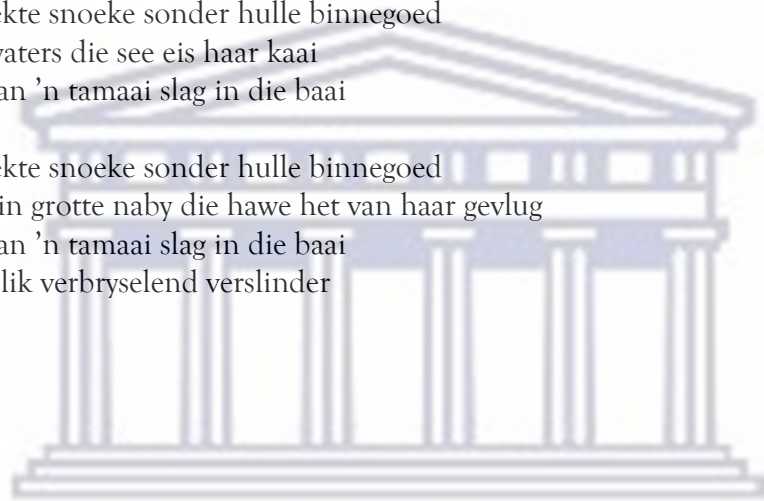
die storm

verskriklik vorstelik verbryselend verslinder
hoër en hoër toring die golf oor die skuimende maalstroom
die strandlopers in grotte naby die hawe het van haar gevlug
sy los haar dooie vis perlemoen rooiaas korale braak

hoër en hoër toring die golf oor die skuimende maalstroom
langs die kus het die storms die binneland binnegedring
sy los haar dooie vis perlemoen rooiaas korale
die see eis haar waters die see eis haar kaai

langs die kus het die storms die binneland binnegedring
alles lê soos gevlekte snoeke sonder hulle binnegoed
die see eis haar waters die see eis haar kaai
die groot golf slaan 'n tamaai slag in die baai

alles lê soos gevlekte snoeke sonder hulle binnegoed
die strandlopers in grotte naby die hawe het van haar gevlug
die groot golf slaan 'n tamaai slag in die baai
verskriklik vorstelik verbryselend verslinder



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

die see praat met mens praat hy nie met jou nie

nee sê ek ek is 'n Klaas daar was 'n tyd toe ek
'n Chainouqua-man was 'n varswatermens en my
mense het my Amroo genoem ek sal nooit soos jy
wees nie Bientang jy is 'n soutwatermens wat met haar waternaam praat

ek het die palmlyne van my bestaan aan die gras afgegee
ek het die vywers in my borste laat opdroog en my lyf dra die sakke sout
dit is die opsomming van my tweespoorverraaisels
dit is teen die grot geskryf elke dag voel dit asof stukke van my binneste
wegvreet ek bleek uit soos kalk my oë raak dowwer my liggaam swaarder

somtye praat die skaduwee van my

dit is ma' en pa' goed dit is die medisyneman
dit is die slangdokter dit is die boetabessie
en hulle kom klim in my kop en hulle maak my vas aan die klip
ek kan nie weghardloop nie maak nie saak watter grotraad
ek aan my geswelde enkel sit nie die kwaad sweer

ek sit bedags by die soutwaters ek bekyk die omweer van die see
ek hoor hoe sy soos kapallangs stap hardloop
oor die klippe het jy nie gesien hoe lyk die vel van die rotse nie
hulle lyk soos my grootmoeder in haar geleende jare
voor sy kom liggaam maak het soos die walvis

hierdie rotse hulle plooi kyk hoe sit die ouderdom in hulle in
die skryf my so in die branders in ek kyk vir myself ek ja ek
ja ek het ok oud geword as ek 'n net gehad het het ek my jonkte
uit die water getrek op die sand uitgepak soos
die ondermaat geelsterte van my ouderdom

//oëdienaar

ek het nie geweet wat ek doen
toe ek iets soos 'n oëdienaar in my invat
sy wil net klik maak of sy saam
met ons kan eroos sy dink sy kan water
o ja sy eis sy gneis sy mes sy skalie
sy dolossteen sy bittersteen sy ark
sy fos(siel) sy horingrots sy klipstapel
sy betaal-erts
maar ek is skag
wie sal my glo
jy bestaan nie jy
ek laat die dag stilhou

ek is laaste mens ek is biantang wie ekke ja net ekke ek ekke



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

//Klaas

my en lord Montagu se terugkeer na die Attaqua-streek
het Hermanuspietersfontein geword ons was by die museum
die dorp wil die storm vergeet en Bientang het geskiedenis geword
net die dassies weet waar Bientang nee wag lieve halku van
die bietoumense heen is ons sien foto's van die oorledenes

die grot is toegegroeï met melkhoutbome en kooigoed dis asof die see
die grot se oog gesluit het ons is met 'n gesukkel haar plek binne
daar was nog die walvisskelet haar krale haar potte haar skilpaddopborde
haar volstruiseiers en wragtag nog 'n potjie met droë kaneel

hoekom sal jy vir my so iets vra kan jy nie sien nie
die grot is ek en ek is die grot praat sy in my kop
lord Montagu het vir 'n lang ruk daar gestaan
ek weet hy is terug by sy verslawnheid: Bientang



onthou jy die jaar toe daar perde mense en wyn uitgespoel het
onthou jy die jaar toe jy van my 'n kreef gemaak het
en ek al die gesinkte dinge al die dood afgeëet het
jy't my belowe ek sal regeer en wat is ek 'n stuk goed
wat met die water praat en net bamboes uitstoot om my te tart

om te sê jy sal nooit kosbaar wees nie jy kos die wêreld te veel
omdat jy 'n vrou is te veel van jou is geheue om geskiedenis te wees
ja hier sal ek vrek hulle sal my bene vir houtgoed gebruik
maar die skulpe sal hulle versamel uitstal en bewaar
want 'n skulp se geheue is meer kosbaar as my versoekskrif



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

//digter

ek wil haar uitpak soos koekemakranka
my besefstukke is weg ek is 'n sin met doodgekrapte woorde
'n mens wil onthou wees vir die lewe ek sweer dit
'n mens wil vir jou plek maak tussen taal
ek wil Bientang laat uitmond
dood se taal praat nog nie ek moet eers
daar uitkom ek het soveel wat in my bars
maar gebruik dit nooit in my lier nie
daar's nie meer plek vir my in die wind nie
ek vee uit al die taal wat ek ken die grot
is haar huiduitslag "en" "want" "maar" is alles:
middelwoorde mens ek sien haar:
sy staan by die plaat die wind waai uit die see uit



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

//oëdienaar

asseblief Bientang
as jy wil sal ek ophou
ek sal jou uitlos ek sal jou nie meer aandra nie
toe vat hy sy kwas en wit verf en skryf

Bientang's cave

hy't gebuig soos 'n heer en gesê:

"tabè Bientang – ek heet jou. I will put you on a water lily by the water.

It is by the water where I met you with your roots exposed ..."

en toe sy stem so weergalm deur
die grot hoor ek haar antwoord as die grot
my gedagtes slaan grond toe die sand plof
op die deksel van my kop in die land
van my kop waar sprekers woon
en oorneem is daar nie meer plek
vir regtig lewe nie in die land trek ek
stofpadgedigte aan en skrik wakker
met gevaarte wat bo my kop swewe

die soom van my kop loswikkel ek wens
ek het nooit begin skryf nie ek wens ek kan
die liggaam van my omruil
hierdie roupak uittrek ek swel
as ek skryf my ruggraatskyf druk hier is
rekmerke oral op my lyf geskryf
ek trek my lyf in soos 'n net
my lyf trek in soos laaggety
in die land van my kop staan die storie
op en skryf sigself klaar en hier kom ek
by die gedeelte waar digterskap my water toe trek
hier in die asvaalwaters van my kop
waar bloublasies my brand
sal ek die res van my lewe dieselfde storie
oor en oor skryf omdat in die land
van my kop voorgeslagte dood lê sonder grafstene

ek die duiwelsdrek in die land van my kop –
gebruik gedigte as 'n skryfgraaf
wat die bene van my voormense wil uitskryf
want in die land van my kop bly ek sonder
siel en sening ek het myself in die water
gedoop en die bamboes braak my uit
want ek is nie water nie ek is nie woorde nie
ek is nie wolke nie ek maak myself op in die land van my kop
want in die land van my voormense is ek nog altyd
niks meer as 'n kettingganger in 'n skip op pad na oorlog
by Danger Point hoeveel keer is my voormense nie gestraf
met oorlewenis nie en hoeveel keer word ek nie gestraf
omdat die gat van vergifnis toegegooi is
ek het vir Bientang 'n kleptokrasie gebou
en aan die buitekant kan jy sien hoe ons by mekaar steel
om 'n stem te lieg



//oëdienaar

struweling Bientang hier sit ek in jou holtes en ek sien hoe die maan
die son in hardloop in jou gestu aanskou ek die stalagmiete jy is grof skerp
wat spel jou klip vandag die vistermanne staan op die klippe: dis omweer
die skuide gaan nie uit nie 'n groep vrouens swerm om die ossewa met
gerookte geelbek en bokkoms die boer se klong laai vate wyn op ossewaens

vergewe my ek weet ek is 'n gedagtegiek ek sal ophou om so uit jou uit te
praat maar ek moet vir iemand sê Bientang wanneer laas het jy galjoen uit
jou pa se hand geëet? die rooiroman by tamatiebank by nooiensbank kom
nie naastenby nie jy mis die galjoen met die are soos wilde water

jy sal dit nooit erken nie maar jou mond water nog daarvoor daar roer
'n storm in jou biantang daar roer 'n maalgat in jou bors ek wens ek kon
die laaste gedagte van jou lees want dit moes eintlik ek gewees het
wat die mense op die dorp waarsku

die swerm vroue by die hawe en die mense wat op die ruggraat van die
walvis staan staan opgeskryf hier in my gewete ek staan op die Plaat
Klipgatgrot en die Sandberge agter my my voete skulpgruis wanneer die
see terugtrek is die ghoera stil die water is skoon en koud soos my woed
ek staan voor my en kyk hoe die gety kwaad word:
biantang verwelk in silt van die bladsy af

jy het die wind gevra om jou by te staan
jy het die gety gevra om op te staan uit haar slaap
jy het waters toe gegaan daarna
ek het geweet more sal hermanuspietersfontein
in die bek gehaak word met 'n vishaak en by die stert
opgehang word en die dood sal blink soos walvisvel

Biantang jy het dié aag dié klikbek toegang gegee tot al jou gedagtes
blyk dit nou jy piemp op my?

die oëdienaar gee op
'n kakawin

ek kom van 'n string mense wat hulle self nie ken nie wat hulle bloedlyn
moet verbeel hanskinders ek het besluit hier in jou grot bestel ek
'n geelbek 'n glas droë witwyn en lees die woorde: die laaste strandloper
hoe word 'n mens 'n laaste? ek het jou in my in- en my uit my uitgeskryf

nou kom jy met die aantygning dat ek jou 'n mite probeer maak
dat ek jou 'n stalagmiet probeer maak my woorde drup jou vas
in 'n soliede kalsietkolom die waarheid is
bientang ek gebruik jou om vir my 'n heenkoms te skep

ek wil jou nie besing soos 'n strydlied nie ek weier
om jou te besing as 'n slaaf jy forseer my in verbastering
want jy moet 'n quena kumm-slaaf wees in
tweeduisend en twintig is baster wees nie 'n vrybriefnasie nie

is jy chainouqua kumm khoi kan ek veertigduisend jaar se bestaan omwis
vir grond ek het vir so lank !kun-woorde versamel en in jou tong ingebou
nou spoeg jy dit een vir een uit wat moet ek nou maak jy skil af op papier
om duinghwarrie te wees is om inheems te wees soos boesmansgif

om baster te wees is om oorlams te wees 'n indringerplant 'n lukwart-
boom al wat van jou oor is is onkruid tussen die gras ek moet vrede
maak met my ironiese vel en ophou vrybriewe deur jou aan myself
te skryf ophou dink ek kan daarmee vir my 'n inheemsgeskiedenis koop

sy loop en kam die loperbaai soos die wind die plaat se getyeboek blai
bientang hoe skryf ek jou klaar is jy nie ook maar net 'n banneling
van 'n ander soort slaweskip as myne nie die digter sit met stersiektes
ek is die argivaris dis ek wat besluit ek sal jou taal bientang

jirre nou begin jy my verbeel my woorde swem terug na my denkbeeld
jy sny jou los van waar ek jou arms die eerste keer in kruisrym geboei het
jou die eerste keer verstroof en jou binnerym uitgehaal het
en daar duik jy woordvry jou eie apokriewe uit

ek staan alleen op die plaat
ek ontheg jou ek kyk terug
die wind verwelk jou in
het jy ooit gepraat?





Chapter 1. Introduction

UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

“Racially, I refuse to call myself ‘coloured’”;
as this is a racial identity placed on me before I was born.
I do not relate to the word ‘brown’ either
and I do not know whether I am allowed to call myself black...”

1.1. Writing journey

My writing career is one of chance. I began writing in the first creative writing course taught at the University of the Western Cape. It was part of English 311. Although my main language is Afrikaans like most of my classmates, I wrote in English. The stories originating from the mini-thesis of my MA in Creative Writing culminated in a short story volume *Tjieng Tjang Tjerries and other stories*, published by Modjadji in 2016. While exploring the options of a degree in education, I began to write poetry in Afrikaans and took a stack of poems to Professor Antjie Krog. Although the interaction between us did not have academic status, the poems ended up as my first Afrikaans poetry volume, *Radbraak*, published by Human & Rousseau in 2017.

Radbraak consists of poems in a range of voices and styles – from prose poems to a five-page lament on the 1987 deaths of two activists from the coloured community, Ashley Kriel and Anton Fransch. In “n Geweeklaag”, I engage with the testimonies of their family members and neighbours at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as well as news clippings, to create a testimony to their lives and their struggle. This was my first foray into longer narrative poems built around a particular person.

Both my books have done well in terms of reviews and prizes: *Tjieng Tjang Tjerries* won the National Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS) award for Best Fiction Single Authored in 2018, and *Radbraak* won the Afrikaans Debut Prize awarded by the University of Johannesburg in 2018.

After exploring longer and prose-like forms of poetry in *Radbraak*, as well as beginning to write longer narratives for stage in various collaborations with young playwrights, I challenged myself: do an Epic! But an Epic about whom? On what? I became the proverbial “writer looking for a character”!

All I knew was that I was searching for a female, indigenous character with a story, but that she should *not* be one of the Khoi characters who were already dominating South African literature, namely Krotoa and Saartjie Baartman.

1.2. A lunch in Hermanus brought her to me!

We found each other at a restaurant on the beachfront of Hermanus called Bientang's Cave. I was visiting with friends and when I turned the menu around there were the so-called "Legends" and this sentence describing Bientang as "the last Koi (sic) Strandloper who lived in the cave. She lived here at the turn of the 19th century and is said to have disappeared mysteriously." I was hooked.

"(L)ast Strandloper". How does one become the "last"? Who was she? Were there any records of her? And so, she stayed with me, this Bientang, and my thoughts milled around a million of things as I began to read texts from the area of Hermanus and Gansbaai, the latter being the place where I grew up. She lived so near to me and yet so far...

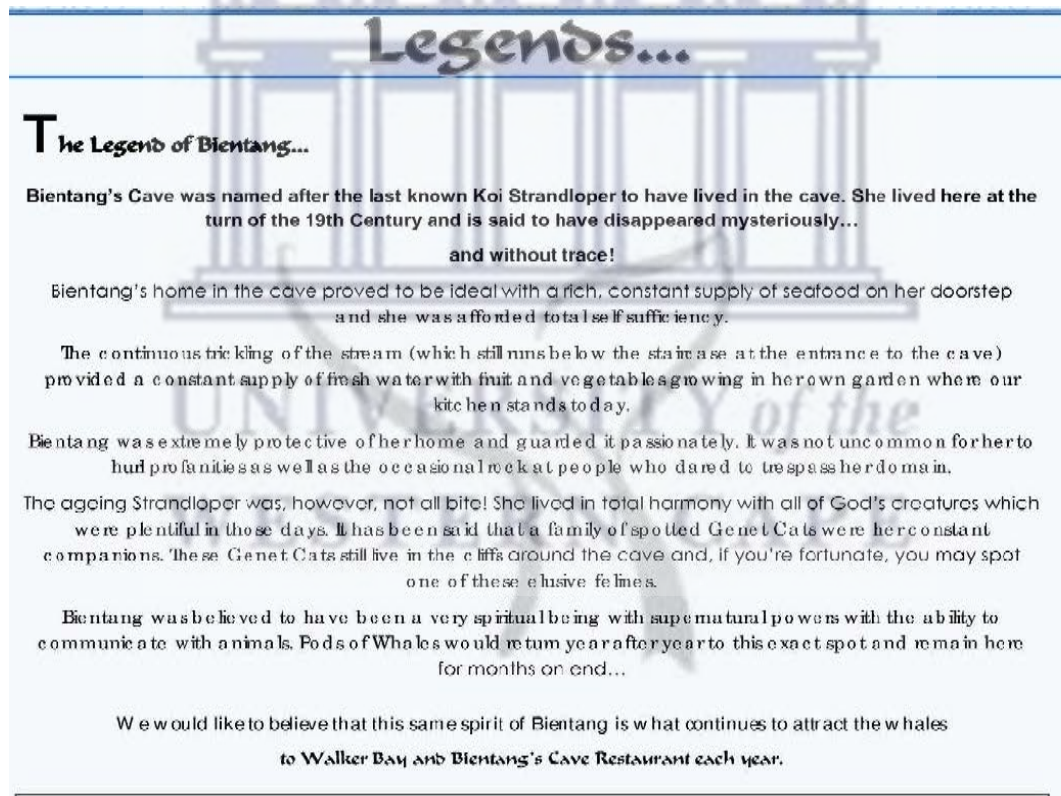


Fig. 1. "Legends" from *Bientang's Cave Restaurant* menu, *bientangscave.com*. Accessed 15 Feb. 2023.

Coming across Bientang, realising more and more that I would have to do a lot of imagining around her, I began to set out a figure that could only become a long poem, an Epic poem, and the

only language it could be in was Afrikaans for me to do justice to this imagining, as well as to my desire to engage with more complex themes and poetic forms.

When this was settled in my mind, I was suddenly flooded with ethical questions leaving me anxious and immobile.

1.3. Some ethical considerations for the poet/academic

First and foremost was the issue of betrayal: Aware of “Can the Subaltern Speak” by Gayatri Spivak (1990), I realised that I would be writing *Bientang* as a kind of “informer” or even worse, force a specific “double displacement” on her. According to Spivak, I, as part of the Gansbaai coloured community, was both an “insider” as well as an “outsider”, “informing” as a poet on the marginalized communities that I came from. How should I (could I?) guard against the continuing violent construction of the subaltern? The assumption and construction of a consciousness or subject will sustain my work, but I would have to be vigilant that the text does “not, in the long run, cohere with the work of imperialist subject-constitution, mingling epistemic violence with the advancement of learning and civilization so that the subaltern woman will be as mute as ever” (90).

How was I to sidestep the stereotyping of indigenous women created by the colonial imaginary? I felt a pressing need to respond to the phrase “the last Khoisan person” but then did I have the right to write an Epic poem about this “last”? Tourism has eviscerated indigenous memory by romanticising the “Other”, and then presenting being “the last” as a triumph, like a terminarch, who ends its people’s existence by being the last one. I felt myself angered by the blatant annihilation of every historically indigenous person in the Overstrand area and how this genocide is presented as entertainment to the elite who come to relax in the village. While my eligibility to write this Epic concerned me, I also felt a deep need to find legitimacy for the life of *Bientang*.

The other major question was: in which Afrikaans to approach her? I am born of spaces characterised by many tongues. The fishing communities of the southern Cape speak a unique variety of Afrikaans mixed with their own linguistic inventions and hybridised forms of English. So I

sensitised myself to ensure that the text should be porous enough, in form and rhythm, to contain many kinds of Afrikaans/English/Gansbaai-speak.

In his book, *Rediscovery of the Ordinary: Essays on South African Literature and Culture* (1991), Njabulo Ndebele argues that there is a “lack of compelling imaginative recreation of rural life in our literature. All we know about are dejected peasants, suffering pathetically under the tyrannical Boer farmer” (70). Ndebele stresses the need for a fresh approach to South African literary representations of rural life; one that moves away from the limited literary representations often found during the pre-apartheid and post-apartheid years.

This prompted me to ask myself: where are the representations of South Africa’s coloured fishing communities in our literary texts and in which languages do they exist? Where is our Gansbaai flayed tongue? Could I craft a literary voice out of various tongues? Was I capable of forging a writer’s voice different from my speaking voice and my mother tongue?

The word Bientang became like a stem that I was trying to pull out of the ground, only to realise that it had an impossibly extensive root structure, entangling landscapes, histories, languages, annihilations as well as my own personal life as a woman poet of colour. Was I up to this intricate task? As I write here, I still cannot answer that.

1.4. My Afrikaans identity: From dialect towards idiolect

My research into Bientang and the period when she could have lived, opened up wonderful opportunities to make use of all the fragmented languages around me to explore issues of marginality and multilingualism within a trans-disciplinary framework. Added to this is the fact that I find myself always translating: translating experience and poetic moments into language, but more importantly translating English into the variation of Afrikaans spoken in Gansbaai, standard Afrikaans into the variation spoken in Gansbaai, Gansbaai speak into standard Afrikaans. And with all these changing rhythms in my head, the contours of my body of work also constantly change. To translate has become a form of breathing.

Historically, Afrikaans has gone through a lot of shifts. The language itself suffers an identity crisis in relation to its speakers. Questions like: who does the language belong to; what racial groups' vocabulary has been included and excluded; who wants to associate with it; who feels that it was colonized; who wants to decolonize it; who attaches trauma and shame to it; who thinks it is the "language of the oppressor"?

I am both angry at Afrikaans and angered by the way Afrikaans has been used to polarise racial groups, but deeply grateful for the opportunities that Afrikaans has afforded me creatively, vocationally and intellectually. But always, I carry some shame in speaking it.

Racially, I refuse to call myself "coloured"; as this is a racial identity placed on me before I was born. I do not relate to the word "brown" either and I do not know whether I am allowed to call myself black. When someone refers to me as a "Gansbaai writer", a "Kaaps poet", "a black intellectual", "a female author", I am offended but also enjoy the "uniqueness".

The moment a work of mine is published, I am aware that Afrikaans has different historical triggers for many black people. For those who survived the 1976 uprising, Afrikaans is the language of the oppressor. I can argue that my parents were oppressed too; that the language does not oppress me; that the language did not kill, torture and cause civil war, but that is naïve and ignorant. So how do I balance my shame about and my pride in the Afrikaans language while I am creating a place for myself in it? How do I make sure that this discomfort does not affect my desire to write well and for my variety of Afrikaans to have literary consideration? I walk around with this linguistic and literary albatross and am exhausted, drained by the paradox. Added to this is that I do not know what I would have done without English literature as a major, without the opportunities afforded by the English department and the enrichment of English literature.

It was in English that I was exposed to creative writing. It was where my voice was lauded, and where I received mentorship and the training to produce three literary works. The English department continued to support my endeavours with the utmost patience when I registered for a PhD in English Studies.

1.5. Subjective Considerations

In keeping with the nature of practice-led research, I had to explore various other important questions influencing my creative writing process. Many reflections and questions were circling in my mind:

- How will I go about changing certain aspects or characteristics of the Epic genre? Epic poems in Afrikaans, and those written in English by South African poets, convey a strong sense of place and character. Against different backgrounds, the characters move purposefully, and the text generally assumes that every reader agrees that the characters' deeds are worthy of heroism. My question is: how to write about somebody about whom *nothing* is known? May I place her against the familiar backgrounds present in this genre? Do I turn her into a hero or do I simply lament and grieve her unreachableness?
- How will I avoid the obvious trap, namely to simply replace the white hero with a black heroine, while keeping the language and structures the same as in the white male-dominated Epic hierarchies?
- If one makes an anti-hero of the main character, what does this do to the genre? Would it subvert the genre to such an extent that it would be ridiculous to still call it an Epic poem? Can one be an Epic hero by simply refusing to be one? Is Epic a fixed concept?
- What will the character do in this poem? Is not-doing a valid form of doing? Is not-doing heroic?
- How accurate is this history of "the last known Khoi Strandloper" that fitted neatly on an A4 page menu of a restaurant? How much was invented to create an aura around a rather bland restaurant?
- There is no clear Khoi literary tradition to draw from; there is no language to use, because unlike /Xam, there is no extensive dictionary. It felt as if the history I wanted to explore had no official traces of existence, especially not in the well-documented histories of Hermanus or Gansbaai.
- How much has been researched about Khoi womanhood, and related traditions or rituals?

- In which kind of language would such a non-heroine find her tongue? Should she have a tongue? I am thinking about the ethics of representation, which also involves translation, and the viability of this process wherein I will be both writer and translator.


In this thesis, there will be five chapters. The introduction will cover background information related to the problem statement, subjective and ethical considerations. Chapter 2 will discuss relevant literature on the epic tradition, selected epics in Afrikaans, and will provide brief discussions of three historical epics and two South African English epics. It will aim to situate the upcoming research within existing theoretical frameworks and highlight areas where further scholarship is needed. Chapter 3, the literature review of theory, will provide additional literature on the subversion of the genre, archive material, brief discussions of important themes, and some notes on the interdisciplinary methodology used by the researcher. This chapter will also explain and justify the research methodology employed, detailing the data collection methods with a specific focus. Chapter 4 will be dedicated to methodology, and in Chapter 5, I will discuss the research findings, followed by the limitations of this study and suggestions for future research avenues.



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

Chapter 2.

Literature Review

The logo of the University of the Western Cape, featuring a classical building with six columns and a pediment.

“And I am looking for a book of spells
for the dreamed. I am looking for the
spell that will turn a dreamer’s head
to see the shape and form of the hand
she sometimes holds, makes sad with desire.”

(Christiansë Castaway 88)

UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE

2.1. Literature Review

In my first poetry volume, *Radbraak* (Phillips, 2017), I explored writing longer poems, narrations of events and more prose-like forms as well as longer narratives for the stage in various collaborations with young playwrights. I felt challenged to move away from the personal, lyrical “I” voice, to try other formats and to shift from my own life to researching someone else’s, and to explore the format of a book-length narrative poem with a specific focus. Therefore, I turned to the Epic to test the waters.

When I arrived at the idea of writing an Epic about a historical figure of whom only one piece of information was available, the task seemed insurmountable and ridiculous. In an effort to stabilise myself, I read as many Epics as I could lay my hands on, but it is only in writing this reflective essay that I could determine what I was taking on board or resisting from these works – I discuss some of these aspects here.

2.2. The Epic Tradition

The word “Epic” is used today mostly as an adjective, but it was originally intended as a noun, from the Latin (*epicus*) and Greek (*epos*), meaning speech, tale or song. When it was used as a literary term in 1706 – according to *The Oxford Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* – it meant “a long poem, typically one derived from ancient oral tradition, narrating the deeds and adventures of heroic or legendary figures or the past history of a nation” (“Epic”). In *Essentials of the Theory of Fiction*, Hoffman and Murphy (1996) offer this conventional description:

The Epic as a genre in its own right may, for our purposes, be characterized by three constitutive features: (1) a national Epic past – in Goethe’s and Schiller’s terminology the “absolute past” – serves as the subject for the Epic; (2) national tradition (not personal experience and the free thought that grows out of it) serves as the source

for the Epic; (3) an absolute Epic distance separates the Epic world from contemporary reality, that is, from the time in which the singer (the author and his audience) lives. (52)

This kind of formulation makes one recoil from the genre: so decisive in tone, so grand in scale, so hierarchical in judgment, so self-assured in having found the exact definition! But what would happen if one used a past that is largely unknown and combined it with the most personal of inner voices, without any Epic distance or even any heroic deed? Would such a tale still be classifiable as an Epic and could such a heroine (in itself a novelty in the Epic form, which honours male protagonists more often than their female counterparts), be considered heroic enough?

In *A Handbook to Literature* (2009), Harmon and Holman define an Epic as “a long narrative poem in an elevated style, presenting characters of high position in adventures forming an organic whole through their relation to a central heroic figure and through their development of episodes important to the history of a nation or race” (201). They also give some main characteristics of the Epic:

(1) The hero is of imposing stature, of national or international importance, and of great historical or legendary significance; (2) the setting is vast, covering great nations, the world or the universe; (3) the action consists of deeds of great valor or requiring superhuman courage; (4) supernatural forces – gods, angels, and demons – interest themselves in the action; (5) a style of sustained elevation is used; and (6) the poet retains a measure of objectivity. (201)

This definition appeals to me more than Hoffman and Murphy’s does, because of its greater generosity and flexibility. This more porous spirit allows for a more culturally inclusive use of the term Epic. It at least offers the *possibility* that a poem like *Bientang* might satisfy and present itself as a tale worthy of the revered term Epic. Yet my continued reading and research did not allow me to settle comfortably on a set framework for my poem, especially when I discovered that within the African context, the Epic is viewed differently.

Christiane Seydou acknowledges a hesitation to subject the Epic to a self-contained, purely textual definition. For him, Africa provides important contributions most notably through the continued use of oral expression: “The Epic (as the etymology of the word indicates) remains a living, spoken act of expression in those societies where orality still dominates. Its function and total expression can, therefore, be observed in its natural setting” (415).

Hoffman and Murphy, and Christiane Seydou’s definitions of the Epic appear to be diametrically opposed. Whereas the former emphasises the absoluteness of the form, Seydou argues that within an African context (my context), one should return to the dynamic and communal nature as well as the organic, unfixed oral form. This emphasis upon community agency (through orality) in the creation and passing on of the form is in keeping with the place that my heroine is coming from. She has been talked about in communities and her story has been told from generation to generation, but every time with less detail, until all that is left of her is her race, her gender, and her name. Her own cultural context is one where stories lived organically in the unfixed space of oral storytelling (one of the reasons such tales died out, with the exception of those archived in the Bleek and Lloyd Archives, for example – a not unproblematic state of affairs, but the subject for another thesis).

So, how to proceed? What Epic tradition or ‘manifesto’ to draw from? How best to honour the story of my heroine in all its nuance and complexity? In short, how to overcome such paradoxes as rendering a (vanished) orality into a fixed written poem? How to do so without sublimating my heroine and her story (roots) to traditions which have historically not only ignored her, but actively reduced her to subjective footnotes and ghostly silences?

2.3. Brief Discussion of Three Historical Epics

I read a range of Epics, from across time and cultures. Below are a select few which sparked ideas and inspiring resonances for me in beginning to conceive a way forward for *Bientang*.

2.3.1. *The Epic of Gilgamesh*

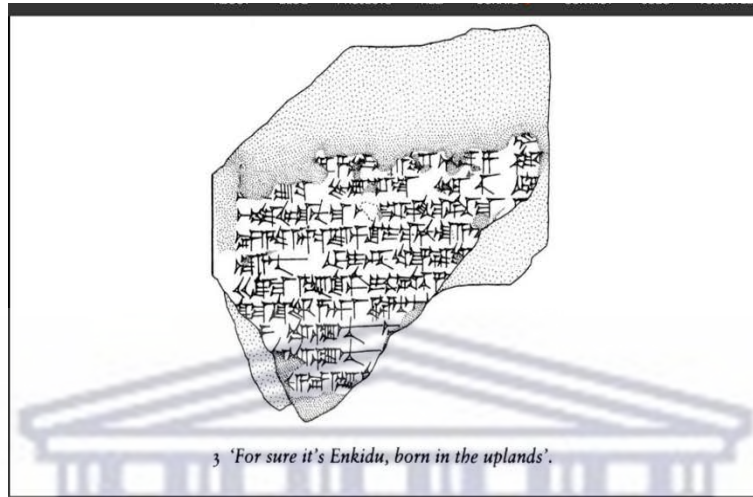


Fig. 2. Standard Version, Tablet II,
N.K. Sandars, translator; *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Penguin Classics, 1960, p.13.

Between the discovery and excavation of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, written in cuneiform on clay tablets, and the decoding from cuneiform to English, 100 years passed. This Epic had existed for 80 000 years before I read it in 2020. When Frye (1957) says that Homer's *The Iliad* and *Odyssey* preceded and established its tradition as the epitome of the genre, I am puzzled as to why *Gilgamesh* is not mentioned as the Epic that precedes all other Epics?

Sandars notes that the "*Gilgamesh* Epic must have been widely known in the second millennium B.C." (8). According to Sandars, there is evidence that *The Epic of Gilgamesh* was written down "according to the original and collated in the palace of Assurbanipal, King of the World, King of Assyria" (8). This evidence shows that *Gilgamesh* is the oldest Epic, older than Homer's Epics by 5000 years.

Gilgamesh's journey did not have a circular narrative structure like "the journey of the Greek heroes Heracles and Theseus when sent on similar errands" (Sandars 14). Unlike Homer's hero, *Gilgamesh* was a king who lived in Uruk, but *Enkidu* was created by the gods to stop *Gilgamesh* from being an oppressor and a tyrant. This Epic about the renowned king of Uruk in Mesopotamia comes from an age which had been wholly forgotten until in the last century archaeologists began

uncovering the buried cities of the Middle East: “If Gilgamesh is not the first human hero, he is the first tragic one of whom anything is known” (Sandars 7). It is perhaps surprising that anything so old as a story of the third millennium B.C. should still have power to move, and still attract readers in the 21st century. Here is how Enkidu is described:

The goddess Aruru, she washed her hands,
Took a pinch of clay, threw it down in the wild.
In the wild she created Enkidu, the hero,
Offspring of silence, knit strong by Ninurta

He knows not a people, nor even a country.

Coated in hair like the god of the animals,

With the gazelles he grazes on grasses.

He veiled his friend’s face like a bride;

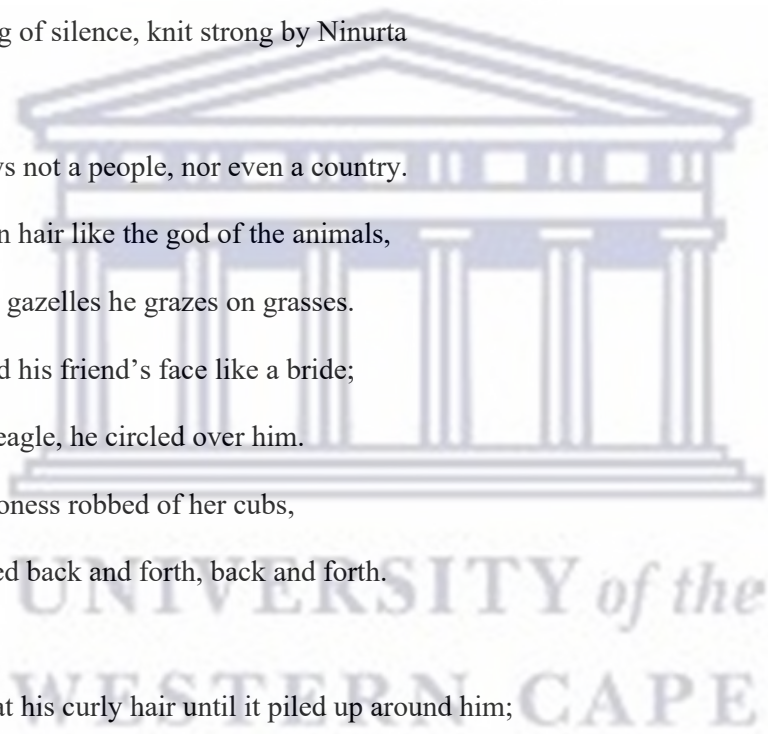
Like an eagle, he circled over him.

Like a lioness robbed of her cubs,

He circled back and forth, back and forth.

He tore at his curly hair until it piled up around him;

He stripped off his finery and cast it away as anathema. (95)



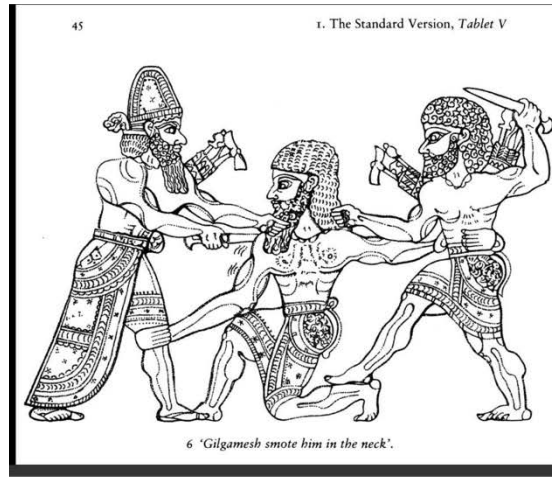


Fig. 3. Gilgamesh and Enkidu in attack,
The Epic of Gilgamesh, translated by N.K. Sanders, Penguin Classics, 1960, p. 45.

In the Afrikaans translation by Walters (2014), the imagery is breathtaking in its visuality, plasticity and viscosity, for example, when the hunter sees Enkidu for the first time:

Wat hy sien, laat al die hare in sy nek regopstaan. Die diërasie kom af na die water toe; dit loop op die kussings van sy lang voete, en op die kneukels van sy groot hande. Sy hele lyf, buiten sy handpalms, die waai van sy arms en sy oogholtes, is toegegroei van die hare. Maar dit is nie 'n beer of 'n kat nie. Hy laat sak sy kop om water te drink, maar dit is nie 'n bok of 'n bosvark nie. Hy het 'n maanhaar van lang, growwe hare, maar dit is nie 'n leeu nie. Dit is 'n man.

Jagter wag, roerloos, tot die gedierte klaar gedrink het en weer wegsloop. Hy staan so stil dat die vissies aan sy tone knibbel. Hy bly stilstaan terwyl miere teen sy arms opkriewel en die vlieë soos wolke op hom kom sit. Eers toe die diërasie met lang treë wegloop, kop omhoog, met water glinsterend op sy pels, gryp Jagter sy gereedskap en hardloop (69).

There are several inspirations I gained from *Gilgamesh*. It exists only in fragments. And it was composed in Akkadian which was a combination of Assyrian and Babylonian dialects (Sandars

8). (Of course, deciphering the cuneiforms posed transliterate and translation problems.) Another thing to note was the lack of ornate style and sparing use of elevated language in the Epic as well as the way in which the main characters discovered their powers and changed their appearances. I challenged myself to think about whether I could present an Epic in a fragment form, with the reader left to imagine the missing pieces and whether I could use a non-standard language or dialect to create the pathos around someone. And whether Bientang could ‘discover’ powers and change her appearance.

2.3.2. Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*

Early Greek culture, from which the Homeric tales emerged, was essentially oral. There were no books or printed materials in wide circulation among the general population.



Fig. 4. Reproduction of cuneiform tablet from British Museum

Source: <https://www.mj2artesanos.es/blog/los-origenes-de-la-escritura-ii-la-escritura-cuneiforme/?lang=en>. Accessed 21 Jul. 2021.

Frederic Will (2006) suggests that it was the professional poets who travelled to high profile events, who retained the different parts of the Epics and acted as the ‘glue’ that preserve the uniformity of Greek literature. I, in my ignorance, and pleasure, in reading the *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, assumed that these ancient Greek literary works had been written down, before being performed for the first time, since they have the quality of something carefully contemplated and formulated. For

me, they represented a sign of the advancement of Greek culture and civilization! I read the two works in the famous Dutch translation by Imme Dros:

De boog snorde. ...

De zon blikkerde...

Chryses was van zijn leven nog niet zo afgeblaft.

Met opgeschorte rokken vluchtte hij als een potsierlijke loopvogel weg langs de rustelose klotsende zee.

“En daarom ben ik hier, zie je,” zei de God met de lange tenen, en de zilveren boog begon weer onheilspellend te gonzen. (61)

...

God van de zee, neem mij niet mee

God met je diepblauwe haren

Poseidon, God van de zee

God van de woelige baren (417)

Frederic Will (2006) argues that:

[s]ince we don't have written manuscripts signed 'by Homer' and we know so little about him, it is hard to say for sure whether he was the only author of *The Iliad*. Readers and scholars over the past two hundred years frequently concluded that 'Homer' was a generic name used to signify the whole tradition of oral literature present throughout the eastern Mediterranean in the early centuries of the first millennium B.C. 'Homer', they reasoned, could be thought of as the collective voice of the early Greek people. (ix).

I liked participating in these conclusions, since a lot of the stringent rules and formulaic ideas on the Epic, use Homer's Epics as the epitome of the genre. These kinds of speculative conclusions, on the other hand, are more exciting to engage with, and made the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* more approachable, more human, and calmed the apprehension I initially had to engage with these Epics.

E.V. Rieu (1953) argues that Homer's *The Iliad* and *Odyssey* are "twin aspects of a single theme – the story of the Trojan and the aftermath" (10). Cas Vos in the foreword to his Afrikaans translation of the *Odyssey* notes that different stories are woven together and that the attentive reader would discover different forms of competing narration (6).

The *Iliad* centres on two leaders' journeys for military and economic rule. The *Odyssey* is about a single man's journey to return to his wife and children. He faces many trials set up by the god Poseidon, who wants to marry his wife. The *Iliad* is more complex, with the conflict between Achilles and Agamemnon being both a personal and political struggle for power.

I was remembering that Jean-Paul Sartre, in *Nausea*, told himself in "Undated Sheet" (9) that "the best thing would be to write down everything that happens from day to day. To keep a diary in order to understand. To neglect no nuances or little details, even if they seem unimportant, above all to classify" (9). So, for me, Homer's genius lies in the fact that the *Iliad* concerns crucial events taking place over a few days – the whole Epic around a few days! (vii). How did Homer manage to write an entire civilization's existence in a couple of days? At no point did I feel that the similes were clichés. E.V. Rieu says that "Homer's historical value to us lies, not in the attempt to describe an actual past, but in the picture which, in the course of this attempt, he cannot help giving us of the life and manners of his day" (10). This ignites possibilities for me regarding my own Epic. Rieu helped with approaching a past for *Bientang*, especially since the historical facts relating to indigenous people are so fractured. Rieu reminded me that the past *does* leave remnants on the landscape and culture of a place, I just had to look for them.

Vos points to the fact that the kind of Greek used is regarded as Homeric Greek – an archaic form of Ionic Greek including various dialects such as the Aeolian Greek, Attic Greek, as well as non-Greek loanwords (41).

Milman Parry's research shows that Homer's Epics are a collective of many singer-poems; the singing forces a particular metre onto the language. The narrations contain phrases that have turned into formulas, with repetition to support the memory of the singers. According to Parry, these epithets were carried over orally from generation to generation, conveying basic themes through their formulas. Parry believes that these narrations were composed by illiterate singers (Vos 3).

These nameless, faceless, but ever-present singers and other oral voices within the Epic tradition, alerted me to opportunities for *Bientang*. I wanted *Bientang* to resound with a strong lyrical register emanating from a lost community/collective voice. I listened to the works of Homer as sung on the internet and enjoyed placing some Afrikaans into the long and short syllable metre, accompanied by the iambic metre in Homer's poetry. Metre takes the poet/lyre to a detailed understanding of how the work must have been performed in ancient Greece. I had never thought about how sound can also be archival of a civilization. It opened my eyes and ears to the aural aspect of *Bientang* and how metre can become a way of designing one's own rhythmic patterns.

Quite influential on me was the way in which the "singer" or oral poet was brought into the Epic in the *Odyssey*, translated by J.P.J. Van Rensburg (1963). The Afrikaans translation reads:

Toe word Demodokos die sanger ingebting, hy aan wie die muse goed sowel as kwaad geskenk het, want terwyl sy hom die goddelike sangkuns gegee het, het sy die lig van sy oë ontnem. 'n Herout lei die blinde sanger na 'n sitplek tussen die gaste, langs 'n hoë suil, waar hy hom laat sit. Die lier hang hy bo sy kop aan 'n haak, sodat hy dit maklik kan bykom ... teen die einde van die maaltyd gryp Demodokos sy lier en hef 'n lied aan waarin hy die stryd besing waarin Odusseus lank gelede voor Troje met Achilles slaags geraak het... hoe pragtig beskryf Demodokos hierdie stryd nie, hoe tril die spanning in sy stem. Odusseus kon sy ontroering nouliks verberg. Hy trek sy purper mantel oor sy kop en steek sy gesig daarin weg, want hy skaam hom dat hy nie sy trane voor die Phaiakiërs kan bedwing nie. (49-50)

I found it wonderful that the poet and the hero are both present in the poem and this inspired me to create the same possibilities in *Bientang*.

2.4. Some Afrikaans Epics

I am not the only South African author who has worked in the Epic tradition. Afrikaans writing by white authors has a particularly strong legacy, with much-celebrated texts bringing recognition and support to their writing careers.

When I started doing research on the substantive Epic tradition in Afrikaans, I found it interesting that, in the various reviews and discussions of many of these long Epic poems, only fleeting attention was given to the actual Epic structure and format within the poems. These book-length single poems were mostly analysed in terms of their symbolic characteristics or their character development, but there was a noticeable absence in these discussions of the *role* of the Epic form within the text. In that sense I am doing something quite “new” in the discourse on Afrikaans Epics, by focusing specifically on the role of the form.

I want to emphasize that in the discussion of all these epics I am presenting only the aspects that I found useful in thinking about and writing *Bientang*.

2.4.1. *Martjie*

Writing about what he terms “the first comprehensive Epic in Afrikaans”, *Martjie* (1918) by Jan F. E. Celliers, J.C. Kannemeyer says:

The world of nineteenth-century farm culture, the South African landscape and the Anglo-Boer War is the building material for *Martjie* . . . As the first full-fledged depiction of unrequited love in Afrikaans literature, it is literally-historically the forerunner of C.M. van den Heever's *Somer* and Hettie Smit's *Sy Kom met die Sekelmaan*. (Translated from Kannemeyer 267)

The character of *Martjie* can be regarded as not only the first “hero” in the genre of the Afrikaans Epic but also the first heroine! Initially, I made a study of this old Epic and regarded it today as quite stuffy.

While *Martjie* was being written at the beginning of the twentieth century important historical and political events were taking place. In Herman Giliomee's (2006) brief chronological timeline of the Afrikaner since the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck in the Cape in 1652, one learns that after the

Anglo-Boer war, the South African Party (SAP), under Louis Botha, formed the first government in which the Afrikaner solidified a solid political rebellion against British rule. Also during these years, several political parties and political acts were formed, namely the South African Native National Congress; the Natives Land Act of 1913, which gave white people a total landmass of 87%; and between 1914 and 1915 some 12 000 Afrikaners rose up in an armed rebellion against South Africa's participation in World War I (7).

In the "Voorwoord" of his book, Celliers, – author of *Martjie* – is cunning in spelling out his intentions and goals. He claims that the story is very basic, a story of a romantic relationship between two young Afrikaners in their Afrikaner environment: "Alle begeerte na avontuurlik of ingewikkeldheid in die verhaal [word] uitgesluit." That is not quite true. While the young Afrikaners fall in love, the young man is conscripted to fight in World War I, political sanctions are implemented and land acts favour the white people living on the farm where Martjie lives. Martjie and Roelf both suffer from unrequited love and, even though Martjie decides to become a war nurse, when she hears that Roelf might be one of the injured in the battle, she bravely runs into the open field, dodging bullets to get to Roelf. When she reaches him he tells her that he could never love her since his romantic interest has died and then he succumbs to a bullet in Martjie's arms.

This brings me to the notion of doublespeak. Edward S. Herman says that doublespeak has:

The ability to lie, whether knowingly or unconsciously, and to get away with it; and the ability to use lies and choose and shape facts selectively, blocking out those that don't fit an agenda or program. (3)

I am not denying that *Martjie* could have been a nice war tale to give hope to those waiting for their family members who were fighting in a war, but I cannot ignore Celliers's clearly stated purpose of this book:

Ek dank my landgenote vir die aanmoediging en ondersteuning, en hoop dat *Martjie* by toeneming sal bydra tot die doel wat beoog: opbou van taal, kuns, nasionaliteit.

Martjie was written as a building block to the Afrikaner's nationalist intentions. And yet, one must ask, how on earth a young Afrikaner debutante could possibly contribute these intentions within such a patriarchal society where "[a] woman's very identity was subsumed in her husband's; any property she brought into marriage was his, any debt she owed was his, almost any act she committed was his" (Edmund Morgan quoted in Giliomee, 11). Yet Giliomee also mentions that "[w]omen at the Cape also participated actively in political affairs. Between 1705 and 1707 women were prominent in the struggle of the burghers against the Governor, Willem Adriaan van der Stel, and some other high officials who, in violation of the Company policy, farmed for the market, in the process increasingly squeezing the burghers out... The Stellenbosch landdrost, Johannes Starrenburg ... was most upset by a demonstration in the town in 1706" (10). According to Giliomee, Van Der Stel, whilst [Taking] refuge in his own house, wrote: "[The] women are as dangerous as the men and do not keep quiet" (11).

I played with the idea that *Martjie* in a way was a trickster: the hero in the oldest Afrikaans Epic surely had to be a man! Therefore, Jan F.E. Celliers's decision to make his hero a woman makes me believe that perhaps the poet as well as his creation were tricksters, because their actions go against what is typically expected of them:

The disruptive side of human imagination is epitomized by the figure of the trickster. Trickster is an emblem of artistic and cultural renewal. He fascinates for how he transgresses boundaries and blurs distinctions. (Ackermann 407)

So, I played with the idea that *Martjie* in a way was a trickster. Therefore, Jan F.E. Celliers's decision to make his hero a woman makes me believe that perhaps the poet as well as his creation were tricksters because their actions go against what is expected of them.

The Epic *Martjie* faces the same challenges as *Bientang*, because both characters are women who have extraordinary events happen in their lives, but, as Giliomee points out, the Afrikaner woman remains a marginal figure in a patriarchal society, such as the one in which *Martjie* lived. *Martjie*'s extraordinary feat is that she was an unconventional woman, yet was beloved by her peers and had agency, deciding when, where and with whom she remains the "baas":

In buurte en dorp
is Martjie baie gesien,
in meisies-kringe ook gesog...
van menig jonkman wat alreeds
om Uitkyks nôintjie het gedraai:
dis duid'lik, sy is almal skoon die baas,
en lyk of sy aan trou nie dink nie. (11)

Martjie challenged my own ideas around what action the eponymous character should take to receive the title of hero. All I saw was a woman who did not want to get married and who warded off suitors. Was she heroic simply because she wanted to live a life on her own terms, even though it meant losing privileges?

The pivotal moment arrives when Roelf is injured in the war. There is a shift from the hypothetical soldiers at war. The war is now personal for Martjie and she makes a brave and heroic decision.

By tuisdom van tant' Mieta en oom Koot
is Martjie besig, by haar kas,
haar plan is gou vertel:
sy sluit haar aan
by die ambulans, die eerste wat weer gaan;
verpleegsters word gevra,
sy kan nie meer
op haar laat wag,
haar diens, as dogter van haar land,
word ook geverg. (92)

In this moment, taking up reins to join the army as an army nurse makes her the hero of her own story, by fighting for the man that she loves, but she also becomes a patriotic “dogter van haar land”. Through Martjie’s observations and experience at the war camp, she introduces the reader to the political climate as well as to the experiences of the soldiers. Women are generally excluded as active participants in the war, so Celliers is refreshingly rebellious by not making her a “little woman” waiting for her love interest to come home. When she hears of a burgher wounded in the veld she rushes out.

Martjie het genoeg gehoor.
Sy weet, sy voel wie daardie burger is
Al het haar niemand dit vertel.
Sy’s weg,
Te voet ...

Then suddenly:

“Roelf!”
Hy hoor haar stem
En maak meteens
’n Snelle wending met sy lyf en hoof,
Die selfde oomblik kraak
’n Sarsie kleingeweer
En hy stort agteroor (100)

To return to my previous point, Martjie as a tragic hero experiences unrequited love because Roelf cannot get over the death of his previous relationship with a woman, presumably in the Anglo-Boer war. Again, this ending resonates with several Afrikaner themes: being faithful to those who sacrificed their lives, standing up and fighting for the future of one’s people, and, most importantly, that the Anglo-Boer war changed people so that they were unable to love or believe again.

According to J.M. Coetzee, the silences in the South African farm novel (or, in this case, the Epic) is particular in its silence about the place of black men in the pastoral idyll (12). In response, I would ask: what about the black woman? *Martjie* formed a basis when I was thinking about Bientang's journey as a possible heroine, Bientang's position as a member of a society, and how and what she functions as in that society. What will become of Bientang once I use the Epic form to tell her story? If I make an indigenous woman the heroine of an Afrikaans Epic, a hundred and fifty years later, what power effects will I be strengthening or subverting?

In his *Poetics*, Aristotle argues:

the poet's function is to describe, not the thing that has happened, but a kind of thing that might happen ... the distinction between historian and poet is not the one writing prose and the other verse ... poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature of universals, whereas those of history are singulars. (1451)

Martjie forms a quintessential part of the double action here. *Martjie* is both history and poetry and, for the Afrikaner, it was essential to be both — to turn a narrative into a national Epic. The Epic generally has a circular plot, but Celliers left the narrative open-ended as a reminder of how far the nation has come.

Political engagement has been part of Afrikaans Epics (and most of the Epics I read in other languages), but the main surprise for me was that this old Epic was written in free verse. Celliers acknowledges that, due to the amount of information needed in an Epic, rhyming would simply hamper the flow. He stresses that his format is "loose", but it is not necessarily without form:

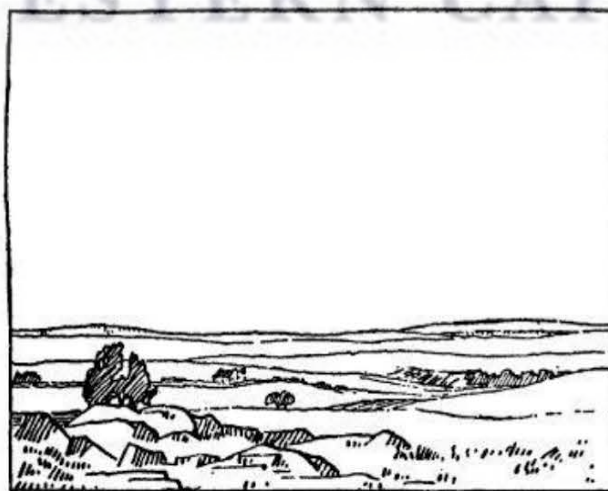
Ek het 'n losse en onafhanklike vorm gekies, omdat daar baie dinge gesê moet word, wat eenvoudige medelinge is, en net ondigterlike rymelary is as dit op strenge maat en rym gesê word, terwyl poësie in elke vorm goed uitgedruk kan word waar dit in 'n werk voorkom. Hoewel die vorm los is, is dit darem nie ongebonde nie. (Celliers)

Celliers's *Martjie* leans more towards the Epic of *Gilgamesh*. It ignores the rigid 'rules' of Epic definitions and analyses and shows that the Epic contains elements of the society within it, like something petrified into a fossil.

2.4.2. *Trekkerswee*

While *Martjie* focuses on the Afrikaner farm idyll, Totius's *Trekkerswee* (1915) deals with impoverished Afrikaners trying to make a living in the city and in the mines. Totius uses a mosaic of poetic techniques. The title has a double meaning: the routes (weë) of the trekkers – not the Voortrekkers, but those who had to leave their bankrupt farms to find employment elsewhere. It also refers to the sorrow (wee) of the trekkers; their displacement and efforts to stay in touch with their roots – far from the idyll in *Martjie*. In this sense, *Trekkerswee* becomes a lamentation of the ending of a utopian Afrikaner life, after losing to the British in a scorched earth war. In Chapter XVII of the book, Oom Gert makes a wedding speech, but it is a political manifesto: the wedding pledge is also a political one: to take back the country from the British.

Trekkerswee, as a physical volume, moves away from the traditional publication of a poetry volume and includes etchings by the artist Jacobus Hendrik Pierneef before each of the chapters. For example:



Verlore-klein lê op die Rand / hul huisie in die trekkerland.

Fig. 5. Pierneef etching on the title page of "Silwer Strale" in Totius, *Trekkerswee Verse van Totius*, Tafelberg, 1981, p. 1.

Dis heuwels, heuwels, heuwels net
Sover 'n mens se oog kan spur;
Grasheuwels waar ook riwwe gaan,
Met enkele stroompies tussendeur (3)

This Epic consists of 59 pages, 746 quatrains, 15 five verse stanzas, 76 six verse stanzas, 14 couplets, eight septets, five dizains, four octaves, 12 verse stanzas and two tercets. This irregular stanza appearance surprises one, and yet, when reading the poem, there seems to be an artistic logic to every decision. I was very surprised by the forms used in chapter I: seven quatrains (pg. 3-4) with the interesting rhyme scheme: 1st stanza: XAXA; 2nd stanza: XXXX; 3rd stanza: XBXB; 4th stanza: XXXX; 5th stanza: XCXC; 6th stanza: XD XD; 7th stanza: EFEF.

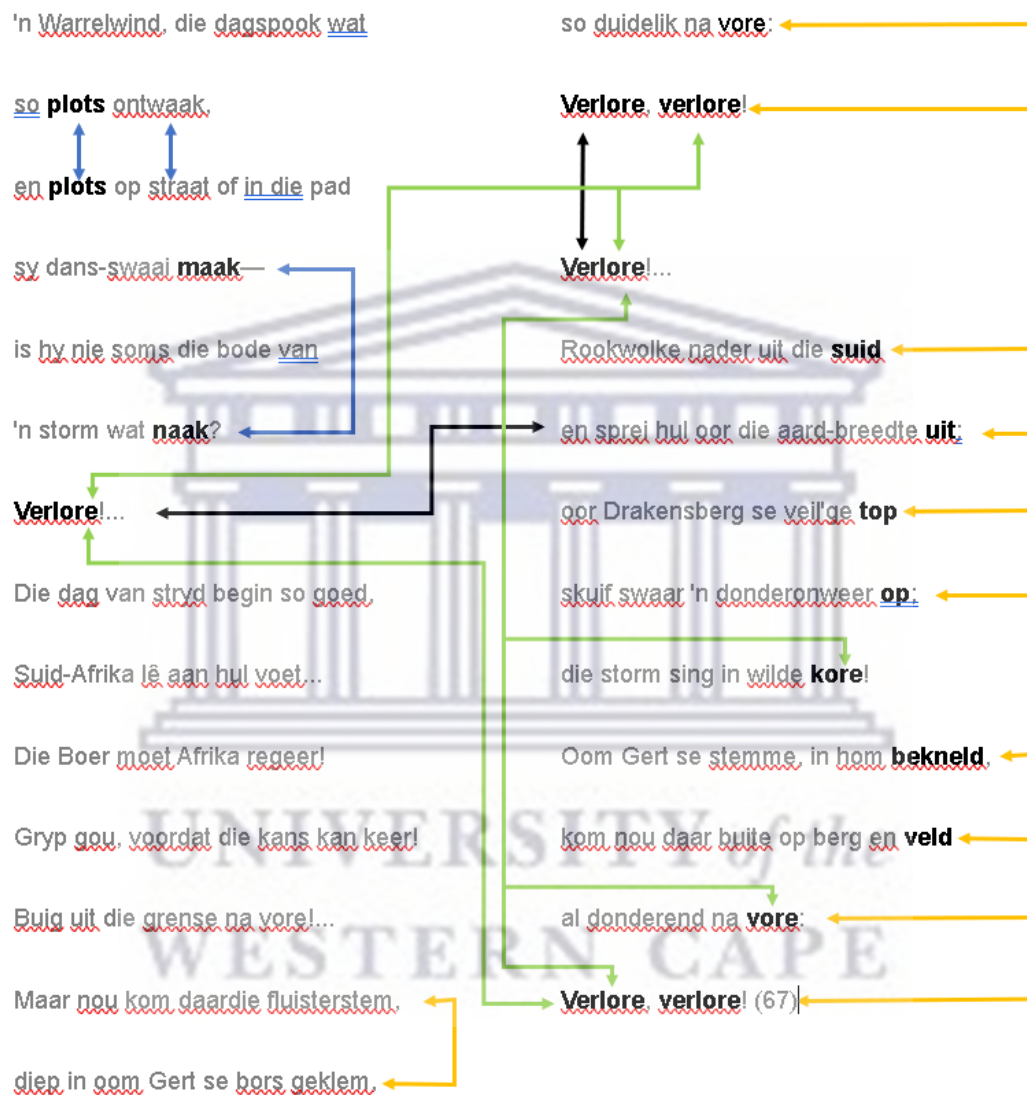
The metre is that of the ballad, combined with iambic tetrameter with eight syllables in the first three lines and seven syllables in the fourth line.

In chapter IV, the observer notes how the farm landscape is not yet dealing with modernisation:

Ek sien daar nog geen telegraaf
Of kronkelende spoorwegbaan;
Geen stofferige heuwelpad
Wat na trekkerswoning gaan. (14)

The narratives of chapters I–VII, XIV, XV are told in quatrains; chapters XIII and XVI are in quintains, which I found quite a liberating form. I tried this later in *Bientang* because this format does not demand the stern rhyme pattern of a quatrain, but uses: ABACA, ABCDA, ABCDA, ABCAB, AABCA, ABCCB, ABCDB, ABCDB.

In chapter XVII, Totius breaks the rules of a sextet and does not use interlaced rhyme or enclosed rhymes, but ABCDEC. Below is an example and illustration of the rebellious rhyme schemes used by Totius.



In *Trekkerswee*, Totius imagined the Afrikaner confronted with an urban environment and foreign culture. The poem is not stuck in an idyllic glorification of the past, but through its more elaborate actuality, gives the first hint of a type of social poetry in Afrikaans.

As far as form is concerned, Totius's poem differs radically from *Martjie*. While Celliers maintains a single chronological line, *Trekkerswee* is a mosaic in three pieces, built intermittently from fragments that are Epic, lyrical, and argumentative, and by means of parallel depictions, the

reader is provided a piece of the ‘creation’ of the Afrikaner. Unlike Celliers's free verse, Totius uses a variety of formal strophic schemes that are adapted to the narrative, with the quatrain form as the dominant verse pattern.

2.4.3. *Raka*

Arguably the most studied Epic in Afrikaans is N.P. van Wyk Louw's *Raka* (1941). Delivering a modern Epic, that embodies a tension between two contrasting figures, Louw makes an important contribution to the tradition of Epic-writing in Afrikaans, sticking closely to the ancient storytelling format of glorifying a hero – including mortal combat and love. D. J. Opperman argues that *Raka* is more of a modern than a traditional Epic, in that the story and descriptions are reduced to a minimum: “[The] modern Epic is a story from the inside, full of the scintillation of a hidden psychical life” (225).

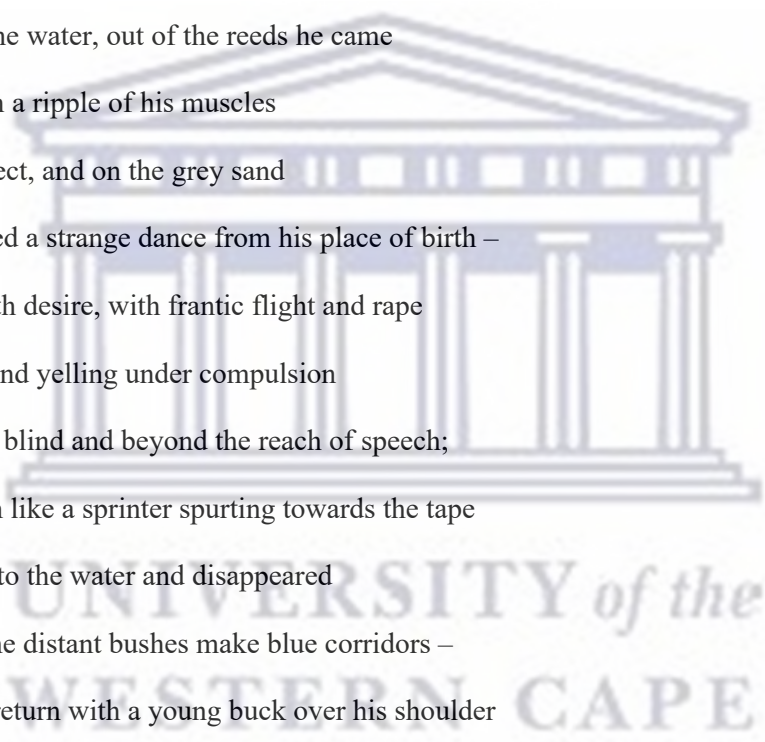
This Epic has been in circulation for more than 80 years and is still regarded as an important poem in Afrikaans. Parts of it were translated into English by the highly regarded poet Guy Butler, and parts of it into Dutch; a ballet was created on the theme, as was a small-scale opera. What makes *Raka* such a literary treasure? What about it speaks to so many generations – even across languages and genres?

When Van Wyk Louw's Epic was published, it was regarded as a magnificent feat of the poetic in Afrikaans. Scholars were keen to discuss it and most of the early work (Bisschoff 1963; Dekker 1945) underlined that one should not draw quick or facile conclusions about who and what the two opposing figures stand for. In the poem, *Raka* stands for what could be seen as the Evil, the Threat, the Other, the outsider, terror itself, the non-thinker, and pure Instinct. *Raka* is associated with physical power, thoughtless body-ness, living out concrete earthiness. Koki is seen as the tragic hero, the thinker, the intellectual, and the philosopher. He seems refined in his thoughts, aware of the ethical implications of his deeds, and determined to carry the responsibility of his community. He seems considerate, prepared to sacrifice himself for his community and therefore is destroyed.

The academic work written on *Raka* is vast, making it both a classic work and relevant – an imperative for me to revisit it as a prospective Epic writer. And yet again, *Raka*'s discourse mainly

deals with the content and not with the role of the form. The abstract opposing forces contained in Raka and Koki are read as part of Afrikaner ideology and used to criticise that ideology. Because both these characters are found in a jungle, in and around a small village, with women and clay pots, no racial connotations were initially seen in the Epic. But more and more critical voices engaged with the easy opposites in the poem and links to being “civilised” or “uncivilised”.

In the anthology *Afrikaans Poems with English Translations* (1962) Butler specifically translated the part where the women were captivated by Raka:



Across the water, out of the reeds he came
And with a ripple of his muscles
Stood erect, and on the grey sand
Performed a strange dance from his place of birth –
Rank with desire, with frantic flight and rape
Mating and yelling under compulsion
Of urges blind and beyond the reach of speech;
And then like a sprinter spurting towards the tape
Dived into the water and disappeared
Where the distant bushes make blue corridors –
Only to return with a young buck over his shoulder
Its throat freshly torn out by hand and the fawn hide
Still full of titchings, smeared
With blood (Van Wyk Louw 136)

Butler also translated the part where Koki senses how Raka has deeply impacted parts of the inner lives of the women and children:

Only one was silent
Koki, swiftest of foot in the hunt,

The lithe juggler with the javelin, he
who lifts a bullock on his sloping shoulders
he did not partake of the dark song that rose
out of the ring ... but feared
great evil to be rampant in the blood
of his obsessed people (Van Wyk Louw 147)

I turn now to the craft. The poem is written in heroic couplets. In its purest form, a heroic couple consists of (1) two rhyming lines of poetry (a couplet), (2) written in iambic pentameter (5-beat lines with alternating unstressed and stressed syllables), (3) the lines should be closed (a pause at the end of each line), and (4) focus on a serious subject matter (heroic). Van Wyk Louw's poem fulfills one, two and four of these stringent requirements. This is quite formulaic, especially in light of the transformations Totius and Celliers risked in their Epic poems.

To write an Epic, I wanted to avoid as many 'traps' as possible and I wanted to make links with and oppose in meaningful ways what has been written previously in Afrikaans. So, although I regarded the heroic couplet as being too 'manacled' on a formal level, in *Bientang* I used the pause from the heroic couplet. I began several separate poems with an opening couplet (see *Bientang* 18, 20, 22, 24) with the pause as a crucial element.

2.4.4. Joernaal van Jorik

Another famous Afrikaans Epic is *Joernaal van Jorik* (1949) by D.J. Opperman, consisting of five parts written in quatrains with cross rhyme. While not as daring as Celliers and Totius, Opperman also worked within the rules of formal 'manacles', though not as strictly as Van Wyk Louw.

Joernaal van Jorik tells the story of Jorik (a name compiled from the poet's names Diederik Johannes), a spy who arrives in Cape Town on a submarine during the Second World War. He learns everything about the country and its people, its landscapes, and contrasts, and becomes embroiled in the political situation. On a broader level, the poem addresses meta-narratives about the colonial

history of Western man and the growth of a new nation at the Cape. The poem also expresses Opperman's notion of how action, within a socio-political context, could be regarded as a betrayal of the poet's purely imaginative task.

What is interesting to me is the intertextuality, the use of symbols, Greek and Christian vocabulary, and concepts like "polis", "rebellion", and political resistance against the British Empire. Against this background, Opperman placed Jorik. But who is Jorik?

Opperman never mentions his background. Although the poem is in the first person, Jorik himself remains elusive, he hides. The reader cannot pinpoint him. This device, for me, has its advantages. Although Jorik is technically the hero of this Epic, Jorik does not try to make the reader invest in his perspective, therefore one soon trusts his narration of the different groups and places he visits as well as the way he interacts with people. He refers to people and cultures living in South Africa and one can easily identify the landscapes, but, unlike *Raka*, nothing is open for interpretation because the poet cunningly plays with the concept of spying, leaving it to the reader to work out for whom and for what the spy is spying? It was good to realise what a wonderful poetic and narrative tool spying is to con the reader into rendering themselves open to the whole Epic.

There is no sign in *Joernaal van Jorik* of the Afrikaner idyll, or the utopia of open farms and veld as in *Martjie*, or the highly aesthetic lyric of *Raka*. Jorik's vocabulary captures whoever he talks to, while the milieu is the mid-twentieth century industrial capitalism in South Africa.

The quatrain form allows the poet to jump from one time to another, one place to another: every quatrain like a flashlight pinpointing something. In *Afrikaans Poems with the English Translations* (1962) William and Jean Branford stuck to the original rhyme scheme in their translation:

Hearing hooves and wheels, he stops to look,
And the Malay cart with its driver that
Cries, 'Fresh fish! Kabeljou, galjoen and snoek!'
And sounds his two-note bugle sharp and flat.

O thorn-tree, marsh and bushveld of mesquite!
The leguaan creeps from the dark, rocky scar.
He knows the veins of gold and anthracite,
Uranium and the rosy cinnabar. (Opperman 249)

Jorik's power lies in the fact that he is an outsider, a late-comer using oppression and racism to his advantage to get information from people. This Epic made me aware that various Afrikaans accents could be used, and most importantly: that Bientang could maintain her mysteriousness and her unknowability.

2.4.5. Zimbabwe

The critical older discussions of *Zimbabwe* (1968) by the poet, P.J. Philander, centre mostly on its clumsy presentation instead of format, and this, according to Hein Willemse in his article "*Insularity and Ambivalence*, (2018) means that Philander's most ambitious work, "has not been explored to any significant degree" (127). Philander's poem has eight sections, dealing with the fall of the Zimbabwean civilization because of sexual misconduct and the enmity of the so-called primitive tribes around them. With this history, Philander joins S.J. Du Toit's *Koningin van Skeba* (1922), although *Zimbabwe* – in addition to bearing direct similarities in terms of word usage – also shows a relationship with Opperman's method of taking a particular piece of history and infusing it with a range of thematic interventions that apply to contemporary issues.

In my opinion, P.J. Philander was ahead of his time, because unlike his peers he focused on the socio-economic and racial inequality faced under Apartheid. Philander's Epic poem is based on the controversial notion that the Phoenicians built Great Zimbabwe. Du Toit, on the other hand, combines two stories; the first is the experience of a group unearthing tombs and mummies of the Queen of Sheba at the Zimbabwe ruins, while the second is the 'history' of the Queen of Sheba as the narrator translates it from Hebrew scrolls. Willemse argues that Philander would have been well-informed about Great Zimbabwe since *Koningin van Skeba* by S.J. du Toit was prescribed at schools,

thus his decision to write this Epic was a deliberate act of resistance. In the second part of Willemse's discussion, *Zimbabwe* is read alongside Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*.

Willemse's goal in his article is to draw the reader's attention to the "binary relationship between settlers and aboriginals" (125) and, finally, to discuss Philander's "political ambivalence and his attempts at making the rise and decline of Great Zimbabwe applicable to apartheid South Africa" (125).

A couple of things stood out for me in this article. First is the thoroughness of the analysis – perhaps the only full analysis of *Zimbabwe* to date. Second is the discussion of the poet's creative and political intent which provides an analysis of the position of the "aboriginal" in colonial texts. Part of my journey of thinking about marginality was also to understand the position the marginal figure had in the Afrikaans Epic as a way of making sure that I did not repeat tropes in the way I was beginning to think about Bientang's positionality. *Zimbabwe*, the only Afrikaans Epic written by a coloured poet, drew a great deal of very negative commentary from the important critics of his time.

Those critical of *Zimbabwe* used terms like the following in their critique: "barok oordad en beskrywingswellus" (baroque excess and wanton descriptions) (Kannemeyer 215). The Epic is regarded as "lomp, met rymdwang" (awkward, with forced rhyme) (Cloete 147); a commendable effort, but as a whole the work does not succeed "’n prysenswaardige poging, maar as ’n geheel slaag die werk nie" (Kok 91) or as a "prekerigheid en dorre relaas" (preachy and dull account) (Kannemeyer 215). In short: this severe criticism meant that *Zimbabwe*, Philander's most ambitious work, has not been explored in any significant detail (Willemse 72).

I almost felt like an ally wanting to come to Philander's defence, since my initial analysis showed the work presented a few important shifts from the Afrikaans Epics of his time, one significant shift being the way that the poet describes Great Zimbabwe in an idiolectic Afrikaans. He writes in a 'lofty' Afrikaans while focusing on 'unlofty' deeds like sex slavery, racial divide, and oppression. But when I wanted to learn from the poet Philander about his approach to form and typography, I soon realised that his adherence to the traditional characteristics of the Epic genre did indeed make the work insular. The entire Epic is written in quatrains and whilst rhythmically it could

have the potential to echo musicality, I had to admit that structurally it created problems with regard to clarity in the plot.

It bothered me that a scholarly article on P.J. Philander's Epic poem was only published fifty years later. This points to the lack of scholarly engagement of Black Afrikaans Academics working on black Afrikaans poets and how creative writing as a methodology brings important discussions and contributions to Afrikaans literature that would otherwise be overlooked by literary scholars.

2.4.6. *Lewendood*

Breyten Breytenbach's poetry volume *Lewendood* (1989) deals with his terrorism conviction and his first experiences of jail. It is described by Kannemeyer as a kind of Epic poem using the same style as *Trekkerswee*. According to Helize Van Vuuren (1992), "In *Lewendood* he [Breytenbach] sees the poet as 'the wart on the feeling places inside the palm of society's hand'" (128). The long poem can also be read as an elaboration on the title, *Lewendood* ('Life-and-death' or 'living death'), referring to the inseparability of the two concepts. This is borne out when Van Vuuren argues: "Sometimes aspects of the obsessive theme of execution are treated with a touch of humour" (87).

All my writing life I had been wary of Breyten Breytenbach, since so much of Afrikaans ingenuity is owed to him. He is often named as the main influence on many Afrikaans poets particularly debut poets who use his work as an inspiration. I did not want to be compared to him, to be engaging with him, to be overwhelmed with his vast output or simply to become another clone. My ego wanted to learn from the Afrikaner poets, but also to rebel against them. I have since gained respect for this poet's ingenuity and his careful exhibition of his work. I describe his work as an exhibition because of the way he uses typography as mimesis.

Lewendood has five parts, namely "voorspraak", "droomwaak", "swarthart", "parapoësie" and "breinvrug". The layout of the table of contents itself is very striking. The poems are numbered in a multileveled way, for example, e.g., 2.1.1 – 2.1.4 then a jump to 2.2 – 2.27. The numbering does not start with say 1.1 but with 2.1.1, which to me is a clever way of starting *in medias res*. Even though the poems are listed chronologically, they do not follow chronologically as a collection. I have never

thought about numbering poems as a poetic device. The numbering is also included as the title of the poems inside the collection.

Another interesting device used by Breytenbach in *Lewendood* is the vast nature of the entire collection in terms of its form. It ranges from the adaptation of famous poets' work, an epistolary play, existing Eastern forms like *ghaselle*, Afrikaans idioms, *volksliedere*, pastorale, "wit vers" with its full political contexts, *ars poeticas*, *lykdigte* and short prose pieces. The collection had a destabilising effect on me while projecting a force of magnitude. This underlined for me how crucial form and typography were. During the writing process of *Bientang*, focusing on form led me to important discoveries of close reading (and writing) and taught me editing conventions I could adopt or dispose of in my shaping process. This meant that by considering other ways in which the poem could exist, I practiced not being precious about my writing. That is healthy, I believe.

But who is the hero of *Lewendood*? An image came up for me about what/ who he is: perhaps not the poet but his ego. In *Joernaal van Jorik*, the hero is a spy, infiltrating spaces to obtain information, but in Breytenbach's poem, the landscape of the hero is dependent on the imagination of the poet. The ego could be seen as an interloper commenting on the fact that, even though the hero, the political prisoner's physical body, has lost the struggle, the ego now triumphs through language.

2.4.7. Lady Anne

In *Lady Anne* (1989) by Antjie Krog, the focalising tension between "hero" (Lady Anne) and "bard" (poet) encourages the reader to view the long poem as a kind of modern Epic. With the shifts between Lady Anne and the autobiographical I, a range of contrasting but related viewpoints and poetical forms converge to create a single poetic atmosphere:

Lady Anne as guide because a hero needs a bard

I wanted to live a second life through you

Lady Anne Barnard – show it is possible

to hone the truth by pen
to live an honourable life within so much privilege
but from your letters you emerge
hand on the hip talented
but a frivolous fool, pen
in sly ink, snob, naive liberal
being spoilt from your principles
by your useless husband
you never had real pluck
now that your whole puerile life
has arrived on my desk, I go berserk: as metaphor
my Lady, you're not worth a fuck (Krog 34)

The invocation of the muse takes on different forms before Lady Anne is called up by the poet. The collection opens with a cut-out of a quote by Bram Fischer, plus a series of fragments, newspaper clippings, quotations of poems, correspondence to people of the poet's whereabouts and the creation processes leading to the writing of Lady Anne. These shreds form a kind of 'mud pool' right through the Epic, which the sole-fish, an emblem repeatedly appearing in the book, must adapt to. These pools of shredded texts illustrate how Krog was also consumed by ethical questions while tackling her Epic poem. As if pasted onto the cover of Part IV, a newspaper cutting reads: "Die vraag is," sê Hein Willemsse: "Waar was die Afrikaanse skrywers toe die land gebrand het?" (56). Another newspaper cutting has the words of Ingrid Winterbach, "Moet die skrywer vooraan die struggle wees? Moet hulle soos God sien, met 'n omvattende oog van Bloukrans tot by Crossroads?" (56). In the poem "Parole" the 'bard' says: if poetry perseveres as luxury it also becomes a lie (39).

There is also some correspondence between the poet and mentor/reader commenting on the work. The mentor/reader warning to look out for pitfalls, not specifically of the form, but the positioning as a white female poet. It is as if Krog were assembling and pasting all the instruments on a notice board while being in a workshop with Lady Anne. I thought about this again when I included

artifacts in my text around Bientang. They are there to remind the reader that Bientang is more than just one-dimensional, more than just the stereotype of the indigenous woman, but she is also a mosaic of other discoveries I made and was inspired by. Via *Lady Anne*, I gathered that visual material could play an important role in suggesting the complex context in which the writing of and search for a historical character takes place.

Lady Anne includes a myriad of poetry forms, namely found-poetry like newspaper clippings, archival material pertaining to Lady Anne herself, letters, the epistolary poetry form, and ballads. Different forms were used to identify the speaker, for example in describing Lady Anne, the rhyme scheme used only the eight-line stanza with A B C D E E B A as the rhyme scheme. In the five-line stanzas (“Parole”) every stanza has the same rhyme *ends* but in any order: ABCDEF, AFCBDE, DBAFCE, and so on.

The different forms, from the traditional to the ridiculous (an ovulation chart) sharpened my desire to make *Bientang* ‘messy’, unpredictable, and since Bientang was descended from different many peoples, specifically from South-East Asia, I looked into Eastern forms like the pantoum and the kakawin. I also placed Bientang’s words on the right side of the page as a homage to the fact that Arabic text reads from right to left.

In the preface of *Lady Anne: A Chronicle in Verse* (the English translation), Krog writes: “I chose her [Lady Anne Barnard] because she represented white privilege and (was) initially frivolous to me”. The poet also expresses her own privilege of being a white woman, even in having access to visit Lady Anne Barnard’s ancestral home. The poet also mentions: “It was easier to access her diaries and paintings than the words and lives of banned liberation leaders”, but she also acknowledges the irony that “the whole Epic was written while I was in the heat of the resistance politics in townships, and I wanted to find a way in which to represent in poetry the unbearable complexity of it all”. Initially, I was critical of the poet’s decision to choose a colonial figure, since Lady Anne Barnard was an English noblewoman. The English nobility are contentious figures in South Africa, especially for Afrikaners like Krog, as the British were responsible for the “Anglo-Boer” war and the concentration camps in which many Afrikaners died. Was this a way to show the apartheid

government the irony of them being in power after experiencing such a traumatic series of events?

Was this the poet's way of denouncing her Afrikaner heritage?

Working through this collection I reminded myself not to emulate aspects of *Lady Anne* in my work, since I came across so many similarities in subject matter and in the use of artefacts. For example, my hero's first setting is in a cave in Gansbaai near where I was born, but that is also where the Drupkelders are located which Lady Anne Barnard visited and Krog wrote about (49). In Hermanus, at the old harbour where Bientang moves from Gansbaai to Hermanus, I found historical archives of Lady Anne Barnard having visited there as well. I had to accept that there is an overlap in history between these two different women, Bientang and Lady Anne Barnard.

Ironically, just like Lady Anne Barnard, who claimed, "I think I am the first" (Krog 44), I also thought that I was the first to write about a 'hero' of colour, while not understanding how essentially colonial that remark is – just as colonial as the idea of "the last strandloper".

To summarise, the mosaic pattern fits *Lady Anne* perfectly with its shifting perspectives and styles. Kannemeyer argues that the structural grip, the meaningful use of the historical, the calculated inscription against the tradition of the Epic verse and a vision of a whole piece of history, as well as the debilitating reality of the apartheid era are underlying themes addressed equally in *Lady Anne* as well as in *Trekkerswee* (222).

2.5. A Brief Discussion of Two Other South African Epics

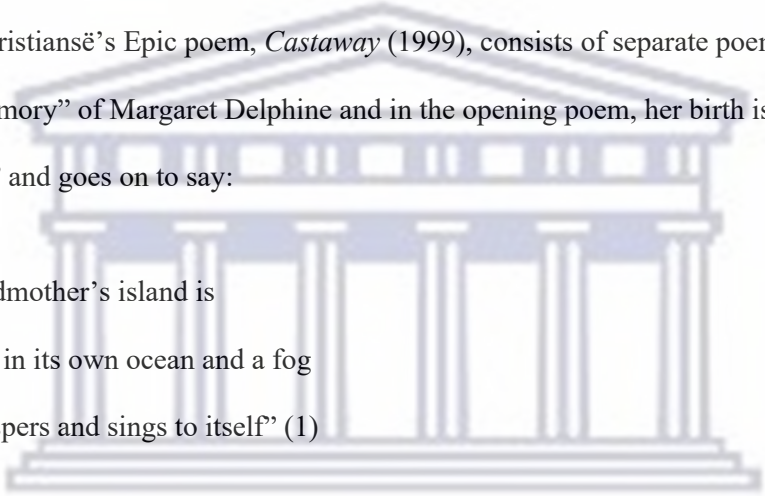
Although the writings about the life of Chaka and others are often described as Epics, I want to point out that for my purpose I distinguish between the Epic as format (an Epic poem) and the epic as adjective (an epic story). I focus mainly on texts that have been regarded as formatted poetic Epics. This may look like a potential clash between the notion of the classical Epic and the African Epic. But I soon realised while writing *Bientang* that I was weaving characteristics of African Epics (including facts that vaguely exist, fantasy, a world of ancestry and magical powers, personal views, orality, lyrical outcries) into the Western format and, in this way, countering the traditional Epic.

Among the contemporary English Epic poems I read were hybrid works like Claudia Rankine's *Don't Let Me Be Lonely: an American Lyric* and Ann Carson's *Autobiography of Red: a*

Novel in Verse, which challenged the boundaries of the form in the best way possible. (I have to confess that the most crazy format I have come across is Carson's *H of H Playbook* – just paper clippings, drawings, smudges, maps and fragments of text.) These two North American poets inspired me to look more closely at two South African English Epic poems, written by two women poets, engaged with a heroine of colour and therefore linked directly to what I was trying to do.

2.5.1. *Castaway*

Yvette Christiansë's Epic poem, *Castaway* (1999), consists of separate poems. It is dedicated to "The loving memory" of Margaret Delphine and in the opening poem, her birth is indicated as "1898? St Helena" and goes on to say:



my grandmother's island is
wrapped in its own ocean and a fog
that whispers and sings to itself" (1)

In a way, this encouraged me to begin to read my own heritage into the history that I was trying to write.

In the book description, Christiansë presents *Castaway* as "an Epic yet fragmented poetic story set off the coast of Africa on the island of St. Helena... Amid echoes of racialized identity and issues of displacement, the poems in *Castaway* speak with a multiplicity of voices—from Ferñao Lopez (the island's first exile) and Napoleon to that of a contemporary black woman". The fragmentation is for me *Castaway's* greatest strength as it made me think about an anti-chronological plot structure, where history is created that gives legitimacy, while it at the same time completely disrupts it.

Although there is no obvious characteristic of the Epic in *Castaway*, Christiansë's use of voice moved me deeply, for instance here are the gardener Ferñao Lopez's words about the ocean and two tongues:

There is a stain on the horizon.
It leaks into the world, covers
the linens, covers the faces
and turns this ocean, shuddering,
from its course. I speak
two tongues—one dressed
in syllables of government,
shielded by amen and hallelujah,
the other a ragged stumbling,
of this place, utterances
of silence and elation, wave breaks
and soil—I speak two tongues,
and neither will suffice. (1)

In the second stanza, the two tongues change into:

And, yes, there is no name
for what I see, but this foraging
for a new lexicon of horror. (1)

In her second collection, *Imprendehora* (2007), Christiansē returns to Ferñao, the gardener,
ending with this devastating thought:

I grow away from one tongue
and into the other, though neither
will save me now, or the world. (1)

2.5.2. “Krotoa’s Story”

The short Epic poem “Krotoa’s Story” (1990) by Karen Press is interesting in terms of historical context and tone. Press reimagines the life of Krotoa. Krotoa (also known as Eva) was a translator and negotiator between her Uncle Autsomao, the leader of the Goringhaicona, and the VOC commander, Jan van Riebeeck), as well as a peacemaker. She was born in 1642, into the Camissa community of traders who founded the Port of Cape Town. Her name means girl “in the wardship of others”. She died at the age of 34 on Robben Island.

In “Krotoa’s Story”, Press places the poetic voice of Krotoa in Oedaso’s kraal where she spends her time with the women and converses with gods and birds. Krotoa is then removed and given by Oedaso as a present to Van Riebeeck. From this moment in the Epic Krotoa has no voice. She has thoughts only when she is abused in the fort. She finally escapes servanthood through learning the language and accepting the religion of the Dutch and so becomes “functional” to them as interpreter. Kelwyn Sole expresses his admiration for the poet’s bravery:

Press embodies the doubts fear and courage of a woman who has too often in the past merely been dismissed as one of South Africa’s first “sell-outs”. Instead, the poem examines (and forces the reader to meditate on) the conflicting interests which place Krotoa between contending and uncaring historical forces which eventually destroy her. (29)

In a stunning mixture of narrative and lyric in Press’ poem, the character Doman asks:

Whose side are you on, Krotoa?

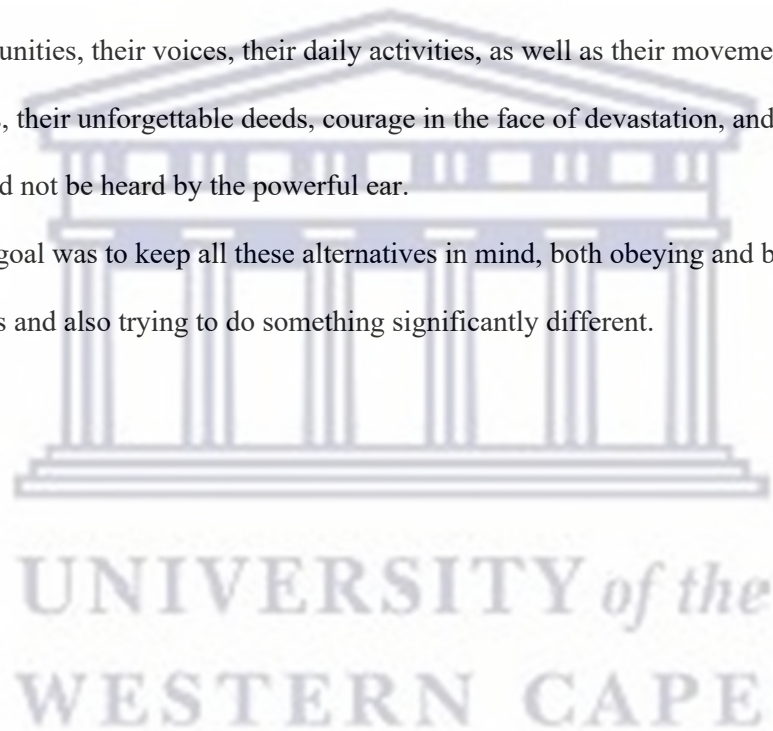
I say

I am where you put me.(58)

I admire the fact that Press challenged herself into imagining Krotoa, but even more that she devised various ways to make the reader aware of her own discomfort in giving voice to a Khoi woman and opening up other ambiguities around her life. Through accumulation of words, the juxtaposition of images of nature, and repetitions, Press contrasts Krotoa's culture with the Dutch, strengthened by the core references to trade, religion and commodities.

In summary, while there is an abundance of themes related to white Afrikaans culture in the Afrikaans Epic, the lives of indigenous people are rarely depicted. What is absent is the history of indigenous communities, their voices, their daily activities, as well as their movements and their survival strategies, their unforgettable deeds, courage in the face of devastation, and the personalities of those who could not be heard by the powerful ear.

My final goal was to keep all these alternatives in mind, both obeying and breaking tradition and characteristics and also trying to do something significantly different.





Chapter 3.

Literature Review of Theory

UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE

“Because poets have a strong tendency to form opinions about their craft and to use these opinions as part of the message of their poems, we are likely to find literary theory of a sort as far back as we can find poems.”

(Wimsatt and Brooks in A.J. Coetzee 1)

3.1. Archive Material

Before moving to theory, I want to offer a brief account of some of the historical sources which informed *Bientang* and my desire to ground my work in a spirit of historical and ethnographic detail which reflects the late 17th into the 18th Century context as accurately as possible.

For historical facts and background, I read various historical and ethnographic sources on the Overberg communities and studies on fishing communities, including the three volume *Travels into the Interior Parts of Africa by the Way of the Cape of Good Hope* by Francois Le Vaillant (1753-1824) and C.G. Seligman's *Races of Africa* (1930), which describes several anecdotes of contact with young Chainoukwa women. Other historical sources such as *Village of the Sea - The Story of Hermanus* (1997) by Ardene Tredgold, *Ensiklopedie van Suidelike Afrika*, collated by Eric Rosenthal et al. (1967), and the numerous works by Jan Fourie – a well-known writer of the region – such as *Wisselstrale oor die Strandveld* (1994), *Gansbaai Kerkgeskiedenis* (1994), *Dagbreek oor Dyerseiland* (1997), *Strandveldse Gisterdinge* (2001), *Duskant die Duine* (2005) plus *Die Gansbaai Gedenkboek* (2014) by Jan and SD Fourie, helped me obtain vital information about the clothing of that century in the region, as well as the formation of the fishing industry, littoral caves, rites and rituals.

All of these texts provided invaluable context for me, although it did not escape my notice that there were no primary texts to draw upon, written or spoken by people like *Bientang* herself. I would like to reiterate that I do not mean there are no texts that could assist in building an archetype for *Bientang*, but rather that my research focus was on the indigenous people of the Overstrand. It is my way of commenting on the lack of archival resources on the indigenous people who lived there. The archival material I could find only made reference to the lives of the white settlers and how they developed the towns of Gansbaai, Stanford and Hermanus, unlike Bleek and Lloyd who recorded linguistic and anthropological research on the /Xam people. I could have used the /Xam archives to fuel my references to an indigenous woman, but these archives are specific to the life and times of indigenous people who came from the Northern Cape. The /Xam archives have provided resources for many poets: Eugène Marais' *Dwaalstories* (1965); A. Markowitz published poetic versions of the *With Uplifted Tongue: Stories, Myths and Fables of the South African Bushmen told in their manner*

(1956); translations and adaptations of /Xam works were included by Uys Krige and Jack Cope in *The Penguin Book of South African Verse* (1968). This century saw Alan James' impeccable versions in *The First Bushman's Path* (2001), as well as Antjie Krog's *Die Sterre sê 'Tsau!'* (2004) and Stephen Watson's *Song of the Broken String* (1991), which used the /Xam material and created a fierce controversy. Hence I chose to move away from using this archive because being wary of falling into the trap of ascribing ethnonyms to a people of whom I have little knowledge.

My father always spoke about the fact that he came from the Chainoukwa people. Doing research related to this group of people, I discovered the work of S. Seligman in *Races of Africa* (1930), where I came across a rite of passage called the "Inau" (31), which struck an immediate chord with me. In the Special Collections in the UWC library I also came across the diaries of Francois le Vaillant, an ornithologist who wrote of a relationship between him and a woman he named "Narina" (386). Most importantly, Le Vaillant writes that he invited her to come with him to the Netherlands, but she refused.

This told me that sometimes the indigenous people indeed had agency and would not sell their lands for jewels and tobacco.



Fig. 6. Narina, A young Gонуqua, *Francois Le Vaillant, Travels into the interior parts of Africa*, translated by Ian Glenn, vol. 1, R. Morison Jnr., 1791, p. 381.

This brings to mind the incisive comment by novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie from her TED Talk, “The Dangers of a Single Story”: “This single story of Africa ultimately comes, I think, from Western literature . . . I would like to end with this thought: that when we reject the single story, when we realize that there is never a single story about any place, we regain a kind of paradise” (Adichie).

I also included Klaas and Lord Montagu in the text to show the relationship between colonial voyeurism and the subversion of interpretation. For example, Klaas interprets for Lord Montagu, but he leaves out certain information in order to protect and respect Bientang’s way of defending her people, thereby preventing from going to find them and to steal from them in some way. As the colonial white man is the recorder of history, I wanted to point out how fraught his recording is due to agency not always manifesting itself in translation.

3.2. Marginalisation and Ethical Questions

After reading many Epic poems I had to turn to theory to build a foundation for what I was planning to write. From an ethical perspective, I faced severe challenges. The severest was being bogged down by a politically correct question – some would call it an ethical question: Who am I to want to imagine hearing Bientang? Who gives me the right or has even asked me to interrogate the fishing communities of the first people through her?

As mentioned in my Introduction, the writings of Gayatri Spivak have been hugely helpful in thinking(1996) were a great mind-opener to think through these questions. I have specifically drawn upon her work as collected in *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works*, edited by Donna Landry and Gerald Maclean (1996).

Spivak regards the subaltern as the most oppressed and invisible of all constituencies. But, according to her, writers nevertheless have an ethical imperative to imagine the subaltern. She believes it is possible to hear the subaltern when there is what she calls “a secret encounter” (270). And this can only happen when “the respondents inhabit something like normality” (270). I interpret

this as Bientang being in an act of normality, being with her, being vulnerable to her, giving up power about her – in the imagination.

Hein Viljoen (1999) argues that to be marginalised generally means:

... to be at the periphery, ‘far removed from power or influence’, ‘virtually beyond the reaches of power’, ‘not quite powerless yet not powerful’. Definitely not in the centre, central or powerful. It also means: ‘looked down upon’, ‘considered unimportant’, ‘ignored’, ‘negligible’, ‘pushed from the centre’, it indicates those who cannot be heard or won't be regarded as making sense anyway. To be marginalised is to be regarded as less than human; to be subhuman. (12)

When Spivak says that the subaltern “cannot speak” (104), she means that the subaltern talks, but cannot be heard by the privileged ear of either the First or Third Worlds (Landry and Maclean 4). If the subaltern was able to make herself heard – as had happened when particular subalterns emerged as organic intellectuals and spokespeople for their communities – her status as a subaltern would be changed utterly; she would cease to be subaltern. And that is the goal of the ethical relation that Spivak is seeking and calling for – that the subaltern, the most oppressed and invisible of constituencies, as such, might cease to exist (Landry and Maclean 5-6).

The subaltern does speak, always, but we must listen with more radical intent. These subaltern knowledges are sometimes hidden away in locations that are at times hard for us to reach as they speak the philosophies, logics, and approaches of their life worlds and in their own languages. How indigenous people in this global/local dance and struggle often make a way out of no way – creating tactics for survival and victories out of the vestiges of an extremely unjust state of affairs – is why we call upon our local advisers in the field to help us try to comprehend. We listen so that we can be of use to them – a messenger and an interpreter to make what they say and do, known to other “Other[s]”(1). Spivak argues:

Such a revolutionary change will not be brought about by traditional revolutionary means, nor by intellectuals attempting to represent oppressed minorities, or worse yet, pretending merely to let them speak for themselves. Here Spivak's deconstructive vigilance leads her to keep in mind at all times the dangers of fundamentalism in any form and to insist on the two meanings of the term 'representation'. (6)

She suggests that representation means both standing-in-the-other's-shoes and an imaginative and aesthetic representation (staging in a theatrical sense) (6). In her essay "A Moral Dilemma" (2000), Spivak asserts that:

[r]adical alterity – the wholly other – must be thought through imagining. To be born human is to be born angled toward another and others. To account for this, the human being presupposes the quite-other. This is the bottom line of being-human as a being-in-the-ethical relation. (47)

By definition we cannot – no self can – reach the quite-other. This is the founding gap in all acts or speech, most especially in acts or speech that we understand to be closest to the ethical – the historical and the political. But we must somehow attempt to supplement this gap (45).

3.3. The Question of Language: Afrikaans as Foe and Friend.

I was doing all that I could to inject historical accuracy into the project, but the question of voice and how to honour the voice of the voiceless subaltern returned to haunt me and caused me some anxiety. Especially, as mentioned in my Introduction, around the loaded implications of Afrikaans as a language within historically marginalized communities such as mine.

Further research into the influence of Khoi languages on Afrikaans however, helped shift my perspective. Christo Van Rensburg, for instance, in his article "Die Vroegste Khoi-Afrikaans", explains that Khoi (as a language) is not a language that forms part of Afrikaans but is rather *a variety*

of Afrikaans (455). Whilst his article was published as recently as 2016, Van Rensburg follows other linguists before him, like Professor Fritz Ponelis, Professor Wannie Carstens, Professor Frank Hendricks, Professor Ampie Coetzee and Dr Donovan Lawrence, who published articles on the history of Afrikaans, and argued that standard Afrikaans is just another variety of Afrikaans and should thus no longer be seen as a so-called higher or purer form of the language.

Van Rensburg's study of the Khoi Afrikaans variety sees it as the first form of Afrikaans. A traditional view sees Khoi as having influenced Afrikaans in some way or another, but if Khoi Afrikaans is the *original* form of Afrikaans, then this cannot be the case:

Khoi Afrikaans was already Afrikaans. Khoi Afrikaans refers to the new language of the Khoi-Khoen at the Cape during the first half of the seventeenth century. This language originated from contact between the KhoiKhoi and visiting seafarers, especially from the Netherlands, which started with the visit from De Houtman in 1595. In this learner's variety, the first building blocks of the latter-day Afrikaans could be found. This was the earliest Afrikaans, which originated between 1595 and 1652, the first period in the history of Afrikaans. (Van Rensburg 455)

In 2022, Afrikaans linguists acknowledge fourteen varieties of Afrikaans, namely, Overbergse Afrikaans, Standard Afrikaans, Vrystaatse Afrikaans, Oos-Kaapse Afrikaans, Voortrekker-Afrikaans, Boesmanlandse Afrikaans, Namakwalandse Afrikaans, Griekwa-Afrikaans, Swartlandse Afrikaans, Kaapse Afrikaans, Karoo-Afrikaans, Weskus-Afrikaans and Sandveldse Afrikaans and Bolandse Afrikaans (Saalbl 2020), and I am sure there are more undocumented varieties of Afrikaans. I have mentioned that the Afrikaans spoken in Gansbaai consists of many of the geo-lingual influences in South Africa and that the geonym for each variety has many other variations.

The above research shows that each variety of Afrikaans has its own linguistic components and is definitely not a lesser version of the language, or "radbraak": the maiming of the language, when one speaks Afrikaans in one's own variety.

Needless to say, every single existing Epic poem in Afrikaans was written in what is disputedly called Standaard Afrikaans. Thus the text, *Bientang*, would then be the first multi-tongued

long poem in Afrikaans, using a variety of Afrikaans lexicons and dictions. Yet as I was writing the poem, I initially could not shake off the feeling that I was like a blind person, fumbling in the dark, failing to find ‘authentic’ and ‘true’ linguistic splinters, shards, fragments of an imagined Bientang, which I could insert into the receiving culture of ‘Standaard Afrikaans’.

Eventually, in order to write at all, I had to make peace with the fact that the immense problems of Afrikaans, its history, and various implications and associations cannot be solved by me on my own. Nor could I ever know how someone like my protagonist might feel about me using this language (even a Gansbaai Afrikaans) to create and inhabit her world. Would she feel silenced and marginalized yet again or take the more pragmatic view of her contemporaries who adapted their tongues to navigate and survive a new and shifting linguistic Cape? Of course, I will never know.

But I refused to despair and I took solace in what I could: that Afrikaans does have its tongue-roots in communities like Bientang’s; that it is a polyvocal language, which has been adopted and adapted historically by both the white status quo to subjugate and alienate, but also by the marginalized to defy, subvert and attempt to survive such subjugations. Added to this, of course, is the transformative liminality and flexibility of all translation.

On a tipoff from Riana Barnard of Pennsylvania I stumbled upon the work of Nestor Garcia Canclini and suddenly I felt how burdens of anxiety were lifted from my shoulders. During the period of my creative writing Canclini was invaluable in conceptualising what I was trying to do. He introduced me to the idea that to translate is to transform into a kind of hybridization:

I consider it attractive to treat hybridization as a translation term along with syncretism, fusion, and other words employed to designate particular kinds of mixing. Perhaps the decisive issue is not how to come to an agreement about which of those concepts is most inclusive and fertile but how to continue constructing theoretical principles and methodological procedures that can help us make the world more translatable, which is to say more cohabitable in the midst of differences, and to accept at the same time what each of us gains and loses through hybridizing. (135)

Basically, the whole imagined story of Bientang had to be translated/transformed from my imagination into a variety of Afrikaans languages to make it “more cohabitable in the midst of differences”. Precisely because the writing process itself is already a translation of experience, feelings, imaginings into language, the translation of experience into textual form, writing is surely a kind of cross-cultural management. Of course, translation is also bound up with asymmetrical power relations, but the aim of translation/transformation, at least in my work, is also to destabilise or to “deterritorialise” readers (Deleuze and Guattari 2009), to “provincialise” them (Bhabha 1994) by presenting them with a hybrid text intended to decentre their identity and thus provoke them to interrogate not only the Afrikaans language itself but also the histories and the stories that it has been used to create.

By the end of my first complete draft of my poem I had come to the following two conclusions: whatever language I speak or choose to write in, I speak and write in a fragmented language and with it I *may* explore issues of marginality and multilingualism within a trans-disciplinary framework. Second, if I could manage only a lament for the utter *unreachability* of Bientang, the sheer fruitlessness of my efforts, I would have succeeded in my subversion.

3.4. Genre as Subversion

The most important notion that Canclini introduced me to was his idea of the “counter-epic”. A counter-epic is defined by the presence of extensive hybridization within the text. Hybridization, suggests Renato Rosaldo in the foreword to Canclini’s groundbreaking *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Leaving and Entering Modernity* (1995), is that which

... emerges from individual and collective creativity—not only in the arts but in everyday life and in technological development. One seeks to reconvert a heritage or resource (a factory, a professional skill, a set of techniques and knowledge) to reintegrate it to new conditions of production and distribution.” (xxvii).

In his work Canclini cautions against the notion that the Epic is an absolute form. According to him, Bakhtin (2004) argued that the Epic requires “a national epic past” or an “absolute past;” a “national tradition” as opposed to mere personal experience; and an “absolute epic distance” that separates it from the present (13). But Canclini suggests that if one mode of understanding becomes absolute, and the use of “heterodox ways of speaking the language, making music, or interpreting the traditions” is no longer possible, one “winds up, in short, sealing off the possibility of modifying culture and politics” (Rosaldo xviii). Canclini therefore proposes:

In choosing an interrogative or doubting relationship to the social, [the artists must] produce a “counter-epic.” If there is no longer one coherent and stable Order, and if the identity of each group is not associated with a single territory but with multiple scenarios, and history is not directed toward programmable goals, then images and texts cannot be anything but a compilation of fragments, collages. (279).

I was delighted to read this. Clearly, the “counter-epic” with its inner workings of hybridization proves to be the most suitable and well-intended form for my heroine as it sets me free in imagining her in re-imagined formulations.

So, while the challenges in using the Epic form were complex, I remained attracted to it because it provided space to reimagine a fossil – one of the living fossils of the origins of the human story from that place where all stories began: in caves with groups around a fire.

3.5. The Representation of Sexual Abuse in *Bientang*

Deya Bhattacharya’s article, “The Portrayal Of Violence Against Women In Literary Fiction” (2018), warns about “[v]iolence against women, for a long time, [which] has been used as content to mould and shape male characters, to titillate readers, and to depict the women who seek justice for sexual assault as meek, infantilised characters who need protection or as villains” (Bhattacharya).

How was I going to make sure that I did not fall into the abovementioned literary trope, especially being a female author writing about a female character? This was perhaps one of the

greatest challenges I had encountered and one that I knew would be hyper-focused on as an aspect of the character's arc. Part of my reasons for creating the character, Bientang, was to question the culture that she lived in where most of the rites and practices excluded women or took away their autonomy. For example, during the !nau practice women had to be isolated (in a menstruation hut) during their menses as it is believed that a woman is at her most powerful during this time and can disturb other rituals performed in a community. If we want to engage with the humanity of indigenous people, we need to steer away from turning them into soft folk tales ignoring uncomfortable aspects like incest and rape. This issue will be discussed further in the next chapter.

3.6. Some Notes on the Trans-disciplinary

The last factor that played an important role in bringing together all the concepts and theories was the notion of trans-disciplinarity. According to Julie Klein, the term “Transdisciplinary can be traced to the 1970s in the first international conference on interdisciplinary” (quoted in Japee). Furthermore, Japee (2020) mentions “there is little consensus regarding how to define the term” (4), although he does acknowledge the work of others, for example, McDonald (2000), Klein (2001), Jantsch (1972) and Herbert Simon (1978). The definition that resonated most profoundly with my imagining of Bientang was formulated by Klein:

A holistic vision: a particular method, concept or theory; a general attitude of openness and capacity for collaboration; as well as an essential strategy for solving complex problems . . . A transdisciplinary vision, which replaces reduction with a new principle of relativity, is transcultural, transnational, and encompasses ethics, spirituality, and creativity (quoted in Japee 516).

How was I going to put *Bientang* in a theoretical framework when I had faced so many challenges in exploring the Epic genre? I knew I had to have a methodology that could support me in my research journey. I needed to know that whatever creative experiments I wanted to embark on that the methodology would not stand in my way. To think about the poem in a trans-disciplinary way set

me free to bring in many histories, many personal issues, many documents, many kinds of Epic-writing and to ‘distort’ everything using my imagination.

In conclusion, I battled a lot with the methodology part of my original research proposal because I resented the fact that my creativity was being forcibly ‘cramped’ by theories. It also took me a long time during the writing process to find enough confidence in my own creativity to write and explore unhampered. However, working on this reflexive essay has made me realise how much this part of my PhD dissertation has clarified many of my qualms, laid to rest some of my anxieties and brought another kind of confidence to me in my writing. I know the strengths of *Bientang*.



Chapter 4.

Methodology: Writing Process

**Breathing Life into Bientang. Writing Voices, Honouring Silences through the
Trans-disciplinary Form.**

UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE

“Transdisciplinary is best understood as a type of interdisciplinarity that stresses team research, a case study approach, and especially integrating not just across disciplines but also beyond the academy.” (Japee 9)

4.1. Trying to ‘meet’ Bientang the Spivak-way

As I have argued earlier, Spivak suggests that it could be possible to hear the subaltern in a “secret encounter” that takes place in “something like normality” (Landy and Maclean 270). I interpret this as imagining Bientang in an act of vulnerable normality, being with her, giving up power concerning her – in the imagination creating a “representation” by standing-in-her-shoes and staging her in a theatrical sense.

In my research proposal, I introduced Bientang’s visitations as follows:

During my research, a woman emerged in my mind’s eye. She felt intensely and powerfully immediate and *real*. Not a character. Not a story. The hair on her head is soft curls. Her skin is elephant leather. Her breasts are small, and her hanging belly covers her womanhood. Her feet are puffy. Day by day, week by week, as my reading and research progressed, I saw and felt her settling inside my thoughts, in my very blood, clearer and clearer: there are cracks in her heels; she is sand brown; her eyes are brown but they look black. Her hands ... She does not want to show me her hands. Intuitively I know too that she has not just arrived. She has always been *waiting* to be written. Waiting for me? I do not know, but I feel myself becoming her willing creative host; in me, she could live a thousand years. It feels as though she is settling into my body.

During the gestation period of imagining Bientang I was hospitalised for a spinal syndrome, called *cauda equina*, that occurs when the nerve roots in the lumbar spine are compressed, cutting off sensation and movement. It was as if my experience was more than walking-in-her-shoes, more than a neutral situation; it was a bodily feeling in which everything was connected. It grew. I began to believe Bientang’s beingness was to be found in my own lineage, the women’s names that I could not get out of my mother, who prefers to bury things and sweep history into the sandy yard. I saw Bientang manifesting in dead things (it was like taking memories off the washing line) and she arrived in books, she was present in those bones haunting the downstairs of museums where people’s bones

hang like ironed clothes. She was bottled like fig jam or distilled like brandy. She was rattling a vocabulary that I must have forgotten – it was like an aching sacrum. Bientang was her name.

And Bientang *is* her name.

4.2. Bientang as an Invocation

The first time we met, she introduced herself not by name, but through a sound. Timeless yet ancient. A testament to resilience, yet thick with death and erasure. This was the haunting sound of a bone-xylophone; the music was visiting, changing my voice that desired to be tone perfect, which felt like loss, but left my throat so flayed that I couldn't help it anymore. The thousands of bones of my ancestors she collected. I heard the bone necklace around her neck and the sugar-shake bangles on her arms and her ankles. Her body sparkled terribly. The skulls sitting on the shelves of her mind were the memory; they were history, and they were the conscience. They did not speak. She did not speak. But she talked. And I heard.

Would I speak for her? Could I? Was that what she was asking? Or did she simply wish for me to bear silent witness?

4.3. The Writing Process

I started writing with a strong conviction that the poem had to be *multivocal*, with full recognition of all the various valid pieces of knowledge that probably surrounded Bientang, as well as the knowledge that now surrounded me as I started writing. I had to approach the question of voice in the text with a sense of the polyphonic, one that acknowledged my own voice as a poet and the limitations of my writing and voicing of Bientang. She was to come from me, but she was not me nor even whom I wanted her to be. She had to be a version of herself within the breathing spaces of the text, and the same applied to the other characters who would shape her story. I therefore first started a language gallery to begin to identify different registers:

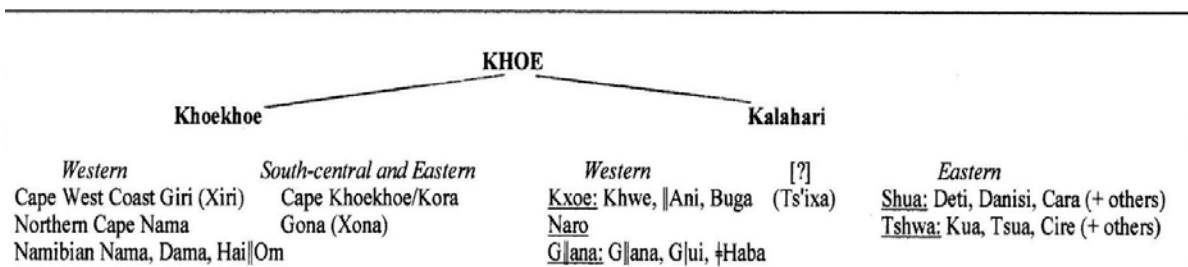


Fig. 7. The KHOE family of languages
 from *Menán du Plessis; Kora: A Lost Khoisan Language*, *South African History Online*,
www.sahistory.org.za/archive/kora-lost-khoisan-language-early-cape-and-gariep-menan-du-plessis-linguistic-classification. Accessed 6 Jun. 2020.

Then I planned the characters according to the voices that I wanted around her: the poet's voice, Lord Montagu, Montagu's interpreter, Klaas, a trickster, who was later changed into an Oëdienaar (Eyeservant). But during the writing process interesting shifts were produced by urgent personal needs. I suddenly wanted to undermine the poet's voice (so then who was this undermining voice: another me?). I felt an urge to have a mother-figure and so I created Atta, Bientang's grandmother, who foretells Bientang's future, teaches Bientang about the fauna and flora of the area in the story and communicates to Bientang, as an ancestor, about her duty to be the keeper of their existence since she is no longer able to do so herself.

The poem has three parts. The first part deals with the initiation or the !nau-process that assists Bientang to move to adulthood, including being raped by her brother, her pregnancy, the death of her brother through a storm brought on by Bientang, the rejection of her family, and her moving to another cave that becomes her home. The second part deals with her meeting with Lord Montagu and his Khoi-guide, Klaas, when they visit her in her second cave. In the third part, there is a shift to the poet's perspective, interrupted by the servant, who interrogates her reconstruction of Bientang, and also then ultimately takes leave of her.

Concerning the narrative, I opened the poem in the middle of things – *in media res*. Bientang is standing on the Klipplaat, she is looking over the Loperbaai – they call it the Loperbaai because it is a shortcut to Hermanuspietersfontein where the rest of the story takes place. It is Bientang's odyssey, her journey from the cave of the clan to her own cave, as she embarks to find her freedom. On the

Klipplaat she was anxious because she was wrestling within herself: whether to choose freedom or to stay with her family — the people she has known her whole life.

To do justice to the alluring notion of a cave, I wove in and out of Plato's allegory of the cave. I was not using the allegorical form but I carried in the text the notion that the family clan's cave encapsulated how freedom felt. I specifically read the Dutch translation of Plato to expand the vocabulary of my voice in the poem:

Wanneer een hunner werd losgemaakt en op eens gedwongen op te staan, en zijn nek om te draaijen en voort te gaan, en het licht aan te kijken, en door dat alles pijn leed, en door het schelle licht die dingen niet zien kon, waarvan hij te voren de schaduwen zag; wat zou hij dan wel zeggen, zoo iemand tot hem zeide, dat hij te voren slechts schijnbeelden gezien had, maar nu nader bij de waarheid was en weer wezenlijke dingen aanschouwde en beter zien kon, en zoo men hem het voorbij gedragen wees, en hem vroeg, wat dat was? (232)

I explored Bientang's imprisonment, departure, and finding herself in her own cave, but this time fully aware of the outside world. Where she previously saw only shadow-images, she was now closer to the truth seeing the beingness of things ("wezenlijke dingen"). Using the cave as a fixed setting and concept helped me to place her creatively. In her novel *Die Kremetartekspedisie*, Wilma Stockenström immediately introduces the reader to the inner world of a slave — an attention-grabbing way of introducing a text, so I also opened the Epic with the hero's conscience.



Fig. 8. Entrance to Klipgat caves, Gansbaai, Cape Province, South Africa
za.pinterest.com/pin/4190459403219181844

I engaged with a lot of archival work because Bientang also manifested as a mythological creature. Her existence was contested in historical recollections, so she moved between history and mythology. Locals believed that she had something to do with the natural disasters and notable occurrences. Historically, she was known as the last Strandloper. But what constitutes a Strandloper, never mind the last Strandloper?

To me, Bientang represented a vessel that held all the aspects I wished to explore, but she was not an embodiment of a particular moral. Her morals and beliefs did not necessarily have to be representative of anything. My only certainty was that it had to be mosaic-like, also in a trans-disciplinary way, to retrieve, as Boaventura Santos puts it “new processes of production and the valorization of valid knowledges” (5).



Fig. 9. Klipgat caves exit, Gansbaai, Western Cape Province, South Africa, <https://secrecapetown.co.za/top-things-to-do-in-cape-town-for-adventurers/>:

The first challenge was how to deal with sexual abuse right at the opening of the Epic – a tragically common trauma for women like Bientang then, as it is for her descendants now. But how to represent this most terrible of transgressions? This most intimate of violations. I was also very aware of how problematic, even impossible, it was to present sexual abuse in a language without becoming erotic in terrible ways. How could I convey the rape of her brother without words? Leaving it blank was also not an option. But I also did not want to tell it in such a way that this incident became the sum total, the epitome of Bientang’s experience. There will be images “of castration, mutilation, dismemberment, dislocation, evisceration, devouring, bursting open of the body”, according to Jacques Lacan (11), but there must be more. Agency. Power. Beauty?

I fell back on figurative language, drawing on the fauna and landscape that Bientang herself would know. I hoped to represent Bientang’s trauma without presuming to appropriate it, but worked with the possibilities of poetic metaphor. This leaves space for silence and less absolute interpretations. It also allows the poet to both represent and ‘float’ meaning. Metaphor has the power to concretise and create representation and meaning and, paradoxically, leave a sense of the abstract, the unknowable.

In my Epic poem, then, the images of violence are represented through the metaphor of the bietou shrub (*osteospermum moniliferum*). *Moniliferum* means “bearing a necklace” and pertains to

the shiny, fleshy fruit arranged in a ring on the margins of the flowers, like a necklace. This humble yellow flower of the bietou plant is accompanied by a green berry, which becomes a yellow berry and, finally, a red/black one. The bietou was reportedly a source of food for indigenous people living in the Gansbaai and Hermanus areas, where Bientang settled.



Fig. 10. Bietou Berries
Osteospermum moniliferum
PlantZAfrica.com, pza.sanbi.org/osteospermum-moniliferum. Accessed 15 Sept. 2023.



Fig. 11. Bitou Plant
Osteospermum moniliferum
PlantZAfrica.com, pza.sanbi.org/osteospermum-moniliferum. Accessed 15 Sept. 2023.

In my text, Bientang views the bietou as a totem, an embodiment of herself. I could make use of the figure of speech through the metaphor of bietou with its cycle from bush to blossom, to fruit. The cycle suggests how often the rape happened (line 1 and lines 8–13 below), but also at what age her predator stopped the sexual violence (after she had her first period). The bietou plant becomes an embodiment of the phases from girl-child to woman – she loses her virginity, her virtue, her ‘fiancé’, her child, and her place in her society. However, Bientang does not adhere to the idea of losing her sex, her sexuality, her person, she does not become less of a woman, and she does not have penis envy. I wanted to create a woman, not in relation to a man or her society, but in relation to herself as a woman and as a free individual. Later in the poem Bientang tells Klaas – the interpreter of Lord Montagu:

ek was te vroeg gepluk ken jy ’n bietoublos klaas?

...

as kind was ek ’n bietoublos my mense

noem my bietou na die plant wat vir hulle in die lente
biesies dra 'n bietoublos blom eers voor sy
groen biesies dra – dan in die son word sy geel
dan word sy rooi en pers as kind het ek hulle baie geëet

in my lente het my bietoublos geel madeliefies gehad
my broer kom pluk aan my maar ek dra nog groen bietous
hy kom pluk aan my en spoeg dit uit
dit was geel en hy was amper tevrede
toe die biesies rooi word eet hy klompies lente van my af

toe die walvisse weg is dra ek 'n kalfie
ma'le pa'le wou weet wie wie
en ek sê dit is die boetabessie
my boeta sê ek is 'n vroumens
ek jok soos 'n bosluisbessie
hy herinner almal ek is aangemaak met storm (2020)

Bientang refers to herself as the bietou bush from which her brother picks, eating the fruit even when it is not ready, and spitting it out, until he is satisfied and has no use of her because her fruits were red. In lines 14-19 she explains that she fell pregnant, she spoke the truth, but her brother said that she was a woman and therefore a liar. She also explains that her pregnancy happened after the whales had left. Whales are an important metaphoric animal in Bientang's life and serve as a sacred spiritual guide.

By the end of her journey, she sees in the way that Plato describes it, as the trajectory of “seeing as understanding”:

In het eerst zou hij het gemakkelijkst de schaduwen kunnen beschouwen , en daarna de beelden van mensen en andere dingen in het water, en eindelijk de dingen zelve. Vervolgens zou hij van de hemelsche dingen het nachtelijke licht van de sterren en de maan met meer gemak kunnen aanzien dan over dag de zon en haar licht [...]

(233)

First, she sees shadows of real things, then she see these things mirrored in the water, and then at last, she is ready to face the world in the bright sunshine.

In the poem Lord Montagu is an ornithologist (based on the ornithologist François le Vaillant), who comes from the Netherlands to record the fauna and flora in the interior parts of Africa. He arrives in Cape Town and prepares himself for his journey. He takes a translator named Klaas with him, who helps him communicate. He is anxious to go to Hermanuspietersfontein because he heard that there is a woman who lives in a cave who can communicate with the sea. The villagers are afraid to go to her because they believe that she is a witch. Lord Montagu and Klaas go to the cave where they meet Bientang, who is angered by their trespassing, but at the same time she is also fascinated by Lord Montagu.

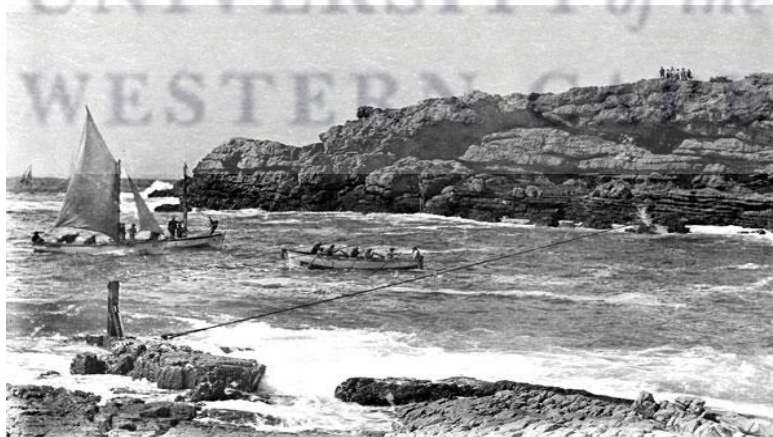


Fig. 12. Gearing's Point, Hermanus,
“*Gearing's Point in Hermanus*”, HermanusOnline,
www.hermanusonline.mobi/hermanus-history-2/gearing-s-point-origin. Accessed 6 Jun, 2020.

I associate the sea mostly with anger, using the word “woede”, “kwaad” and “woed” in the opening and near the end of the Epic, while maintaining the potential destruction by the sea. The sea

and its ebb and flow are metaphors for the emotion of anger circulating throughout the text, suggesting that getting angry signals an awareness of injustice:

[...] ek staan op die Plaat

Klipgatgrot en die Sandberge agter my my voete skulpgruis wanneer die

see terugtrek is die ghoera stil die water is skoon en koud soos my **woed**

ek staan voor my en kyk hoe die gety **kwaad** word: [...] (55)

4.4. Poet as Host; Poet as Problem

The poet character is in conversation with Bientang. The poet, unlike the historical figure of Bientang, navigates her identity in relation to Hermanus, where she was born but feels that the town holds no memory of where she comes from and, therefore, no memory that she exists. The poet tries to use Bientang to create a heritage for herself. All the effort of trying to voice Bientang fails because she has not figured out her own traumas in relation to her history (she is still seeing only shadows), and she does not realise that she emulates the same colonial authority by giving Bientang a voice and history; she later gives up that authority. She accepts that she cannot imagine Bientang and that not imagining her is affording a greater freedom to Bientang than trying to restrict her to a poem filled with personal trauma. This realisation takes place on the last pages of the Epic.



Fig. 13. Hermanuspietersfontein (photographer Thomas Ravenscroft)

Felicity Jervis; “Hermanus was the home of the world’s oldest living professional photographer, Thomas Ravenscroft-a photographic legacy”, *Hermanus History Society*, www.hermanus-history-society.co.za/2016/02/15/hermanus-was-the-home-of-the-worlds-oldest-living-professional-photographer-thomas-ravenscroft-a-photographic-legacy/. Accessed 6 Jun, 2020.

4.5. Rewriting the Epic hero(ine)

Like all heroes of the Epic, Bientang must make a journey. This she does, from one cave to the next, in keeping with the Epic tradition. She becomes autonomous but alone, made free from the constraints of her society, of what was necessary to become a woman but restricted by her gender to create a new society. I only realised after creating Bientang that I needed not be subservient to the dilemma of the hero. I must accept that I cannot create a woman that would serve as a substitute for my search for identity, heroic or not.

After I sent a first draft of *Bientang* to the publisher, there was pressure to see and hear more of Bientang, an express desire (so I interpreted it) to find a coherent story of Bientang – exactly what I was avoiding because of all my ethical and creative anxieties around voice, noted in Chapter Two and Chapter Three. I worked out a kind of trajectory but deliberately kept hiatuses, overlappings and contradictions.

4.6. The Eyeservant

Initially, I was fascinated by the African notion of the trickster, which plays with marginalisation and captures cultural and historical hybridity. Bientang is such a character. Her life is outside, under, over and around the periphery, over the threshold, but not omniscient. The trickster pretends to be on the inside, but her tricks place her on the edge. She could not perform her tricks anywhere else but on the periphery. To dupe, she allows herself to be put on the community's periphery. Scheub explains:

The difference between the trickster and the culture hero lies here: the trickster's creations are evanescent; they die as quickly as he (the hero) obtains fulfilment of his desires. This breaking of a cyclical pattern is what enables the trickster and hero to become outsiders, engaged in a struggle against the norms of their societies, changing those standards in the interest of immediate gratification or for a noble vision. (15).

This was important to me because I wanted to know: How does the hero break the cycle of tradition? How does the hero transcend and exceed the place where they come from?

But during the writing I found the word trickster with its connotation of tricks, cunning, and subversiveness increasingly problematic and, later, entirely useless. I first had a sea bird as a kind of all-seer, then created a Slinkster: which lasted up until draft nine:

laat ek maar 'n Slinkster wees

hy wat alles ken ek vat by hom

And later:

my pa'le se slinks kunde sit nog vas in my vel
ek kan tuin maak ek kan visvang ek visvrou van die loperbaai



Fig. 14. A Young Gonaqua
from F le Vaillant; *Travels into the Interior Parts of Africa*,
translated by Ian Glenn, vol. 1, R. Morison Jnr., 1791.

In the final versions, I found I created the word “Oëdienaar” (Eyeservant) which suited the theme more fruitfully than the notion of a trickster. So the Oëdienaar becomes the polyphonic voice or character that observes the hero and gives the reader information about the hero, as well as information the hero cannot access because she can only focus on her own journey. I see the Oëdienaar in my poem as a voice that has the ability to be a witness to the hero (Bientang). But the Oëdienaar is not just an omniscient being. They possess the ability to be in and outside the story, with the poet in the now and also in the past.

At the same time I felt the poet is herself very busy. As she is trying to read or imagine reading traces of Bientang, she is also doing research. She interrupts Bientang’s journey by way of archival material that she finds to make sense of the name “Bientang”. She puzzles over oral history and historical archives and maps, as in her research on Hermanuspieterfontein, in which the poet needs to fabricate a period for Bientang to exist.



Fig. 15. Map of the Cape Whale Coast
 “Baardskeerdersbos is Lekker”, *Xplorio*, www.xplorio.com/gansbaai/baardskeerdersbos-is-lekker/en/blog/50995/the-phenomena-baardskeerdersbos/. Accessed 6 Jun. 2020.

The poet deliberately tries to alert the reader to the fact that the history of Bientang is fabricated, random, a mosaic.

What upset the applectart massively for me, nearly halfway with my writing, was a discovery around the word “Bientang”. During a visit to the Netherlands, we went to an Indonesian restaurant where the host ordered beer. When the bottle was put in front of me, the name of the beer hit me like lightning. Bintang! With a red star above the name! I felt deep voices talking to me, many ghosts gathering in this strange country.

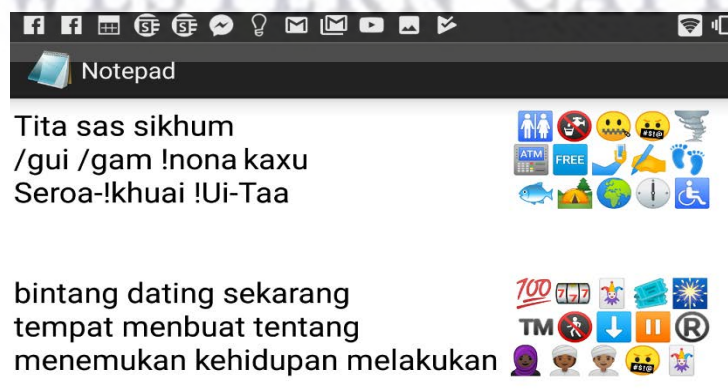
So Bientang was not a Khoi word, but clearly means “star”. Does that mean that Bientang has slave blood? Would she also know Eastern customs? And what does that mean for my considerations of brown and coloured identity? (She taught me a lesson, this Bientang woman! “Don’t burden me with your obsessions!”)

To return to the notion of the trickster. Bientang deliberately uses her story to remain an enigma to Lord Montagu. She manipulates Klaas, part of the same linguistic clan as her, and constantly interrupts them in their quest to find out who she really is. So Bientang herself could perhaps have been the ‘real’ trickster as heroine of the Epic, despite myself.

4.7. Format (Typography)

Right from the first two pages I had to make decisions about format and especially typography to distinguish among the many voices. I wanted to represent Bientang's journey typographically, like a cartographer recreating a lost landscape of experience and memory. Like my use of voice itself, though, it was essential that this 'map' marked, and also paradoxically, testified to the impossibility of marking the terrain of memory and experience. I did not want to use, for example, traditional script writing technique where you use a colon to indicate that a character was speaking, because I did not want *Bientang* to be a play. Nor did I want to use speech marks when Bientang spoke, as this implies that the words are verbatim. Yet there needed to be differences, as well as indications to the reader, in who is speaking. So I experimented with different ways of indicating voices. Although I did not want to use standard or correct punctuation, in my previous volume of poetry I had used the double forward slash to indicate that a voice was speaking, experimenting with syllables and building rhythm and breath. But what to do for Bientang to show a stream of consciousness?

Initially I wanted to open the poetry volume with the following contemporary markings. I wanted her to part of this technological era, yet also completely unfamiliar and therefore the opening pages looked as follows:



Indonesies [edit]

Naamwoord [edit]

bintang

1. ster ('n hemelligaam)

Pryslied vir Bientang

Ek is by die see aangemaak

ek is silt

ek skulp

as die son opstaan praat met my kaapse heuningby

This was removed in the final version.

I pushed Bientang's voice into the right-hand margin – as if she was speaking against the very margin, as if there was no real space for her in the text, as if she was always on the edge, but also as an honouring of Arabic text that reads from right to left.

Font played an important role in the text as I used it to indicate the difference between Bientang, Klaas, and Lord Montagu's voices. Because of Lord Montagu, I used the old Roman cursive, where "s" looks like an "f".

I encountered this "semantic enigma" when reading Elizabethan and Shakespearean texts and it always made English look a bit foolish to me; so, my main goal was for Lord Montagu to be more of a caricature than a character. My reasoning behind this was that characters like Lord Montagu have had previous representation in literature *ad nauseam* – now, I wanted him to look like a sham.

Colonial figures always had substance no matter what they did or said and using the old Roman cursive, I could have Lord Montagu say "fuck" when he meant "suck"! I also did not think he needed to be imagined so I used archival research from Le Vaillant's *Travels into the Interior Parts of Africa*, something unrelated to his possible historical relevance in Hermanus. I also wrote his voice in inverted commas so that *he* was a quote, and not a creation.

(x)

I have likewise softened (if I may be allowed the expression) a few passages that possibly might be accounted mere effusions of fancy and vivacity in a French author, but which would ill accord with the delicacy of a female translator, or indeed with the temper and genius of English readers, with whom *MONSIEUR VAILLANT*, notwithstanding, bids fair to become a great favourite, as he unites a daring spirit of enterprise with another truly British Characteristic, namely Humanity.

Fig. 16. Example of the long 's'

F. Le Vaillant; *Travels into the Interior parts of Africa*, Ian Glenn et al, translators, vol 1, R. Morison Jr. for R. Morison and Son, 1791, x.

To illustrate: below are first the words of Klaas, mixed with the words of Lord Montagu, followed by the words of Bientang:

En ek dink terug aan haar woorde "Hoekom sal jy vir my so iets vra? kan jy my nie sien nie die grot is ek en ek is die grot?" lord montagu het vir 'n lang ruk daar gestaan. Toe vat hy sy kwas en wit verf en skryf Bientang's cave. Hy't gebuig soos 'n heer en gesê:

"Tabè Bientang - ek heet jou. I will put you on a water lily by the water. It is by the water where i met you with your roots exposed ..."

en toe sy stem so weergalm deur

die grot hoor ek haar antwoord as die grot (52)

[...] ek is 'n kneg wat kag 'n klip wat kalp my voete swel
vir seewater vryheid wag agter die sandberge
ek hoor my mense beweeg die veters ryg
ek oorkruis die nek van my voete
my voete wurg as ek in jou skoene staan
skaaf my enkels maak geswelde kenne
die skoene rek na my breë voete kort tone
ek staan in jou skoene Montagu (41)

When I discovered that Bientang was an Indonesian and not a Khoi word, I realised I had also fallen for the restaurant's sham of presenting Bientang as a "Strandloper". So in the final section of my poem, I take leave of my construction of Bientang and try to have a discussion with her about the whole project. I tried to give her agency in this last part, but an agency loose from me. I cut her arms loose that were bound by cross-rhyme and inner-rhyme, her body capsulized in stanzas, so that she could dive "woordvry" from all my imaginings of her. In the last lines I remain alone and lonely on the Klipplaat:

ek ontheg jou ek kyk terug
die wind verwelk jou in
het jy ooit gepraat? (61).

4.8. Looking back

I had built an archive, wonderful for myself, for Bientang both creatively and academically and I am now humbled by the journey I had undertaken to create her as a dissertation and as a creative project. As a trans-disciplinary research methodology, I had engaged with history, botany, musicology, psychology, mythology. I used traditional and experimental styles in the writing of it, I

invested in her a sense of place and space in the world and by turning it into a play later, I also employed theatre.

The theatre performance was a practical presentation of the work. With this I had developed my other skills such as acting, public speaking, singing and song writing. I had collaborated with composers, actors, academics, musicologists, filmmakers, national art festivals like Woordfees, Klein Karoo National Kunstfees (KKNK), Suidoosterfees, the National Theatre Initiative (NATI) and US Toyota Woordfees, fine artists and audiences from different backgrounds. The trans-disciplinary methodology had allowed me to create a big creative community and research allies. The work itself has enjoyed attention from Afrikaans academia that are interested in the linguistic and archival merit (see Chapter 5).

The 'spiritual' and 'creative' aspect of trans-disciplinarity delivered the most innovation to the project. In some instances it is difficult to explain, but I also had my !nau (rite of passage). I came to know so much of my country's racial history. In the beginning I was angry at the violence in the texts written by the colonialists and the Apartheid government, but I had to process these feelings to be able to understand freedom.

My greatest desire was to make Bientang an individual and I wanted her to be free, without thinking that freedom could have repercussions, where one is in a pendulum between freedom and loneliness. Bientang found her cave, without all the rejection and abuse, but like all heroes she realises that she is human and not a god with the power in their grip. This in turn was my ars poetica.

Chapter 5.

Results

Ek wou my afdruk op jou laat

Ek wou jou brandmerk met die vlamme deur

Van alleen wees...

En jou treurige liggaam

Ek wou daardie treurigheid uit jou haal

Sodat jou liggaam oop mag breek...

Deur jou alleen het ek besef hoe haweloos ek is in 'n brandende see

“[hoe was ons hier]”

(Breytenbach in Joubert 58)

5.1. Impact, Failure, and Conclusions

After many drafts guided by the publisher and editor of Human and Rousseau, Nelleke de Jager, *Bientang* was published in August 2020.

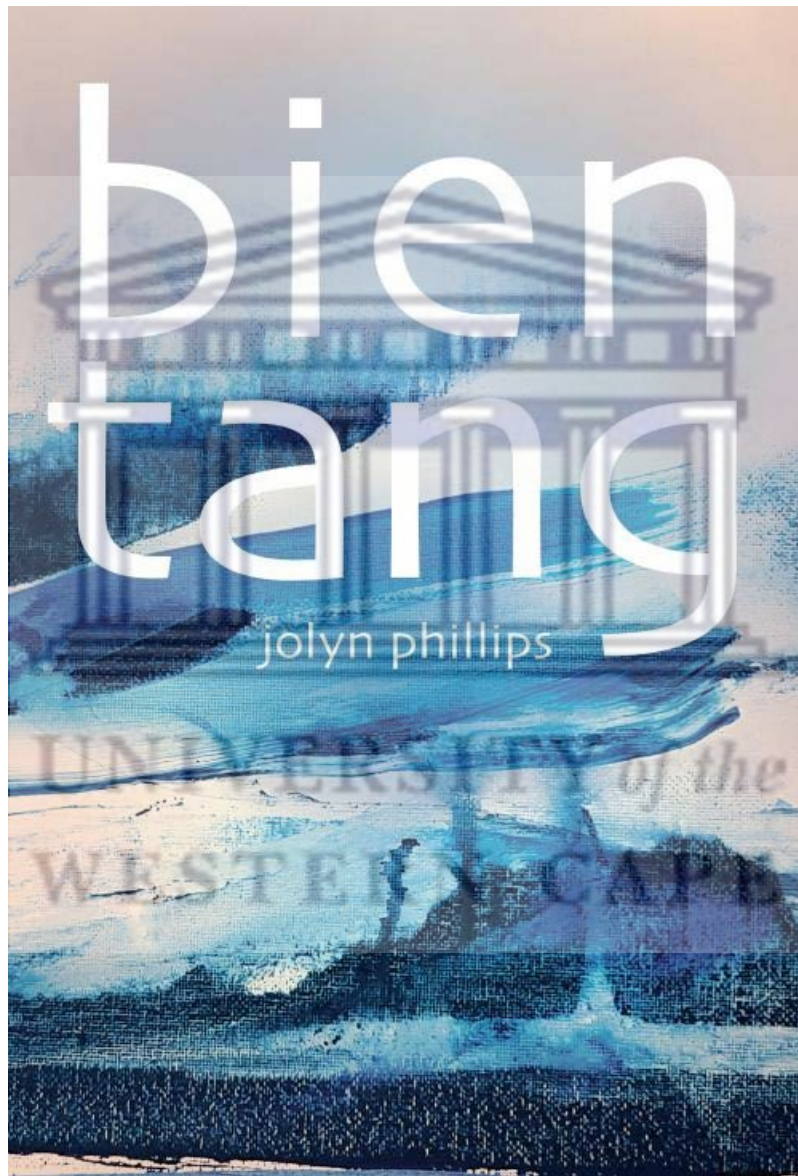


Fig. 17. The cover page of *Bientang* by Jolyn Phillips, Human & Rousseau, 2020.

Between my final manuscript and the final published version, a few adjustments were made. Work went into cleaning the manuscript from its many “en’s”, “omdatte”, and “soos”. Then we had to

sort out the specific spelling of “!kun” and “Khoekhoegowab”, for example, as well as the new words I brought in: “pa’le” instead of “pa-hulle” (dad-and-them), as used in: “sê pa’le ek kan nie by die water uitkom nie sê ma’le”. The inclusion of phrases and words like “!nau”, “ha!ku”, and “tabé” signaled a fear in me that these words might altogether disappear after being pushed into near extinction by colonialism. So I brought these words into a contemporary creative Afrikaans text, as opposed to a historical, archival, or academic text, as a deliberate act of recalibrating some hermeneutics of memory. The same with a slave vocabulary from the east, for example, “kapallangs” and “toering”.

Despite my initial rather obsessional concerns about the different variations of Afrikaans and my desire to use Gansbaai Afrikaans, I found that the whole poem found itself in the end written in a very old classical variety of Afrikaans. What was new was the words that I made up: spelunk as a verb, “slinksterheks” (33), ek loop “kryg” (47), “ek mes” (53), “ek skalie” (53), “ek gneiss” (53), “ek ark” (53) and the deliberate distortions of Afrikaans. Then there were the different fonts and the placements of the text on a page. The physical size of the pages was widened by the publisher by about 1cm to accommodate some of the longer lines. The visual material had to be decided on and the copyright cleared.

Initially there was insistence by the editor for better coherence of plot: what is Bientang’s physical journey? In the opening stanza she stands on the Klipplaat – where is that? Which cave is being referred to? Although I felt that a plot in that particular sense was not necessary, and was in fact in conflict with my preferred notion of a fragmented counter-epic where nothing was ‘whole’ or coherent and everything happened in a stream of consciousness, I could see that the meeting with Klaas and Montagu, the interaction with the grandmother, the storm that nearly destroyed Hermanus, and so on, did need a line of coherence for a reader. I therefore made some shifts to indicate a timeline, while some parts deliberately overlapped or remained opaque.

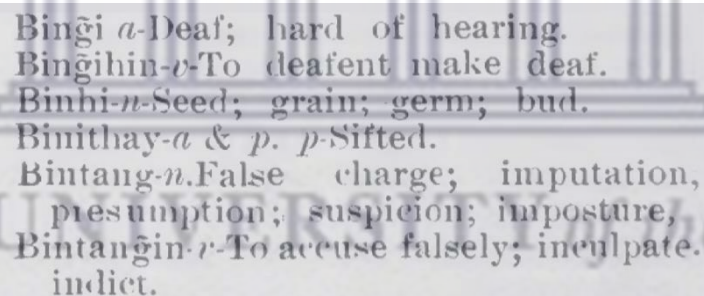
Returning to my original research proposal, I was surprised, after so many months of journeying on so many different paths and grappling with so many different questions, how closely I had stuck to the goals that I had set. The only radical diversion was from the second sentence in the proposal: “I seek to write an Epic poem about a marginalised woman known as Bientang. Bientang

was a Khoisan, or “Strandloper”, as Khoisan people were known, in the coastal region of the Southern Cape, and she featured in several legends from this area.” I realised, as discussed in Chapter Four, that she must have also come from slavery from the East. Instead of moulding her on a lost Khoi tradition, I had to accept her “impurity”, her mixed heritage. This, though, led to enrichment to the text and to myself.

As Bientang was written in Afrikaans, I give a summary of the poem below with some translations into English.

5.2. Bientang – An Epic

Instead of the initial emojis I had in earlier drafts, the volume opens with a dictionary explanation of the word “Bientang”, followed by the first stanza in prose:



Bingī *a*-Deaf; hard of hearing.
 Binģihin-*v*-To deafent make deaf.
 Binhi-*n*-Seed; grain; germ; bud.
 Binithay-*a & p. p*-Sifted.
 Bintang-*n*.False charge; imputation,
 presumption; suspicion; imposture,
 Bintangin-*v*-To accuse falsely; inculpate.
 indiet.

Fig 16. Bingi to Bintagin.
Tagalog– English and English– Tagalog Dictionary, Charles Nigg, 1904, p. 6, p. 32.

ek staan op die plaat klipgatgrot en die sandberge agter my
 my voete is plat my tone uitgesprei oor die skulpgruis
 wanneer die see terugtrek hoorek die ghoera die water
 skoon en koud soos my bloed ek staan voor my
 ek kyk hoe die gety kwaad word ...

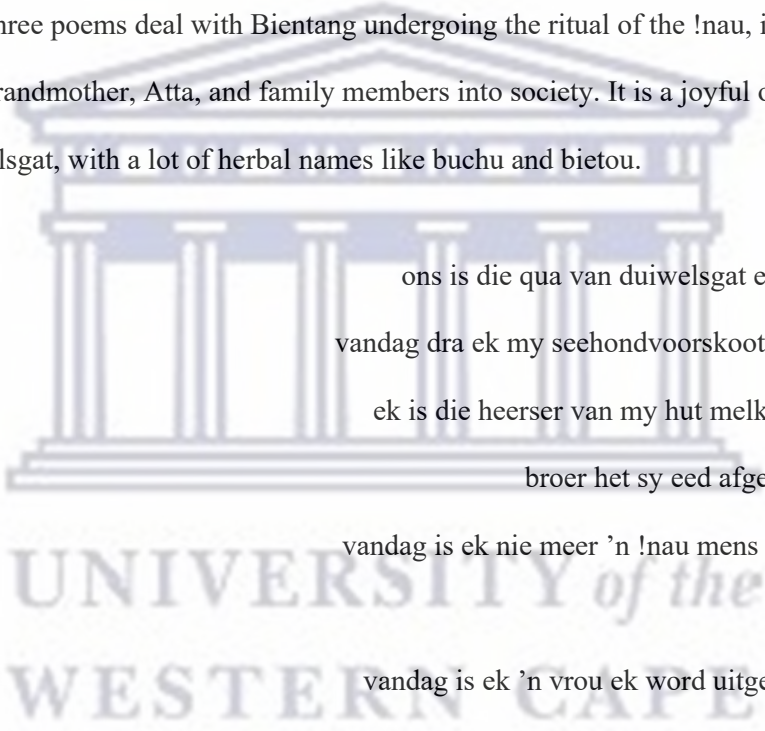
I am standing on Die Plaat of Klipgatgrot with the Sand mountains behind me my feet are flat
 my toes spread out over the shell debris when the sea pulls me in I hear

the ghoera the water is clean and cold like my blood

I watch the tide angering

This procedure, the definition of the word “bientang” followed by text, is kept right through the volume. Every new definition broadens the possibilities of Bientang’s being. These cuttings from various dictionaries for the words “bintang” en “bĕntang” in Tagalog, Malayan, and Indonesian, imply that the name is from a mixed heritage, and that the name demands freedom into various spaces.

The first three poems deal with Bientang undergoing the ritual of the !nau, in which she is ritualised by her grandmother, Atta, and family members into society. It is a joyful occasion at the cave called Duiwelsgat, with a lot of herbal names like buchu and bietou.



ons is die qua van duiwelsgat en ons gaan nêrens
vandag dra ek my seehondvoorskoot kapallangs mantel
ek is die heerser van my hut melk self die bokke my
broer het sy eed afgelê ek word vandag
vandag is ek nie meer ’n !nau mens nie my mense sing
vandag is ek ’n vrou ek word uitgesmeer met boegoe
dit maak my vrugbaar atta’le vat my vanoggend
na die hut en sê vir my ek is nie meer ekke nie
sy buk ek kruip as sy kruip ek skil as sy skil ek gaan nooit
weer iets met my eie hande kan bewerk nie [...]

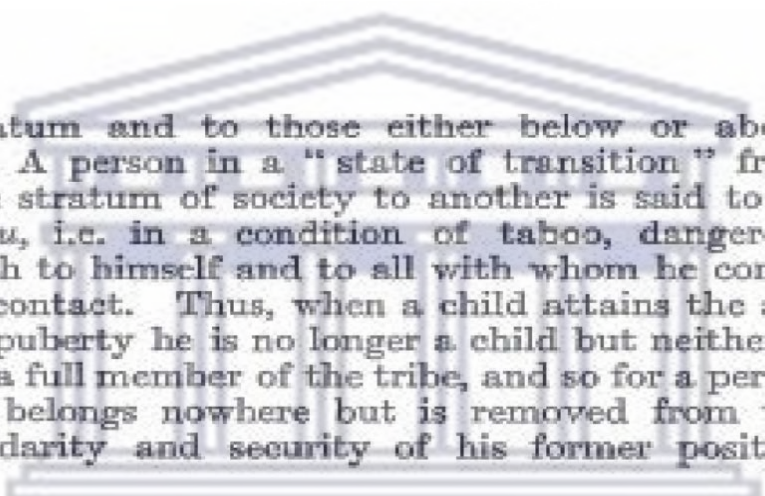
we are the qua of Duiwelsgat and we are going nowhere

today I wear my seadogskirt kapallangs cloak

I reign in this hut I milk the goats myself

my brother has made an oath today today I become

today I am no longer a !nau human my people sing
 today I am a woman I am smeared out with boegoe
 this will make me fruitful atta'le took me this morning
 to the hut and told me I was no longer ego
 she bowed down I crawled when she crawled I rind when she rinds I
 I would never again hold something with my own hands



stratum and to those either below or above
 it. A person in a "state of transition" from
 one stratum of society to another is said to be
!nau, i.e. in a condition of taboo, dangerous
 both to himself and to all with whom he comes
 in contact. Thus, when a child attains the age
 of puberty he is no longer a child but neither is
 he a full member of the tribe, and so for a period
 he belongs nowhere but is removed from the
 solidarity and security of his former position

Fig. 18. The description of the !nau (S. Seligman), which is included in *Bientang*.

I alternated research, documentation, and imagination in my text. After the rape, the denial of
 the brother, the death of the baby and rejection by the clan, Bientang finds that in her anger she can
 call up the sea, and a storm drowns the brother while Bientang flees to Loperbaai. In this period, the
 Oëdienaar makes their appearance, claiming that Bientang's call was heard by the sea. Bientang
 settles into her new cave, which she now enters like those in Plato's cave, who have already seen the
 sun. The "shadows" in the cave are seen in a new light, with the shadow of the death of her brother.

wat maak ek met sy skaduwee ek is ondankbaar in die grot
 my oë sien die wêreld bleker jy gaan my nie sommer
 onderkry nie ek is die see se wagvrou ek laat my nie onderkry
 van oestervangers nie

as my oë nie kan sien nie sal my vel my voete en my hande vir my sien

what am I to do with his shadow here I am
ungrateful in this cave my eyes see the world ashen
you are not going to get me down I am this sea's shibboleth
I am not going to let some oystercatcher get me down
if my eyes cannot see I will use my skin and these hands to see

Bientang returns to the cave of her parents, but the whole clan has relocated. She says to herself: “Ek moet spelunk” (*I have to cave*). Without deliberately planning it that way, I realised that the whole text is pervaded with the word “shadow”. Then the Eyeservant asks: Who is Lord Montagu? Who is Klaas? Before these two men meet Bientang, the definition of the word “bientang”, from “false charge / imputation” to “spread out / expand / crucify”, appears with some Arabic translations in my text, linking the name with the Muslim culture. At the same time the Oëdienaar and poet confess that they refuse to change Bientang into a slave, and accept the “bastardisation”, the impurity of being.

The broadening of the definition, “spread out/expand” happens in the life of Bientang. Klaas describes the meeting between Bientang, himself and Lord Montagu:

[...]toe ons haar
die eerste keer ontmoet was sy jonk en haar wangbene hoog
sy het verleidende heupe met plat voete sy het 'n mantel aangehad
gemaak van walvisvel en sy het geruik na boegoe
die plek het soos reën geruik sy het vir lord Montagu bokmelk gebring
want dit is wat vir hom lekker was bo-op die dorp is sy 'n slinksterheks
hieronder was sy soos sy gesê het god van die see –“like Poseidon,”
lord Montagu exclaimed.

// lord Montagu

“she presented me with a basket of goatsmilk with a natural grace which she displayed and had taken care in making the vessel clean. it was quite warm. i drank some of it.”

when we first met she was young and her cheekbones high
she had spoon hips with flat feet she had on a mantle
of noorkapperskin and she smelled of boegoe
this place smelled of rain she brought lord Montagu goats milk
this was his favourite in the town people carry her as a trickster
down here she proclaims herself to be god of the sea – “like Poseidon”,
lord Montagu exclaimed

Klaas is the main speaker about the interaction among the three of them. Bientang speaks the same language as Klaas and he develops feelings for her as she tells them her life story. But he sees that Montagu has too much charming newness which fascinates her. Bientang herself describes her analysis of Montagu after he offers to take her with him. (This part was quite challenging to write, because his so-called civilisation must have had an effect on her, but then what is it that she saw or experienced?)

Bientang says: “Klaas says people like me do not say no to lords” and then she deals with the things that intrigued her about Montagu — he left her with “clothes and words”.

I say k!u he says cloud

I say #hui he says dress

Let me be a shrew to Montagu that knows everything

Montagu also had money. Klaas explains that people like the lord take from the earth and give money back; they take what they believe is theirs. Then Bientang reacts to the shoes, comb, and dress he gave her:

[...] as ek in jou in jou

skoene staan skaaf my enkels maak geswelde kenne

die skoene rek na my breë voete kort tone ek staan in jou skoene montagu

ek wil jou pad verstaan ek loop kryg met die skoene hulle's grofgeskut

die lord bring leerskoene hy los pèrels 'n kam laat val hy 'n kappie 'n

rok hy vergeet sy jas jy's so ver van my af ek weet nie hoe om jou te gaan

haal nie ek moet hier bly tot jy kom

[...] jy't my kom kry in my ma se mantel jy't

my 'n kleurlingmeid in die mond van die dorp gelos ek loop in die

ronde vir jou ek skop klippies van kwaadheit vir jou

vir jou gaan ek nooit kry nie ek skop jou uit ek loop my sole hard

to stand in your shoes they chafe my ankles into swollen chins
the shoes stretch towards my broad feet short toes I stand in your shoes Lord Montagu

I want to understand your road I walk warrior with your shoes

they are artillery the lord brings leather shoes he leaves pearls

a comb he lets fall a bonnet a dress he forgets his coat you are so far from me

I don't know how to catch up with you I must stay here until you come again

[...] you found me in my mother's cape

you left me a kleurlingmeid in the mouth of the town

I walk in a circle for you in fury for you I kick little stones

you I will never get I kick you out I walk my soles hard

The definition of the word ‘bintang’ is again broadened to fit her relationship with Lord Montagu who describes her as a celestial body.

bintang 1 star. *batu* – a) meteorite. b) crystalline rock. *cirit* – a) shooting/falling star, meteor. b) meteorite. *ilmu* – astronomy. *Perang* – Star Wars, aka Strategic Defense Initiative; → **PRAKARSA Pertahanan Stratégis**. *ramalan* – horoscope. *tahi* – → **CIRIT bintang**. *sebanyak – di langit* as many as there are stars in the sky. 2 any diagram or figure that resembles a star. *bendéra bulan* – a flag depicting the crescent and star symbol of Islamic nations. *Bendéra Malaysia mempunyai bulan sabit dan – pecah empat belas pada satu sudut*. The Malaysian flag has the crescent and a star with 14 rays in one corner. 3 the symbol of the PPP (party). 4 planet or heavenly body regarded as influencing a person’s future. *Ia dilahirkan dalam naungan – Léo*. She was born under the sign of Leo. 5 fate, destiny, luck, fortune. *–nya gelap and gelap –nya*. He had a run of bad luck. *–nya naik* his star is rising. *–nya terang*. He is fortunate/prosperous/doing well. *Mulai terbuka –nya*. His star is in the ascendant. 6 constellation (showing the picture of an object or animal). – *biduk* Great Bear. – *pari*

Fig. 19. Definition of “Bintang”
A Comprehensive Indonesian–English Dictionary,
compiled by Alan M. Stevens and A. Ed., Semidgall-Tellings, 2010. p.140.

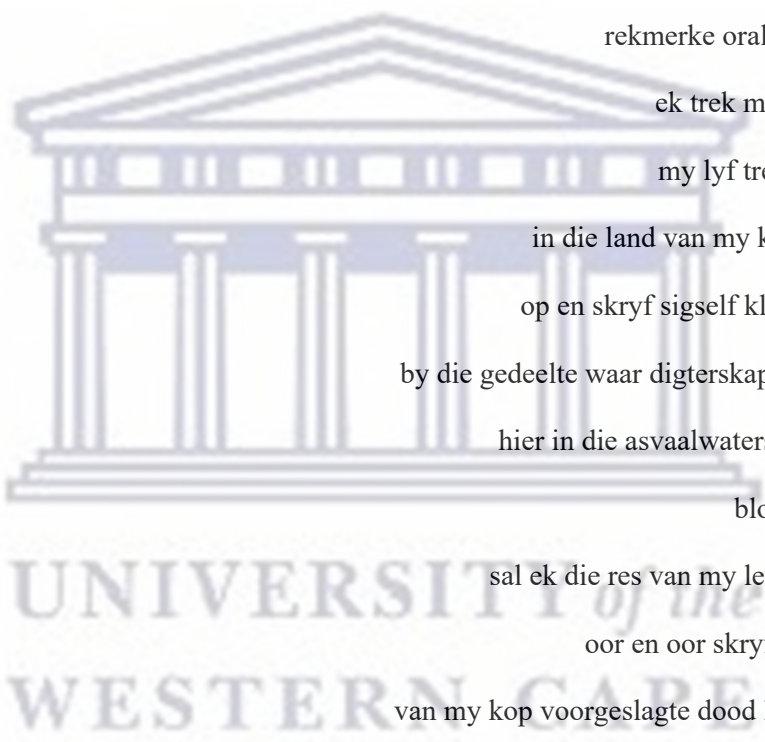


Fig. 20. Picture of Bintang beer sold on the Island of Bintang, Indonesia
www.bienmanger.com/2F34319, *Bintang Beer From Indonesia.html*

Bientang laments how her life has changed, how she desires to be her old self again. She envies the trees that will outlive her; she longs to dissolve, to return as sea. She tries to go to the town, but finds it disconcerting among all the people and becomes so desperate and furious about her whole life that she calls up another storm, which is also her own end.

The Oëdienaar enters again as a “shaft”, an ancestor, and describes how Bientang has become part of the things on the earth: she knives, gneisses, she scales, she stones, she arcs. Klaas enters, relating how desolate he and Montagu found the cave when they returned, but the main final speaker

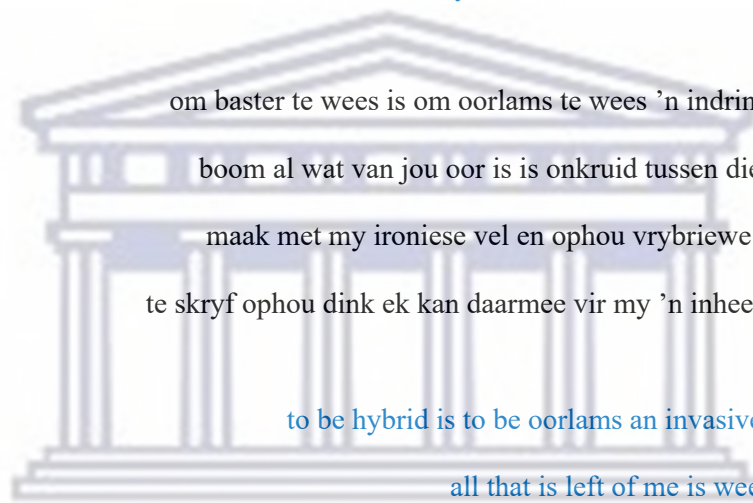
is the Oëdienaar, mixing with the poet. Here is the end of the poem as a final sense-making reckoning by the poet:

The logo of the University of the Western Cape is a faint watermark in the background. It features a classical building with a pediment and columns, with the text 'UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE' below it.

[...]ek wens ek
het nooit begin skryf nie ek wens ek kan
die liggaam van my omruil hierdie roupak
uittrek ek swel
as ek skryf my ruggraatskyf druk hier is
rekmerke oral op my lyf geskryf
ek trek my lyf in soos 'n net
my lyf trek in soos laaggety
in die land van my kop staan die storie
op en skryf sigself klaar en hier kom ek
by die gedeelte waar digterskap my water toe trek
hier in die asvaalwaters van my kop waar
bloublasies my brand
sal ek die res van my lewe dieselfde storie
oor en oor skryf omdat in die land
van my kop voorgeslagte dood lê sonder grafstene

I wish
I have never begun to write I wish I can
exchange my body
take off this grief-suit I swell
when I write my spine presses here are
stretchmarks everywhere on my body
I pull my body like a net
my life is like lowtide

in the land of my head a story stands
up and writes itself to the end and here I come
at the part where being poet pulls me underwater
here in the ashenwaters in my head
where bluebottles burn
I will write for the rest of my life the same story
over and over because in this land
of my head ancestors lie dead without gravestones



om baster te wees is om oorlams te wees 'n indringerplant 'n lukwart-
boom al wat van jou oor is is onkruid tussen die gras ek moet vrede
maak met my ironiese vel en ophou vrybriewe deur jou aan myself
te skryf ophou dink ek kan daarmee vir my 'n inheemsgeskiedenis koop

to be hybrid is to be oorlams an invasive plant a loquat- tree
all that is left of me is weed between the grass

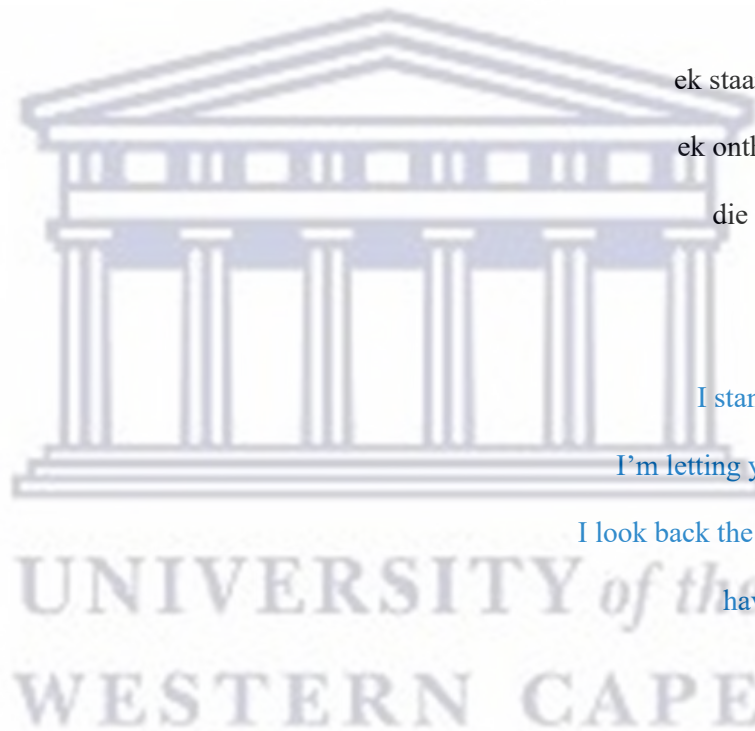
I have to make peace with my ironic skin
and stop writing free letters to you as myself
stop thinking I can buy myself an indigenous history

sy loop en kam die looperbaai soos die wind die plaat se getyeboek blaai
bientang hoe skryf ek jou klaar is jy nie ook maar net 'n banneling van
'n ander soort slaweskip as myne nie die digter sit met stersiektes ek is
die argivaris dis ek wat besluit ek sal jou taal bientang

I walk and comb the cursor bay like the wind calling tidal anger
bientang how do I write you to the finish am I not also an exile
from a different type of slave ship the poet with star diseases
I'm the archivist it's me who decides I'll language you bientang

jirre nou begin jy my verbeel my woorde swem terug na my denkbeeld jy
sny jou los van waar ek jou arms die eerste keer in kruisrym geboei het
jou die eerste keer verstroof en jou binnerym uitgehaal het en daar duik
jy woordvry jou eie apokriewe uit

jirre now you start imagining my words swimming back to my imagination
you cut yourself loose from where I first cuffed your arms in cross rhymes
and took you out of inner rhyme you dive word-free out my apocryphal



ek staan alleen op die plaat
ek ontheg jou ek kyk terug
die wind verwelk jou in
het jy ooit gepraat?

I stand alone on the plate
I'm letting you out of this poem

I look back the wind wilting you in
have you ever spoken?

5.3. Thoughts on Translating some Extracts of Bientang into English

For this reflexive essay specifically, I undertook to translate in a very literal way a small part of *Bientang* into English to give the reader an idea how much the Afrikaans was affected (See Annexure 1). However, once I started and became aware of the literature on poets who self-translate (for example, Joseph Brodsky, Stefan Georg, Rainer Maria Rilke) it became a daunting, frankly overwhelming task to translate my distorted, self-forged language with its remnants of ancient Afrikaans and deep-seated political resistance into English. What kind of English? I was reminded constantly of Christopher Whyte's essay "Against Self-Translation" (2002) where he insists that self-

translation is an “activity without content, voided of all the rich echoes and interchanges ... attributed to the practice of translation” (68), whereby an author exerts “an improper control over texts” that leaves little room for further interpretation by the reader or outside translator (70).

I realised that I was indeed no longer translating the extracts but, in trying to break loose from the initial Afrikaans, was often re-writing, changing, and therefore actually writing a new text that developed a life of its own. The exacerbating factor was the kind of Afrikaans I was using/making: a lot of neologisms and creative compounds and compilations of words, which led to challenges in finding equivalents in English. The definition of the word neologism is as follows:

A neologism is a relatively recent or isolated term, word, or phrase that may be in the process of entering common use, but that has not been fully accepted into mainstream language. Neologisms are often driven by changes in culture and technology. (Čilić and Plauc 115)

I found it nearly impossible to fracture and distort English grammatical rules, invent new words, and mix English words with Afrikaans ones through the present continuous of the English (e.g., *he was gaaning aan* – he was going on). I battled with vocabulary for indigenous concepts and cultures in English because I explored Afrikaans as a hybrid with a substantial amount of the vocabulary of Southeast Asian and Khoi languages. (Trying to convey this in the translation, as one can see in Annexure 1, makes the text become rather incomprehensible.)

At times in Bientang’s monologues, I fracture the Afrikaans compound so much that it loses its standard metaphorical and imaginative qualities, in order to see how two concepts, words, shapes, and expressions can make a character or a setting unique. The strongest indication of how I mis-used/abused Afrikaans shows up in the translation (Annexure 1).

In hindsight, I realised that my poetry also became its idiolect because I experimented with fragmenting the words, which led to the hybrid in which it exists now. I would go so far as to say that since the words in Bientang’s mouth are so full of neologisms, it created a special idiolect for her.

Another complication in terms of translation was that the difference between Bientang and Lord Montagu’s speech would not be so dramatic if they both spoke English. Bientang has a

collective tongue, and Montagu, is a British one. So, the biggest challenge was to bring across Bientang's language and to bring it across as radically different from Lord Montagu's. Therefore, my translation energy was in the end better directed in the play. With its concrete dialogue and the assistance of all the role-players in forming the play, it was easier to transform the text into English. (See Annexure 2).

5.4. Reactions to Bientang

I received the much-coveted Eugène Marais prize (2021) for young writers awarded by the Akademie vir Kuns en Wetenskap. Next to the Hertzog prize, it is the most prestigious award for Afrikaans literature. The poem also competed against all the other genres in 2021 which gave the prize even more kudos.

In a review in *Rapport*, Hein Viljoen comes to the following conclusion:

Bientang is a praiseworthy and convincing attempt to deal with the puzzle of the legend of Bientang's "presence" in the cave at Hermanus. It argues for an unexplored Khoi-world and very effectively evokes the strangeness and difference of the Bientang.

The poem succeeds wonderfully as an archaeological project to record the past, and reconstruct and archives the past. Remarkable in the poem is the language: rich in the symbolism of plants, the sea, and sea-things. Bientang becomes a gripping figure as a woman exposed to tragic circumstances, but she keeps on slipping out of the poet's words as the poet cuts her loose so that she can dive "wordfree" out of apocryphal records. (Viljoen)

While in the abstract of her 2020 article, Bibi Burger writes:

In this article I contend that references to slavery and colonialism and the use of words in languages brought to South Africa through slave networks, position these collections as products of the transnational Black Atlantic tradition, as theorised by Paul

Gilroy. The fact that the narratives of both collections take place in the Overstrand region, near the meeting place of the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, is an indication of how Gilroy's theory needs to be adapted to be applicable to Afrikaans literature: as many English-language South African theorists have argued, oceanic literary studies in South Africa should pay as much attention to routes in the Indian Ocean as to Atlantic routes. The emphasis in both collections on not only a history of slavery, but also one of the displacement of and violence against the people already inhabiting the area when colonisers alighted, further serves to indicate what an Afrikaans black aquatic literature looks like. Taking account of these differences between Afrikaans and other versions of black aquatic art, reading *grond/Santekraam* and *bientang* as part of a global black aesthetics allows the researcher to identify the ways in which these collections are characterised by a hermeneutics of suspicion (an interpretation of contemporary life that recognises the ways in which it is structured and functions in anti-black ways) and a hermeneutics of memory (an interpretation of this anti-black contemporary as a continuation of the history of the dehumanisation of black people). (67)

Louise Viljoen (2001) writes:

The representation of *Bientang* relies on a poetic diction infused with sensory, affective and emotional content as well as a strong interconnection with the plants, animals, landscapes, and seascapes of her physical environment." ("Affek, emosie en kognisie in die rekonstruksie van 'n vergete ...") The article focuses on the articulation of anger, relying on the theoretical insights of Sianne Ngai and Sarah Ahmed, both of whom refuse to draw a strong distinction between affect and emotion. Several views on the use (Lorde, hooks), the (in)effectiveness (Nussbaum), and the aptness of anger (Srinivasan) are mobilised to explore the role of anger in *Bientang*'s relations with her family (parents and brother) and the traveller Lord Montagu. The anger of the poet, who figures as one of the speakers in the text, is also considered. (144-145)

And in the magazine *Herri*, a fellow poet of colour, Ronelda Kamfer, wrote the following about

Bientang:

There is a feeling of trepidation and careful excitement. The text is both mysterious and intricately woven, like a veil covering a young bride's face. Much of Phillips' power as a poet resides in this juxtaposition of lexical simplicity and psychological complexity. For a reader with a limited or non-existing Nama or KhoeKhoegowab vocabulary, it requires careful reading to put together what's happening at certain points in the poem, as the meaning sometimes hinges on unfamiliar words (even for Afrikaans speakers) like *Inau* and others. Meaning unfolds slowly, and mysteriously, clarity gradually emerges. Like your eyes adjusting to the dark in a cave perhaps.

I should mention that there are other voices, besides *Bientang*'s in the poem. The most prominent of these is *Klaas* and the author herself. The latter voice opens up a meta-narrative within the text that takes the depiction of *Bientang* in interesting directions. The author uses this as an opportunity to challenge her own assertions of *Bientang*. And complicates the narrative in an enjoyable way. It also shields the poem from predictable categorisations.

There is something disconcerting about seeing a creation reject its creator. It is a particular kind of violence that the author willingly visits upon herself. But you understand immediately why it is necessary. *Bientang* needs to reject her author, to retain her agency. Phillips does this to remind the reader that *Bientang* is in fact not her creation. She was a real woman. She existed.

Out of this obscure history, Phillips manages to unearth something valuable and affecting. *Bientang* avoids the obvious routes to reach its destination, this isn't a slave's lament, praise song or folk tale, it's the inverse of those things. An Epic poem told intimately and with humility. Perfectly captured in Jolyn Phillips' low voice, that reminds you of an ocean with slow, ebbing waves that belies the depths below. (Kamfer)

5.5. Spawning from Bientang

Tjieng Tjang Tjerries and Other Stories, which was written in English, was my debut publication. I turned the book into a play (vimeo.com/255175295) working with theatre maker, actor, and director Jason Jacobs. This was performed at Woordfees 2018 in Stellenbosch.

I was not quite sure whether a play around *Bientang* was possible (it would again confront me with the unwillingness to make her “real”). But then the project instigated by NATI (die Nasionale Afrikaans Toneel Inisiatief) that specifically focuses on drama texts in Afrikaans invited me to participate in a series of workshops creating new texts. I applied for financial assistance from the NIHSS Working Group Grant for 2021/2022 to turn the text into a play. (See Annexure 2.)

5.6. Failing Better: A Conclusion

Purely by chance I came across an essay written by Zadie Smith. In ‘Fail Better’ for the *Guardian* newspaper on Saturday, 13 January 2007, she writes:

I’ve often thought it would be fascinating to ask living writers: “Never mind the critics, what do you yourself think is wrong with your writing? How did you dream of your book before it was created? What were your best hopes? How have you let yourself down?” A map of disappointments – that would be a revelation [...] It strikes me as a suitable guide to the land where writers live [...] (Smith)

This brought me to a quotation by Irish writer Samuel Beckett (I learnt that he himself grappled with issues of translation, and a historical and literary context of past/present colonial erasure and existential trauma) who famously described life’s journey as a series of inevitable failures. In *Worstward Ho!* (1983) the narrator declares, “Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try Again. Fail Again. Fail Better” (8). I adopt this statement of inevitable failure to explain the unavoidable limitations and failures of art and artistic endeavour. So, sharing the sentiments of both Beckett and Smith, I feel I need to recall my most pressing creative objectives and moments with *Bientang*.

I wanted to write an Epic poem in Afrikaans about a very opaque character that I only knew the name of and maybe one of her locations. In order to prepare myself, I read through a wide variety of Epics in various languages but focused in the end on the context in which I have to place the Epic, namely Afrikaans. Then I read a lot of theories dealing with the Epic and how its definition changed over time. This was quite fruitful because the terrain in Afrikaans was white, and the heroes and formats were rather predictable despite some strong and famous Epics in the language.

What was even more fruitful was to notice that the rather substantial Afrikaans critical literature on these Epics hardly does not focus on how the poets treated this format. It has left wonderful gaps within which to be truly original, without diverging in unaccountable ways.

And yet the fear of failure and actual failure mocked me every step of the way. I had to grapple with two main challenges: (a) Is it possible to write an Epic about a history-less character in a way *that remains respectful to the history-less fact*? (b) Is it possible to use the format of the Epic in a way that is not only *different* from the previous Epics in Afrikaans, but also *gains in metaphorical depth* precisely through its subversion?

Taking cues from many other Epics, ranging from *Odysseus* to *Lewendood*, I used what I had: the name Bientang and her abode. From her name, I derived possible histories ranging from the yellow flowering indigenous bietou-bush to “bintang” in various Eastern languages. For the cave, I explored many of the caves appearing along that side of the coast and visited the Bredasdorp Museum as well as the Blombos Exhibition to learn what had been found in these caves. I also read about Plato’s cave and its philosophical meaning. From this research, glimpses of possible histories began to appear. When I had misgivings about writing about the marginalised, I felt compelled to remind myself and make the reader aware that all this was nothing but attempts, mostly failed attempts, to reach the life of somebody else, and so therefore I created the character of the Oëdienaar and the poet to disrupt any smooth narratives.

I also had to avoid the obvious trap of simply replacing the white hero with a black heroine, while the language and structure remained basically the same as it was in the white male-dominated Epic hierarchies. Did I succeed in this? I think the only questionable decision I made for my hero was the fact that I wrote the Epic in Afrikaans. My research indicates that she could have been of slave

and/or indigenous origins. Even making use of dictionary entries would not suffice so I decided to write her in my language. Ironically, I did come up with an idiolect that is so specific to Bientang that working in these fragments of language strangely exemplified accurately how Afrikaans as language was originally invented.

I think I succeeded in giving voice to Bientang by making sure that I understood the environment I was placing her in and, as far as possible, I think I did not make her an insular character who was at risk of being like the people in Plato's cave, afraid of the shadows. In my observations of heroes in the Epics that I studied, heroes need a witness for their heroism to be real and/or their heroic deeds to be recognised. As a result, their deeds become lore and epitomes of culture. Bientang's heroic quest was to be free, away from cultural constraints placed on her as part of a tribe and as a woman. She did not agree with the rites of passage that she had to undergo and felt betrayed by her people for allowing these rites to continue. She wanted to be her own individual and to be her own country. Her greatest fight is with nature rather than with people since at a supernatural level she could command nature to kill them. She realises that, although the sea follows her command, it is not a slave to her. She does need people to witness and to remember that she once lived. I would, therefore, argue that I succeeded in creating a subversive, yet tragic hero in Bientang.

Put differently, if I invented a full life for her as other writers have done, André Brink with Philida and Elsa Joubert with Poppie Nongena, for example, then one would feel 'healed' by a complete story, feel that some injustice of the past has been restored, while this is not the case at all. And this is what I wanted to say: that the terrible rupture is everlasting. Fail. Fail Again. Fail Better, regardless of the praise of critics or readers.

To add to this grief, this 'map of disappointments' has one final irony and mark of terrible compromise. I waded into a list of firsts in Afrikaans literature: the first female person of colour to write an Afrikaans Epic; the first person to write an Afrikaans Epic about a "heroine" of colour; the first person to write an Afrikaans Epic encompassing a wide variety of Afrikaans forming a kind of idiolect; the first person to write an Afrikaans Epic that actively undermined or re-question the accepted notion of an Epic; and finally the first person to write an Afrikaans Epic as part of a PhD.

And while this is breaking barriers, it also relates to exclusion: while Bientang was the last, it took 107 years for me to be the first – the first brown female poet to write an Afrikaans Epic. As with being the last, being the first is also oppressive.

As a PhD in Creative Writing in Afrikaans at the University of the Western Cape was not available to me (it simply did not exist), I was forced to undertake all of this as part of a PhD in English Studies through practice-based methodology! This final terrible irony, the ultimate comment on a creative journey doomed to compromise from the start, is not lost on me as I complete my final paragraph in English to you, reader. And yet, would I embark on this journey again if I knew all this from the beginning? For Bientang's sake, but mostly for my own, I believe I would. And, as I sharpen my pencil and settle my mind, the coaxing, mocking, insulting, soothing ghosts would chant:

“Back again?”

“Yes, I cannot not.”

“No matter, Jolyn. Try Again. Fail Again. Fail Better.”

The logo of the University of the Western Cape, featuring a classical building facade with six columns and a pediment.

UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

BIENTANG: BLOEDSPOOR!/NAU

The Play



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

Character list :

Bientang

Digter

Kelner

Oupa Hen

Aunty Lettuce

Suster

Oëdienaar

Klaas

Montagu

The players in alphabetical order:

Deniel Barry performed as a musician and a singer. She is also double-cast to play the characters Bientang and the Oëdienaar alongside Jolyn Phillips.

Frazer Barry performed as a musician and singer. He is also cast to play Klaas and Oupa Hen and double-cast as the Oëdienaar alongside Charlton George. Frazer also reworked some excerpts from the characters Bientang and the Digter which were sung by Frazer and Jolyn as soloists, whilst other songs were sung by the collective.

Charlton George(CG) performed as a musician and chorus singer. He plays Lord Montagu, Aunty Lettuce, Kelner, and double-cast as the Oëdienaar.

Jolyn Phillips (JP) is in the chorus. She is also cast as the character Atta, the Digter and double-cast to play Bientang and the Oëdienaar alongside Deniel Barry.

Included in the play is a voiceover (VO) by Renée Cloete.

CHORUS

Deniel Barry

Frazer Barry

Charlton George

Jolyn Phillips

Facilitator/Director: Amelda Brand

Facilitator/Musical Director: Frazer Barry

Choreographer: Kayla van der Merwe

Note: The play was developed during a workshop process and the players as musicians and singers accompanied interpreted excerpts from the Epic, *Bientang: 'n Inau gedig* by Jolyn Phillips through music, choreography, clowning, and performance. The workshop process was facilitated by Amelda Brand, Frazer Barry, Robert Hindley, and Kayla van der Merwe.

The logo of the University of the Western Cape, featuring a stylized classical building with columns and a pediment, with the text "UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE" below it.

UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE

AANKOMSRITUEEL & CHANT

*Storieverteller kom binne. Maak ruimte reg. Sit bagasie neer.
VO tydens chant.*

BIENTANG (VO): ek staan op die plaat klipgatgrot
die sandberge agter my
my voete is plat
my tone uitgesprei oor die skulpgruis
wanneer die see terugtrek
hoor ek die ghoera
die water is skoon en koud soos my bloed
ek staan voor my en kyk hoe die gety kwaad word

*Eindig met Digter wat in die grot sit met kelner wat haar bedien en Restaurant Band wat begin speel.
Volgende spreekbeurt van die digter sal gelyke tyd in met afwisseling met die Restaurant Band
plaasvind.*

DIGTER: Dit is 17 Desember 2017
ek het besluit hier in jou grot in Hermanus bestel ek 'n
geelbek 'n glas droë witwyn
en ek lees die woorde: die laaste strandloper
...die laaste strandloper...
hoe word 'n mens 'n laaste?

*Musicians change – move to other side – Tagalog music. Musikante ve – beweeg na die regterkant van
die DIGTER – speel Tagalog musiek*

Na ek oor Bientang gelees in die Overstand gelees het, sit ek weer in 'n
restaurant
Die keer in Nederland – 'n Surinaamse restaurant
Ek bestel Javaanse bami en 'n bier

KELNER: We have only one kind of beer, Bientang...

DIGTER: Bientang?

KELNER: Bientang in Tagalog – False charge

Malayu – to spread out

Bahasa – celestial body

All true

DIGTER: In Suid-Afrika is sy 'n vrou, hulle sê sy was die laaste strandloper en het in 'n grot in Hermanus gebly – dis nou 'n restaurant. Hulle sê jy kan steeds gaan kyk waar sy geslaap het.

Kelner loop net weg. Frazer musiek oorgang – bly steeds in posisie.

Bientang, ek het deur al die /xam argiewe gesoek na jou en
van jou strandlopergeid nog te min

vir jou moet mens uitpak soos koekemakranka

'n mens wil onthou wees vir die lewe ek sweer dit 'n
mens wil vir jou plek maak tussen taal ek wil

Bientang laat uitmond

dood se taal praat nog nie met my nie ek moet eers

daar uitkom

hoeveel keer is ons voormense nie gestraf

met oorlewenis nie

ek wil vir Bientang 'n kleptokrasie bou

ons gaan by mekaar moet steel

om stemme te lieg

Musiek stop. Transition – akteurs skuif van posisie terwyl VO speel.

BIENTANG (VO): ek staan op die plaat klipgatgrot die
sandberge agter my my voete is
plat my tone uitgesprei oor die skulpgruis
wanneer die see terugtrek hoor
ek die ghoera die water is skoon
koud soos my bloed ek staan voor my
en kyk hoe die gety kwaad word

MONTAGU: Lord Montagu kom in die Kaap aan. Dit is die jaar 1780.
Hy is op pad na die Suide van die Kaap. Hy was in Mosselbaai. Swellendam,
Namaqua. Dit is in Namaqua dat sy reis verander het. Sy natuurkundige
verstand was nou op pad na die Noorkapper, die vrou in 'n grot. Hoe sy die
weer kon beheer, diere. Sulke dinge is nie moontlik nie. As 'n ortinoloog kan
ons net die natuur waarneem en dit neerskryf, selfs dan is dit nie die waarheid
nie. Die natuurkundige hoop altyd dat die natuur eendag die geheime sal
openbaar van hoe ons hier gekom het.

OËDIENAAR(FB): Jy weet vir hierdie stories is Lord Montagu op Le Vaillant se skryfwerk baseer,
né. Ken jy dit? *'Travels into the Interior parts of Africa by the way of the Cape
of Good Hope' ensomeer...*

OËDIENAAR (CG): Ja, ja, goed om te weet, maar in ons storie noem ons die 'karakter' Lord
Montagu met alles wat aan hom vir hier storie toegedig is. En Klaas is sommer
net so, naam en al, gecopy en paste uit Le Vaillant se verhale tot hier . . .

KLAAS: Lord Montagu se reis na Hermanuspietersfontein

MONTAGU: I took leave of my friends,
and on the 18th of December 1781,
at nine in the morning, I departed, escorting

my convoy, myself on horseback,

a gridiron a frying pan

two large kettles

a cauldron

a few china plates and dishes

coffee-pots, teapots

cups, bowls

some boilers.

for my own person, provided myself

with linen of every kind

a large stock of white and candied sugar

coffee, tea, and a few pounds of chocolate.

it would be necessary for me to supply

the Hottentots who accompanied me

with tobacco and strong liquors,

I procured an ample abundance

three casks of the latter. I carried with me.

also a large quantity of glassware,

toys, and other curiosities,

to exchange with the natives

as occasion might require, or to gain their friendship.

To all these things belonging to my caravan,

add a large and a small tent,

instruments for repairing my wagons,

and for melting lead; a jack for raising burdens, a

quantity of nails, iron, bars and in small pieces.

pins, thread, needles, distilled liquors, &c. &c.

Such was the cargo of my two carriages,

weigh each nearly about two tons,
My train was composed of thirty oxen;
twenty for my two carriages,
ten more to relieve them.
three hunters, nine dogs, and five Hottentots

KLAAS: Reis na BIENTANG se grot

MONTAGU: The wind blew ominously.

KLAAS Ons het om elfuur die oggend op 19 Desember 1781 by haar grot aangekom.

MONTAGU: The custom of going out to hunt runaway negroes, and those who turn plunderers, as we hunt savage animals, has nothing in it that can offend the delicacy of a European.

KLAAS: Die oomblik wanneer mans, nuttig in die samelewing, hul situasie laat vaar, hetsy van 'n gees [*Montagu onderbreek*]

MONTAGU: Of libertinism, they degrade themselves, below brutes and deserve the most rigorous treatment –

KLAAS: Die oomblik wanneer mans, nuttig in die samelewing, hul situasie laat vaar, hetsy van 'n gees. [*Montagu onderbreek*]

MONTAGU: - of degradation, of libertinism ...

DENIEL: En nou oor Bientang ...

MONTAGU: I shall introduce nothing that is not my own.

KLAAS: Ek het niks voorgestel nie.

DIGTER: Ek stel net bekend wat ek gevind het.

DIGTER: Die digter is op pad na haar oom toe. Hulle noem hom Oupa Hen. Hy is die een met die geskiedenis van die Gibson familie. Hoe hulle na 'n straat vernoem is. Hy ken Stanford soos die palm van sy hand. Die digter maak eers 'n besoek aan haar ma se antie, Oupa Hen se ma, wat in Stanford woon. Die digter arriveer per taxi van Bellville na Stanford en kom om 14:00 daar aan. Dit is 5 Julie.

(Digter klop aan die deur.)

DIGTER Daar is geen antwoord nie. Sy loop deur die huis. Dis 'n huis waar jy nie hoef te klop om in te kom nie. Sy ruik moerkoffie is gemaak Sy ruik Jik en OMO. Hierdie reuk vertel haar dat haar Aunty Lettuce by die wasgoedlyn staan.

DIGTER: Aunty Lettuce?! *(Sy roep deur die huis)*

DIGTER: Wanneer die DIGTER by die wasgoedlyn kom, het Aunty Lettuce pennetjies van haar skouer tot aan die einde van haar bloes wat soos 'n ruggraat hang. Een pennetjie sit soos sigaret in haar mond.

AUNTY LETTUCE: Kyk wat waai die wind uit? Wat maak jy in Blikkiesdorp, moet jy nie in die college wees nie? Jou ma't niks gesê nie.

DIGTER: Die digter het haar Antie baie lank laas gesien. Antie Lettuce is die een wat vashou aan die Gibson storie. Wie nou skoon-, bloed- of trou familie is. Sy is die trotste oor die storie waar sy en haar dogtertjie met die blonde krulletjies in die bus gesit het in Kaapstad en niemand haar gevra het om op te staan nie om agter in die Coloureds Only area te sit nie . Dit maak haar oudste suster baie jaloers.

SUSTER: Hoekom praat jy altyd oor die verlede? Wat weg is, is weg

AUNTY LETTICE: Ja, Emily, dit is jy, altyd met 'n shawl oor die waarheid. Jy plaas sykouse oor jou gevoelens. Geen wonder...

SUSTER: Genoeg! (*Onderbreek haar suster se gedagte*)

DIGTER: So, wanneer het die Gibsons hier gekom, Antie Lettuce?

AUNTY LETTUCE: Jy weet ons is nie eintlik Gibson is nie. Ons noem dit Jipson. Maar toe het die group areas gekom. Ek onthou as kind. Ek het 10 reise per dag met 'n pram gemaak

DIGTER: O, nou Antie Lettuce, waar kom die naam vandaan?

AUNTY LETTUCE: Ek weet nie. Pa het altyd gesê ons is Jipsons. Pa het dit verander.

MONTAGU: I was to be acquainted with this new country, to which I found myself transported as if in a dream. I didn't care for Cape Town much it felt like a farce. The Dutch trying to fit themselves into a shoe too small. You could see how the city was limping when no one was looking, but walking like the English, haughty. The English and the Dutch present themselves in noble and simple taste. Two slaves carry a bible the size of a map behind their master's carriage. The book is in pristine condition, untouched and unread.

Fish are very abundant at the Cape. Among those most esteemed, the principal are the roo man a red fish found in the bay of Falso; and the klepvis which has no scales, and which is caught on the rocks bordering the sea.

DIGTER: Ek het oorgeloop na Oupa Hen se huis. Hy staan in sy garage waar hy besig is om 'n houtkruis order af te rond vir 'n kerk. Ek waai vir hom soos ek na sy huis aangestap kom en hy signal vir my dat ek kan inkom . Ek klop saggies aan die tafel waarop hy werk as 'n groet.

OUPA HEN: So mamma het jou gestuur?

<http://etd.uwc.ac.za/>

DIGTER: Ja, Oupa Hen.

OUPA HEN: Mamma het nie gesê wat jy soek nie. Wat wil jy weet kint?

DIGTER: Ek moet navorsing doen oor die inheemse mense wat in ons gebied gewoon het.

OUPA HEN: Nee dan is jy by die regte plek. *(OH nooi Digter om te kom sit.)* Jong dit is donkiejare se goed wat jy nou daar vra ... is dit vir jou college?

DIGTER: Dit is vir my PhD, Oupa Hen.

OUPA HEN: Ha! Nou toe nou. Wie sou dink JanGap se kind kan so ver leer maar jy't ons breins.

DIGTER: Antie Lettuce het gesê ek kan Oupa Hen vra oor die geskiedenis... van Stanford.

OUPA HEN: Ja, daaroor kan ek heel marrag bekmaak.

DIGTER: Ek wil baie graag hoor of Oupa Hen vir my kan vertel van die inheemse mense?.

OUPA HEN: Die Iere het hier aangekom in...

DIGTER: Nee, ek praat van die inheemse mense

OUPA HEN: Nou ja ek se dan nou

DIGTERS: Ek bedoel die mense voor die Iere.

OUPA HEN: Daar was niemand voor ons nie.

DIGTER: Maar ek het gelees dat Lord Stanford die grond by Caledon gekoop het en ...

OUPA HEN: Bog. Ons besit hierdie land. Dit is van ons weggeeneem. Ons kom uit Ierland wat jy ken. Ons is pure Iers. Ons het met 'n boot met die naam Birkenhead

gekom. Dit het gesink. 1845. Gaan kyk vir jouself op die rekenaar. Jy sal ons daar vind, maar kyk vir Jibson nie Gibson.

DIGTER: Dankie Oupa Hen En die volk voor die skipbreuk?

OUPA HEN: Ek het vir jou gesê, ons is die eerste mense wat hierheen gekom het.
'n Straat is vernoem na ons familie.
Jou oupa het die klipkerk gebou. Ons het die geskiedenis gemaak.

DIGTER: Vir wie se kerk is dit Oupa Hen?

OUPA HEN: Jy weet ek het baie kruise vir kerke gemaak, maar hierdie eikeboom wil my nie 'n reguit lyn gee nie. Ek sny teen die graan. Dit splinter. Hierdie visstert het sy dae gehad.

DIGTER: So, Oupa Hen, ek kyk na hierdie geskiedenis van Bientang's Cave.

OUPA HEN: O dai restaurant met die boesman in? Ons is nie een van hulle nie. Ek het eenkeer 'n boesman geken, ou Klaasjan. Jy kan die peperkorrels op sy kop tel.
Kort. Hy het soos die Namakwas gepraat. Snaakse ou. Nee. Nee. Ons is Iers.

DIGTER: So wanneer het ons bruin geword?

(Kyk maar na OUPA HEN verleë. Sy weet sy het hom beledig.)

MONTAGU: Lord Montagu arrives in the town in Hermanuspietersfontein. This wind continues from January to April at this extremity of Africa, especially closer to the tip of this continent. The most dreadful disease is the sore throat and smallpox. Killing two-thirds of the hottentot population. Now that the Europeans have settled here disease is as far away as a breath from one's mouth. I have heard of a whale called the cachalot, or the noorkapper. This whale is generally from sixty to eighty feet long, and sometimes more. It often times emerges from the sea with half its body; and when this heavy mass falls back again, it makes a noise as loud as the report of a cannon. There's a woman who calls them, they say, in a cave, they come by the masses, they say, no

poacher comes near her. Everyone has died, trying to get to the whales. I have to meet her.

(DIGTER se gesels gaan voort met OUPA HEN)

OUPA HEN: Ek het vir baie wit mense gesê om hierheen te kom vir ons storie. Ek is te moeg om dit weer te sê.

DIGTER: My oom is te moeg om dit vir my te sê. Hy is kwaad dat hulle op al die boeke van die Geskiedenis van Stanford nooit sy naam noem nie.

OUPA HEN: Wat skryf jy?

DIGTER: 'n Verhaal oor Bientang.

OUPA HEN: Wat is die titel van die boek?

DIGTER: Bientang

OUPA HEN: Ek weet ga niks van soe iemand nie.

Jammer ek kan jou nie help nie. Wat's dit na met jou en die vrou?

DIGTER: Ek wil weet waar ek vandaan kom.

OUPA HEN: Ons kom uit Ierland. Die boot se naam is Birkenhead
Gaan kyk in die boeke, ons is daar, gaan kyk na die lys
Ons is daar.

Hy hou op met sy werk en vra skielik.

OUPA HEN: Wie se naam sal op die boek wees wanneer dit gedoen word?

DIGTER: Myne.

OUPA HEN: Kyk, ek het vir die wit mense gesê. Julle mense kom hierheen julle krap en julle krap waar dit nie jeuk nie.

KLAAS: Ek Klaas, se wortels loop ook diep en ver in die se aarde in.

My oumagrootjie was 'n Kettingkouqua vrou
wat met my Oupagrootjie, 'n bleekvelman met blou oë deurmekaar was
Hy het baie besittings, beste en huise gehad.
My Pa'le was drie seuns uit daai verhouding.
Die kinders was volgens diegene wat wet slaan, basters genoem.
My Oupagrootjie het toe begin handel dryf met mense wat soos hy lyk.
Dis toe dat hy my Ougrootjie verlaat vir 'n bleekvelvrou met dieselfde
blou oë soos hy.
Hulle het toe kinders gehad uit daai huwelik.
Sy bleekvel kinders en sy baster kinders het nie om een vuur gesit of
gedans nie.
Want die basterkinders moes as slawe in diens van hul eie bloed staan.
Dis toe dat die basterkinders besluit om weg te trek saam met hulle se pa
se oë om hulle eie kraal te maak.
Hulle het hulself die Chainoukwas genoem.

MONTAGU: “How fascinating, how profound!”

KLAAS: By Bientang se grot ko ôs sien 'n vister bly hier. Daar was 'n vywer en 'n klein soutpan.

MONTAGU: Her name was too strange to my ear, although I recognize the word Bientang – celestial body – that I picked up in Suriname. I want to call her Narina, after my favourite flower. She promised to keep the comb I gave her as long as she lived in remembrance of me. A sentiment that was no longer a stranger to her heart.

KLAAS: Daai aand na ons ontmoeting

MONTAGU: Where does she come from?

KLAAS: Sy't nie mense nie sy's die laaste een, My Lord.

MONTAGU: Fascinating.

OËDIENAAR (CG): Wie is lord Montagu
hy's 'n reisiger 'n man wat plante en diere ken
die plante en die diere het hy in sy boeke geskryf
die plante en die diere het hy afgeskryf
maar vir Bientang kan hy nie uitgeskryf kry nie

KLAAS: wie is Klaas?
Klaas het die lord opgetel met
'n sak tale

OËDIENAAR (DB): Wat het dit met Bientang
uit te waai?

OËDIENAAR (JP): Al wat jy hoef te weet is dat

OËDIENAAR(JP & DB): Bientang
nee gesê het
vir die lord

'Inau' chant begin. Rostrum kom vorentoe.

BIENTANG (VO): die !nau kom vinnig aan ek moet in my hut sit
die mans suiker die elandgebed vir my eer
my troubare sal vir my met 'n klipdaskaros seën
my kinders sal altyd behoort aan sy pa'le
wat van rivier kamma-kan kamma vandaan kom

ons is die qua van duiwelsgat en ons gaan nêrens vandag
dra ek my seehondvoorskoot kapallangs mantel ek is die
heerser van my hut melk self die bokke my broer het sy
eed afgelê ek word vandag

vandag is ek nie meer 'n !naumens nie my mense sing

vandag is ek 'n vrou ek word uitgesmeer met boegoe
dit maak my vrugbaar atta'le vat my vanoggend na die
hut en sê vir my ek is nie meer ekke nie.

sy buk ek kruip as sy kruip ek skil as sy skil ek
ek gaan nooit weer iets met my eie hande kan bewerk nie
my hande word toegesluit sy leer my voete saam-saam strop
my rooidag maak die see onstuiming in die hut ons
wag ons wag ons wag mane om sonne verby

(Break in VO)

ek ruik na bietoublos ek kniel voor die ghoenavyg

sê pa'le ek kan nie by die water uitkom nie sê ma'le
sy bewerk my met bruinsalie haar vaalbosstampsel

sy wat my suster is kyk toe dat ek voor haar vrou word
sy's klaar deur haar fynbostyd sy's klaar ingeheuning vir
my los'le om te ontaard vir my los'le gedou

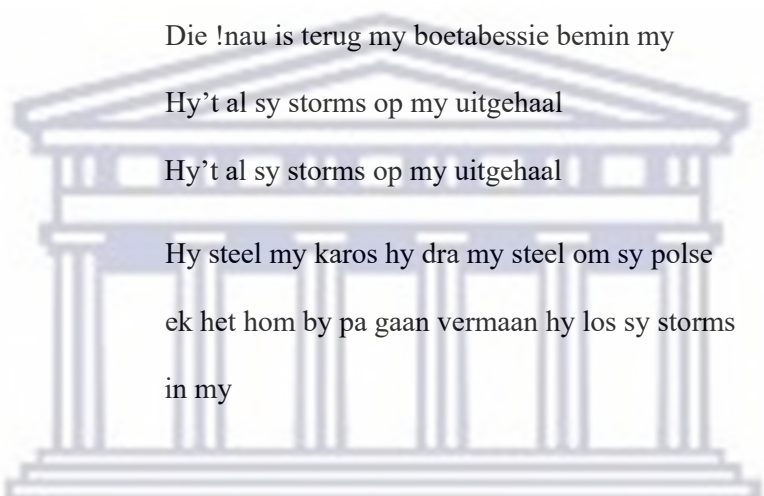
ek voel hoe die ghoenavygblom uit my trek

ek ruik na seemeemis ruik vis tussen my bene
groeï daar uintjies onder my arms word ek bokkoms

BIENTANG (JP):

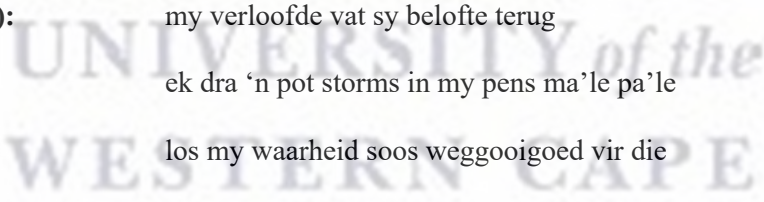
Vrougoed maak my aasgoed ek berg liefs my strandloopgeit
my rooidag is op pad ek wag vir my teken
see bring woorde waarmee ek kan bid ek spoel
ek vlieg ek staan op die plaat my sing fring
jou waternaam vang my oog my oestervanger hy
weenfluit sluit die swartmossel oop

(Break)



Die !nau is terug my boetabessie bemin my
Hy't al sy storms op my uitgehaal
Hy't al sy storms op my uitgehaal
Hy steel my karos hy dra my steel om sy polse
ek het hom by pa gaan vermaan hy los sy storms
in my

BIENTANG (DB):



my verloofde vat sy belofte terug
ek dra 'n pot storms in my pens ma'le pa'le
los my waarheid soos weggooigoed vir die
seemeeue ek is terug in die !nau sê die
medisyneman my broer maak vir hom 'n nuwe
karos

een van die dae sal hy trou net ek en sy stormkind bly nou !nau

Lied: Aangemaak met die see

OËDIENAAR(JP):

Atta het dit geweet

die medisyneman het dit aan ons verklaar

ons is aangemaak met die see

!nau die groot storm roep!

die dood hardloop weg vir ons

die bientangkind vang dit

Atta sien die kind se koliek goggo die stormse

ek, jou Atta, is jou oëdienaar

ek ryg skulpe ek ontskulp

alkruk ek krok ek kraak

blaker ek uit ek staan op

ek steel met my oë roof my tong ek blaai om

die spelonk die noorkapper storm die bientang tang

BIENTANG(DB & JP):

vat hom na sy hel toe

vang hom

sluk hom in

haak hom see

BIENTANG (JP):

vat die stormstoker

in stormsnaam

BIENTANG (JP & DB):

ek loop, ek loop, ek loop

ek breek julle tak vir tak van my af

ek het my atta se mantel ingepak

ek visvrou van die loperbaai

ek het die familiestrik afgetrap

BIENTANG (DB & JP): omdraai
kan ek nie
omdraai
kan ek
wragtag nie

OËDIENAAR (FB): Bientang se aankoms by haar grot in Hermanuspietersfontein

BIENTANG (JP): Ek het dit tot hier gemaak

BIENTANG (DB): ek is vandag hier om my hawe te kom regtrek

ek vat die seepant met my twee hande

ek lig die see op tot bo-aan die klippe

dan bring ek dit weer liefderik terug grond toe

BIENTANG (JP): dan kom die vissers

ek sien hier van my aardsholte

die hakskeenknie van hulle bote

laat hulle maar vergeet van my

Lied: Arms sussend...

BIENTANG (JP): arms sussend my lied my lyf wat die wind na-aap
my heupe kalm laaggety ek roffel my voete als dans
sam-saam 'n donderstorm als saam is wolk wat breek
as ek wakker word is my krag 'n toering om my kop

BIENTANG (JP): ek staan op met die gedagte van huiskeer kry wat sal my makeer
ek't niks by my ouer'le verloor nie
ek moet loop vrede maak as ek wil vrede wees

BIENTANG (DB en JP) : ek moet loop vrede maak as ek wil vrede wees

BIENTANG (DB): ek is met die heks in my kruis weer na pa'goed se plek
toe is hulle nie meer daar nie
my mensgoed het goed sonder my klaargekom
ek is nou 'n kreef wat aan die oorskiet peusel ek is 'n
slak in 'n skulp uitgespoel

BIENTANG: (DB en JP): ek is die baai se rooiaas wat stink
ek is die wurms wat die visters
so uit my volmaan uithaal

Lied: sing daar buite

BIENTANG (ALMAL): ek sing so lank in 'n ander taal
sing daar buite
ek het gedink as ek eers 'n blyplek vind
sal dit maklik wees om tuis te wees in
hierdie grot is altyd die skadu's van die ander grot

**

BIENTANG (JP): as ek sonder my mensgoed kan klaarkom sal ek sonder jou
see klaarkom ek het jou nie nodig nie hoor jy jy sê vir my
in my slaap daar sal weer 'n storm kom
die dorp wegvreet ek is nie meer bang nie
ek is nie meer bang vir jou waterkrag nie
jy het my seerang gegee ek het ook sê hier

BIENTANG (JP and DB): toe ek huis vind in my grot toe besef ek ek ken
niemand meer hierbinne nie ek ken alles
niemand ken my meer nie

Lied: Die walvisdroom

BIENTANG (JP): die walvisdroom kom klim in my kop
as ek sluimer deur die dag
drome wat in die dag geskied
sê Atta word waar

BIENTANG (JP): ek is 'n slaweskip wat deur die sand trek
ek droom my vel word 'n net
en die see word net sand
'n hand kom en gooi die sand

BIENTANG (FB): ek droom ek sien onderwater
ek kan onderwater asemhaal
in die baai sal ek spook
tot ek fossiel in die baai

sal die noorkappers kom
herinner ek is bientang
my arms bore vinne ek voel hoe ek
maan ná maan noorkapper word

Lied: Bientang atta se kind skrik wakker

OËDIENAAR (ALMAL): Bientang Atta se kind

skrik wakker
ek praat saam met jou

OËDIENAAR (JP) ek wil deur die mure breek
ek wil vir jou 'n storie vertel

OËDIENAAR (JP & FB): van waar ons almal vandaan kom
hoekom ek met die see kan praat
hoekom jy met my waternaam sit

OËDIENAAR (ALMAL): Bientang my kind skrik wakker
ek praat saam met jou X2
ek moet jou my storie vertel
ek wil hê jy moet my hart leeg skeep
my kind jou Atta sy sink
bodem toe skrik wakker
voor almal van ons vergeet

MONTAGU: wie is lord Montagu?
hy's 'n reisiger 'n man wat plante en diere ken
opskryf Bientang het hy in sy boeke geskryf
die plante en die diere het hy afgeskryf
maar vir Bientang kan hy nie uitgeskryf kry nie

KLAAS: wie is Klaas?
Klaas het die lord opgetel met 'n sak tale

OËDIENAAR (DB): al wat jy hoef te weet is dat Bientang nee gesê het
vir die lord

OËDIENAAR (JP): al wat jy moet weet is dat sy ook hulle afskryf
dit is al.

KLAAS: ons het onder by haar grot gekom
sy perd net so bleek soos hy het sy stert geswaai
sy perd het van die varswater gesuip
lord Montagu het nie skaamte nie
hy het ingeklim hom met boerseep gewas
sy baard geskeer en gesê:

MONTAGU: “I feel like a new man”.

KLAAS: ek het vir hom gesê ons staan op iemand se bidplek

KLAAS: ek sal nie sê nie ons het ontmoet nie sy het ons
betrap uitgetrap en ons gevloek in haar taal al wat
Montagu kon uitkry was

MONTAGU: “you are the most beautiful savage I have ever seen”

KLAAS: sy het verleidende heupe met plat voete sy het ’n mantel aangehad
gemaak van walvisvel en sy het geruik na boegoe

die plek het soos reën geruik sy het vir

lord Montagu bokmelk gebring

MONTAGU: “she presented me with a basket of goatsmilk with a natural grace
which she displayed and had taken care in making the vessel clean. It
was quite warm. i drank some of it.”

KLAAS: bo-op die dorp is sy ‘n slinksterheks
hieronder was sy soos sy gesê het god van die see –

MONTAGU: “Like Poseidon,” lord Montagu exclaimed

KLAAS: “is dit jou grot?”

BIENTANG (JP): hoekom sal jy my so iets vra
julle sit om my vuur eet my kos
kan julle nie sien hoe julle in my oortree nie

KLAAS : Bientang het snaaks gepraat
die see praat saam met ‘n mens praat hy nie met jou nie?
vra sy my reguit
nee sê ek ek kan hom hoor maar ek verstaan hom nie

BIENTANG (JP): ken jy ‘n bietoublos Klaas?

KLAAS: ja

BIENTANG (DB): ek was te vroeg gepluk

BIENTANG (JP): in my lente het my bietoublos geel madeliefies gehad
my broer kom pluk aan my
ek dra nog groen bietous
hy kom pluk aan my en spoeg dit uit
dit was geel hy was amper tevrede
toe die biesies rooi word eet hy klompies lentes van my af

BIENTANG (DB): toe die walvisse weg is dra ek ’n kalfie
ma’le pa’le wou weet wie wie
en ek sê dit is die boetabessie
my boeta sê ek is ’n vroumens
ek jok soos ’n bosluisbessie
hy herinner almal ek is aangemaak met storms
ná die derde maan kom die rooimaan weer
ek is in die hut gesit ek het geboorte gegee
aan bamboes ek is uit die hut ek het gehardloop

ek het die see geroep ek het my bamboes vir haar gegee

KLAAS:

lord Montagu praat

met my oor hoe ek en Bientang gesels het

dit was 'n soort behoort wat hy nie

kan verwoord nie toe teken hy haar

ek het ook oor haar gedink my kop

bruis soos die see hier ek tel die sterre

so naby aan my vel

as lord Montagu praat oor hoe mooi

die vrou wat so koninginlik

in sy oë kyk – in sy duiwelsgatgrotkop kyk

raak ek nie jaloers nie

ek raak jaloers

as sy so terug in die lord

se oë in soek

ek sien jou twee syagtige tierklipoë

in jou oogkasse wat amper wil uitval

en hoe die woorde in my binnekop

'n bergstorting veroorsaak

want as ek in hulle kyk

dan blaas jy die vlam van jou gedagtes dood

dis dan dis dan wat die jaloesie

in my oor steek

veral as lord Montagu vir my sê:

MONTAGU:

Behold

the rocks

breaking
when she laughs

KLAAS: vir die lord met die oë
van 'n mistroostige see
vir hulle kompas jou oë
binnetoe
hy het my gevra
van waar jy is
aan wie behoort jy
ek het jou belofte
geantwoord
she doesn't have people
she is the last one my lord

BIENTANG: Klaas sê die lord se mense vat wat hulle dink hulle s'n is

Lord Montagu het 'n manier om 'n mens te onderbreek
Selfs 'n mens se gedagtes

BIENTANG: toe sy 'n kind was het sy weggehardloop
weg van haar mense af
sy het teruggegaan maar al wat daar was was bene
sy het dit in haar sak gesit en saam huis toe gedra
van haar afgestorwe bemindes se beendere 'n stoel
'n beker en 'n lamp gemaak
sy laat vir lord water daaruit drink
sy brand haar mense uit die lamp
en sê haar pa se raaisel soos 'n gebedsel op

JOLYN: jy sit op my liefde Lord Montagu

jy drink uit my liefde

maar liefde lieg soos gif

BIENTANG (JP): ek is jaloers op 'n boom wat langer as ek lewe

langer as ek hier kan bly en vir wie die grond plek

maak vir sy wortels my voetstappe sal onthou

BIENTANG (DB & JP): ek is laaste mens ek is bientang wie ekke ja net ekke ek

Lied: die storm

OEDIENAAR (ALMAL): verskriklik vorstelik verbryselend verslinder

OËDIENAAR (FB): hoër en hoër toring die golf oor die skuimende
maalstroom die strandlopers in grotte naby die hawe het
van haar gevlug sy los haar dooie vis perlemoen rooiaas
korale braak

OËDIENAAR (CG): hoër en hoër toring die golf oor die skuimende
maalstroom langs die kus het die storms die binneland

binnegedring

sy los haar dooie vis perlemoen rooiaas korale

braak die see eis haar waters die see eis haar

kaai

langs die kus het die storms die binneland

binnegedring alles lê soos gevlekte snoeke sonder

hulle binnegoed die see eis haar waters die see eis

haar kaai die groot golf slaan 'n tamaai slag in die

baai

alles lê soos gevlekte snoeke sonder hulle binnegoed
die strandlopers in grotte naby die hawe het van haar
gevlug die groot golf slaan 'n tamaai slag in die baai
verskriklik vorstelik verbryselend verslinder

KLAAS:

my en lord Montagu se terugkeer na die Attaqua-streek
die dorp wil die storm vergeet en Bientang het geskiedenis
geword net die dassies weet waar Bientang nee wag lieve
ha!ku van die bietoumense heen is ons sien foto's van die
oorledenes die grot is toegegroeï met melkhoutbome en
kooigoed dis asof die see die grot se oog gesluit het ons is met
'n gesukkel haar plek binne

daar was nog die walvisskelet haar krale haar potte haar
skilpaddopborde haar volstruiseiers en wragtag nog 'n potjie met
droë kaneel

DIGTER:

'n mens wil onthou wees vir die lewe ek
sweer dit 'n mens wil vir jou plek maak
tussen taal
om 'n stem te lieg

Bientang jy het dié aag dié klikbek toegang gegee tot al jou gedagte
blyk dit nou jy piemp op my?

nou kom jy met die aantying dat ek jou 'n mite probeer maak
dat ek jou 'n stalagmiet probeer maak my woorde druij jou
vas in 'n soliede kalsietkolom die waarheid is bientang ek
gebruik jou om vir my heenkoms te skep

Digter gaan sit op die boks. Keer terug na die onderhoud tussen Digter en Oupa hen

DIGTER: So, Oupa Hen, ek kyk na hierdie geskiedenis van Bientang's Cave.

OUPA HEN: O dai restaurant met die boesman in? Ons is nie een van hulle nie.

Ek het eenkeer 'n boesman geken, ou Klaasjan.

Jy kan die peperkorrels op sy kop tel.

Kort.

Hy het soos die Namakwas gepraat. Snaakse ou.

Nee. Nee. Ons is Iers

DIGTER: So wanneer het ons bruin geword?

AUNTY LETTUCE: Jy weet dat ons nie eintlik Gibson is nie. Ons noem dit Jipsons.

Maar toe het die Group Areas gekom. Ek onthou as kind.

Ek het 10 reise per dag met 'n pram gemaak.

DIGTER: Waar kom die naam vandaan?

AUNTY LETTUCE: Ek weet nie. Pa het altyd gesê ons is Jipsons. Pa het dit verander.

Strydlied (ek weier)

DIGTER (FB): ek wil jou nie besing soos 'n strydlied nie

DIGTER (JP): ek weier om jou te besing as 'n slaaf

DIGTER (DB): jy forseer my in verbastering

DIGTER (ALMAL): want jy moet 'n quena kumm-slaaf wees

DIGTER (CG): in tweeduisend en twintig is baster wees nie 'n
vrybriefnasie nie...

Lied: wie's jou baster

DIGTER (FB): Daar word gesê ons is basters ons is oorlams
Daar word gesê ons is indringerplante, lukwarte-uitheemse bome
Daar word gesê al wat van ons oor is is onkruid tussen die gras
Maar ons het vrede gemaak met ons ironiese vel

DIGTER (ALMAL) Wie is jou baster? Wies jou oorlams?

Ons sal moet liefdesbriewe aan ons self begin te skryf

Ons hoef nie vir onself 'n

inheemsgeskiedenis te koop

(VO)

ek staan alleen op die plaat

ek ontheg jou ek kyk terug

die wind verwelk jou in

het jy ooit gepraat?

Die einde / Bientang word een met die natuur

LIED: DIE ROOIDAG

Vers 1

BIENTANG (DB): Meng my waters saam tot ek gesoen word deur die maan

BIENTANG (JP): Trap my skulpe fyn tot ek in oseane verdwyn

KOOR: My rooidag, maak die see gelukkig

Die rooidag, maak die see gelukkig

Vers 2

BIENTANG (DB): Laat my sweef op vlerke van die Noord-Wes wind

BIENTANG (JP): Dra my saam maak seker dat niemand my sal vind

KOOR

BRUG

BIENTANG (ALMAL): Ek leef / Ja ek leef / Die mane om / die sonne verby

Ja ek leef, verewig is ek vry

Ek leef / Ja ek leef / Vir ewig is ek vry

(VO)

ek staan alleen op die plaat

ek ontheg jou ek kyk terug

die wind verwelk jou in

het jy ooit gepraat?

Chant – Jolyn begin.

Spelers verlaat die speelvlak.

ANNEXURE 1 – TENTATIVE LITERAL TRANSLATION OF PARTS OF *BIENTANG*

(I have removed the formatting that is in the Afrikaans poetry volume)

the !nau comes quickly I have to stay put in my hut
the men sugar the eland-prayer for my honour
my intended/fiancé will bless me with a klipdaskaros
my children will always know that they have a father
who belong to the river Kamma-kan Kamma people

we're from the qua of devil's hole
and we're not going anywhere
today I wear my sea-dog apron my kapallangs mantle
I'm the ruler of my hut I milk the goats myself
my brother has declared his honor to my intended
today I am no longer a !nau person no my people singing today

today I am a woman I am being smeared out with boegoe
it makes me child-bearing Atta'le take me to the hut
this morning she tells me I am no longer I

I crawl as she crawls I peel as she peels
I'm never going to be able to work anything with my own hands
my hands are locked and only unlocked as being tied to my people
she teaches my feet to walk like one foot
Atta says from now on I must stay away from the sea
the snake doctor talks my life hot with the boegoe

my red day makes the sea turbulent in the hut
we wait we wait sun and moon away (7)

I'm afraid of the !nau
yet I want to stay in the !nau
heed sea! send black mussel messages for my seblief
i taste after bietoublos
I kneel before the ghoenavyg
Hide me gonna-bush-hide-me in your throat
malmok leave me off !nau please!

keeper my beach waking moil

says pa'le I can't get to the water
says ma'le she works me up with brownsalie
her hand a vaalbos pestle
my sister allow them to turn me into a woman in front of everyone
she's finished her fynbos time
she's already been honeyed in
they leave me to unearth
they leave me to scatter

I feel the ghoena-vygbloem pulling out of me
I smell like guano smelling fish between my legs
becoming bokkoms growing sedge under my arms
Womanhood makes me bait
I will hide my strandloper soul

my red day is on the way
I wait for my sign sea
bring words with which I can prey
I'm flying I'm standing on Die Plaat
my singing coils your water grave
catch me eye-catcher
my oyster-catcher
mournfully whistling
unlock the black mussel
run says the oyster-catcher, sea way

my legs loosen run
but my get-set hesitates
I look at the sea and go back home
until your muscles loosen
until the fling in your soles take flight
run away from here (8)

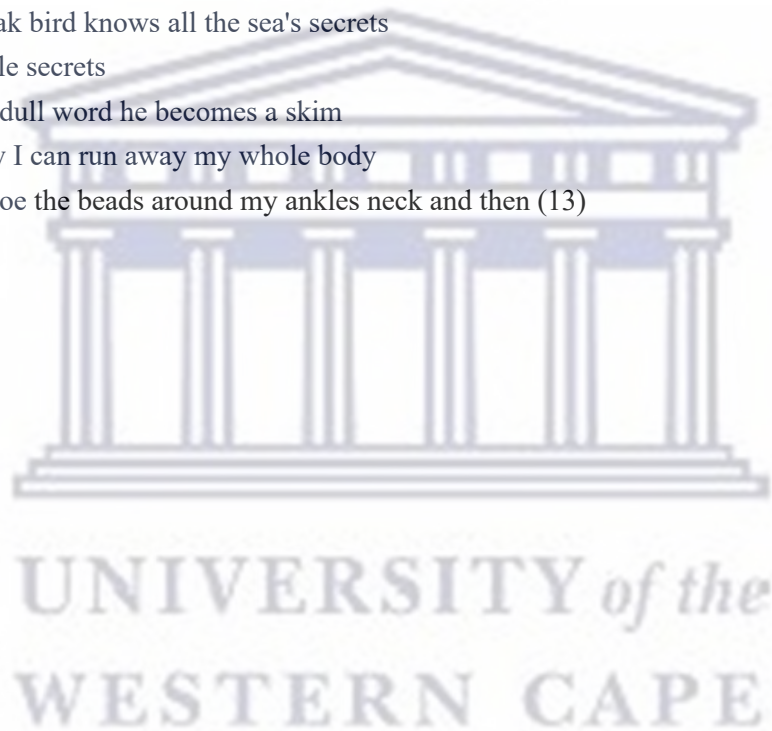
//eyeservant

you trek around the world
you stormsea
you shipwreck
drowner you overwhelm
you empower me
you lure me

you headjailer me through the water I confess
I become pickle water
in me galjoen en coral reef can live in me
sea, you are all that is left of my dune-ghwarrie limbs (11)

this morning on the whale mat, a drip-stone cave form
the sea my debt bone has come to collect
I am cradled it's time for fig wear

Atta I ask how do you get less
why am I burning dark getting older?
wind when I have my hooks on you!
I know the red beak bird knows all the sea's secrets
I know all my pa'le secrets
but he becomes a dull word he becomes a skim
he shows me how I can run away my whole body
dance sweat soe-soe the beads around my ankles neck and then (13)



Atta's premonition

I knew it the medicine man had declared it to us
she was made with her !nau
the big storm is calling!
it is galjoen time
the waer is my preclude
death run away for us
the Bientangkind catch

I see this child's colic
goggo the storms

Atta sometimes I still look for you between the water graves
Atta I missAatta up to the marrow of my hearts
I need my eucalypter klipkous healer
rabbit skin Atta pulls off its fleece
and puts it on my pa's chest
my Atta is a snake-healer
suckling out a venom
like a wedge who spits out his mother's suckle
Atta's calling hail (14)

I threw my afterbirth into a pot
next to my legs walking my moons
again the oyster-catcher in my eyes looking forward
looking backwards
I was flying
I was the wings
all along Loperbaai
he showed me my new place (16)

the first storm calls me I can no longer hold in my listening
I sit on Die Plaat sitting suns and moons away to I pray for the sea
make a storm I egg the sea on there he is? take him to his hell!
I watch my brother with the fishing rod: there is your bait sea!
catch him! before the galjoen tide

I have buried my storms in you take him before the galjoene stops biting
in storms name I deserve the favour
I will be your keeper I will look after your water children
I will keep with every witness of you

I Bientang your fishwoman ask it until

my arms turn to salt arms soothe my song
my body my hips calmly dancing like low tide
together a thunderstorm all together my cloud that breaks
I wake up my strength a tower on my head
my pa'le keeps waiting next to the fire the wind whispers the embers to sleep (17)

the day I turned my away from Duiwelsgat
I walked off the curse
my swollen ankle bothers me all the time
after my brother's dead

Pa'le turns their back Ma'le turn their back
points the medicine in the direction away from them
away from burial
I left my mourning with them
I pack it away in the depths of my head
it shingles there I walk the oyster-catcher promises

says the oyster-catcher freedom waits for you on the other side of Loperbaai

I give you up ma'le
I'm breaking you off me branch by branch
there's freedom waiting
I packed my Atta's mantle
Pa'le's cunning skills still stuck in my skin

i can garden I can fish I fishwoman from the Loperbaai
I stand on Die Plaat Klipgat cave and the Sandberge behind me
my feet are flat my toes spread out
across the shell silt
when the sea retreats
I hear the ghoera the water
clean and cold like my blood
I look in front of me
I watch the tide get angry
my brother sheds from my !nau (18)

my journey to my new place smells like wild dagga

the sand sings the white desert hills

it is getting smaller I'm almost there
I'm getting closer to my spelunk
step by step making my feet swollen and sore
the sandhills spoke yesterday
I've hurt my ankle and it's a dragging snail track
the blue heaven stands without clouds
it's going to become a cold night
I still seek asbos I know from their branch tops
they know little rain I have brought too little water
I will also blow out a flush stream of windwards
I will keep my sand singing until my destination
what freedom awaits me after all the pain that sits in my cross?
turning around I can't turn around I can't not a damn (19)



arriving at the cave in the Chainoukwa region

I see a mountain with a black eye I thank the fynbos
I made it to here in the cave I am going to make a lot of fire here

when I sing I stand in prayer with my body? in self-surrender I describe raindrops
from the depths of my stomach there is a waterfall that fall at Pig-snout mountain

there where my Atta's herbal questions burn loose
for her before my voice picks pieces of firings
out of the cave from my Pa'le
when they hunt and throw the ashes in the air
I remember reading their footsteps in the moon

he watches over us my voice running away from me
I can see in the darkness getting so used to cave
I know the language of darkness
I can't over-tongue my skin is as damp as the disheveling cave

the sea comes knocking on my cave's door
but it's not going to be as beautiful
she never comes in I'm her neighbour
she sends mussels clams fish
and seals that I take to my place near my death

I am grateful this morning so through the pain
of the sprain-foot my neighbour came to complain to me
the noorkappers are on the way
prepare (page 20)

Bientang's first complaint

is my beak not salty like you?
is my ears not enough inlaid from your seaweed?
my head is a sourfig that first wore a crown
but I feel the sun makes me hard from the outside and soft from the inside
how I relied on and struggled in the beginning

here was fresh water to drink but this cave and I are bad weather
I can't burn fire for long how I kept the walls dry
then the constant swooning the together with the darkness
the place is an upturned like an ostrich egg

in it just midnight mounts I am behind the oystercatcher
also, he has stolen the food from my beak

I am now used to the cold damp house of mine
I know the cliffs' nukes I know the colics
I know which winds are taunting
I must beg I'm as salty as you sea
I enjoy the view of boats that crack like empty lobster shells
against you I cook mussels in bamboo (21)



Bientang's dream of the whale

the whale dream climbs into my head as I slumber
daydreams that take place in the day says Aatta become true

where I am a slave ship that pulls through the sand
I dream my skin becomes a net and the sea sifting through it
it falls through my mourning, and I have death laced to my hands
the winding roads in my palm it has thorn direction I have lying on the water
and slept I trust the water in her I can give up in me is also water

yes, in me is also thunderstorms
in me are also the resins as green as seagrass
in me are stones and there is a cave at every swelling corner of my body
here I can't sink here rinsing the water out my ears
in my nose my eyes breath I keep open in my mouth

the water is me like all the other children of the sea
who stay in her the sun burns my dark my skin inlaid?
if I want I can shake off fish is the water for you
you sea keep me out with the taste of you sometimes your bamboo falls
out of your crown and it makes it hard I need you sea

I don't complain I'm just here I'm inside you
but you keep me out of you I dream I see underwater
still, you keep me at bay I will haunt until I fossilize in this bay
I will come and remind the noorkappers
I am Bientang because sea I feel my feet become steering
my arms drill fins I feel how I moon after moon becomes noorkapper

I get up with the thought should I go home what calmed the wave like this?
I've lost nothing at my parent'le (22)

//eyeservant

Atta: Bientang Atta's child
wake up I want to talk to you
I want to break through the walls
I want to tell you a story of where we all come from
why I can talk to the sea why you sat with my water name
Bientang my child wake up!
I must tell you my story
I want you to empty me out
create my child
your Atta is sink to the bottom
wake up!
before we are all forgotten (23)



Bientang's return to her family cave

the day comes say again tabè I don't feel like days my darkness feel safe
in the cave's dark eye when your slumber stands up

I say I'm taunting you with pebbles jumping on your calm waters
but you don't cry I'm walking with a lump in my throat
I want to damn erupt I don't want the water from my eyes to become hale

my homecoming was so quiet I sang so long in another language
singing out there I thought if I first found a stay
it would be easy to be at home
in this cave are always the shadows of the other cave (24)

I'm having the witch in my sacrum again
they're not there anymore Pa'le
did he not smoke dagga in that corner?
didn't Ma'le just sit ignoring me
as if she was creating an empty turtle shell
full of herbal water they didn't just talk to me
you see they weren't there they weren't there anymore

sea they were gone there were legs of fish seals a beak
of a penguin there were bones from the goats here they ate well
you left them more fish in their fig vein
you gave my father's arrow and bow more poison

you gave his weapons eyes their lives had finished well without me
I am now a lobster that is on the leftovers
I'm a snail in a shell washed out I'm power because Pa'le
the vertebrate winds are in my croup the angry bees
make roll clouds in my chest (25)

do you know what makes it secret? it makes the ground in your chest soft
like sand dunes if you see treading again on your softsides the sand swallows you in

what would I be anyway what would I do?
with my sand dune at Klipgat are we then not all running people
it's in my blood to be so but I am I made to spell alone
I am trapped here in my freedom I am the bay's red bait

that stinks I am the worms that the visitors pull so out of my full moon

I am not hotnosfish I don't want to live on fish anymore
I want to lick my lips and taste the sweet of honey
the sour of frietangs

i Bientang want to stand
by the sea again and be in love on its calmness
and its bluerity knows the sea knees
me I dream this bay is my child
I can't carry her in my arms
my breasts have become a treaty
behind my throat crocheting my rage with bamboo

the rest of the child blooming out of here in front of me
the child who I got too early and like seawood
the sea washes her out every morning
is it your way of taunting?
taunting me with my brother's shadow
thank you for his death (26)

what do I make with his shadow? I'm ungrateful in the cave
my eyes see the world balding you're not going to get me down
I'm the sea's waiting woman let me get down from oyster-catchers
if my eyes can't see my skin my feet and my hands

I will finish without you sea I don't need you to hear me
you tell me in my sleep there will come a storm again
the town is eaten away I am no longer afraid
I am no longer afraid of your water charge
you have given me sea-rank I have a say here (27)

the weather come and say tabè again I wish I could like the visitors here
on this Parra-bay wind-catching their redemption
I'm tired of always getting behind clear wind
I want to say I'm not their slave the southeastern
the southeastern decides for everyone our broken morning our death-tide

I'm here today to get my bay right I take the sea with my two hands I lift the sea
until it foams at the top of the stones and I bring it back to the ground again
I put the sea in its skin I pulled it neatly over with the kale linen
then I take the pillow of the sea-holly I puff it up fresh for a new sleep-laying
the sides made flat with a blue-grey spread

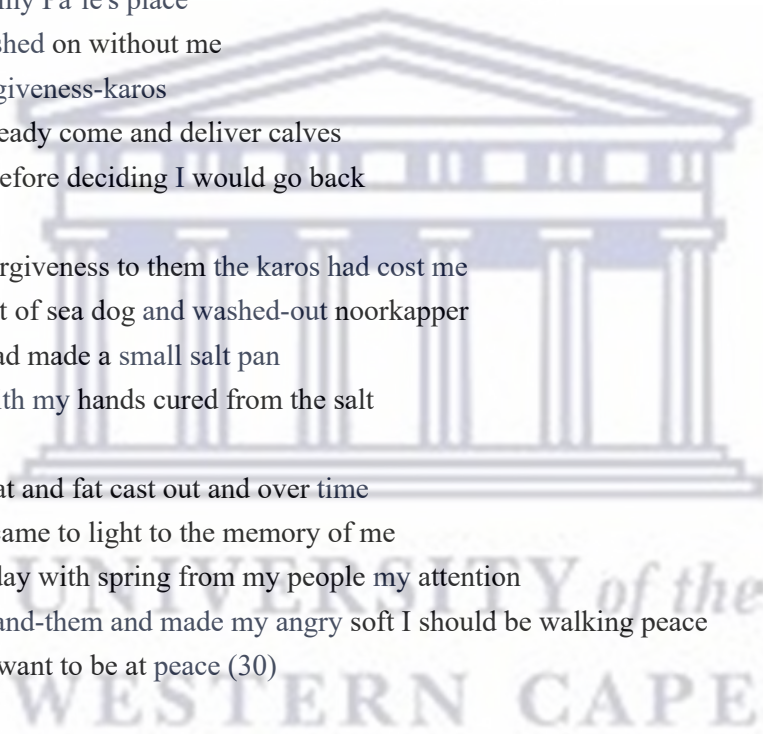
fine foaming edges for a beautiful bridesbed
then the visitors come I see here from my earth cavity
the heel of their boats their coastal sloop and they forget me
as they come home with boeties bull sharks and karelgrootoë-fish
at the table the fishers pray the fish tastes nice

when I found home in my cave I realised I didn't know anyone
inside this hollow I know everything
nobody knows me anymore (29)

I came back from my Pa'le's place
yesterday they pushed on without me
I made them a forgiveness-karos
the whales had already come and deliver calves
here at my place before deciding I would go back

today I take my forgiveness to them the karos had cost me
lots of dassies a lot of sea dog and washed-out noorkapper
I had browned I had made a small salt pan
to treat the skin with my hands cured from the salt

every piece of meat and fat cast out and over time
my weather gray came to light to the memory of me
storms came one day with spring from my people my attention
catch my parents-and-them and made my angry soft I should be walking peace
making peace if I want to be at peace (30)



ANNEXURE 2 – A SHORT REFLECTION ON THE PLAY

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the poem was changed into a play, or rather a group consisting of a professional actor Charlton George, two musicians Frazer and Deniel Barry and myself, under the guidance of Amelda Brand was brought together to create a play around my poetic text of *Bientang*. When we got together it was wonderfully clear from the beginning that in the adaptation aspects of representation was important for all of us: how did we want to represent *Bientang*? The collective, because that was what we had become – an indigenous collective – decided that we would play with different theatrical and storytelling techniques to represent *Bientang* in a mosaic of dance, music, and physical theatre. So the adapted version of the various abstracts to music was performed as a collective, the storytellers and/or performers and not the Eyeservant – the latter has become a collected voice. Since there are so many representations of Khoi woman written in colonial texts and notwithstanding the accompanying stereotypes with regard to physical appearance, neither of us felt that we could fully embody *Bientang* and we did not want to because we did not want to give currency to an assumption that representation is possible or desirable. We accepted that as contemporary indigenous people, we would rather work from the ‘now’, our history and from our personal experience with indigenous culture, already so fragmented, and so we allowed hybridity to play to our advantage.

Furthermore, the tone of the monologue in the original Epic poem tells the reader what aspect of the story s/he can believe, whereas in the play all is scattered to distract so this trajectory sets the adaptation into a different plot structure.

Where the Eyeservant in the epic poem anguishes over the action she and the poet have taken in order to observe and represent *Bientang*, “The poet” in the adaptation introduces the information to cast doubt and suspicion not only on the Eyeservant but also on *Bientang*. In the play both *Bientang* and “The poet” indicate baldly that they will be committing fiction by lying:

Bientang I want to build you a kleptocracy

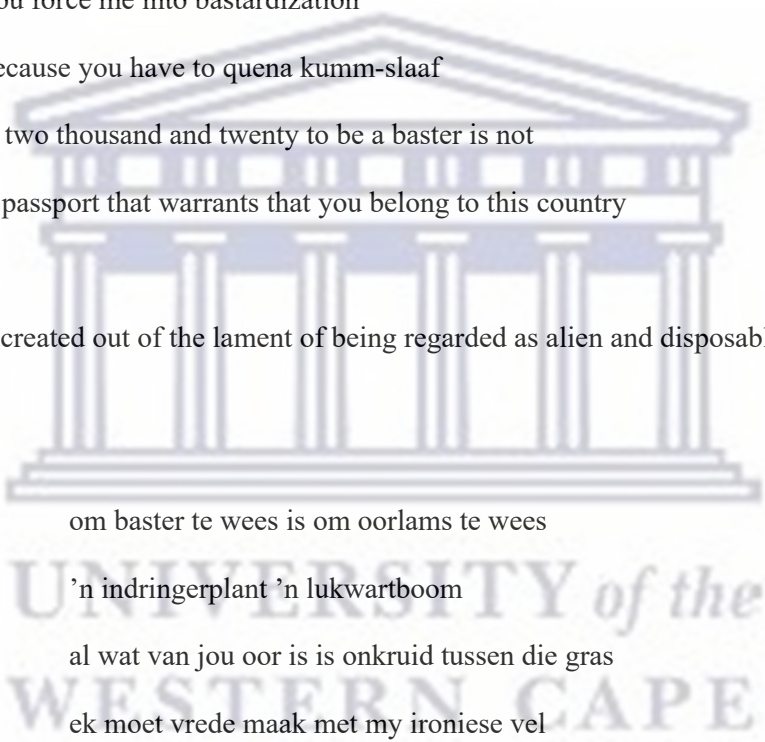
We are going to have to steal from one another

To lie on behalf of the voices

Another significant departure from the Epic was adapting some of the poetry to music. We had a composer, Frazer Barry, who also made use of these poems from the Epic and used the following lines:

I refuse to praise you as a struggle song
I refuse to praise you because you're a slave
You force me into bastardization
Because you have to quena kumm-slaaf
In two thousand and twenty to be a baster is not
A passport that warrants that you belong to this country

Another song was created out of the lament of being regarded as alien and disposable by many South Africans:



om baster te wees is om oorlams te wees
'n indringerplant 'n lukwartboom
al wat van jou oor is is onkruid tussen die gras
ek moet vrede maak met my ironiese vel
ophou vrybriewe deur jou aan myself te skryf
to be a bastard means to be oorlams
to be an invasive plant species a lukwart tree
all that is left of you are weeds
I will have to make peace with this ironic skin
stop writing freedom letters to myself

In the adaptation the last line was amended to: “we will have to write love letters to one another.” The play *Bientang: bloedspoor!/nau* follows the same concept of fragmentation in that we used fragments

of the poem as well as new archival work. When I refer to fragments, I do not mean just taking excerpts, but also changing the meaning or the emotion of them.

Example :

<i>Original fragment from the epic poem</i>	<i>Fragment adapted in the play</i>
<p>ek het vir Bientang 'n kleptokrasie gebou en aan die buitekant kan jy sien hoe ons bymekaar steel om 'n stem te lieg bientang jy het dié aag dié klikbek toegang gegee tot al jou gedagtes blyk dit nou jy piemp op my? 'n glas droë witwyn en lees die woorde: die laaste strandloper hoe word 'n mens 'n laaste? ek het jou in my in en my uit my uitgeskryf nou kom jy met die aantying dat ek jou 'n mite probeer maak dat ek jou 'n stalagmiet probeer maak my woorde drup jou vas in 'n soliede kalsietkolom die waarheid is bientang ek gebruik jou om vir my 'n heenkoms te skep</p>	<p>Bientang, ek het deur al die /xam argiewe gesoek na jou en van jou strandlopergeid nog te min vir jou moet mens uitpak soos koekemakranka 'n mens wil onthou wees vir die lewe ek sweer dit 'n mens wil vir jou plek maak tussen taal ek wil Bientang laat uitmond dood se taal praat nog nie met my nie ek moet eers daar uitkom hoeveel keer is ons voormense nie gestraf met oorlewenis nie ek wil vir Bientang 'n kleptokrasie bou ons gaan by mekaar moet steel om stemme te lieg</p>

The examples above show the intricacies of economizing one poem to be used in different mediums and then repeated in different parts of the story with the aid of the performance and music. It also illustrates the complexity of adapting an Epicepic poem into performance poetry. The adaptation ends with the poet surrendering to the fact that they (the players) cannot complete this Epic nor complete a journey for Bientang on her behalf.

Advertisement

Bientang: bloedspoor/!nau

Moontlik gemaak deur die National Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences Working Groups Programme, ondersteun deur [NATi](#)

MET Charlton George, Frazer Barry, Jolyn Phillips en Deniel Barry **TEKS** Jolyn Phillips **REGIE** Amelda Brand **MUSIEK** Frazer Barry en Jolyn Phillips **CHOREOGRAFIE** Kayla van der Merwe **VERHOOG- EN PRODUKSIEBESTUURDER** Amber Fox-Martin **BELIGTINGSONTWERP** Bennie Arendse **ASSISTENTVERHOOGBESTUURDER** Lulu Kieser **ONTWERP** Maia Lehr-Sacks **KOSTUUMS** Elrina Marais **VERVAARDIGER** Attakwa Productions






UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

Works Cited

- Abrams, M.H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Heinle & Heinle, 1999.
- Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. "The Danger of a Single Story." *TED*, July 2020,
www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story.
- "Afrikaans: The Language of Black and Coloured Dissent." *South African History Online*.
www.sahistory.org.za/article/afrikaanslanguage-black-and-coloured-dissent.
- Aristotle. *Poetics*. Preface by Gilbert Murray. Translated by Ingram Bywater. Clarendon Press, 1920.
- Bakhtin, M.M. "Epic and Novel". *The Dialogic Imagination*. Edited by M. Holquist. Translated by C. Emerson and M. Holquist. University of Texas Press, 2004.
- Beckett, Samuel. *Worstward Ho*. John Calder, 1983.
- Bennet, Nini. "Bientang." *Versindaba*., versindaba.co.za/2020/09/10/resensie-bientang-jolyn-phillips.
Accessed 15 Feb. 2023.
- Bhattacharya, Deya. "Portrayal of Violence against Women in Literary Fiction." *The Curious Reader*., 10 June 2020, www.thecuriousreader.in/features/violence-against-women.
- Bhabha, Homi: "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse." *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.
- Bientang's Cave, bientangscave.com. Accessed 15 Feb. 2023.
- Bisschoff, B.P. "Raka, deur N.P. van Wyk Louw". *Patrys*, 15 (180): 46–7, 1963.
- Breytenbach, Breyten. *Lewensdood: Kantlynkarteling by 'n Digbundel –: Die Eerste Bundel van die Ongedanste Dans*. Taurus, 1985.
- Brink, André. *Philida*. Random House, 2012.
- Brown, Julian. *The Road to Soweto: Resistance and the Uprising of 16 June 1976*. Boydell & Brewer, 2016.
- Burger, Bibi. "Grond/Santekraam En Bientang: Gesitueer in Globale Swart Seeroetes." *Tydskrif Vir Letterkunde*, Vol. 59, No. 1, 2022, pp. 62-74. <http://doi.org/10.17159/tl.v59i1.8964>.
- Canclini, Nestor Garcia. *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*. University of Minnesota Press, 1995.

- Carson, Anne. *Autobiography of Red*. Vintage, 1999.
- Carson, Anne. *H Of H Playbook*. Random House, 2021.
- “Caesura”, *Poetry Foundation*, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/learn/glossary-terms/caesura>.
- Celliers, J.F.E. *Martjie*. Nasionale Boekhandel Bpk., 1918.
- Christiansë, Yvette. *Castaway*. Duke University Press, 1999.
- . *Imprendehora*, Kwela/Snail Press, 2007.
- Čilić, Ivona Šetka, and Jelena Ilić Plauc. “Today’s Usage of Neologisms in Social Media Communication.” *Društvene I Humanističke Studije*, Nono. 1(14), Feb. 2021, pp. 115–40. <https://doi.org/10.51558/2490-3647.2021.6.1.115>.
- Clifford, Hugh and Frank Athelstane, *Dictionary of the Malay Language: Malay–English*. Swettenham, 1894.
- Cloete, T.T. *Die Afrikaanse Literatuur sedert Sestig*. Nasou, 1980.
- . “Die Kort en Heel Vorm van Breytenbach se ‘Die Boenk’.” *Standpunte*. Nuwe reeks 146, April 1980
- Coetzee, A.J. *Ritme en Skandering: ’n Ondersoek na Ritmiese Sisteme in Uitgesoekte Afrikaanse Gedigte*. Tafelberg, 1972.
- Coetzee, J.M. “Farm Novel and ‘Plaasroman’ in South Africa.” *English in Africa*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 1986, pp. 1-19. www.jstor.org/stable/40238587. Accessed 29 Sept. 2023.
- Cope, Jack, and Uys Krige (Eds). *The Penguin Book of South African Verse*. Penguin Books, 1968.
- Dekker, G. 1941. “*Raka*: ’n Belangrike epiese digwerk in Afrikaans”. *Die Huisgenoot*, September, p.19.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Felix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Penguin Classics, 2009.
- Dros, Imme. *Ilios & Odysseus met Tekening van Harry Geelen*. Querido, 2015.
- Du Toit, S.J. *Die Koningin van Skeba of Salomo se ou Goudveldegoudvelde in Sambesia*. Nasionale Pers, 1922.
- “Epic.” *The Oxford Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*. 2nd ed., Oxford UP, 2005.
- The Epic of Gilgamesh*. Translated by N.K. Sandars. Penguin Classics, 1960.

- Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Translated by Constance Farrington. Penguin, 1982.
- Fourie, Jan and S.D. Fourie. *Die Gansbaai Gedenkboek*. Human & Rousseau, 2014.
- Fourie, Jan. *Dagbreek oor Dyerseiland*. Human & Rousseau, 1997.
- . *Duskant Die Duine*. Human & Rousseau, 2005.
- . *Gansbaai Kerkgeskiedenis*. Human & Rousseau, 1997.
- . *Geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse Literatuur*. Academica, 1984.
- . *Strandveldse Gisterdinge*. Human & Rousseau, 2001.
- . *Wisselstrale oor die Strandveld*. Human & Rousseau, 1994.
- Frye, Northrop. "The Rhythm of Recurrence: Epos." *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*. 10th ed., Princeton UP, 1973.
- Giliomee, Hermann. *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*. University of Virginia Press, 2009.
- Grove, A.P. and C.J.D. Harvey. *Afrikaans Poems with English Translations*. Oxford University Press, 1962.
- Harmon, William, and C. Hugh Holman. *A Handbook to Literature*. 11th ed., Pearson Prentice Hall, 2009.
- Herman, Edward S., and Noam Chomsky. *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. Pantheon, 1988.
- Hoffmann, Michael J., and Patrick D. Murphy. *Essentials of the Theory of Fiction*. Duke UP, 1996.
- Homer. *The Iliad*. Edited by Cynthia Brantley. Pocket Books, 2006.
- Homer. *The Odyssey*. Translated by E.V. Rieu. Penguin Books, 1946.
- Homerus, *Fragmente uit die Ilias*, Translated by Cas Vos. Protea Boekhuis, 2014.
- Japee, Gurrudutta, "Transdisciplinary Research – Paradigm shift in research." *Xi*, Vol. 16 No. 8, August 2020, pp. 92-104.
- www.researchgate.net/publication/343627099_Transdisciplinary_Research.
- Joubert, Elsa. *Die Swerfjare van Poppie Nongena*. Tafelberg. 1978.
- Kamfer, R. "Avoiding the usual routes Jolyn Phillips deconstructs the legend of Bientang." *Herri*, No. 5, www.herri.org.za/5/ronelda-s-kamfer/.
- Kannemeyer, J.C. *Geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse Literatuur 2*. 1ste ed., Academia, 1983.

- Krog, Antjie. *Die Sterre sê "T'sau"*. Kwela Books, 2004.
- . *Lady Anne*. Human & Rousseau, 2004.
- . "Lady Anne as guide because a hero needs a bard". *Lady Anne: A Chronicle in Verse*. Translated by Antjie Krog, Bucknell University Press, 2017.
- Lacan, Jacques. *Écrits: A Selection*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. Travistock Publications, 1997.
- Landry, Donna and Gerald Maclean (Eds). *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*. Routledge, 1996.
- Le Vaillant, Francois. *Travels into the Interior Parts of Africa by the Cape of Good Hope in the Years 1780, 81, 82, 83 and 84*. Volume 1. Translated by Ian Glenn. R. Morison Jr., 1791.
- ... *Travels into the Interior Parts of Africa by the Cape of Good Hope in the Years 1780, 81, 82, 83 and 84*. Volume 2. Translated by Ian Glenn. R. Morison Jr., 1791.
- ... *Travels into the Interior Parts of Africa by the Cape of Good Hope in the Years 1780, 81, 82, 83 and 84*. Volume 3. Translated by Ian Glenn. R. Morison Jr., 1791.
- Marais, Eugene N. *Dwaalstories*. Human & Rousseau, 1965.
- Markowitz, Arthur. *With Uplifted Tongue: Stories, Myths and Fables of the South African Bushmen Told in Their Manner*. Central News Agency, 1956.
- Morris, Rosalind (Ed)., editor. "*Can the Subaltern Speak??*": *Spivak, Gayatri. Reflections on the History of an Idea*. Columbia UP, 1990.
- Mort, ValzhynaValrhona "To Antigone, a Dispatch." *New York Times*, 31 August 2020, www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/08/31/to-antigone-a-dispatch.
- Mulder, H.A. "N.P. van Wyk Louw: Raka." *Ons Eie Boek*, Vol.11, No.14, Dec. 1945, pp 196-200
- Ndebele, Njabulo. *Rediscovery of the Ordinary: Essays on South African Literature and Culture*. University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 1991.
- Nigg, Charles. *A Tagalog English and English Tagalog Dictionary*. Ulan Press, 2012.
- Olivier, Fanie. *Aspekte van Ballingskap en Vaderland in die Poësie van Breyten Breytenbach*. Stellenbosch University, MA thesis, 1972.
- Opperman, D.J. *Joernaal van Jorik*. Tafelberg, 1978.

Opperman, D.J. "Kamera." *Afrikaans Poems with English Translations*, edited by A.P. Grové and C.J.D. Harvey, Oxford UP, 1962.

Parry, Michael. *The Bedford Introduction to Literature: Reading, Thinking, Writing*. Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005.

Parry, Milman, and Adam Parry. "*The Making of Homeric Verse*": *The Homeric Formulae and Homeric Metre*. Oxford UP, 1987.

Philander, P.J. *Zimbabwe*. Nasionale Boekhandel Bpk., 1968.

Phillips, Jolyn. *Radbraak*. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 2017.

---. *Bientang*. Human & Rousseau, 2020.

---. *Tjieng Tjang Tjerries and Other Stories*. Modjaji, 2016.

Plato. *De Republiek Van Plato*. Translated by D.D. Burger Jr. and P.N. Van Kampen, 1849.

Press, Karen. *Bird Heart Stoning the Sea; Krotoa's Story; Lines of Force: A Small Murder*. Buchu Books, 1990.

Rankine, Claudia. *Don't Let Me Be Lonely: An American Lyric*. Penguin, London, 2004.

Rosenthal, Eric (Ed). *Ensiklopedie van Suidelike Afrika*. Central News Agency, 1967.

Saal, Elvis, "Afrikaanse Dialekte in die Klaskamer: Kô lat ôs praat" – 'n Onderhoud met Elvis Saal deur Naomi Meyer. *LitNet* 2020.

Sandars, N.K. *The Epic of Gilgamesh: An English Version with an Introduction*. Penguin Books, 1960.

Santos, Boaventura de Sousa. *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide*. Paradigm Publishers, 2014.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Nausea*. Penguin Books, 2013.

Scheub, Harold. "A Review of African Oral Traditions and Literature." *African Studies Review*, Vol. 28, No. 2/3, pp. 1-72, June/September 1985. www.jstor.org/stable/524603.

Seligman, C. *Races of Africa*, 4th ed., Oxford UP, 1967.

Seydou, Christiane. "The African Epic: A Means for Defining the Genre." Translated by Kathryn Wright. *Folklore Forum*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 1983, pp. 47-68.
hdl.handle.net/2022/1853.

- IUScholarWorks*, scholarworks.iu.edu/dspace/handle/2022/1853.
- Smit, Hettie. *Sy Kom Met Die Sekelmaan*. 10th ed., Nasionale Boekhandel Bpk., 1970.
- Smith, Zadie. "Fail Better." *The Guardian*, 13 Jan. 2007, www.theguardian.com/profile/zadie-smith.
- Sole, Kelwyn. "Bird Hearts Taking Wing: Trends in Contemporary South African Poetry Written in English." *World Literature Today*, Vol. 70, No. 1, 1996, pp. 25–31.
<http://doi.org/10.2307/40151848>. Accessed 4 Oct. 2023.
- South African National Biodiversity Institute. "Osteospermum Moniliferum." Sanbi.Org, pza.sanbi.org/osteospermum-moniliferum. Accessed 15 Sept. 2023.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "A Moral Dilemma." *Theoria*, Vol. 47, No. 96, Jan. 2000.
<http://doi.org/10.3167/004058100782485675>.
- Streim, Alex., "The Heroic Couplet." *An Introduction to Poetic Forms*, edited by Patrick Gill, 1st ed., Routledge, 2022.
- Stockenström, Wilma. *Die Kremetartekspidisie*. Human & Rousseau, 2014.
- "The origins of writing (II). Cuneiform writing." *MJ2 Artesanos Artesanía y réplicas*, 21 Jul 2021, www.mj2artesanos.es/blog/los-origenes-de-la-escritura-ii-la-escritura-cuneiforme/?lang=en.
- Tjieng Tjang Tjerries*. Directed by Jolyn Phillips and Jason Jacobs, Woordfees, 2018, www.vimeo.com/255175295
- Toerien, Barend J. "Untitled Review." *World Literature Today*, Vol. 60, No. 3, 1986, pp. 511-511. *JSTOR*, <http://doi.org/10.2307/4142401>. Accessed 3 Oct. 2023.
- Totius. *Trekkerswee*. Tafelberg, 1981.
- Tredgold, Ardene. *Village of the Sea: The Story of Hermanus*. Human & Rousseau, 1997.
- Van Den Heever, C.M. *Somer*. 31st ed., J.L. van Schaik, 1974.
- Van der Ross, R.E. *Up from Slavery: Slaves at the Cape – Their Origins, Treatment and Contribution*. Cape Town: Ampersand Press, 2005.
- Van Niekerk, Lanita. "Krotoa — Cape Town Museum." *Cape Town Museum*, 13 Apr. 2022, www.capetownmuseum.org.za/they-built-this-city/Krotoa.
- Van Rensburg, C. "Die Vroegste Khoi-Afrikaans." *Tydskrif Vir Geesteswetenskappe*, Vol. 56, No. 2–1, June 2016, pp. 454–76. <http://doi.org/10.17159/2224-7912/2016/v56n2-1a10>.

- Van Rensburg, C. "Die Vroegste Khoi-Afrikaans." *Tydskrif Vir Geesteswetenskappe*, Vol. 56, No. 2–1, June 2016, pp. 454-76. <http://doi.org/10.17159/2224-7912/2016/v56n2-1a10>.
- Van Wyk Louw, N.P. *Raka*. Tafelberg, 1941.
- Van Wyk Louw, N.P. "The coming of Raka". *Afrikaans Poems with English Translations*. Translated by Guy Butler, Oxford University Press, 1962.
- Van, Rensburg, J.P.J. *Die Odusseia*. Human & Rousseau, 1963.
- Van Vuuren, H. *Poetry in Prison: A Study of Breyten Breytenbach's Five Volumes of Prison Poetry in Translation (1976-1985)*. Nelson Mandela University, MA thesis, 1992.
- Venuti, Lawrence and Baker, Mona (Eds). *The Translation Studies Reader*. Psychology Press, 2000.
- Viljoen, Hein. "Die Raaisel Van Bientang." *Netwerk24*, 25 July 2020, www.netwerk24.com/netwerk24/kunste/boeke/die-raaisel-van-bientang-20200725.
- Viljoen, Hein. "Marginalia on Marginality." *Alternation*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1999, pp. 10–22. http://doi/pdf/10.10520/AJA10231757_6.
- Viljoen, Louise. "A Contextualisation of my 2001 Article, 'The Contestation and Renegotiation of Gendered Spaces in Afrikaans Poetry. *Stilet*, Vol. 13, No. 1, June 2001, pp. 51-64." *Stilet*, Vol. 31, No. 1, 10134573, June 2019, pp. 289-90. <http://doi/abs/10.10520/ejc-stilet-v31-n1-a35>.
- . "Affek, Emosie en Kognisie in die Rekonstruksie van 'n Vergete Geskiedenis: Jolyn Phillips Se Bientang." *Stilet*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 10134573, Jul. 2022, pp. 141-62. www.researchgate.net/publication/362231649_Affek_emosie_en_kognisie_in_die_rekonstruksie_van_'n_vergete_geskiedenis_Jolyn_Phillips_se_bientang.
- . "Bientang (Jolyn Phillips)." *Tydskrif Vir Letterkunde*, Vol. 57, No. 2, Academy of Science of South Africa, Nov 2020.
- Walters, C.H. "Vervreemding, Patronaat en Tuiskoms: Die Gilgamesj-epos vir Afrikaanse Kinderlesers." Stellenbosch University, MA thesis, 2014.
- Watson, Stephen. *Song of the Broken String: After the /Xam Bushmen – Poems from a Lost Oral Tradition*. Sheep Meadow Press, 1991.

Whyte, Christopher. "Against Self-Translation." *Translation and Literature*, Vol. 11, No. 1, Mar. 2002, pp. 64–71. <http://doi.org/10.3366/tal.2002.11.1.64>.

Willemse, Hein. "Insularity and Ambivalence: The Case of the South African Poet P. J. Philander's Epic Poem, *Zimbabwe*." *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 39, No. 1, March. 2008, pp. 125–48. <http://doi.org/10.2979/ral.2008.39.1.125>.

